

THE BATTLE OVER A BLACK YMCA AND ITS INNER-CITY COMMUNITY:  
THE FALL CREEK PARKWAY YMCA AS A LENS ON INDIANAPOLIS' URBAN  
REVITALIZATION AND SCHOOL DESEGREGATION, 1959-2003

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## Introduction: Competing Visions of Indianapolis' Historically Black YMCA

The narrative of the Fall Creek Parkway YMCA is central to the record of the historically black community northwest of downtown Indianapolis, which was established in the early 1900s, as well as reflective of the urban revitalization projects and demographic fluxes that changed this community beginning in the 1960s. This is because the conflict between administrators of the Fall Creek YMCA branch and Greater Indianapolis YMCA or Metropolitan YMCA over the viability of the branch at 10<sup>th</sup> Street and Indiana Avenue was a microcosm of the conflict between community and city leaders over the necessity of large-scale forces. This thesis specifically examines the large-scale forces of urban revitalization, defined in the study as the city's implementation of construction projects in Indianapolis' downtown area, and school desegregation, which was the focus of a federal court case that affected Indianapolis Public Schools. Delineating the contested visions held by Fall Creek and Metropolitan YMCA administrators about how the Fall Creek YMCA should have functioned within an environment changed by urban revitalization and school desegregation is crucial to understanding the controversies that surrounded major construction projects and desegregation measures that took place in the downtown area of Indianapolis during the late twentieth century.

The relationship between the Fall Creek YMCA Board, community leaders, and the Metropolitan YMCA Board, explicitly reflected the conflict between community groups and agents of urban revitalization. Proponents of those redevelopment projects

intensified their activities between the 1960s and 1980s.<sup>1</sup> For example, approximately 80 percent of Lockefield Gardens Apartments, the public housing project constructed for African Americans in the late 1930s and financed by New Deal funds, was demolished in 1983 as part of a plan developed by the Midtown Economic Development Industrial Corporation (MEDIC), Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI), and Wishard Memorial Hospital.<sup>2</sup> The complex had been vacated in 1973 in accordance with a 1971 ruling by U.S. District Court Judge Samuel Hugh Dillin to redress residential segregation and by extension school segregation.<sup>3</sup>

The 1960s and 1970s were also the preliminary decades during which the real estate department of Indiana University rapidly increased its acquisition of residential and business properties that made up the historically black community surrounding Indiana Avenue in near-downtown Indianapolis. IU's expansion paralleled other urban revitalization projects that targeted the downtown area, specifically the construction of Highway I-65. As a consequence of such urban revitalization and school desegregation measures, the Fall Creek YMCA shifted from being the center of a historically black

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<sup>1</sup> Clyde Griffen, Preface: "Towards a Future History of the YMCA," in *Men and Women Adrift: The YMCA and the YWCA in the City*, ed. Nina Mjagkij and Margaret Spratt (New York and London: New York University Press, 1997), xv; Ralph D. Gray, *IUPUI: The Making of an Urban University* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2003), 49.

Note: The Greater Indianapolis YMCA will hereafter be referred to by interchangeable titles, including the Greater Indianapolis Metropolitan YMCA, Metropolitan YMCA, metropolitan association, and the Indianapolis YMCA or IYMCA.

<sup>2</sup> Leigh Darbee, "Lockefield Gardens," in *The Encyclopedia of Indianapolis*. Seventeen buildings were demolished as part of the joint plan.

<sup>3</sup> Ralph D. Gray, *IUPUI: The Making of an Urban University* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2003), 146.



community to a microcosm of large-scale processes and ensuing public controversy.<sup>4</sup> Although this thesis provides some information about the federal funding that Indiana received to construct an interstate highway system in Indianapolis between 1959 and 1976, as well as details about the administration of William H. Hudnut III between 1976 and 1992 (which spanned the implementation of urban revitalization projects in Indianapolis' near-downtown area and central business district), the study focuses chiefly on the desegregation of Indianapolis Public Schools, expansion of Indiana University and Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, as well as the partial demolition of Lockefield Gardens.

It was that changing environment which contributed to the contested visions of how the Fall Creek Parkway YMCA should have functioned in an increasingly urbanized environment that displaced low-income residents and attracted a middle-class clientele. And like the conflict between community groups and agents of urban revitalization—e.g., the Indiana University Real Estate Department, Indiana State Highway Department, and other agencies that facilitated construction projects—the conflict between the Fall Creek branch and the Metropolitan YMCA also intensified during the late twentieth century. While the central conflict between community groups and city agencies in Indianapolis concerned the validity of implementing urban revitalization and school desegregation measures, the twofold conflict between the Fall Creek and Metropolitan YMCAs

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<sup>4</sup> Gray, *IUPUI*, 50; Richard B. Pierce, *Polite Protest: The Political Economy of Race in Indianapolis, 1920-1970* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2005), 80; David Wilson, "Local State Dynamics and Gentrification in Indianapolis, Indiana," *Urban Geography* 10, no. 1 (1989): 20.

Wilson, a professor of geography at The University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign, conceptualizes "local-state" or state political machinations and institutions as mediators of gentrification in cities. His local-state approach and institutionalist perspective, which understands institutions like city administrations as agents of gentrification rather than passive entities, is an important development in the historiography of urban and organization studies. (See Wilson 1989 and 1990.)

centered on the mission and service area of the branch within an environment changed by urbanization and desegregation measures.

Members of the Fall Creek YMCA Board supported the objectives of branch members and community leaders to maintain the branch as a social service agency that provided a host of programming for youth as well as residential services for the needy in near-downtown Indianapolis. In contrast, members of the Metropolitan YMCA Board made the decision to align with the agenda of the national YMCA office in Chicago, Illinois, and exclusively provide programming for youth and families. Thus the Fall Creek and Metropolitan YMCA Boards disagreed, as demonstrated in the public media and organizational records, over the mission and by extension the targeted audience of the branch at its 10<sup>th</sup> Street and Indiana Avenue location.

Conceptualizing the mission of the Fall Creek YMCA differently also led branch administrators, advocates, and Metropolitan YMCA administrators to envision the service area of the Fall Creek YMCA through conflicting perspectives. On one hand, administrators on the Fall Creek YMCA Board and supporting community members thought that the service area of the Fall Creek YMCA included existing residents in its immediate area as well as those outside of downtown who could access the branch using public transportation. On the other hand, administrators on the Metropolitan YMCA Board indicated in public releases and branch studies that they only considered the immediate vicinity of the branch to be its service area.

Thus, conflict over the mission and service area of the Fall Creek YMCA stemmed from competing visions of the role and targeted audience of the branch within an environment challenged by large-scale urban revitalization and school desegregation

measures between the 1960s and 1980s. The contested visions held by branch administrators and advocates about how the Fall Creek YMCA should have functioned in an urbanized area informed the controversy that surrounded the decisions of the metropolitan association to close the dormitory section of the branch in March 2002, and the branch itself in September 2003. This thesis is a historical narrative and analysis of such contested visions concerning the Fall Creek YMCA, and how they were a microcosm of the conflict between community groups and city agencies concerning the implementation of large-scale urban revitalization projects and desegregation orders in Indianapolis. It is the study of the history, prominence, and controversial decline of a branch that is informed and humanized, respectively, by archival research and oral history interviews with individuals who were involved in either the administration or advocacy of the Fall Creek YMCA between 1971 and 2003.

**Scope and Methodology:**

**The Methodological Virtues of Using a Case Study on a YMCA Branch as a Lens on Larger Social Conflicts**

The narrative of the Fall Creek YMCA followed the contentious story of Indianapolis similarly to other prominent institutions and businesses that were patronized by the black community around Indiana Avenue, as well as negatively affected by later desegregation measures and downtown redevelopment projects. Referencing a YMCA branch as an institutional model of its urban environment has been thoroughly validated in the field of African-American associational life and history by Nina Mjagkij, Professor of History at Ball State University, and in the field of organization studies by Mayer N. Zald, Professor Emeritus of Social Work at the University of Michigan.

In a collection of studies which she co-edited titled *Men and Women Adrift: The YMCA and the YWCA in the City* (1997), Mjagkij described local branches as “urban institutions” in order to establish YMCAs and YWCAs as products of their social settings within a city. The terminology designated organizations that adapted their mission and programming to the needs of their dominant membership groups.<sup>5</sup> In her book *Light in the Darkness: African Americans and the YMCA, 1852-1946* (1994), Mjagkij discussed how administrators of “colored” YMCAs facilitated educational, physical fitness, and fraternal programs with the objective to advance the social status of African-American men within a racially prejudiced society. She emphasized the connection between the programming and mission of colored YMCAs, which adapted the mind-body-spirit mission of standard associations, to the aspirations of African-American men in their surrounding communities. In short, Mjagkij’s works established case studies on YMCAs as vehicles to understanding associational life among African Americans within a larger societal context.<sup>6</sup> Zald’s works, which spanned a career of fifty years, evaluated the

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<sup>5</sup> Griffen, Preface: “Towards a Future History of the YMCA,” in *Men and Women Adrift*, xv; Nina Mjagkij, “True Manhood: The YMCA and Racial Advancement, 1890-1930,” in *Men and Women Adrift: The YMCA and the YWCA in the City*, ed. Nina Mjagkij and Margaret Spratt (New York and London: New York University Press, 1997), 138-159.

Refer to *Men and Women Adrift* for different studies on how the YMCA and YWCA developed as institutional agents of charity, socialization, and racial advancement. The volume is composed of multiple essays that examine (mostly simultaneous) historical contexts that served to diversify the YMCA’s and YWCA’s membership foundations, including urbanization, the rise of the immigrant population from 1820 to 1930, and the rise of the black population in northern cities. The argument that unites these essays, and which is referred to in this thesis, is that YMCA and YWCA branches were “urban institutions” or organizations that changed to meet the needs of diverse membership groups (e.g., agrarian migrants, European immigrants, African Americans) throughout the 1800s and 1900s.

<sup>6</sup> Nina Mjagkij, *Light in the Darkness: African Americans and the YMCA, 1852-1946* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1994), 128-132; Mjagkij, “True Manhood: The YMCA and Racial Advancement, 1890-1930,” in *Men and Women Adrift*, 138-159.

Refer to Mjagkij’s foundational book, *Light in the Darkness*, for a thorough discussion of the history of Colored YMCAs in America up until the National Council’s antidiscrimination resolution, and informative appendices for the number and location of African-American YMCAs as well as the names of black YMCA leaders.

methodological uses of case studies on YMCAs to reflect the changes taking place in their cities or urban environments.<sup>7</sup>

In his landmark study *Organizational Change: The Political Economy of the YMCA* (1970), Zald examined the organizational characteristics of a metropolitan YMCA association through using the YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago as a case study. He identified the organizational characteristics of a YMCA branch as its enrollment economy, or financial dependence on membership dues, and political economy, which concerns the financial relationship between the branch and its metropolitan association or budgetary head. Zald pointed out that these characteristics sometimes constrained the autonomy of a YMCA branch to facilitate diverse programming. In other words,

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Mjagkij is a professor of history at Ball State University, a recipient of the Hurley Goodall Distinguished Faculty Award, as well as the award-winning author and editor of *Light in the Darkness, Organizing Black America: An Encyclopedia of African American Associations* (2001), and *Portraits in African American Life since 1865* (2003). She pioneered the investigation of how the YMCA has evolved as a philanthropic institution and broke theoretical ground through using YMCAs and YWCAs as case studies to understand urban associational life among African Americans against a larger sociopolitical context.

Author's note on language: African-American and black will be used interchangeably to describe the near-downtown community as well as some individuals and organizations. "Colored" is used to describe some YMCA branches and departments, their targeted audience, as well as majority-black communities in order to accurately present how they were generally referenced during a certain time period. The words "for Colored Men and Boys" paraphrase the title of Stanley Warren's 2005 book *The Senate Avenue YMCA for African American Men and Boys, Indianapolis, Indiana, 1913-1959*.

<sup>7</sup> Mayer N. Zald, *Organizational Change: The Political Economy of the YMCA* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1970), xiii-xiv.

Refer to Zald's landmark organization studies book for a more technical analysis of the hierarchal and financial structure of the YMCA. The study is based on the personnel and "outside" oral history interviews that Zald conducted with staff members at the YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago and affiliate organizations (e.g., Chicago Housing Authority, the Chicago Welfare Council, George Williams College, and the National Board of the YMCA). Zald also identified and explained how the organizational characteristics of the YMCA at times constrained the programming and autonomy of local associations. These characteristics are its enrollment economy, or financial dependence on memberships, and political economy, which concerns how power within the organization is distributed between the budgetary head (i.e., the metropolitan association) and branches.

Zald, Professor Emeritus of Social Work at the University of Michigan, has earned various distinctions for his research in organizational studies and social theory. His groundbreaking theoretical approaches to the structure and function of institutions, which specifically refer to the YMCA as a model, have developed over the past fifty years of his career. (See Zald and Patricia Denton Wallace 1963, Zald and Roberta Ash 1966, Zald 2008.) Zald validates the utility of case studies on individual YMCAs through examining the structural-functional characteristics of organizations and their urban environments.

conforming to the characteristics of a traditional YMCA branch—financial self-sufficiency based on membership dues and compliance to the metropolitan association—could conflict with the continuation of preexisting programs at a local branch, especially if they did not produce a profit or align with a general objective set by the metropolitan association. According to Zald, such a potential conflict between a metropolitan YMCA and local YMCA branch reflected larger conflicts in their urban environment.<sup>8</sup>

Therefore a case study about a YMCA branch, in contrast to another prominent black space, offers a magnified reflection of the social conflict taking place in a particular environment. This thesis combines Mjagkij's and Zald's analyses through examining how the organizational characteristics of the Fall Creek YMCA, specifically its enrollment economy and political economy, were affected by the large-scale processes of urban revitalization and school desegregation, which reshaped the branch's historically black community. The study understands the conflict between the Metropolitan and Fall Creek YMCAs over targeted membership groups and autonomy as a *reflection of* changes in the branch's surrounding area. Moreover, the study utilizes such conflict as a *lens* to the larger conflict that took place in Indianapolis between the agents of citywide urban revitalization plans and community leaders who opposed the implementation of these plans, as well as school desegregation measures, at the expense of the historically black community located in the near-downtown area of the city.

Like the conflict between the Metropolitan and Fall Creek YMCAs over the development of the Fall Creek branch, the conflict between supporters of urban

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<sup>8</sup> Zald, *Organizational Change*, 113, 115-116; Mayer N. Zald and Patricia D. Wallace, "From Evangelism to General Service: The Transformation of the YMCA," *Administrative Science Quarterly* 8, no. 2 (1963): 234.

revitalization and school desegregation plans over the development of Indianapolis' near-downtown area and central business district was driven by competing visions about the utility of both spaces. Members of the Metropolitan YMCA Board envisioned the Fall Creek YMCA as an unsustainable model within an environment reshaped by large-scale forces of change. Members and allies of the Fall Creek YMCA Board envisioned the Fall Creek YMCA as a needed model of social service within a community that had been negatively affected by urban revitalization and school desegregation plans that could adapt to a changing environment.

Those who supported the Fall Creek YMCA differed in their visions of how the branch should be maintained. The study will discuss African-American community leaders who disagreed over the long-term utility of the Fall Creek branch within its changed environment and the culpability of the Metropolitan YMCA in the controversy surrounding the branch's permanent closing in 2003. Furthermore, competing visions for the Fall Creek YMCA branch and its surrounding community did not possess equal financial or political support. For example, the land acquisition procedures implemented by the IU Real Estate Department were legalized by the Indiana General Assembly in 1967, and the agenda of downtown development groups like the Greater Indianapolis Progress Committee were promoted under a city government that incorporated Marion county suburbs following UniGov.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, suburban township schools that participated in desegregation measures during the same period as the city's

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<sup>9</sup> Thornbrough, *Indiana Blacks*, 156, 225; Pierce, *Polite Protest*, 110-112.

The Unified Government or UniGov law was adopted by the Indiana General Assembly in 1969. UniGov incorporated the "heavily Republican suburbs" of Marion County into a unified city-county government. "The result was a regular Republican advantage in city politics and a concurrent disadvantage to Democrats, of whom black voters constitute a large percentage" (Thornbrough 225).

implementation of downtown development projects received compensation from the Indiana General Assembly. The study will demonstrate how the Metropolitan YMCA Board referenced such local-state support of large-scale changes in its decision to change the social service model of the Fall Creek YMCA. In short, competing visions concerning the trajectory of the Fall Creek YMCA, and by extension its community in near-downtown Indianapolis, differed in how they were articulated and the extent to which they were sponsored.

Grassroots opposition to federal-funded highway projects, city-led urban revitalization projects, and desegregation measures was a controversial battle that happened not only in Indianapolis but also nationwide.<sup>10</sup> The narrative of the Fall Creek YMCA is a microcosm of local and even national conflicts, and demonstrating how the branch is a case study for its environment presents large-scale forces of change (i.e., urban revitalization and school desegregation) as well as the controversial opposition to these forces on a revealing and legible scale.<sup>11</sup>

The story about the battle between agents of urban revitalization projects and community advocates over inner-city Indianapolis, and ultimately the competing visions of both parties, is significantly substantiated in this study through the incorporation of oral histories. It is the underlying contention of this thesis that historians need to conscientiously include the extraordinary memories of ordinary people who were instrumental within their communities, in order to present a more comprehensive and

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<sup>10</sup> Arnold R. Hirsch, introduction to *Urban Policy in Twentieth-Century America*, ed. Arnold R. Hirsch and Raymond A. Mohl (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1993), ix-xiii.

<sup>11</sup> Griffen, "Preface: Towards a Future History of the YMCA," xv; James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998).

See Scott's book for definitions of "legibility" and "statecraft" in relation to the superimposition of cityscapes onto communities that lack sociopolitical agency.



therefore truthful account of what happened in a certain space and time period. Thus, it is appropriate that this thesis started out as an oral history project about the story of the Fall Creek YMCA branch between 1959 and 2003.

The oral history project involved interviewing individuals who were either administrators or community advocates of the branch during two important periods of its development, which were 1971-1979 and 2000-2003. These individuals or narrators were John Lands, Norris Lineweaver, LeVester Hobbs, and Jocelyn-Tandy Adande. John Lands was the Executive Director of the Fall Creek Parkway YMCA between 1971 and 1979. He had spearheaded the development of a community center and cooperative supermarket, named Our Place and Our Market respectively, and acted as a peacemaker between anxious policemen and a group of African Americans during the riots on Indiana Avenue in the summer of 1968, before accepting an offer from the chairman of the Fall Creek YMCA Board to become executive director of the branch. Formerly a professional football player for the British Columbia Lions (or B.C. Lions) in Canada and the Houston Oilers (currently the Tennessee Titans), Lands was a vocal activist and recognizable role model for young black men in his community. The Fall Creek YMCA reached a peak in programming and memberships during his tenure as the branch's executive director.<sup>12</sup>

Norris Lineweaver was the CEO and President of the Greater Indianapolis YMCA between 1994 and 2005. He had served as a World Service Worker at the YMCA of Ethiopia between 1967 and 1969 and had been the executive director of YMCA branches in Dallas and Los Angeles before becoming president of the metropolitan association in

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<sup>12</sup> Interview, Melissa Burlock with John Lands, former Executive Director of the Fall Creek Parkway YMCA, 1971-1979, March 1, 2012, Indianapolis, audio recording, IUPUI Special Collections and Archives, e-Archives; Interview, Melissa Burlock with John Lands, February 10, 2014.

Indianapolis. His work in the non-profit management sector spanned over four decades and was mostly with different YMCAs.<sup>13</sup> Both Lands and Lineweaver were retired at the time of the oral history project.

LeVester Hobbs was the director of the Fall Creek YMCA's dormitory section from 1991 until its close in 2002. He also served as the Acting Executive Director of the branch between 2000 and 2003, during which interval he acted as a peacekeeper between the near-downtown black community and the Greater Indianapolis YMCA. Hobbs was the Director of Building Services at the Jordan YMCA at the time of the oral history project.<sup>14</sup>

Jocelyn-Tandy Adande was a local political activist who became the spokesperson for a coalition of community groups that advocated against the decision of the Greater Indianapolis YMCA to close the Fall Creek YMCA branch in 2003. As spokesperson she launched several membership and letter-writing campaigns in support of the continued maintenance of the Fall Creek YMCA branch at its 10<sup>th</sup> Street location. Adande was the Republican Precinct Committeewoman of Ward 5 (elected in 2012) at the time of the oral history project.<sup>15</sup> (A party official, the Republican Precinct Committee Officer is elected by Republican voters and serves as the liaison between the

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<sup>13</sup> Interview, Melissa Burlock with Norris Lineweaver, former President & CEO of the Greater Indianapolis YMCA, 1994-2005, April 10, 2012, Indianapolis, audio recording, IUPUI Special Collections and Archives, e-Archives.

<sup>14</sup> Interview, Melissa Burlock with LeVester Hobbs, former Acting Executive Director of the Fall Creek Parkway YMCA, 2000-2003, April 26, 2012, Indianapolis, audio recording, IUPUI Special Collections and Archives, e-Archives.

<sup>15</sup> Interview, Melissa Burlock with Jocelyn-Tandy Adande, former leader of Members United to Save Fall Creek, 2003, July 23, 2012, Indianapolis, audio recording, IUPUI Special Collections and Archives, e-Archives.

voters of an election district, candidates, and elected representatives.)<sup>16</sup> Hopefully, the inclusion of excerpts from interviews with John Lands, Norris Lineweaver, LeVester Hobbs, and Jocelyn-Tandy Adande, which were completed for the Fall Creek YMCA Oral History Project between March and July 2012, creates a metanarrative about the prominence, decline, and controversial close of the branch within the study.<sup>17</sup>

The voices of other narrators who had knowledge of the Fall Creek YMCA and its near-downtown community come from newspaper articles, public releases, and the Greater Indianapolis YMCA records (e.g., correspondence, reports, and minutes) that are stored in the basement of the English Foundation Building at 615 North Alabama Street, Indianapolis, Indiana. (The Association Office of the IYMCA is located in a suite on the second floor of the building). It is important to note again that, while some narrators presented themselves as spokespersons for the Indianapolis black community, there were different understandings among African Americans about the sustainability of a historically black YMCA in near-downtown Indianapolis. In short, this study interconnects and analyzes voices that were articulated in oral history interviews about the Fall Creek YMCA, newspapers, and the organizational records of the Greater Indianapolis YMCA.

Chapter One of this thesis concerns the expansion of the YMCA organization in America and the establishment of segregated Colored YMCAs, including the Senate Avenue YMCA, Fall Creek's predecessor, within a community situated northwest of

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<sup>16</sup> Republican News Watch, *What Is a Republican Precinct Committeeman?*, <http://republicannewswatch.com/wp/?p=5131>.

<sup>17</sup> With the exception of the author's follow-up interview with John Lands on February 10, 2014, all of the interviews cited throughout the thesis are accessible in IUPUI's eArchives at <https://archives.iupui.edu/handle/2450/6955/browse?type=title> as MP3 files.

downtown Indianapolis and along Indiana Avenue. Chapter Two is an overview of the programmatic development and prominence of the Fall Creek YMCA branch during its peak in the 1970s, as well as conflicting perceptions held by YMCA administrators about the organizational mission of the YMCA. Chapter Three discusses the larger context of the Fall Creek YMCA branch which included the implementation of citywide urban revitalization projects and court-ordered desegregation measures, as well as how these processes were protested by community leaders.

Chapter Four analyzes the conflicting visions surrounding the Fall Creek YMCA that were held by the Fall Creek and Metropolitan YMCA Boards as well as community leaders and advocacy groups. Was the Fall Creek branch a financially declining remnant of segregation and an impediment to urban revitalization, or a site of historical significance that could have been sustained? Did the branch solely belong to African-American community members who had been its historical membership base, or was it within the sole jurisdiction of the Metropolitan YMCA? Chapter Four evaluates answers to these questions, and also demonstrates how the narrative of the Fall Creek YMCA was representative of larger conflicts over the necessity of desegregation measures and urban revitalization projects, which changed the environment of downtown Indianapolis in the 1970s and 1980s.

### **The Origin of the YMCA and its American Proliferation**

The Young Men's Christian Association originated as an alternative asylum to bars, brothels, and other city spaces of immoral repute, which attracted young men who migrated from the countryside to cities in search of employment. The first association was founded on June 6, 1844, in London by a group of eleven store clerks, led by George Williams. These believers desired to share their Methodist Christian faith and practices with young men who, separated from their families, were susceptible to the temptations characteristic of an urban environment. A group of thirty-two Christian men founded the first American association in Boston on December 29, 1851, after its leader, a retired naval officer named Thomas Sullivan, visited the London association two months prior. Moralistic philanthropists like Sullivan increasingly established YMCAs to act as lamp stands (Matthew 5:15 NASB), or basically sites of moral enrichment that offer constructive social opportunities, within different cities.<sup>18</sup>

New YMCAs emulated their London and Boston predecessors, and were supported by similar membership bases of young white men searching for either employment in the city or enjoyment during short respites from fourteen-hour work days.

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<sup>18</sup> Andrea Hinding, *Proud Heritage: A History in Pictures of the YMCA in the United States* (Norfolk and Virginia Beach, Virginia: The Donning Company, 1988), 15-18.

Hinding was the Curator of the Kautz Family YMCA Archives from 1985 to 2002. The Kautz Family YMCA Archives collects the records of the YMCA of the USA, which is the national resource office for YMCAs throughout the country. See Hinding's book for images, a U.S. YMCA timeline, and lists of lay leaders, chairpersons, National Council presidents, and national general secretaries. Also reference the Fall Creek YMCA Collection, 1923-2002 (M 0849) at the Indiana Historical Society.

Matthew 5:15 (New American Standard Bible) "...nor does *anyone* light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lamp stand, and it gives light to all who are in the house."

Three years after its founding date in America, the YMCA became a confederation of associations. William Chauncy Langdon, who was the founder of the District of Columbia association, spearheaded the creation of the confederation of YMCAs, the forerunner of the YMCA of the USA, in 1854 through stressing collaboration and sidelining the nationally divisive issue of slavery.<sup>19</sup>

Only a year earlier, Langdon worked with Anthony Bowen (1809-1871), a former slave born in Prince George's County, Maryland, and other free men to establish the first separate YMCA for African-American men and boys in Washington D.C. (Although Congress outlawed the slave trade in the District of Columbia as part of the Compromise of 1850, slavery remained legal in the area until 1862.) Bowen served as the branch's president, a position that was preceded by several other leadership roles in which he spearheaded initiatives for African Americans in Washington. In 1839, he sought after the necessary permits to establish The Colored Peoples Meeting House in Washington. Bowen also co-established a Sunday School in 1845 and a Sunday Evening School to provide reading, writing, and Bible study classes for freedmen in 1847.<sup>20</sup> In short, the establishment of American YMCAs during the antebellum period was ultimately a segregated process in which white leaders founded branches for young white men who

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<sup>19</sup> Hinding, *Proud Heritage*, 18.

<sup>20</sup> Biographies, n.d., Kautz Family YMCA Archives, Elmer L. Anderson Library, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis.

Other notable accomplishment throughout Bowen's advocacy career included the establishment of St. Paul AME Church in Washington in 1856 and petitioning Congress for the creation of a free public Negro school in 1865 in the D.C. area, for which venture he also donated land. Congress ordered for the appropriation of funds to build the Anthony Bowen Elementary School in 1867. Anthony Bowen E.S. closed in 2008 and its students were transferred to Amidon Elementary School, renamed Amidon-Bowen Elementary School, and Jefferson Junior High. The original facility was converted into the Metropolitan Police Department First District Headquarters. (See Councilman Tommy Wells' blog entry at <http://www.vote4progress.com/2008/07/the-new-amidon-.php>.)

Bowen was promoted several times within the U.S. Patent Office (he was employed in 1841), eventually becoming the office's first African-American clerk. He held this position until his death in 1871.

were city transplants, while black leaders founded and administered branches for fellow free African Americans.

### **The Story of the Indianapolis YMCA**

The Indianapolis Young Men’s Christian Association (for young white men) began as a series of meetings organized by five community leaders, three of which included John C. Easterline, James M. Ogden, and Charles Lynn, in December 1854. Easterline, Ogden, and Lynn shared the same objectives with Williams in London and Sullivan in Boston while developing a YMCA organization in that they envisioned the branch as a moral alternative to other disreputable sites that catered to young men in the city. Their vision was promoted a century later. An article published in the *Indianapolis Times* in 1954 that celebrated the centennial of the Indianapolis YMCA described Indianapolis in 1854 as “a city of mud, wallows, rubbish, and hogs in the streets,” and a “near-frontier city” crowded with “saloons and gambling places on every hand.” The article concludes that the city a century ago was “a place of terror and loneliness for young men newly out in the world on their own—some at the age of thirteen and fourteen—as they found companionship where they could.”<sup>21</sup> While the writer of the article is not an authority on the conditions of Indianapolis in the nineteenth century, he does reflect the perception held by the founders of the IYMCA, which was that the Indianapolis branch provided a necessary alternative for fellowship and recreation at the time of its establishment.

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<sup>21</sup> Martin Perry, “Happy Birthday; ‘Y’ Men Celebrate 100 Years of Fellowship and Service to Youth of Their Community,” *Indianapolis Times*, December 5, 1954, sec. J-3, Clipping File, “Y.M.C.A.” Indiana State Library, Indianapolis, Indiana.

## **The Secularization and Racialization of the YMCA Philosophy**

Following the Civil War only 59 associations remained, including the IYMCA. This number increased to over 650 during the late 1860s. Over the course of this postbellum period association leaders changed how they involved and assisted young men in cities. YMCAs gradually began to market services that fortified not only the spirit but also the mind and body, the latter two objectives accomplished through the addition of lectures and gymnasiums to the associations' array of programs and facilities.<sup>22</sup>

IYMCA managers launched a new building campaign after the war, planning to relocate the branch to an existing facility at Market and Pennsylvania Streets. Though the organization had financial crises, the consistent investments of wealthy members and moneyed supporters facilitated its continuance in the city, and in 1871 the IYMCA purchased a facility at 33-37 North Illinois Street.<sup>23</sup> Speakers at the dedication ceremony included *Indianapolis Journal* editor Elijah W. Halford, U.S. Vice President Schuyler Colfax, Thomas A. Hendricks, who would become the Governor of Indiana, and prominent ministers. Approximately one thousand people were in attendance.<sup>24</sup> Originally the facility "had housed a vaudeville theater, a livery stable and the most fashionable salon and gambling hell of the city," according to the *Times* article commemorating the centennial of the YMCA.<sup>25</sup> By literally taking the place (i.e., space)

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<sup>22</sup> Hinding, *Proud Heritage*, 34-35.

<sup>23</sup> Perry, "Happy Birthday," December 5, 1954.

Perry reported that one of the IYMCA's most serious crises was "by far ... financial," and that "time and again the 'Y' was in bad straits moneywise, often hopelessly. But always a small band of stalwarts managed to turn up the cash at the last minute."

<sup>24</sup> Ralph L. Brooks, "YMCA Celebrates First Century," *The Indianapolis Star Magazine*, December 12, 1954, Clipping File, "Y.M.C.A." Indiana State Library, Indianapolis, Indiana.

<sup>25</sup> Perry, "Happy Birthday," December 5, 1954.



of such as building, IYMCA leaders communicated that their mission aligned with the traditional objective established by preceding YMCAs before the Civil War, which was basically to serve as a bastion of moral cultivation or an alternative service to young male urbanites. But, this mission would begin to include more secular objectives that were educational, employment, and physical fitness-oriented over the next fifteen years, resulting in the addition of evening classes, a physical fitness program, and boy's work department.<sup>26</sup>

African-American leaders established YMCAs for Colored Men and Boys during the postbellum period with different financial impediments and objectives than their all-white counterparts. YMCAs were characteristically self-financing satellite branches that were independent from their central administrations and consequently dependent on local communities. Historian Nina Mjagkij contends that such an organizational structure was not sustainable in segregated African-American communities that “lacked the [cumulated] financial resources” necessary to continually support a local association.<sup>27</sup> Those black associations that African-American leaders successfully established and sustained during the postbellum period understood the YMCA spirit-mind-body enrichment programming and Christian philosophy not as objectives, but rather as means to 1) receive respect in a demoralizing and racist society, and 2) advance the social position and educational opportunities of African-American men in society.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Brooks, “YMCA Celebrates,” December 12, 1954.

<sup>27</sup> Mjagkij, *Light in the Darkness*, 8.

<sup>28</sup> Mjagkij, “True Manhood,” 138-159.

It is important to remember that this plan for racial advancement was promoted by black YMCA leaders during a period of time when African-American men experienced different forms of emasculation. These men endured segregation, political disenfranchisement, inequality, dehumanizing violence, and being addressed as “boy” or “nigger” rather than “Sir” or “Mister,” in their interaction with white men and women. Thus, while all-white YMCAs promoted new spirit-mind-body programs, colored YMCAs promoted the idea of achieving equal status in a racist society through participating in such YMCA spirit-mind-body programs. These dual YMCA visions or missions were racialized and consequently distinctive. Both signified the extent to which early associations conformed to the needs of their targeted membership base.<sup>29</sup> Indeed, it is ironic that the establishment of separate YMCAs for African-American men and boys both contradicted and fulfilled the foundational Christian principles of the organization.

### **The Black YMCA Movement**

Beginning in the late 1870s, the national confederation of YMCAs made deliberate actions to support the establishment of colored YMCAs. In 1879, the national YMCA’s International Committee (originally the Executive Committee) appointed Henry Edwards Brown to serve as a “traveling secretary for African-American association work.” Brown liaised with black ministers, teachers, and students to organize regional conventions that stimulated support for the YMCA movement among African Americans, and to create on-campus YMCAs at black colleges and universities. Brown spoke at

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<sup>29</sup> Mjagkij, “True Manhood,” 138-159.

thirty-five conventions in 1882. By 1888 he had assisted in the development of twenty-eight associations on black campuses.<sup>30</sup>

In 1887 Brown suggested that the YMCA International Committee appoint an African-American secretary at the Colored YMCA in Norfolk, Virginia. The committee chose to offer the position to a black Canadian from Ontario named William Alphaeus Hunton (1863-1916). Hunton accepted the position in December 1887 and resigned from the staff of the Canadian Department of Indian Affairs to become the first full-time secretary of a black YMCA branch. At Norfolk Hunton, who was the son of a former slave who came to Canada in 1843 and a free African-American woman, facilitated the development of a library at a local store as well as educational and physical fitness classes. He also organized a choral club, Bible study group, and debating societies. Hunton spearheaded the creation of the Colored Work Department in 1890, and would succeed an ailing Brown in 1891 as the International Committee's first African-American departmental secretary for African-American YMCA work.<sup>31</sup>

In his address to the 13<sup>th</sup> International YMCA Convention, which took place in Indianapolis in May 1893, Hunton eloquently described his objective of recruiting African-American men to Colored YMCAs as an evangelical mission:

As Christian workers you cannot afford to forget or neglect the colored young men who may be in your field, for they are just as truly a part of that field as the young men of any other race or class ... Satan is not waiting for a better time, but

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<sup>30</sup> Mjagkij, *Light in the Darkness*, 28-34.

<sup>31</sup> Mjagkij, *Light in the Darkness*, 35-38; Biographies, n.d., (scanned), Kautz Family YMCA Archives, Elmer L. Anderson Library, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis.

See Chapter 2: "White Supervision of African-American YMCA Work, 1875-1891" in *Light in the Darkness* for more information about Brown, Hunton, and the initial "experimental" establishment of African-American YMCAs in northern and southern states. Also refer to the Colored Work Department records (Y.USA.1) at the Kautz Family YMCA Archives, <http://special.lib.umn.edu/findaid/html/ymca/yusa0001.phtml>.

is bearing down upon our young men with a tremendous force of evil. Shall Christians sleep while poisonous tares are being sown in this large portion of our Lord's vineyard?<sup>32</sup>

Such "sowing" and "harvesting" within colored YMCAs occurred in the face of societal evils that black YMCA leaders such as Hunton perceived as bars, brothels, and Jim Crow racism manifested in institutional segregation, violence, and political disenfranchisement. Such were the "tares" that Hunton and similarly-minded founders of colored YMCAs believed could be countered in communities through the establishment of local YMCAs. They believed that actively helping to develop new YMCAs was a spiritual mission that would produce visible effects in the lives of young men, both black and white, and their communities.

The postbellum era of black YMCA leaders continued with Jesse Edward Moorland (1863-1940), who became Hunton's assistant in 1898. A *magna cum laude* alumnus of Howard University who graduated with a Doctorate of Divinity in 1906, Moorland worked with Hunton to establish black YMCA branches, recruit and train black YMCA secretaries, as well as organize annual conferences for black YMCA staff.

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<sup>32</sup> W. A. Hunton, "The Growth and Prospects of Association Work among Colored Young Men," 1893, Kautz Family YMCA Archives, Elmer L. Anderson Library, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis; "The Contribution of the Association To The Moral and Religious Life of Universities and Colleges," Booker T. Washington, 1901, Kautz Family YMCA Archives, Elmer L. Anderson Library, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis.

Refer to Hunton's speech for an insightful discussion (and refutation) of white members' reasons not to endorse black YMCAs, such as the fear that such financial support would be at their own facility's expense. He also referred to his previous speech at a Detroit YMCA which concerned "bridging the chasm between black and white YMCA members" through the Cross, or the commitment to follow Christ and compassionately interact with others regardless of their skin color. He urged listeners to teach this lesson of neighborly love to young white men, as he promoted it among his own. This speech marked the first time an African American delivered an address at an International Committee convention. (The author could not locate a corresponding newspaper article celebrating this event.)

Also see Booker T. Washington's 1901 address in which Washington says to the Jubilee Convention audience at Tuskegee, "... thank you for sending these young men [William A. Hunton and Jesse Moorland, Colored Work Department secretaries with the YMCA International Committee] who are leading our manhood up to a higher plane of living."

Moorland also launched building campaigns for black associations across the nation. He recruited wealthy white businessmen like Julius Rosenwald, Sears Roebuck and Company President, to the black YMCA movement as philanthropists. Moorland's career spanned the construction of fourteen Colored YMCAs, including the establishment of the Senate Avenue YMCA in Indianapolis in 1913.<sup>33</sup> Following Hunton's retirement in 1916, Moorland became the senior secretary of the Colored Work Department. He retired from the position in 1924. Moorland was succeeded by Channing H. Tobias, who held the position until the Colored Work Department was dissolved in 1946, when the YMCA's National Council passed an anti-discrimination resolution.<sup>34</sup>

### **A Space in Indianapolis for Colored Men and Boys**

The Senate Avenue YMCA originated as the Young Men's Prayer Band, which was founded by four local African-American civic leaders headed by Dr. H. L. Hummons, in December 1900.<sup>35</sup> Their goal was to create an evangelistic group for "colored" men and boys as an alternative to the whites-only YMCA in Indianapolis. Two

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<sup>33</sup> Mjagkij, *Light in the Darkness*, 3-5; 67; Biographies, n.d., Kautz Family YMCA Archives.

See Chapter 5: "Philanthropists and the Construction of YMCA Buildings, 1901-1933" in *Light in the Darkness* for an overview of how Hunton, Moorland, and other black YMCA leaders secured the financial support of white philanthropists to support building campaigns for African-American associations during the early twentieth century.

<sup>34</sup> Kautz Family YMCA Archives, *A Brief History of the YMCA and African-American Communities*, <https://www.lib.umn.edu/ymca/guide-afam-history>; Also refer to the Colored Work Department records (Y.USA.1) at the Kautz Family YMCA Archives, <http://special.lib.umn.edu/findaid/html/ymca/yusa0001.phtml>.

<sup>35</sup> Stanley Warren, *The Senate Avenue YMCA for African American Men and Boys, Indianapolis, Indiana 1913-1959* (Virginia Beach: Donning Company Publishers, 2005), 27.

According to a public release titled, "An Open Letter To The Community," published in the *Indianapolis Recorder* on September 23, 2003, the Greater Indianapolis YMCA board contacted Dr. Stanley Warren, Professor Emeritus of Education and distinguished Indiana University alumnus, to write a historical narrative about Senate Avenue YMCA.

years after its establishment, the prayer band was recognized as a YMCA by the state YMCA, or Greater Indianapolis YMCA, and became an official branch in 1910. Its first facility was located at 316 ½ Indiana Avenue.<sup>36</sup> The IYMCA organized two fundraising teams (one black, one white) in 1911 to collect donations for a new building following Sears Roebuck & Company President Julius Rosenwald’s announcement that he would contribute \$25,000 to the city that raised \$75,000 for the construction of an African-American YMCA. In totality, the black and white fundraising teams gathered over one hundred thousand dollars from their respective communities and earned Rosenwald’s promised contribution. Prominent community leaders and entrepreneurs who supported the construction of a new African-American YMCA included Madam C. J. Walker, whose gift in the amount of one thousand dollars was at the time the largest donation from a black person, and the first from a black woman.<sup>37</sup>

Due in large part to the significant financial support of the community, Senate Avenue opened in July 1913 at 450 North Senate Avenue, a location at which it would function until 1959.<sup>38</sup> Madam C. J. Walker and other prominent supporters, like Booker T. Washington, attended the building’s dedication ceremonies, which included a week-long celebration of parades, speeches, and special dinners. The facility housed recreational spaces, classrooms, a gymnasium, auditorium, kitchen, and fifty steam-heated dormitory rooms. With over 500 members, Senate Avenue was boasted by newspaper reporters to be “the largest colored branch in the country.”<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> Warren, *The Senate Avenue YMCA*, 32-33.

<sup>37</sup> Warren, *The Senate Avenue YMCA*, 35-37.

<sup>38</sup> Warren, *The Senate Avenue YMCA*, 39-41.

<sup>39</sup> Warren, *The Senate Avenue YMCA*, 39-41; Brooks, “YMCA Celebrates,” December 12, 1954.

Over the course of nearly fifty years as a model Colored YMCA, Senate Avenue functioned as the center of solidarity and social service within a segregated community that purposed to evangelize, educate, and enhance the spirit, mind, and body of African-American boys and men. Such a mission of racial advancement was accomplished through a host of programs. For example, the Boys' Summer Camp aimed to channel "the energy of youngsters" into "organized play, swimming, educational tours, hobby classes, devotional services, character education, and group music." Senate Avenue held its Summer Camps, which subsumed the Learn-To-Swim Campaign and Vacation Bible School, at the national Boy Scout reservation, Salvation Army camp, Bedford camp, which was the State YMCA camp, and Flat Rock Camp between 1928 and 1950.<sup>40</sup>

The Young Adult Department, which started out as the Education and Religious Department, oversaw the "informal education for social living through clubs, programs, forums, and leadership in community projects," as well as the Christian development of older boys. Specific activities included youth-led clubs that also aligned with the spirit-mind-body mission of Senate Avenue. For example, the Pioneer Club made the "the development of the character of boys" in grade school its central objective. The Pioneer Federation, which was made up of individual clubs at different Indianapolis Public Schools (IPS), was formed in 1930 to oversee the Pioneer Round-Up convention and the

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<sup>40</sup> *People are Our Business: The 50<sup>th</sup> Year of Community Service, 1900-1950, Young Men's Christian Association, The Senate Avenue Branch, 450 North Senate Avenue, Indianapolis, IN*, p. 26, YMCA of Greater Indianapolis, Records, Box III of IV, Room M, English Foundation Building, 615 North Alabama Street, Indianapolis, Indiana 46204.

At the time of this project, the Greater Indianapolis YMCA stored materials and photographs (i.e., records) concerning its YMCA branches in the basement of the English Foundation Building located in downtown Indianapolis. **The location will hereafter be cited as YMCA Records.**

Citations of YMCA Records follow a Box Title, Folder Title (if applicable) format. For example the citation "...Box Executive Committee and Board of Directors Folders 2008, 'Photographs' Album, YMCA Records," denotes that the document was found in an album that was stored inside a box labeled Executive Committee and Board of Directors Folders 2008, which is in Room M of the English Foundation Building located at 615 North Alabama Street, Indianapolis, Indiana 46204.

Pioneer Variety Show fundraiser held at Crispus Attucks High School. Triangle Clubs were also fraternal groups that promoted the solidarity of African-American boys at the Senate Avenue YMCA. Participants were sponsored by volunteers who were mostly made up of teachers and met at public schools as well as churches.<sup>41</sup>

Another Senate Avenue club for older boys that aligned its activities with the mission to nurture and build character was the Life Builders' Club. Organized in 1927, Life Builders served as an evangelical and educational club that hosted speakers and rewarded members for attendance. One such member named Jack Davis had perfect attendance for 14 years until he left to serve in WWII. Young men with perfect attendance records formed the Board of Architects group, which oversaw club activities.<sup>42</sup>

Other clubs for young African-American men that advanced the spirit-mind-body mission of Senate Avenue and encouraged the leadership of its participants included the Knights of the Round Table, founded in 1921. The chapter published and disseminated the "Knights of the Round Table Courier" newspaper, and was featured in "a glowing write-up" in the national YMCA magazine *Associate Men*. Moreover, members and administrators at the Senate Avenue YMCA facilitated the Intercollegiate Club, Hi-Y Club, Phalanx Fraternity for volunteer service, Older Boy's Conference, annual Turkey Day Races, weekly evening Bible Study meetings at the branch and participants' workplaces, as well as open forums in the Reading Room at the branch during which time "discussion hungry men" met to read government records and reference books and to

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<sup>41</sup> *People are Our Business*, Box III of IV, YMCA Records, 18, 22, 27.

<sup>42</sup> *People are Our Business*, Box III of IV, YMCA Records; Warren, *The Senate Avenue YMCA*, 30.



“propose remedial measures for every conceivable social, legislative, or economic ill.” The Senate Avenue YMCA also facilitated art exhibits and lessons, boxing, golf, and junior/senior league basketball tournaments, as well as swimming, volleyball, tennis, women’s badminton, and baseball classes. Branch administrators additionally oversaw auxiliary sections like the Religion Department and Education Department, as well as special services for African-American servicemen and veterans during and after World War II. For instance, the Senate Avenue Board assigned a Secretary to oversee recreational activities for servicemen stationed at nearby camps such as Camp Atterbury and Fort Harrison. The board also assigned a fulltime Secretary to “advise and assist servicemen in their rehabilitation,” through helping them to find employment and housing as well as to file service-related disability claims. The results of these services “were appreciated by many” veterans and families in the community.<sup>43</sup>

The special events facilitated by clubs at the Senate Avenue YMCA also provided a space for African-American women to be instrumental in their community. Some fraternal orders at Senate Avenue were supported by African-American sister organizations. The Phalanx Fraternity at the YMCA was complemented by the Gradale Sorority. The sorority was organized in October 1948 and was originally composed of the girlfriends of the young men in the Phalanx Fraternity. Senate Avenue’s annual Father and Son Banquets were facilitated by the Father’s Club as well as the Ladies Auxiliary, whose members prepared meals for and served at the banquets. The Ladies Auxiliary,

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<sup>43</sup> *People are Our Business*, Box III of IV, YMCA Records; Warren, *The Senate Avenue YMCA*, 18, 21, 25, 28-31, 35.

formed in 1928, was partly made up of the wives of members and administrators at Senate Avenue.<sup>44</sup>

The Senate Avenue YMCA also offered dormitory services beginning in 1913 when the branch moved to its new facility, which housed fifty steam-heated dorm rooms, at 450 North Senate Avenue. In a commemorative booklet titled *People Are Our Business: The 50<sup>th</sup> Year of Community Service, 1900-1950*, the writers (who were on staff at the Senate Avenue YMCA) described the dormitory section of their YMCA as “the mecca of out-of-town students, or the physically handicapped, [and] the widowed” as well as “a service that cannot be overemphasized” because the dormitories were “palatial” alternatives to more expensive housing in Indianapolis during the early 1900s. They went on to characterize the dormitory as a temporary haven or “house by the side of the road” for different groups between 1913 and 1950, including “the indigent homeless, the wayfaring traveler, itinerant orchestras and athletic teams, railway employees, and convention-goers,” as well as senior retirees.<sup>45</sup>

Such a diverse set of residents demonstrated that the Senate Avenue YMCA offered a variety of programming and services for other individuals within its community outside of families and youth. In short, the Senate Avenue YMCA provided a space within its segregated community for the cultivation of racial solidarity, educational

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<sup>44</sup> *People are Our Business*, Box III of IV, YMCA Records; Warren, *The Senate Avenue YMCA*, 24-25.

See Chapters 4 and 5 (pp. 60-105) in Warren’s *The Senate Avenue YMCA* for descriptions and photographs of Senate Avenue programs, clubs, physical department activities (Ch. 4), and communal services (Ch. 5).

<sup>45</sup> *People are Our Business*, Box III of IV, YMCA Records; Warren, *The Senate Avenue YMCA*, 31, 39-41; Brooks, “YMCA Celebrates,” December 12, 1954.

enrichment, and self-pride as well as the celebration of professionalism and family cohesiveness.<sup>46</sup>

Probably the most esteemed program facilitated by the Senate Avenue YMCA staff for young African-American men were the Monster Meetings, which began as local forums that featured speakers in 1905.<sup>47</sup> The program was essentially a platform that was built upon the community-centric foundation of the Senate Avenue YMCA. Eventually, Monster Meetings grew out of the local branch to gain national prominence.

### **The Monster Meeting Platform**

Senate Avenue's Monster Meetings provided a singular forum in the state of Indiana to hear leading African-American academics, scientists, artists, politicians, theologians, educators, and distinguished athletes. These important meetings, similar to short conferences, would become the culmination of both the mission and function of the Colored YMCA to educate and encourage young African-American men in striving towards a model of professionalism, masculinity, and virtue. Senate Avenue administrators also supported African-American men who had begun to make achievements in various fields by inviting them to Indianapolis to speak at Monster Meetings and using the forums as fundraisers. At first the speakers were local African-American and Caucasian evangelists. "The Monster Meeting in its genesis," according to

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<sup>46</sup> *People are Our Business*, Box III of IV, YMCA Records; Warren, *The Senate Avenue YMCA*, 31.

<sup>47</sup> Stanley Warren, "The Monster Meetings at the Negro YMCA in Indianapolis," *Indiana Magazine of History* 91, no. 1 (1995): 57.

For a detailed list of Monster Meeting speakers from 1926 to 1963, as well as the date, location, and topic of the speeches, refer to Warren's benchmark article on the Monster Meetings facilitated by the Senate Avenue YMCA.

the *People Are Our Business* booklet, “was created to fulfill the evangelistic purpose of the Young Men’s Christian Association.”<sup>48</sup> Later on, meetings were named Monster Meetings, and would be led by national figures such as famed civil rights activists, attorneys, legislators, and scholars of that period.

The name “Monster Meeting” was coined by Thomas E. Taylor, Executive Secretary of the Senate Avenue YMCA, as an alternative to the IYMCA’s “Big Meetings.” Taylor served as executive secretary from 1905 to 1912. He was succeeded by Faburn E. DeFrantz, who served as executive secretary of the branch from 1916 to 1952, during which time he transformed the character of the Monster Meeting program into being more politically aggressive.<sup>49</sup> The parade of speakers that crossed the “Monster Meeting platform,” according to the fiftieth anniversary booklet, “enunciated the new progressive trends in social and political idealism.” Educational, employment, and public relations subcommittees also started to address audiences at Monster Meetings.<sup>50</sup> The growth of the Senate Avenue YMCA from a few hundred members in 1916 to 5,270 members by the 1960s was simultaneous with the increased recognition of the Monster Meeting program as a national platform for civic agency and anti-discriminatory measures. The meetings provided opportunities to celebrate famed African-American intellectuals, politicians, philosophers, artists, athletes, and theologians. Monster Meetings also served to encourage African Americans who lived in Indiana to advocate local civil rights issues, including the 1947 Anti-Hate and 1949

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<sup>48</sup> *People are Our Business*, Box III of IV, YMCA Records, 20-21.

<sup>49</sup> Warren, “The Monster Meetings,” 57-61.

<sup>50</sup> *People are Our Business*, Box III of IV, YMCA Records, 20.

School Desegregation bills, as well as the hiring of black employees by the city of Indianapolis.<sup>51</sup>

Thus, Monster Meetings, reputedly the longest-running forum for YMCA members in the nation, functioned as both “a vocal sounding board and a vehicle of action” within the Indianapolis area and state while adhering to its original evangelistic mission to aggressively “uproot certain evil elements in society,” which Senate Avenue administrators and members understood to be segregation and discriminatory practices. Accordingly, the executive secretary and administrative board of the Senate Avenue YMCA also viewed the Monster Meeting program as a community-centered platform that influenced the state of civil rights for both African-American men and women in Indiana.<sup>52</sup>

Following their evaluation of the Monster Meetings that were facilitated by the branch, the authors of the fiftieth anniversary booklet concluded that the forums were “more than just another program project of the Senate Avenue YMCA.” Indeed, they wrote, “This must be clearly understood if one is to truly evaluate these meetings, for the Monster Meeting [has been] ... an integral part of the community cultural pattern.”<sup>53</sup> Therefore, Senate Avenue’s Monster Meeting forum grew out of a branch program to essentially become a distinct institution.

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<sup>51</sup> Warren, “The Monster Meetings,” 57, 60-61; Warren, *The Senate Avenue YMCA*, 47; Emma Lou Thornbrough, *Indiana Blacks in the Twentieth Century* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2000), 144-147.

Thornbrough was recognized as the leading scholar on the history of African Americans in Indiana. Her studies include *The Negro in Indiana before 1900: A Study of a Minority* (1957, reprinted 1993) and its sequel, *Indiana Blacks in the Twentieth Century* (2001), which was published posthumously. These state histories continue to be significant to research that concerns the experiences of African Americans living in Indiana between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

<sup>52</sup> *People are Our Business*, Box III of IV, YMCA Records, 20.

<sup>53</sup> *People are Our Business*, Box III of IV, YMCA Records, 20.

One of the last major Monster Meetings hosted by the Senate Avenue YMCA before becoming the Fall Creek Parkway YMCA was held at Cadle Tabernacle in Indianapolis on Friday, December 12, 1958. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the honored speaker, had visited the site of what would become the Fall Creek Parkway YMCA two days earlier. His interracial audience on that Friday reportedly numbered between eleven hundred and over four thousand.<sup>54</sup> At twenty-nine years old, Dr. King had already spearheaded the Montgomery Bus Boycott and cofounded the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC). A program advertising the Monster Meeting event included a brief “Biographical Sketch” that introduced the young civil rights leader as pastor of Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama; president of the Montgomery Improvement Association; author of the current bestseller *Stride toward Freedom*; and the recipient of over forty leadership awards, including the NAACP Spingarn Award. The sketch also related the academic career of Dr. King at Morehouse College, Crozer Theological Seminary, and Boston University.<sup>55</sup>

The program also listed individuals who facilitated proceedings that came prior to the address by Dr. King. For instance, the “Welcome” was led by Indianapolis Mayor Phillip Bayt, Jr., while the “Greetings” and “Acknowledgements” portions of the ceremony were presented by Ortho Scales, Indianapolis YMCA President, Reverend H.

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<sup>54</sup> Warren, “The Monster Meetings,” 63; “News Release: Martin Luther King Meeting, 12-12-58,” Box II of IV, YMCA Records; Alex Marquand-Willse, e-mail to author, February 24, 2012.

The unnamed author of the “News Release” estimated that a gathering of over four thousand people attended the Monster Meeting at Cadle Tabernacle.

A Research Assistant at the Martin Luther King Jr. Research and Education Institute at Stanford University informed the author that Dr. King visited Indianapolis on two dates in 1958, which were December 10, 1958, to visit the new Fall Creek Parkway YMCA site, and December 12, 1958, to speak at Cadle Tabernacle on behalf of Senate Avenue’s Monster Meeting program.

<sup>55</sup> “Special Meeting of The Monster Meeting Forum of Senate Avenue Branch YMCA: Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Pastor Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, Montgomery, Alabama, Friday, December 12, 1958,” Box II of IV, YMCA Records.

L. Burton, Interdenominational Alliance President, and Reverend Franklin Harper, Indianapolis Ministerial Association President. Presenters in the special Monster Meeting ceremony also included Dr. Harvey Nathaniel (H.N.) Middleton, chairman of the Senate Avenue Board of Managers, and John James, Executive Secretary of the branch, which was soon to become the Fall Creek Parkway YMCA.<sup>56</sup> Articles in the *Indianapolis Recorder* reported on Dr. King and the content of his speech as well as the ceremonies that preceded and followed his main address. It should be noted that the *Indianapolis Recorder* newspaper was founded in 1897 by George P. Stewart and Will Porter with the mission to “speak to and for the people,” and has since been established as one of the foremost publications by African Americans in the nation. Diligently reporting about local events that were important to African Americans was a manifestation of this mission. Consequently, the *Recorder* is an appropriate source to rely on for information about the facilitation of and responses to events such as the Monster Meetings overseen by the Senate Avenue YMCA.<sup>57</sup>

The writer of an article titled, “Reserved, Common Touch, That’s Martin Luther King,” which was published in the *Recorder* on December 20, 1958, one week after the Monster Meeting applauded Dr. King’s “ordinary Joe” manner. The writer also marveled that the civil rights leader traveled to Indianapolis without a secretary or bodyguard four months after a near-fatal attack by a mentally ill woman in New York, “and under doctor’s orders to ‘take it easy for a year or two.’” In another article titled “Martin Luther

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<sup>56</sup> “Special Meeting of The Monster Meeting Forum of Senate Avenue Branch YMCA: Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Pastor Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, Montgomery, Alabama, Friday, December 12, 1958,” Box II of IV, YMCA Records.

<sup>57</sup> *Indianapolis Recorder*, December 20, 1958; Wilma L. Moore (credited as Wilma L. Gibbs), About: *Indianapolis Recorder continues to support and empower African Americans*, <http://www.indianapolisrecorder.com/site/about/>; University Library, Indianapolis Recorder Collection, <http://www.ulib.iupui.edu/digitalscholarship/collections/IRecorder>.

King ‘Like Moses of Old,’” the writer compared Dr. King to the Biblical prophet by stating that the civil rights leader was “chosen by God to lead His people out of bondage.” Included in the article were excerpts from the leader’s address at Cadle, which concerned being “prepared for the new world to come” through having an attitude of forgiveness. ““We must learn to live together as brothers, or we will die as fools,”” preached Dr. King according to the writer of the ““Like Moses”” article. ““Love is a sure winner. If we do it the way God wants us to do it, we will be able to sing with pride, ‘My country, ‘tis of thee.’ For freedom must ring from every mountain side,”” said Dr. King.<sup>58</sup>

The ““Like Moses”” article also included details about the ceremonial proceedings. Dr. King was introduced by Reverend Andrew J. Brown of St. John Baptist Church and afterwards Dr. H.N. Middleton, Chairman of the Senate Avenue YMCA Board, presented him with a trophy for ““human relations.”” Dr. King’s participation in this Monster Meeting was one of four times that the civil rights leader visited Indianapolis before his assassination on April 4, 1968.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> “Special Meeting of The Monster Meeting Forum of Senate Avenue Branch YMCA: Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Pastor Dexter Avenue Baptist Church, Montgomery, Alabama, Friday, December 12, 1958,” and “News Release: Martin Luther King Meeting, 12-12-58,” Box II of IV, YMCA Records; *Indianapolis Recorder*, December 20, 1958.

The author could not locate a published version of the aforementioned news release draft using IUPUI’s Indianapolis Recorder Digital Collection. An entry in the “Chatter for the College Set” section of the *Recorder* that was published on December 13, 1958, explained that one half of the members of the Calypsos club would sponsor a teen dance at the Senate Avenue YMCA to raise funds “to furnish a dormitory room” at the new Fall Creek YMCA, while the other half would serve as hostesses for the Monster Meeting at Cadle Tabernacle.

<sup>59</sup> Alex Marquand-Willse, e-mail to author, February 24, 2012. A Research Assistant at the Martin Luther King Jr. Research and Education Institute informed the author that Dr. King visited Indianapolis on the following four dates between 1958 and 1961: (1) December 10, 1958, to visit the new Fall Creek Parkway YMCA site; (2) December 12, 1958, to speak at Cadle Tabernacle on behalf of Senate Avenue’s Monster Meeting program; (3) June 26, 1961, to visit a couple, Mr. and Mrs. Marion Stuart; and (4) November 24, 1961, to attend the Murat Temple’s Freedom Fund Rally.



Other distinguished speakers who addressed a Monster Meeting audience at least once included: Harlem Renaissance poet Countee Cullen (on February 25, 1927); professor-philosopher-author Alain Locke (November 28, 1926; November 26, 1927; February 12, 1928; and November 30, 1929); W.E.B. Du Bois (March 17, 1934, and March 9, 1941); *Amistad Mutiny Murals* creator Hale Aspacio Woodruff (March 30, 1941); former First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt (December 13, 1953); Baseball Hall of Fame inductee Jackie Robinson (January 28, 1958); National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) lawyer Thurgood Marshall (March 9, 1958); pioneer research chemist Percy Lavon Julian, who spoke six times between January 1936 and February 1955 as well as received financial support for his research at DePauw University; and Howard University president Mordecai Wyatt Johnson, who spoke sixteen times between November 1926 and November 1961. Meetings were held in a lecture and/or question-and-answer format. Speakers discussed a range of topics including the pragmatism of Christian values, civil rights issues, national and global politics, the black diaspora, as well as health and employment concerns in the black community. The diversity of such topics was indicated by speech titles like Mordecai Johnson's "Our Work, Our Wages, Our Soul," Alain Locke's "Some Recent Gains in Race Relations," and W.E.B. Du Bois' "The Economic Plight of the American Negro."<sup>60</sup>

The Monster Meeting program, with its roll call of academics, activists, and political leaders demonstrated the extent to which administrators at the Senate Avenue YMCA were aware of contemporaneous societal problems and involved in examining these problems. Certainly the branch for colored men and boys was representative of a

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<sup>60</sup> Stanley Warren, "The Monster Meetings," 66-80.

YMCA organization that structurally adapted to and reflected the urban changes taking place in the surrounding community through implementing certain programming.<sup>61</sup> In particular, the Monster Meeting program both reflected and sought to redress segregationist practices in its environment through facilitating public discussions.

### **Steps to Integrate YMCAs Halted by Persistent Segregation**

World War II inspired anti-segregation rhetoric among African-American YMCA members, and also exposed parallels between America's Jim Crow racism and Nazi Germany's anti-Semitism. The YMCA National Council reflected such social change, as is characteristic of the organization, through adopting a resolution for the abolishment of racial discrimination in 1946. The resolution extended to designated colored sections in publications and departments, and meant the dismantlement of the Colored Work Department as well as Colored YMCAs. While the National Council's resolution reflected changing attitudes towards organizational policy, individual associations continued segregationist practices. All-white YMCAs, many of them in the South, did not take steps to diversify their membership base, and YMCAs with all-black memberships were located within segregated colored communities.<sup>62</sup>

One of the colored communities in Indianapolis where blacks resided was located below South Street and roughly from West Street to Madison Street on "the Southside," which is a section of the city. In the early twentieth century, the Southside was actually a multicultural community in which African Americans shared neighborhoods and

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<sup>61</sup> Clyde Griffen, Preface: "Towards a Future History of the YMCA," in *Men and Women Adrift*, xv; Zald, *Organizational Change*, xiii.

<sup>62</sup> Mjagkij, *Light in the Darkness*, 6-7.

friendships with Jewish, Irish, German, Italian, and Greek immigrants. There was a similarly populated neighborhood located in Haughville, Indianapolis, where African Americans also lived in proximity to European immigrants.<sup>63</sup> Three other “non-contiguous” colored communities developed on the Northside, near Westside, and Eastside of Indianapolis.<sup>64</sup>

This thesis focuses on the colored community that existed on the near Westside of Indianapolis, or Pat Ward’s Bottoms, which was one of the oldest colored communities in the city. “Northwest of downtown” and intersected by Indiana Avenue, the “Bottoms” was the community located within the central area of Indianapolis that patronized the Senate Avenue YMCA at 450 North Senate Avenue, and a host of other spaces that black entrepreneurs established along and around Indiana Avenue (See Fig. 1).<sup>65</sup> Black spaces within this community included all-black professional associations for lawyers and doctors, schools, Baptist and A.M.E. churches, and fraternal orders. The Pat Ward’s

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<sup>63</sup> Susan B. Hyatt and others, *The Neighborhood of Saturdays: Memories of a Multi-Ethnic Community on Indianapolis’ South Side* (Indianapolis: Dog Ear Publishing, 2012), 2, <http://indiamond6.ulib.iupui.edu/cdm/ref/collection/NOS/id/2352>.

Refer to book for an overview of a Southside neighborhood that is based on archival research and oral histories. The authors specifically discuss the communities developed by Sephardic Jews and African Americans and how these immigrant and migrant groups harmoniously coexisted on the Southside during the early twentieth century.

Interview, Melissa Burlock with William McConnell, World War II veteran and member of Bethel A.M.E., July 21, 2013, audio recording, IUPUI Special Collections and Archives, e-Archives, <https://archives.iupui.edu/handle/2450/6956/browse?type=title>.

McConnell grew up in Haughville, Indianapolis.

<sup>64</sup> Pierce, *Polite Protest*, 58. According to Pierce, the oldest African-American neighborhood in Indianapolis, situated “along the canal directly northwest of downtown and dubbed Pat Ward’s Bottoms or the Bottoms, was established during and after the Civil War. The second was north of the Bottoms along present-day Martin Luther King Boulevard. The youngest neighborhood was on the east side, near Douglas Park, in present-day Brightwood.”

<sup>65</sup> Warren, *The Senate Avenue YMCA*, 90; Pierce, *Polite Protest*, 58.

Author’s Note: The Pat Ward’s Bottoms community will hereafter be referred to by both its full and shortened names as well as its location in Indianapolis. For example, the terms “inner-city” and “near-downtown” will be used to describe the Bottoms community.

Bottoms area also encompassed the social service agency Flanner House, jazz club venues that featured famed artists, restaurants, and other black-owned businesses.<sup>66</sup> On the whole the Senate Avenue YMCA was an important thread woven throughout the fabric that was the near-downtown black community in the early-to-mid 1900s.

In Indianapolis white real estate agencies worked in conjunction with white supremacist civic groups to segregate the African-American population—which climbed from 21,816 to 43,967 during the “Great Migration” period between 1910 and 1930—to the abovementioned segregated communities during most of the twentieth century.<sup>67</sup> The political support of residential segregation in Indianapolis was the result of Ku Klux Klan members and supporters dominating the city council government in the 1920s, the period of time when Klan membership in the state represented “the mainstream of” whites in Indiana.<sup>68</sup> Though the Klan as a group lacked a specific agenda for enforcing segregationist practices, Klansmen and similar-minded supporters were members of civic groups that lobbied for the politicization of such practices. For example, members of the White Peoples Protective League and other white supremacist civic groups petitioned the Klan-dominated city council of Indianapolis to pass an ordinance barring blacks from moving into all-white communities (without first obtaining the consent of one of the communities) in March 1926.<sup>69</sup> Although the residential zoning law was repealed nine months later due to legal efforts by the local NAACP branch, white residents who were

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<sup>66</sup> Emma Lou Thornbrough, “African-Americans,” and Michelle D. Hale, “Indiana Avenue,” in *The Encyclopedia of Indianapolis*.

<sup>67</sup> Emma Lou Thornbrough, “African-Americans,” in *The Encyclopedia of Indianapolis*, ed. David J. Bodenhamer and Robert G. Barrows; Pierce, *Polite Protest*, 58.

<sup>68</sup> Thornbrough, *Indiana Blacks*, 48-53.

<sup>69</sup> Thornbrough, *Indiana Blacks*, 48-53.

increasingly angered by the growing black population continued to organize in order to maintain segregation through hostile, even sometimes violent, means.<sup>70</sup> For instance, the Capitol Avenue Protective Association, whose members included Capitol Avenue residents, built “spite” fences or walls around properties purchased by black families in exclusively white communities. Likeminded individuals disseminated handbills that read, “DO YOU WANT A NIGGER FOR A NEIGHBOR,” in “their” neighborhoods.<sup>71</sup>

Therefore, supporters and members of racist civic groups promoted de jure segregation and practiced de facto segregation in order to discriminate against Indianapolis’ black population.<sup>72</sup> Thus, whole communities were segregated. Consequently, community spaces like local social service agencies, businesses, churches, and the Senate Avenue YMCA, remained single-race institutions partly due to the legal and extralegal measures exerted by segregationists to relegate Indianapolis blacks to racially segregated colored communities.

After nearly fifty years at 450 North Senate Avenue, both Indianapolis YMCA and Senate Avenue YMCA administrators agreed that members needed more room as well as better amenities, and they made plans to move the branch to another location

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<sup>70</sup> Emma Lou Thornbrough, “African-Americans,” in *The Encyclopedia of Indianapolis*, ed. David J. Bodenhamer and Robert G. Barrows; Thornbrough, *Indiana Blacks*, 53.

<sup>71</sup> Pierce, *Polite Protest*, 59. Refer to Chapter 3: “We Were Always Fighting the Housing Battle: African American Housing in Indianapolis” for a thorough explanation of housing discrimination, blight, and gentrification processes—as well as the political decisions which facilitated them—in Indianapolis during the twentieth century.

<sup>72</sup> Pierce, *Polite Protest*, 57-58. Pierce stated that, “By 1910, 9.3 percent of the city’s total population was African-American, the highest percentage of any city north of the Ohio River.”

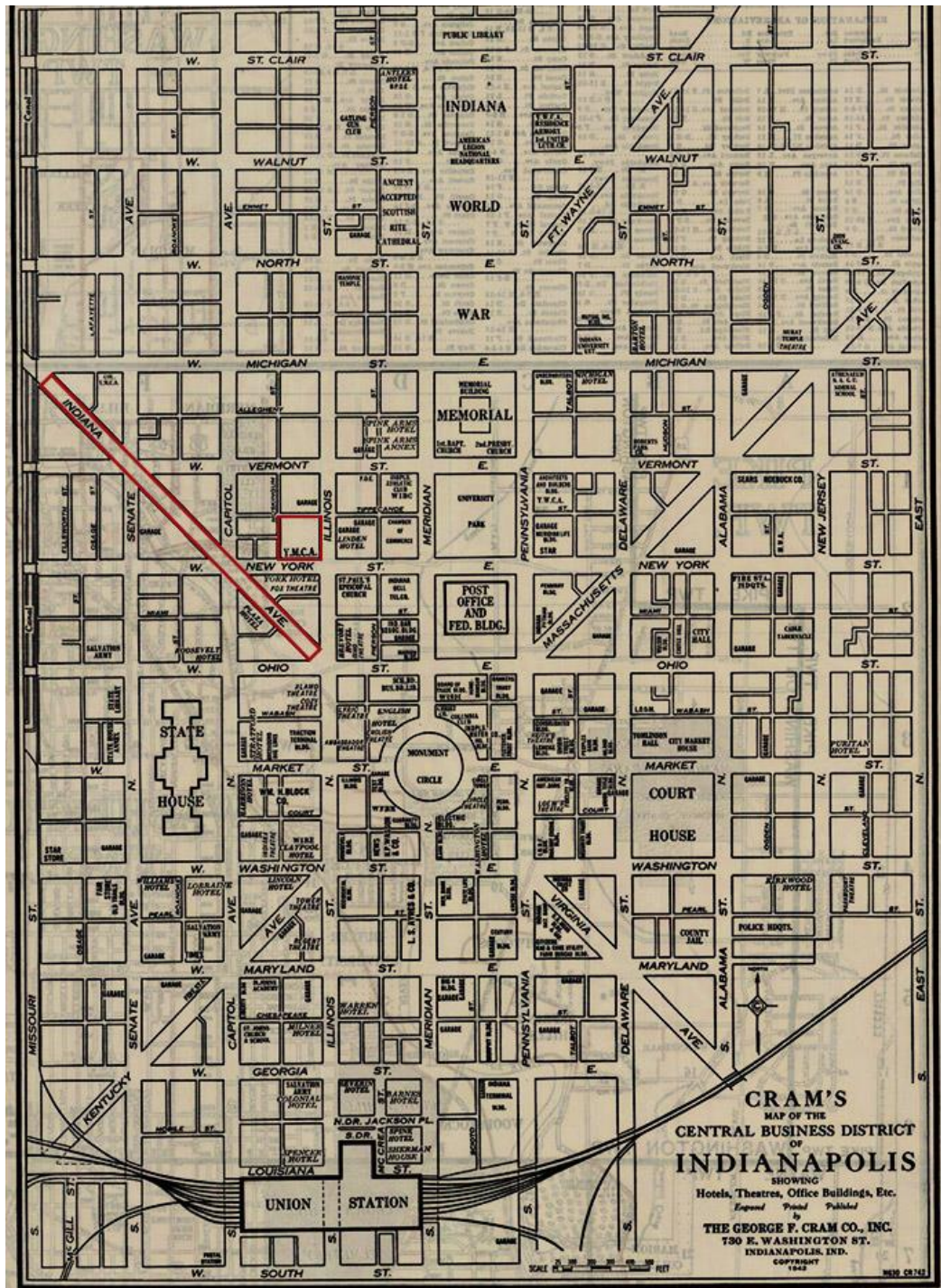


Fig. 1. Above. Map of the Central Business District of Indianapolis, 1945. Scale is marked at increments of 25, 100, 200, 300, 400, and 500 feet. (IUPUI University Library, Historic Indiana Maps Digital Collection).

within the Bottoms community. The YMCA moved to its new location on West 10<sup>th</sup> Street in 1959 and became the Fall Creek Parkway YMCA. The Fall Creek YMCA

continued Senate Avenue's legacy of being a programmatic and fraternal center, and hence became a central thread that was intertwined with the cultural fabric of the vibrant community along and surrounding Indiana Avenue. Ironically, the prominence of both the Senate Avenue and Fall Creek YMCAs was, like the financial success of other black-run spaces, the result of segregationist ordinances and practices that had restricted black residents to patronizing the organizations and services in their own communities.

### **The Story of the Fall Creek YMCA**

By 1955, the deteriorating condition of the Senate Avenue YMCA building prompted the board members of the Senate Avenue and Greater Indianapolis YMCAs to make plans to build a new facility at the intersection of 10<sup>th</sup> Street and Indiana Avenue.<sup>73</sup> The Metropolitan Board encouraged a joint New Building Committee to look for an appropriate site for a new YMCA in majority-black neighborhoods, and after extensive demographic characteristics studies (e.g., rental units, home ownership, racial makeup) the committee members designated two such areas: 1) near 29<sup>th</sup> street and 2) at the intersection of 10<sup>th</sup> Street and Indiana Avenue near Fall Creek Boulevard. A majority of the IYMCA and Senate Avenue Boards decided on the latter site because of its proximity to other prominent locations in the black community, such as Lockefield Gardens (which was bordered by Indiana Avenue as well as Blake, North, and Locke streets), Crispus Attucks High School, and the Phyllis Wheatley YWCA. Thus the new YMCA, like its predecessor, was deliberately built in close proximity to its targeted membership base.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Warren, *The Senate Avenue YMCA*, 115, 117.

The IYMCA solicited funds to construct and furnish what was to become the Fall Creek Parkway YMCA through a fundraising program. Community leaders and businessmen also demonstrated their support by making generous loan commitments to finance “the construction of the dormitory section” of the new facility. They included Dr. Harvey Nathaniel (H.N.) Middleton as well as Herman Charles and Ellnora Decker of the Krannert Foundation. Dr. H.N. Middleton was an African-American cardiologist and active community leader in the city who served on the Metropolitan Board and several Senate Avenue YMCA committees. Herman Krannert and his wife, Ellnora, established the Krannert Foundation and Krannert Charitable Trust in 1960 as charitable entities to fund the creation of “Centers of Excellence” in several fields including education and youth services, largely in the Midwest. The couple, married in 1919, supported major projects at universities, hospitals, and arts institutes such as the Indianapolis Museum of Art. The commitments of \$10,000 and \$20,000 by Dr. H.N. Middleton and the Krannert Foundation respectively were accepted by then-IYMCA President Ortho L. Scales.<sup>75</sup>

With the donations solicited through the IYMCA fundraising program and the contributions of community leaders, the Senate Avenue Management Committee was able to finance the construction of a new YMCA facility. Members of the management

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<sup>74</sup> Leigh Darbee, “Lockefield Gardens,” in *The Encyclopedia of Indianapolis*; Warren, *The Senate Avenue YMCA*, 115, 117. Also refer to the Lockefield Garden Apartments (Indianapolis, Ind.) Records, 1935-1954 (M 0786) at the Indiana Historical Society.

Lockefield Gardens was made up of 748 African-American housing units built in European design by African-American men for their families between 1935 and 1937. The complex was closed during the 1970s as part of federal desegregation efforts, and approximately eighty percent of the buildings were demolished in the 1980s as part of a plan to make space for IUPUI’s expansion.

<sup>75</sup> Young Men’s Christian Association Loan Commitments, Black Filing Cabinet, First drawer, YMCA Records; News – Memo, From the desk of Elmer O. Hill, General Secretary, February 23, 1959, Box III of IV, YMCA Records; Wilma Gibbs, “Middleton, Harvey Nathaniel,” Pat Watson, “Krannert, Herman Charles,” and Nora McKinney Hiatt, “Krannert Charitable Trust,” in *The Encyclopedia of Indianapolis*.



committee held a groundbreaking ceremony at the 10<sup>th</sup> Street site of the new Fall Creek YMCA in April 1958. The new building opened in September 1959 and continued the programmatic, fraternal, and social service legacy of its predecessor within its historically African-American community for over four decades (1959-2003). During this period of time, the role of the Fall Creek YMCA in the Bottoms community was increasingly shaped by urban revitalization projects, successful challenges to residential segregation in the city, as well as disagreements between branch supporters and the Metropolitan YMCA Board concerning the financial viability and social necessity of a YMCA in near-downtown Indianapolis. In the end, the Fall Creek YMCA was closed by its metropolitan association in September 2003.<sup>76</sup> Understanding the importance of the Fall Creek YMCA within its Bottoms community is crucial to analyzing the conflict between the Fall Creek YMCA Board, community advocates, and the Metropolitan YMCA Board over how the branch should have maintained its utility and sustained its programming. Thus, discussing the prominence of the branch—through relating how ordinary individuals remembered its extraordinary role in near-downtown Indianapolis—is necessary in presenting a more comprehensive account of the branch’s history and why it was a contested space.

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<sup>76</sup> Warren, *The Senate Avenue YMCA*, 125.

## Chapter Two: The Mission of the Fall Creek YMCA within Indianapolis' Pat Ward's Bottoms Community, 1958-1979

### **Another Milestone in the Colored YMCA's History**

A multitude attended the groundbreaking ceremony at 10<sup>th</sup> Street and Indiana Avenue on Sunday, April 19, 1958. This was to become the space of the new Fall Creek Parkway YMCA, dubbed “the million dollar YMCA” by a journalist who covered the event for the *Indianapolis Recorder*. According to the reporter, onlookers “seemed intensely aware [that] they were witnessing history in the making.” The ceremony included State Senator Brokenburr (Republican Party), the first African-American senator in Indiana, and Robert Gilliam, a surviving founder of the Senate Avenue YMCA. Brokenburr, Gilliam, and other community leaders turned over shovelfuls of earth at the site. It was as if they were enacting the evangelistic mission of William Hunton, the first African-American departmental secretary of the YMCA International Committee, who exhorted other YMCA leaders to prepare the field of colored young men in the 1890s. How this scene must have been watched with the pride of ownership and restless excitement. Indeed, ““you could feel it in the air”” that was taut with anticipation explained John James, executive secretary of the Senate Avenue YMCA, who was also present at the groundbreaking rites.<sup>77</sup>

Elmer O. Hill, General Secretary of the Greater Indianapolis YMCA, reported on the construction of the Fall Creek YMCA in a series of memo minutes titled “From the desk of Elmer Hill” that were circulated among the YMCA branches in the city. On April

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<sup>77</sup> The *Indianapolis Recorder*, April 19, 1958.

21, 1958, Hill wrote that the Senate Avenue YMCA (which officially changed its name to Fall Creek in April 1958 since the new site was near Fall Creek Parkway) would raise fifty thousand dollars to furnish the new facility, and that its dormitory section of two Residence Halls would be financed by a four hundred thousand dollar loan.<sup>78</sup> The new Fall Creek YMCA opened its doors to embrace the near-downtown African-American community of Indianapolis the following year. Indianapolis YMCA leaders and new Fall Creek YMCA administrators facilitated the dedication of the new building on September 13, 1959. The dedication celebration began with a “bon voyage program” at the Senate Avenue building, which was followed by a parade to the new Fall Creek building. A dedication ceremony at the new site was presided over by leaders such as State Senator Brokenburr, Metropolitan YMCA secretary Elmer Hill, and Howard University president Dr. Mordecai Johnson, who addressed the large audience.<sup>79</sup>

### **New Beginnings for Indiana’s Colored YMCA and the Nation**

The Fall Creek Parkway YMCA opened on 860 West 10<sup>th</sup> Street in September 1959 with a multipurpose gymnasium, swimming pool adjacent to one hundred-seat bleachers, and a ninety-eight room dormitory section. The facility also housed a banquet hall, four activity rooms, and a coffee shop equipped with air conditioning. Adults entered through the entrance on West 10<sup>th</sup> Street, and the youth entrance was located

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<sup>78</sup> Elmer O. Hill, “From the desk of Elmer O. Hill, General Secretary,” April 21, 1958, Box III of IV, YMCA Records.

Elmer O. Hill was the General Secretary of the Greater Indianapolis YMCA (or IYMCA) during the late 1950s, 60s, and 70s (the author could not locate archival material detailing specific years), and served under IYMCA president Ortho Scales. Scales was also the Vice President of Enos Coal Mining Company.

<sup>79</sup> The *Indianapolis Recorder*, ca. September 1959; Elmer Hill, “From the desk,” October 1, 1959, Box III of IV, YMCA Records.

along Fall Creek Parkway.<sup>80</sup> The branch's leaders purposed to serve both sets of members, and thus continue the legacy of the YMCA's predecessor in the community. John James, executive secretary of the new Fall Creek Parkway YMCA, promoted this objective for the new YMCA. (James had been appointed by the Senate Avenue Management Committee to be the Executive Secretary of Senate Avenue, and the Senate Avenue Board of Management voted for him to continue this leadership role at Fall Creek. James' previous experience included working on the staff of the New Washington Park YMCA in Chicago).<sup>81</sup> James stressed the service mission of the Fall Creek YMCA at the dedication ceremony for the branch:

In every community there is a need for social and recreational activities through which young men and women may get acquainted ... The YMCA will provide that opportunity specifically through special programs, such as ballroom dancing classes, bridge classes, square and folk dancing classes, dramatics, photography, crafts and many others.<sup>82</sup>

The opening of the Fall Creek YMCA, and the beginning of its role in the lives of young African-American men and women, preceded important national and statewide movements that had similar goals of social advancement for minorities. John F. Kennedy, who was elected President of the United States in 1961, became an important proponent of civil rights legislation for African Americans, women, and immigrants. Several of Kennedy's civil rights proposals were realized as Great Society programs during the Lyndon B. Johnson administration following Kennedy's assassination in 1963, including the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the 1968 Housing Act

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<sup>80</sup> The *Indianapolis Recorder*, ca. September 1959; Warren, *The Senate Avenue YMCA*, 123.

<sup>81</sup> Warren, *The Senate Avenue YMCA*, 114, 119-120, 123.

<sup>82</sup> The *Indianapolis Recorder*, September 1959.

which made discriminatory housing practices illegal and subsidized reconstruction projects in low-socioeconomic communities.<sup>83</sup>

Even before these equality measures, the Indianapolis NAACP branch and other civil rights organizations persuaded the Indiana state legislature to create the Indiana Civil Rights Commission and the Indianapolis Human Rights Commission. The *Brown v. Board of Education* decision handed down by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1954, and 1964 Civil Rights Act, became the precedents that empowered the U.S. Department of Justice to charge Indianapolis Public Schools (IPS) with implementing de jure segregation in 1968. As a result of the litigation, which was not resolved until 1981, African-American IPS students were bused one-way to outlying suburban townships in Indianapolis.<sup>84</sup> Such landmark civil rights laws and cases happened during the lifetime of the Fall Creek YMCA and as a result the story of the branch is inseparable from the contentious civil rights history of the nation and state. This shifting political environment also informed conflicting visions about the utility of the Fall Creek YMCA and ultimately the controversy surrounding the legitimacy of its closing in September 2003.

### **Programs for the Spirit, Mind, and Body**

The Fall Creek Parkway YMCA underwent more renovations and continued to facilitate the same kinds of services as its predecessor in the 1960s. Elmer Hill, General Secretary of the IYMCA, wrote about such renovation projects and programming in his

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<sup>83</sup> Civil Rights Act of 1964, Pub.L. 88-352, 42 U.S.C. 2000e (1964); “Fair Housing Act,” Sec. 801, 42 U.S.C. 3601 (1968).

<sup>84</sup> Emma Lou Thornbrough, “African-Americans,” in *The Encyclopedia of Indianapolis*. Also refer to the Indianapolis Public Schools Desegregation Case Collection, 1971-1999 (M 0749) at the Indiana Historical Society. The collection was created by Senior Archivist Wilma Moore.

memo series, in which he reported on the goings-on of local branches including the Jordan Family, Central, Eastside, Krannert Memorial Family, and Southside Family YMCAs. For example, in his memos Hill briefly noted the dates of Monster Meetings (e.g., Dr. Mordecai Johnson on February 20, 1960, and December 30, 1964), and also wrote that Fall Creek held a Spring Carnival (June 30, 1962), underwent interior renovation (May 28, 1965), hosted Ball State University's Institute for Elementary School Teachers of Disadvantaged Children and Youth (June 28, 1965), as well as facilitated a Learn-to-Swim campaign and Neighborhood Youth Work Project (June 21, 1966). Hill also reported on the attendance at the Annual Father and Son Banquet (e.g., 375 in March 1960 and 250 in February 1966), Annual Pioneer Club Variety Shows held in the auditorium at Crispus Attucks High School, as well as at YMCA Independent Basketball and Volleyball Tournaments. He also provided program statistics, including the enrollment rates in the Learn-To-Swim Campaign (300 youths in May 1966) and Neighborhood Youth Work Project, net profits from fundraisers, and income from the residence halls (\$5,699 in August 1967). Overall, Hill's memos are concise records of various events at Fall Creek as well as the attendance rates and net profits of such events.<sup>85</sup>

The Fall Creek YMCA was also utilized as a space for Indianapolis blacks to hold wedding receptions, fashion shows, bridge clubs, youth dances, home economics classes, and a host of other activities.<sup>86</sup> Besides continuing the Monster Meeting forum series and

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<sup>85</sup> Elmer O. Hill, "From the desk of Elmer O. Hill, General Secretary," 1959-1969, Box III of IV, YMCA Records.

<sup>86</sup> Interview, Melissa Burlock with Jocelyn-Tandy Adande, former leader of Members United to Save Fall Creek, 2003, July 23, 2012, Indianapolis, audio recording, IUPUI Special Collections and Archives, e-Archives, <https://archives.iupui.edu/handle/2450/6955/browse?type=title>.

fraternal groups like the Intercollegiate Club and Pioneer Club, these activities also included Annual Turkey Day Races, crafts and physical education classes, swimming and scuba diving classes, basketball and boxing tournaments, music extravaganzas, variety shows, as well as a Charm Clinic for young female members. The YMCA underwent renovations, which were made to improve its lighting and air conditioning, in May 1965 before accommodating more conferences like the Summer Institute for Elementary School Teachers.<sup>87</sup>

The programmatic schedule and services provided by the Fall Creek Parkway YMCA became more community-focused and financially secure under the leadership of John Lands. Lands stayed in the dormitory section of Fall Creek in 1963 when he first came to Indianapolis; he was in a room on the second floor, which was the women's floor, because there was not enough room on the men's floor. The branch, said Lands, was "always packed" because it was the "place where black folks went." It was there he learned how to play bridge, chess, and participated in a national table tennis tournament. In short, Lands was already aware of the potential of Fall Creek to function as a programmatic and recreational center for African Americans in Indianapolis before agreeing to become the branch's executive director.<sup>88</sup>

Theodore D. Wilson, Chairman of the Fall Creek YMCA Board, recruited Lands to serve as the branch's executive director in the fall of 1971. Wilson had assured Lands in a letter dated in August that upon accepting the executive directorship of Fall Creek he

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Adande and her brothers grew up participating in YMCA programs and activities. Her relationship to the branch will be discussed in Chapter Four.

<sup>87</sup> Elmer O. Hill, "From the desk of Elmer O. Hill, General Secretary," 1959-1969, Box III of IV, YMCA Records.

<sup>88</sup> Burlock with Lands, March 1, 2012.

would “be granted a free hand to run the Y” according to his judgment, “accountable to the Board ... only.”<sup>89</sup> Wilson’s choice was most likely based upon Lands’ previous activism. During the late 1960s Lands established the Our Place community center for kids that “the community would call troublemakers.”<sup>90</sup> The center was funded by Flanner House, which was a social service agency for African Americans. Lands estimated that he received five thousand dollars annually from the social service agency to facilitate operations.<sup>91</sup> Lands remembers taking a knife away from a young person who had held it at another’s throat; being on-call at two o’clock in the morning for counseling; finding employment for members; hosting Christmas dinners that featured a black Santa Clause, and especially having long talks with young African-American men. “We talked an awful lot ... We talked mostly about pride, dignity, respect, going to school, black history. We gave very strong emphasis on what it meant to be a black person.” Lands became a local “father-brother idol” to young black men who “cried out for guidance.” He influenced young men who grew up to become “scattered around in all walks of life,” some later contributing to the Fall Creek YMCA.<sup>92</sup>

Lands also developed Our Market as a subsidiary of Our Place, which was a cooperative supermarket that he envisioned to be the model for “community-owned businesses” that provided jobs and a sense of purpose in one’s own neighborhood. Our

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<sup>89</sup> Theodore D. Wilson, Chairman of the Fall Creek YMCA Board of Management, to John Lands, 25 August 1971, photocopies. Provided by John Lands and in possession of the author.

<sup>90</sup> Russ Pulliam, “Stifled Dream for Indiana Avenue,” *News*, May 1979, Box Executive Committee and Board of Directors Folders 2008, “Photographs” Album, YMCA Records.

<sup>91</sup> Burlock with Lands, February 10, 2014; Also refer to Michelle D. Hale, “Flanner House,” in *The Encyclopedia of Indianapolis*.

<sup>92</sup> Pulliam, “Stifled Dream for Indiana Avenue,” *News*, May 1979, YMCA Records.



Market ultimately experienced financial troubles in the early 1970s after the loss of business from the tenants who resided in Lockefield Gardens. (The complex was vacated in 1973 in accordance with a 1971 ruling by U.S. District Court Judge S. Hugh Dillin in the Indianapolis Public Schools desegregation case.) As a result, Our Market closed.<sup>93</sup> However, Our Place remained open and Lands continued to spend time mentoring kids at the center even after he was hired as the full-time Executive Director of Fall Creek.<sup>94</sup>

### **1970s Context and Equal Rights Campaigns**

The executive directorship of John Lands spanned a turbulent decade that encompassed the transition between the monumental civil rights legislation and racial tension of the 1960s, and the efforts to translate such legislation into public realities by the 1970s. This determination to realize the dreams of racial advancement and equality that were sown during the Civil Rights Movement took root in Indiana, growing into demands for equal treatment on university campuses as well as to “raise consciousness about black history” in the state. It is important to discuss such a political and racially-charged milieu in relation to Lands’ vision for the Fall Creek YMCA in the Bottoms or Center Township black community during this period. This is because his directorship at Fall Creek and his disputes with members of the metropolitan association were informed by the advancements, persistent disadvantages, and critical needs of the black community

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<sup>93</sup> Interview, Melissa Burlock with John Lands, former Executive Director of the Fall Creek Parkway YMCA, 1971-1979, March 1, 2012; Pulliam, “Stifled Dream for Indiana Avenue,” *News*, May 1979, YMCA Records; Gray, *IUPUI*, 146.

<sup>94</sup> Burlock with Lands, February 10, 2014.

that characterized the Indiana black experience in the 1970s.<sup>95</sup> These advancements in education and public awareness were preceded by controversial protests.

Though a minority on the Indiana University and Indiana State University campuses, black undergraduates and graduate students were active participants and leaders in student protests aimed at achieving equal treatment and nondiscriminatory hiring practices. Student-led groups such as the Afro/Afro-American Student Association (AAASA) and the Ad Hoc Committee Against Racism (AHCAR) orchestrated sit-ins in the late 1960s to protest discriminatory hiring practices and charters of all-white fraternities at Indiana University. IU trustees eventually responded by creating the Groups program to recruit undergraduates from low-socioeconomic backgrounds and finally offering a black studies program. Undergraduate members of the Black Student Union at Indiana State University (ISU) also organized sit-ins on campus to demand black participation in administering student dormitories and the black studies program. These sit-ins and demands were initially met with disruptive violence by an all-white fraternity and the dissemination of racist propaganda on campus by a Ku Klux Klan chapter, but eventually culminated with the creation of a Center for African American Studies in 1972. ISU granted the first African American studies degrees in 1979.<sup>96</sup>

Such student activism happened during the same time that black community leaders and entrepreneurs sought to ensure that black history and the new black identity (as an equal member in society) were publicly celebrated and accepted. In 1970 these leaders created the Indiana Black Expo to showcase black culture, entertainers, leaders

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<sup>95</sup> Thornbrough, *Indiana Blacks*, 209-219, 225-227. Chapter 10: “The Continuing Search for Identity” (pages 207-235 in *Indiana Blacks*) was written by Lana Ruegamer.

<sup>96</sup> Thornbrough, *Indiana Blacks*, 210-211, 214.

and historical accomplishments every year. Following the inauguration of Black History Month in 1973 community leaders spearheaded several projects aimed at promoting the role of blacks in the State and Midwest, including the formation of the Black Bicentennial Committee in 1975 and the Freetown Village exhibit at the Indiana State Museum, as well as the incorporation of “a black history curriculum” by Indianapolis Public Schools in 1988.<sup>97</sup>

Successful protests and the development of events that promoted black history and advancements in the 1970s—which were spearheaded by middle- and upper-class black leaders in business, academia, and media—starkly contrasted with the experiences of urban poor blacks who remained in Center Township. Rates of black-on-black crime, out-of-wedlock pregnancies, poverty, and the disproportionate prison population of black males (who made up 8 percent of the population in the state but 40 percent of the population in state prisons) would only increase for the next twenty years. While Center Township had the largest black population in Marion County by 1980, black professionals seeking “racially integrated” neighborhoods increasingly moved from the Bottoms community into previously all-white suburban townships outside of the central city.<sup>98</sup> Such “black flight” created a loss of social and economic capital in Center Township. This post-desegregation loss left lower-class blacks more vulnerable to large-scale gentrification and beautification projects in the 1970s and 1980s—such as the expansion of IUPUI and the construction of Highway I-65 as well as downtown

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<sup>97</sup> Thornbrough, *Indiana Blacks*, 219, 226.

<sup>98</sup> Thornbrough, *Indiana Blacks*, 190, 219, 223-224; Andrew Wiese, *Places of Their Own: African American Suburbanization in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 27; Mary Pattillo, “Black Middle-Class Neighborhoods,” *Annual Reviews of Sociology* 31 (2005): 305-306.

destinations like restaurants—and defenseless against local-state agents of urban revitalization, including Mayor William H. Hudnut’s administration (1976-1992), which promoted the redevelopment of the central city following UniGov.<sup>99</sup>

It was in this milieu of competing racial advancements and crises, as well as a physically changing cityscape, that Fall Creek YMCA Executive Director Lands—“the only black YMCA branch director in the city”—promoted his vision for the role of the branch.<sup>100</sup> *Indianapolis News* journalist Reginald Bishop described Lands as “a product of the Civil Rights Movement,” one of the few leaders “to continue his work into the ‘70s.”<sup>101</sup> Lands’ disputes with the Metropolitan YMCA over conflicting visions of Fall Creek and its role in a disadvantaged black community illustrated on an organizational scale the conflict that would continue between the black community and agents of “progress” or organizations that facilitated downtown construction and expansion projects (e.g., highways, campus buildings, and central city attractions). In short, the Fall Creek YMCA and the surrounding black community would increasingly become a contested space over which competing visions of the branch’s utility and the state of its

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<sup>99</sup> Pierce, *Polite Protest*, 80; David Wilson, “Local State Dynamics,” 20; “RetroIndy: Mayor William H. Hudnut III: Four term mayor resided over the city’s transformation from 1976-1992,” *Indianapolis News*, January 10, 2013, <http://www.indystar.com/article/99999999/NEWS06/101103021>; Georgetown University School of Continuing Studies, *Master of Professional Studies in Real Estate: William Hudnut*, <http://scs.georgetown.edu/departments/13/master-of-professional-studies-in-real-estate/faculty-bio.cfm?fId=135598>.

The argument that middle-class black flight left urban poor blacks defenseless against gentrification measures is taken from Lana Ruegamer, the author of Chapter 10: The Continuing Search for Identity in Emma Lou Thornbrough’s *Indiana Blacks in the Twentieth Century*. I disagree with Ruegamer’s statement that race “receded as a major part of [middle-class blacks’] sense of personal identity” towards the close of the twentieth century (232) based on sociological and urban history studies concerning the continued significance of race in determining, or more specifically limiting, the experiences and opportunities of middle-class blacks in a majority-white society.

<sup>100</sup> Lisa Baird, “Y Head Calls Firing Bid To Alter Racial Makeup,” April 1979, Box Executive Committee and Board of Directors Folders 2008, “Photographs” Album, YMCA Records.

<sup>101</sup> Reginald Bishop, “Not Just the YMCA,” *Indianapolis News*, May 1979, Box Executive Committee and Board of Directors Folders 2008, “Photographs” Album, YMCA Records.

environment pushed for dominance. Controversial urban revitalization projects and conflicting visions of Indianapolis' downtown area, which are the subjects of Chapter Three, were reflected in disputes between Lands and the Metropolitan Board of Directors during the 1970s.

### **The Lands Era, 1971-1979: Programming and Special Events**

In describing the number of youth members that frequented Fall Creek YMCA programs in the 1970s, Lands said that the branch had “Kids coming out of the woodwork.” Educational and recreational activities at Fall Creek seemed to be as numerous as their eager participants. The branch offered a host of youth services and daily programs that were carried out from daybreak to sunset. These services and programs, which were anticipated by the “carloads of youths dropped off” by family members targeted a broad age range from preschoolers to teenagers.<sup>102</sup> For example, Tiny Tots was a half-day (10 a.m. to 1 p.m.) daycare program that provided “tots” with tutoring services as well as transportation to field trips at amusement parks and doctor check-ups. The Mayor’s Farming Project was designed to help disadvantaged families and the Teenage Action basketball program provided young adults with opportunities to contribute to their community and practice teamwork. Basketball tournaments featuring Fall Creek’s winning junior league attracted crowds and caused traffic jams in the branch parking lot. Young members also participated in the Indianapolis Parks and Recreation Department Beach Games as well as the National Pal Club Tournament and

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<sup>102</sup> Burlock with Lands, March 1, 2012.

Championship.<sup>103</sup> In short, facilitators at the Fall Creek YMCA created programs that related to the different ages and needs of its youth members.

Moreover, the Fall Creek YMCA functioned as a venue for popular community events such as festivals, seminars, and conferences. The April 1972 Folk Art Festival was crowded with adults and youths who wanted to attend scholarly forums led by professors from local universities, free performances by the Buffalo Black Theatre and Black Arts Theatre of Indianapolis, as well as sample authentic African cuisine provided by The Afrique Hut restaurant.<sup>104</sup> Executive Director Lands was instrumental in bringing the National Conference of Black and Non-White YMCA Laymen and Staff (discussed later on) to Fall Creek in 1973. It would be the first time that the conference was held at a YMCA branch and not a hotel.<sup>105</sup> Lands recalled that he provided conference goers with van transportation from their hotel on Old Meridian Street to the branch. He also ensured that breakfast, lunch, and dinner meals were catered over the course of the conference. Afterwards attendants informed Lands that the conference had been the best in the history of the organization.<sup>106</sup>

Lands also invited Professors Yosef ben-Jochannan and George Simmons of New York City College to lead a two-week seminar on Black History and philosophy in January 1976. In a public release letter detailing the event, he described the conference as a “COMMUNITY MUST, especially for Ministers, Parents, and Educators on all levels

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<sup>103</sup> Wilbur H. Peck, General Executive of the YMCA of Greater Indianapolis, and John Lands, “YMCA of Greater Indianapolis, Fall Creek Branch: Programmatic and Development Plan, 1976-1980,” cover letter to Lilly Endowment Inc. Provided by John Lands and in possession of the author.

<sup>104</sup> Burlock with Lands, March 1, 2012; John Lands, “Fall Creek Parkway YMCA Progress Report 1972,” 3-4. Provided by John Lands and in possession of the author.

<sup>105</sup> Burlock with Lands, March 1, 2012.

<sup>106</sup> Burlock with Lands, February 10, 2014.

who are concerned about the education and development of their Black Students.”<sup>107</sup> The purpose of the event was not only reminiscent of Senate Avenue’s Monster Meetings in the 1950s but also reflective of the community awareness of the executive director.

Activities facilitated outside of the Fall Creek facility included the Resident Camp program held at Flat Rock River Camp. The objective of featured outdoor activities, which included horseback riding, hiking, and canoeing, was to provide young adults and their parents opportunities to bond and thus aimed to both “nurture a positive attitude” about nature and “strengthen the family unit.”<sup>108</sup> Lands rented Flat Rock in 1973 and remembered how he and his staff transported kids and their parents to the camp. He and his staff also put up cabin signs with African names because they wanted the young campers to “develop pride and respect” for their ancestral culture and themselves. Such an effort illustrated one of the objectives that Lands purposed to accomplish through various programming at Fall Creek, which was to fortify the self-image of the branch’s African-American members.<sup>109</sup>

Moreover, Fall Creek YMCA administrators liaised with community-based groups such as social services and the Indianapolis Housing Department to offer a Bus-in Program. The Bus-in program was an outreach service that transported youth members from their homes or schools to the Fall Creek YMCA. This way distance and the lack of reliable transportation did not become obstacles to members who wanted to take

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<sup>107</sup> John Lands, General Letter, photocopy, December 29, 1975. Provided by John Lands and in possession of the author. A short seminar application is included at the bottom of the letter, under a perforated line. The letter also indicates that it includes additional enclosures detailing the format of the conference and the credentials of the speakers. The author is not in possession of these enclosures.

<sup>108</sup> Wilbur H. Peck and John Lands, “YMCA of Greater Indianapolis, Fall Creek Branch: Programmatic and Development Plan, 1976-1980.” Provided by John Lands and in possession of the author.

<sup>109</sup> Burlock with Lands, March 1, 2012.

advantage of the counseling services, educational activities, and extracurricular programs in art or physical fitness that were facilitated at the branch.<sup>110</sup>

Such programming was facilitated within a limited space and in the midst of renovations, as well as the lack thereof. Elmer Hill, General Secretary of the Greater Indianapolis YMCA, reported that the YMCA facility had already endured “six years of deferred maintenance,” six years *before* Lands became director of the branch, and that “Landscaping [was] yet to be done.”<sup>111</sup> According to a 1972 Progress Report by John Lands, certain building amenities such as “furnaces, air-conditioners, windows, halls, [the] swimming pool, lighting fixtures ... youth areas ... lawn and parking lot,” all suffered from a “lack of maintenance” due to insufficient repair and janitorial funds. In the midst of the limitations and renovations of the facility, such as the gym floor being completely refinished under Lands’ directorship, Fall Creek YMCA programming continued and expanded during the 1970s.<sup>112</sup> These programs were a synthesis of “the traditional YMCA approach,” which involved facilitating recreational programming, “with a concentrated thrust to service the black community in Indianapolis.” Fall Creek thus continued the Senate Avenue YMCA’s organizational legacy of being reflective of its communal membership base through offering needed programming that ranged from educational daycare programs, neighborhood service projects, and summer camps, to transportation and outreach services.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Wilbur H. Peck and John Lands, “Development Plan, 1976-1980.”

<sup>111</sup> Elmer O. Hill, “From the desk of Elmer O. Hill, General Secretary,” May 28, 1965, Box III of IV, YMCA Records.

<sup>112</sup> John Lands, “Fall Creek Parkway YMCA Progress Report 1972,” 1-5. Provided by John Lands and in possession of the author.

<sup>113</sup> Wilbur H. Peck and John Lands, “Development Plan, 1976-1980.”



The Fall Creek YMCA not only facilitated programs for “tots,” young people, and families, but also served as a neighborhood meeting space for community, senior citizen, and religious groups. The following is a non-inclusive list of such outside groups and churches that used the Fall Creek facility as a host site for conferences and work discussions during the 1970s:<sup>114</sup>

- Atterbury Job Corps
- Boy Scouts
- Center Township Trustee’s Office
- Crossroads Stroke Club
- Gary Indiana Children’s Bureau
- Goodwill Industries
- Holy Angels Church
- Indianapolis Public Housing Department
- Indianapolis Salvation Army
- Indianapolis Skill Center
- Marion County Department of Public Welfare
- Marion County Juvenile Courts
- Marion County Probation Agency
- St. Mary’s United Parcel Service
- Work Release Center

The extent to which the Fall Creek YMCA coordinated various programming from a centralized location demonstrated that the branch acted as the heart of its environment which supplied enriching programs, services, and cultural events as well as served to support existing local groups and agencies through providing a venue.

The Fall Creek YMCA’s role in its surrounding black community paralleled that of the Senate Avenue YMCA in that its programming targeted specific needs in the black community that predominantly white institutions did not meet within general society. According to Jocelyn-Tandy Adande, whose brothers participated in the Father and Son

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<sup>114</sup> Wilbur H. Peck and John Lands, “Development Plan, 1976-1980,” 13-17.

Banquets at Fall Creek, the YMCA was a family-focused organization that was the moral fiber of its residential black community, and as such was central to its solidarity and social maintenance.<sup>115</sup> Lands remembered the YMCA in the 1970s as an institutional “tentacle” that reached into needy areas of the near-Westside and downtown community.<sup>116</sup> The implications of such an analogy were evidenced by the number of evangelistic, physical education, and recreational programs that Fall Creek facilitated as well as hosted during the 1970s in the Indianapolis Black Community. It was the variety, scope, and heritage-focus of Fall Creek’s activities that made the YMCA a programmatic and ideological successor to the Senate Avenue YMCA. Debates concerning the necessity of this role in a community being affected by demographic shifts and urban revitalization measures will be discussed in Chapter Four.

### **Partnerships with Non-profit Organizations**

John Lands actively raised funds to cover the costs associated with facilitating programs and services at the Fall Creek YMCA. He did this by directly negotiating with representatives of allocating committees at non-profit organizations during his tenure as director, taking on a role that would have typically belonged to the branch’s Board of Directors or metropolitan association. “I was probably the first maybe one of the only executives to meet with [the United Way of Central Indiana] allocating committee,” surmised Lands. At the time United Way was only giving about \$12,500 to pay for the salary of the executive director. Lands persuaded the allocating committee to increase the

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<sup>115</sup> Burlock with Jocelyn-Tandy Adande, July 23, 2012.

<sup>116</sup> Burlock with Lands, March 1, 2012.

donation to “either \$121,000 or \$111,000.” He also remembered securing \$100,000 from Lilly Endowment and “about \$90,000” from the Department of Parks and Recreation while he was the Executive Director of Fall Creek. “We were bringing more money into the [Fall Creek] Y than the Y had ever had before,” concluded Lands.<sup>117</sup>

Donations from United Way, Lilly, and the Parks and Recreation Department would have typically covered the branch’s overhead costs that included the expenses of 1) equipment like pool tables, ceramic throw wheels, tumbling mats for activities, and a used bus for member transportation; 2) capital improvements such as renovating the gymnasium; 3) contracts with bandmasters, bus drivers, and other professionals who contributed to YMCA activities; and 4) miscellaneous supplies for the gymnasium and game room. Personnel salaries ranged from six to approximately twelve thousand dollars and included a facility director, athletic director, youth director, life guards, and recreation leaders.<sup>118</sup> John Lands did not receive a raise on his salary during all of the eight years he was the Executive Director of Fall Creek.<sup>119</sup>

While Lands was able to solicit support from his own staff and outside non-profit organizations during the 1970s, he did experience conflicts with some of the groups that made up the all-black membership of the Fall Creek YMCA. He remembered having to confront adult members of the Bridge Club over not keeping their room reservations at the branch. Failing to honor room reservations meant that a room remained empty at the branch when it could have been used to accommodate youth activities. Lands also

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<sup>117</sup> Burlock with Lands, March 1, 2012; Art Strong, Superintendent of Recreation with the Board of Parks and Recreation, to John Lands, photocopies, December 20, 1971. Provided by John Lands and in possession of the author.

<sup>118</sup> Art Strong to John Lands, December 20, 1971.

<sup>119</sup> Burlock with Lands, March 1, 2012.

remembered how he and his staff had to confront a group of parents who belonged to the black middle-class in Indianapolis. Some of those parents wanted their kids to be given a special swimming program because they did not want their children to learn how to swim with other children whose families lived in public housing projects. “[They] asked my aqua director,” recalled Lands, “if I would set up a special program for their kids because they didn’t want their kids swimming with the kids [from] Lockefield.” In short, as the Executive Director of Fall Creek Lands dealt with conflicts that were demonstrative of the limited space at the branch and the class rifts in its African-American membership.<sup>120</sup>

Lands concluded that the *start* of his executive directorship was marked by conflicts with some of the African-American members at the branch. “I’ve had more problems, man, with black folks than I had with white folks in the beginning,” he said. But, he emphasized that the Fall Creek YMCA reached a new highpoint in memberships, programming, and funding during his tenure, even with the presence of those conflicts and class divides. Lands instead saw his conflict with members of the majority-white metropolitan association to be the cause of irrecoverable consequences for his directorship and the trajectory of the branch.<sup>121</sup>

### **A Contentious and Controversial End**

The termination of the executive directorship of Lands was interpreted by the Fall Creek Board of Directors and newspaper correspondents who covered the controversy as

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<sup>120</sup> Burlock with Lands, March 1, 2012.

<sup>121</sup> Burlock with Lands, March 1, 2012.

a dishonest and damaging setback for the 10<sup>th</sup> Street YMCA.<sup>122</sup> His being forced out was not a surprise but rather the culmination of major conflicts between the Fall Creek and Metropolitan YMCA Boards that would continue to characterize the relationship between the two groups. The Fall Creek YMCA increasingly became a battleground over which divergent visions of how a branch should function within an inner-city community warred with each other for dominance and implementation. In other words, Lands, the Fall Creek Board, and the Metropolitan Board differed in how they interpreted the spirit-mind-body mission of a YMCA. Lands conceptualized Fall Creek as a branch that autonomously offered services that specifically addressed what he identified as needs in the black community, while the metropolitan administration conceptualized Fall Creek as a branch that was attached to and under the authority of a larger organization.

The first clash between John Lands as Executive Director of the Fall Creek YMCA and the Metropolitan Board happened as early as 1971. Lands had submitted a plan to finance the Fall Creek YMCA to Lilly Endowment Incorporated. Fred Carl, Metropolitan YMCA Director, asked Lands not to pursue funding for just the Fall Creek YMCA because he wanted instead to “present to Lilly a collective plan for all Y’s.”<sup>123</sup> Thus, while Lands understood the Fall Creek YMCA as a community organization that both targeted and possessed specific financial needs, the director of the Metropolitan YMCA understood the Fall Creek YMCA as a branch that was subsumed by one multifaceted organization, and consequently not a stand-alone case.

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<sup>122</sup> Lisa Baird, “Fall Creek YMCA: Country Club for IUPUI or Gathering Place for Black Community?” April 1979, Box Executive Committee and Board of Directors Folders 2008, “Photographs” Album, YMCA Records.

<sup>123</sup> Baird, “Fall Creek YMCA,” April 1979, YMCA Records.

The understanding that the Fall Creek YMCA was not independent of, but rather dependent on, the Metropolitan YMCA actually aligned with the conventional organizational hierarchy of metropolitan and individual YMCA branches. A branch's facilities, endowments, and other income (from membership and dormitories) were legally owned by its metropolitan association. Metropolitan associations evaluated individual YMCAs based on their ability to become self-financing or to balance expenditures and income. Those that incurred debt requested subsidies as well as loans at an interest rate from the metropolitan association, which acted as an accounting agency. Associations with default metropolitan loans and an imbalanced budget (i.e., income was less than programmatic expenditures) were classifiable as "unstable-deficit departments" whose administrations consequently experienced decreased autonomy.<sup>124</sup> Thus, the question of autonomy concerning a struggling branch was dependent on whether or not the metropolitan association labeled the branch as unstable and decided to reclaim administrative control over the branch's managers and executive director.

The divide over whether the Fall Creek YMCA was under the authority of its executive director, who was appointed by the branch's board of managers, or its metropolitan association, manifested again in 1974 when Lands and the Metropolitan Board disagreed over the color of two used vans. Lands purchased the vans with Fall Creek YMCA funds and utilized them as part of a transportation system that chauffeured senior citizens to supermarkets and doctor's offices, as well as preschoolers to the Tiny Tots daycare service at Fall Creek. The daycare service addressed the needs of residents in the surrounding Bottoms community, particularly single mothers on welfare. These

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<sup>124</sup> Zald, *Organizational Change*, 123.

ladies volunteered their food stamps, time, and talents to facilitate ““daylong”” daycare services for the kids who were transported to Fall Creek in Lands’ vans. According to the executive director, children “were learning to work and play together, read and write and respect adults other than their mothers,” while many volunteer mothers obtained the skills that would help them to secure paying positions. In short, both the education of daycare-age children and training of volunteers were made possible by the free transportation that was provided by two vans, which Lands painted red, black, and green. His decision to use Black Nationalist colors reflected the rise of pro-black history sentiment in Indiana during the 1970s.<sup>125</sup> Perhaps Lands also felt that the colors were appropriate because they indicated the purpose of the vans, which was to serve the black community that made up Fall Creek’s membership base.

The Metropolitan Board wanted the vans to be painted red, white, and blue instead and for ““the titles [of the vans] be put in the corporate name rather [than] Fall Creek’s.”” Such a desire reflected the understanding that the Fall Creek YMCA was underneath the financial umbrella of the Metropolitan YMCA, and moreover that Fall Creek was not a separate entity unto itself because the branch targeted its ethnic community. Ultimately, the Fall Creek YMCA lost the vans in 1977 when a repairman, upon instruction by the Metropolitan YMCA, refused to return them to Lands.<sup>126</sup>

The dispute between Executive Director Lands and the Metropolitan Board as well as the subsequent seizing of the vans by the board—to be utilized by the Ransburg and Flat Rock River Camp YMCAs—was followed by program and budget cuts. To

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<sup>125</sup> Baird, “Fall Creek YMCA,” April 1979, YMCA Records.

<sup>126</sup> Baird, “Fall Creek YMCA,” April 1979, YMCA Records.

shore up the budget for Fall Creek “in the wake of revitalization and development plans in the near-Westside,” Lands submitted another comprehensive plan to Lilly Endowment. This plan was to be set in motion between 1976 and 1980. Again plans for the Fall Creek YMCA failed to materialize into funding because of the lack of “commitment” communicated by the Metropolitan Board to Lilly.<sup>127</sup> The conflict marked the final dispute over funds before Lands was forced out of his executive directorship by the Metropolitan Board. As one newspaper reporter asserted, this last “confrontation” decided “the rather crucial issue of whether the Fall Creek board, or the predominantly white Metro board will control the black institution,” which was Fall Creek.<sup>128</sup>

In April 1979, a short time after the second clash over Lilly funds, Metropolitan Board Chairman Richard Warne announced the appointment of Superior Court Judge Michael T. Dugan, a Metropolitan Board member, as head of an independent committee that was to decide the future utility of Fall Creek in its black community. (Dugan eventually tendered his resignation to the Metropolitan Board in June, most likely due to “political pressure” by the members of the Fall Creek Board of Directors.)<sup>129</sup> According to articles published in the *Indianapolis Recorder*, Warne also reported that the Metropolitan YMCA Board had accepted the resignation of John Lands, effective at the end of the month. Lands knew that the announcement was wrong not only because he had never yielded either a written or verbal resignation—“I never resigned,” he said—but also because he knew that only the Fall Creek YMCA Board possessed the authority to

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<sup>127</sup> Baird, “Fall Creek YMCA,” April 1979, YMCA Records.

<sup>128</sup> “Fall Creek ‘Y’ Fights For Life,” April 1979, Box Executive Committee and Board of Directors Folders 2008, “Photographs” Album, YMCA Records.

<sup>129</sup> “Dugan Heads Y Study,” April 1979 and Michael W. Greene, “Dugan resigns from Metro Y Task force,” *Indianapolis Recorder*, June 1979, Box Executive Committee and Board of Directors Folders 2008, “Photographs” Album, YMCA Records.



terminate his directorship. “The only person that could fire me was my Board,” explained Lands, “They hired me . . . and were the only ones who could fire me.” Roderick Bohannan, who was the President of the Fall Creek YMCA Board and an attorney for the Legal Services Organization, described the actions taken by the Metropolitan Board to force Lands out without the approval of the branch’s board as deplorable and arrogant in a later news conference covered by reporters for the *Recorder*.<sup>130</sup>

Lands decided to continue his role at the Fall Creek YMCA out of respect to the board members who had hired him, and who were the only ones with the authority to vote him out of the directorship. He estimated that he worked at Fall Creek for a year and a half to two years without pay. After that time, Lands made the decision to leave his position at the branch and to file suit against the metropolitan association over not receiving his regular salary since December of 1979. His lawyer informed him that he had to file suit against the Fall Creek YMCA Board as well. The back-pay suit was ultimately settled out of court. Lands explained that the result was a small compensation after having acquired debt for working without salary for almost two years at the Fall Creek YMCA.<sup>131</sup>

Lands remembered the ordeal as being representative of how the Metropolitan YMCA Board did not value the role that the Fall Creek YMCA filled under his directorship. “We were what I consider to be the mouthpiece of Indianapolis,” Lands said about the YMCA branch at 10<sup>th</sup> Street, echoing Faburn E. DeFrantz, who served as

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<sup>130</sup> Burlock with Lands, March 1, 2012; “Dugan Heads Y Study,” April 1979; Baird, “‘Y’ Head Calls Firing Bid To Alter Racial Makeup,” *Indianapolis Recorder*, April 1979; “Fall Creek Y To Retain Director,” April 1979; Fall Creek Y fights Lands Firing,” 1979; Michael W. Greene, “Dugan’s Impartiality Questioned: Fall Creek Board Votes to Keep Lands,” *Indianapolis Recorder*, May 1979, all located in Box Executive Committee and Board of Directors Folders 2008, “Photographs” Album, YMCA Records.

<sup>131</sup> Burlock with Lands, March 1, 2012; Baird, “Fall Creek YMCA,” April 1979, YMCA Records.

Executive Secretary of the Senate Avenue YMCA between 1916 and 1952. Lands made clear that, “Fall Creek was where everything was happening at ... we were involved in educating, doing things in order to help the kids build self-esteem. You would think that the metropolitan [association] would have looked at that.”<sup>132</sup> He also stressed that the services and programs offered at Fall Creek were the result of cooperation. “It wasn’t about me ... it [was] really about us and we,” he emphasized. Lands adamantly credited the success of activities at the Fall Creek YMCA during the 1970s to not only his efforts but also those of his staff at the time.<sup>133</sup> Therefore, Lands envisioned the Fall Creek YMCA as a collaborative operation that preserved the legacy of its predecessor and met the needs of African Americans who lived in the Bottoms community for outreach services and onsite, life-enriching programs.

Thus, Lands knew that the conflict between himself, the Fall Creek Board, and the Metropolitan Board was more than an internal organizational dispute. Indeed he understood that the conflict concerning the administration of Fall Creek was a microcosm of a larger conflict. This conflict was between the needs of the Bottoms community and the “progress” of downtown revitalization projects in Indianapolis—perpetuated by redevelopment agents like the state highway department and IU Real Estate Department—that would reshape Indianapolis’ inner-city neighborhoods.

Likewise, staff of the *Recorder* connected the attempts by the Metropolitan Board to oust Lands from Fall Creek to a long-range plan that included erasing the identity of the surrounding “traditional black community,” which would consequently “merge into

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<sup>132</sup> Burlock with Lands, March 1, 2012.

<sup>133</sup> Burlock with Lands, February 10, 2014.

the shadows of” IUPUI.<sup>134</sup> Bohannon further contended that removing Lands would mean losing Fall Creek to other local organizations and institutions which had visions that were contrary to the needs of the inner city. The board president explained to *Recorder* journalist Lisa Baird at the time that the attempt by the Metropolitan Board to remove Lands from the Fall Creek YMCA was “the final step ... in an attempt to take the facility away from the black community and transform it into a ‘country club’ for Indiana University-Purdue University, Indianapolis, the medical complex and downtown businesses.”<sup>135</sup> According to *Recorder* staff writer Michael W. Greene, Lands did not oppose Indiana University students taking advantage of Fall Creek facilities. In fact he would have encouraged their involvement provided that, as he informed Greene, Fall Creek “remain[ed] committed to the black community” in the downtown area.<sup>136</sup> How the Fall Creek YMCA should have functioned within its black community was the issue over which Lands, the Fall Creek YMCA Board, and the Metropolitan YMCA Board were divided. This conflict was manifested in the attempt by the metropolitan association to bring an end to the executive directorship of John Lands at the Fall Creek YMCA.

There was no compromise on the part of the Metropolitan Board of Directors concerning the removal of Lands as executive director. Approximately two months after the board announced it had accepted the resignation of Lands, the locks were changed on his office as well as on dormitory rooms and “Program area doors” at the facility. This strategy to effectively lock Lands out of his office and a large part of the building was

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<sup>134</sup> Bishop, “Not Just the YMCA,” May 1979, YMCA Records.

<sup>135</sup> Baird, “Fall Creek YMCA,” April 1979, YMCA Records.

<sup>136</sup> Greene, “Dugan’s Impartiality Questioned,” May 1979; Baird, “Fall Creek YMCA,” April 1979, YMCA Records.

reportedly orchestrated by members of the Metropolitan Board while Lands was in Atlanta attending a YMCA Conference.<sup>137</sup> Ultimately, Lands was replaced by Valjean Dickinson, a recently resigned African-American member of the Metropolitan YMCA Board and the former continuing studies division manager at IUPUI.<sup>138</sup>

### **Competing Visions about the Mission and Membership Base of the Fall Creek YMCA, 1970s**

The contentious end to the relationship between executive director Lands and the Metropolitan Board was a microcosmic drama that unfolded on the stage of 1970s Indianapolis. This context carried over into the 1980s and 1990s, encompassing student demands for equal rights on college campuses, the promotion of black history and accomplishments in curriculum, media, and public spaces, as well as the increasing implementation of desegregation measures in accordance with the *Brown* decision and 1960s civil rights legislation. The conflict between the Fall Creek and Metropolitan YMCA Boards would manifest the relationship between the downtown black community and the city during such a period of time. It is important to first understand the former conflict implicit in the narrative of Lands' executive directorship of the Fall Creek YMCA, and his disagreements with the Metropolitan Board of Directors.

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<sup>137</sup> Michael W. Greene, "Locked out of Office: Post remains vacant after Lands' ouster," *Indianapolis Recorder*, July 1979, Box Executive Committee and Board of Directors Folders 2008, "Photographs" Album, YMCA Records.

<sup>138</sup> Reginald Bishop, "Spruced Up Fall Creek 'Y' Planning For Greater Impact," *Indianapolis News*, January 9, 1982, Clipping File, "Y.M.C.A.," Indiana State Library, Indianapolis, Indiana.

**“Nowadays the Y is a business”<sup>139</sup>**

The first successor to Lands proposed a general management plan that demonstrated the potential conflict between advocating for the black community and aligning with citywide changes. Upon assuming directorship of Fall Creek, Valjean Dickinson, who was formerly a manager of the IUPUI continuing studies division and member of the Metropolitan YMCA Board, informed a reporter for *Indianapolis News* in January 1982 that his vision for the branch was twofold. In spite of limited space in the facility, Dickinson wanted the Fall Creek YMCA to eventually “have a sauna and [offer a] physical exercise program like the health spas” at other locations in the city. He also planned for Fall Creek to continue to be “a focal point in the black community,” which he explained was disproportionately and acutely suffering from “many of society’s problems such as drop outs, teen-age pregnancies, abortions, divorces and homicides.” Dickinson summarized that ““We,”” as in he and the Metropolitan YMCA Board, ““want to develop a good solid program for the community,”” especially black families, at Fall Creek. Wilbur Peck, a white man who was the president of the Greater Indianapolis YMCA at the time, reiterated Dickinson and said that, ““The branch will continue to be a focal point in the black community.”” Neither Dickinson nor Peck specified to the reporter how physical fitness programs that appealed health spa aficionados would be reconciled with social service programming that could address serious problems in the inner-city community of Indianapolis.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Jeff Swiatek, “Durable YMCAs forced to become cost-efficient,” *Indianapolis Star*, May 1, 1983, Clipping File, “Y.M.C.A.,” Indiana State Library, Indianapolis, Indiana. (Hereafter cited as ISL.)

<sup>140</sup> Bishop, “Spruced Up Fall Creek ‘Y,’” January 9, 1982, Clipping File, “Y.M.C.A.,” ISL. Wilbur Peck, President of the Greater Indianapolis YMCA, was also interviewed.

The dichotomy between developing physical fitness programs and services that addressed social problems was also a point of contention for other YMCA administrators and advocates in the state as well as nationwide during the 1980s. This conflict over the mission of individual branches was informed by larger societal and cultural issues. In an *Indianapolis Star* article published in May 1983 titled “Durable YMCAs forced to become cost-efficient,” reporter Jeff Swiatek explained that “The service and athletic association that every town seems to have is fighting to overcome not only a recession but sharper competition in the form of for-profit health clubs.” It was a fight that, as Swiatek noted, some branches lost, such as the YMCA in Gary that closed in 1976. One school of thought that arose in the early 1980s asserted that YMCA branches needed to change their mission to target only youth and families in order to maintain financial stability. Proponents of this school of thought included the executive directors of the branches in Monroe County and New Castle, Indiana, and a spokesperson for the national YMCA of the USA office based in Chicago, Illinois.<sup>141</sup>

In the “Durable YMCAs” article, Scott A. Gaalaas, executive director of the Monroe County YMCA in Bloomington, credited the significant financial success of his branch following the time of its opening in October 1981 to “concentrating exclusively on fitness programs, even setting up an exercise program for 1-year-old babies.” By 1983 the Monroe County YMCA was the largest branch in the state of Indiana with reportedly 9,500 members. YMCA administrators had also paid off the branch’s building debt of \$2.5 million. Gaalaas told reporter Jeff Swiatek that ““YMCAs must realize they need to react to the needs of people toward health and fitness”” in order to financially thrive like

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<sup>141</sup> Swiatek, “Durable YMCAs,” May 1, 1983, Clipping File, “Y.M.C.A.,” ISL.

his branch.<sup>142</sup> It is important to note that physical fitness education has been a main focus of individual branches in the U.S. as early as the 1800s. Moreover, health and physical education has been a reoccurring subject of studies and conferences sponsored by the National Council of YMCAs since the early twentieth century.<sup>143</sup> Therefore, Gaalaas' decision to implement programming that met the health and fitness needs of members represented a continuation of rather than a shift in national YMCA policy. His emphasis on *only* developing physical fitness programming was based on his own understanding of how the Monroe County YMCA should have functioned within its own local community.

Likewise, Thomas Mulcahy, who was the executive director of the New Castle YMCA in Henry County, Indiana, at the time thought that YMCA branches needed to change in order to remain vital and financially viable within their communities. Mulcahy had been on staff at a YMCA branch in Flint, Michigan, before moving to Indiana. He attributed the financial trouble of the New Castle YMCA to static management that continued unprofitable sleeping room services and struggled with overhead costs. "Management," he explained, "was not able to keep up with changing times." The New Castle branch would have permanently closed in 1982 if it was not for an emergency fund drive that brought in two hundred thousand dollars. When the branch

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<sup>142</sup> Swiatek, "Durable YMCAs."

<sup>143</sup> Refer to the YMCA Physical Education Programs records (Y.USA.5) at the Kautz Family YMCA Archives, <http://special.lib.umn.edu/findaid/html/ymca/yusa0005.phtml>, for conference materials, physical education studies, papers, and minutes dated between 1887 and 2001 by groups such as the National YMCA's Physical Department, Physical Education Committee, as well as leading experts. For example: "YMCA Health and Physical Education; a Plan for the 80s," [scanned pamphlet advertising a conference co-sponsored by National Council of YMCAs], October 16-17, 1975, Kautz Family YMCA Archives, Elmer L. Anderson Library, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis.

Also see Elmer L. Johnson, *The History of YMCA Physical Education* (Chicago: Association Press, 1979).

reopened in February 1983 its sleeping rooms were closed and the facility had been refurbished with energy-efficient heating and air conditioning systems.<sup>144</sup>

Based on his understanding of the New Castle YM's financial deficits, Mulcahy concluded in May 1983 that "“Nowadays the Y is a business and has to be run as a business.”<sup>145</sup> His vision of the nonprofit YMCA organization as a business stressed the significance of a strong enrollment economy—i.e., a strong membership base that gave financial support—which was one of the traditional characteristics of a YMCA branch identified by Mayer Zald, Professor Emeritus of Social Work and an expert on the organizational characteristics of YMCAs.<sup>146</sup>

The contention that the YMCA had to continue to maintain high enrollment rates in the late twentieth century was also promoted to Swiatek by Anthony Ripley, a representative of the national YMCA office. Ripley claimed that the question facing YMCAs across the nation in 1983 was whether or not they could modernize to build and retain a membership base. He thought that individual YMCA branches could accomplish this in the 1980s through autonomously adapting to their changing environments. "“The Y,”" he explained to Swiatek, "“bends, moves, reshapes and reshuffles. It has always been a reflection of local desires.”"<sup>147</sup> Ripley thus agreed with Zald that it was the tendency of YMCAs to respond and reflect the ferment taking place in their communities.<sup>148</sup> The extent to which services at a YMCA branch reflected local desires and agreed with

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<sup>144</sup> Swiatek, "Durable YMCAs."

<sup>145</sup> Swiatek, "Durable YMCAs."

<sup>146</sup> Mayer N. Zald and Patricia D. Wallace, "From Evangelism to General Service: The Transformation of the YMCA," *Administrative Science Quarterly* 8, no. 2 (1963): 234.

<sup>147</sup> Swiatek, "Durable YMCAs."

<sup>148</sup> Zald, *Organizational Change*, xiii-xiv; Swiatek, "Durable YMCAs."



programs that were reviewed by the National Council of YMCAs was determined by the branch's executive director and metropolitan board.

The question facing the administrators of historically black YMCA branches like the Fall Creek YMCA was *whose* local desires or visions would reshape their mission and communal role in the 1980s apart from the national YMCA office. Indeed, although Gaalaas, Mulcahy, and Ripley referred to their positions on the financial viability of YM branches as being comprehensively applicable to all branches, there were other administrators within the YMCA organization that proposed different survive-and-thrive strategies for YMCAs with majority non-white memberships. This is because they felt that branches with minority memberships were different than traditional ones.<sup>149</sup>

In contrast, Wilbur Peck, president of the Greater Indianapolis YMCA, thought that YMCA branches were generally different because the ages and gender of members had "diversified" by the late twentieth century. In "Durable YMCAs" he explained how the acronym Y.M.C.A. was a misnomer: "'We're not young, we're not men and we're not Christian in terms of having to be one to join.'" Swiatek went on to note that "a majority of YMCA members nationwide are older than 18 and almost half are female." Peck's usage of "we" though belied the perspective of some vocal African-American leaders within the YMCA organization who thought that branches with majority-black memberships were unconventional regardless of the age, gender, or religion of their individual members. In other words, the fact that not all members were Caucasian, and that not all YMCAs were centered in historically black inner cities, should also be taken

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<sup>149</sup> Swiatek, "Durable YMCAs;" Ronald S. Henderson, Submitted to The National Conference of Black and Non-White Laymen and Staff of the Young Men's Christian Association, A Case Study Summary: Conception of 21 YMCA Units in Black Communities-Planned Survival Action-Task Force on the Survival and Future of Black and Non-White YMCA Units, August 1974, p. 1. Provided by John Lands and in possession of the author.

into account when deciding if branches should change their mission or not. According to these leaders, YMCAs centered in African-American communities did not need to reinforce traditional characteristics (e.g., an enrollment economy) in order to maintain strong membership rates and compete with neighboring health club businesses.<sup>150</sup>

**“The Fall Creek YMCA is not a YMCA”<sup>151</sup>**

The second school of thought concerning the communal role and administration of YMCAs arose as early as 1968. It asserted that YMCAs with all or majority nonwhite memberships needed to continue providing community-centered services in order to maintain their utility. Proponents included those African-American, Chinese, and Chicano staff members at YMCA branches who participated in the National Conference of Black and Non-White YMCA Laymen and Staff or BAN-WYS. BAN-WYS was originally an ad hoc group that was established in November 1968 by Leo Marsh, the first African-American president of the Association of YMCA Secretaries (AOS), and other men and women who were on the staff of different YMCA branches. These individuals were frustrated with the persistence of institutional racism in YMCAs. Over time, the group became a network that worked to represent the ideas and policies advocated by nonwhite YMCA staff members. Affiliates of the BAN-WYS program included members of the Association of Professional YMCA Directors (APD).<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> Swiatek, “Durable YMCAs;” Henderson, A Case Study Summary: Conception of 21 YMCA Units in Black Communities, 1. Provided by John Lands and in possession of the author.

<sup>151</sup> Henderson, “A Case Study Summary.”

<sup>152</sup> Jesse N. Alexander, Jr., “The YMCA in Black Communities – A Leap into the ‘80s: A Proposed Program for 130 YMCAs,” Concept Paper #3, in “YMCA of Greater Indianapolis, Fall Creek Branch: Programmatic and Development Plan, 1976-1980,” by Wilbur Peck and John Lands, August 1975, p. 4. Provided by John Lands and in possession of the author; Kautz Family YMCA Archives, *A Brief*

One of the concept papers submitted to the national conference of BAN-WYS in August 1974 was written by Ronald S. Henderson. John Lands, Executive Director of the Fall Creek YMCA, met Ronald Henderson at the 1973 BAN-WYS conference that was held at the Fall Creek branch (see “The Lands Era, 1971-1979: Programming and Special Events” on page 55). Lands remembered Henderson or “Ron” as an Executive Director of a historically black YMCA branch in New Orleans, Louisiana, who “played a major role in the Y” and was “very active in BAN-WYS.” According to Lands, Henderson started to write the paper that he would present at the 1974 BAN-WYS conference after attending the 1973 BAN-WYS conference at the Fall Creek YMCA. The paper was eventually disseminated to executive directors of YMCA branches across the nation, recalled Lands.<sup>153</sup>

In his concept paper Henderson wrote about the need for YMCA branches in majority-black communities and observed that providing community-centered programs to meet those needs was not characteristic of a conventional YMCA branch. He used the Metropolitan and Fall Creek Parkway YMCAs as case studies for this claim. “The conventional YMCA operation,” he explained, “is managed by a group of concerned people who have the financial means to support a large portion of the operating cost.” Henderson also asserted that the operating cost of a conventional YMCA was offset by a strong enrollment economy or membership base that the YMCA staff solicited for “financial donations” and support through advertising the “total ‘GOOD’ of the YMCA.” Since the Fall Creek YMCA did not exhibit such “characteristics, institutional goals or

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*History of the YMCA and African-American Communities*, <https://www.lib.umn.edu/ymca/guide-afam-history>. Also refer to the YMCA Interracial Programs records (Y.USA.2) at the Kautz Family YMCA Archives, <http://special.lib.umn.edu/findaid/xml/yusa0002.xml>.

<sup>153</sup> Burlock with Lands, February 10, 2014.

objectives” that centered on marketing membership dues, Henderson concluded that “By all conventional standards, the Fall Creek YMCA is not a YMCA” but rather “the most effective, sustaining, community service organization in the City of Indianapolis.” This understanding of the Fall Creek branch as a community service organization represented a vision of YMCAs that directly conflicted with the concept of the YMCA as a competitive business.<sup>154</sup>

Henderson listed several reasons to support his conclusion about the unconventional role of Fall Creek, stressing the necessity of such a role within the downtown community of Indianapolis. He credited Executive Director John Lands with administrating the Fall Creek branch as a “human service agency” that assisted “elder citizens, delinquent juveniles, unwed mothers and fatherless children.” Another reason Henderson listed to support his conception of the role of “the Fall Creek operation” was that the branch related “to the unwanted problems of the mid-town [area] (unemployment, drugs and crime, inadequate housing, deterioration, resistance to capitalistic sprawl),” and therefore served the people who remained in the inner city of Indianapolis.<sup>155</sup>

Lands agreed with Henderson’s conception of Fall Creek as an unconventional YMCA operation within an underprivileged service area. “We didn’t have what I consider to be a typical YMCA,” the executive director reflected about Fall Creek during his tenure between 1971 and 1979. “We were dealing with people who were kind of left behind who ... [weren’t] able to leave the neighborhood.” He explained that the membership base of the Fall Creek YMCA included the kids of families living in the 748

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<sup>154</sup> Henderson, “A Case Study Summary;” Swiatek, “Durable YMCAs.”

<sup>155</sup> Henderson, “A Case Study Summary.”

units that made up Lockefield Gardens, which was between Indiana Avenue, Blake, North, and Locke Streets, and other public housing projects.<sup>156</sup>

What is more, Lands extended the influence of the Fall Creek YMCA beyond its immediate service area, offering transportation services to adult and youth members. “We were dealing pretty much with the whole of Indianapolis ... [not just] the Indiana Avenue [area],” Lands remembered. “We were a tentacle. We reached in all the black communities.”<sup>157</sup> Thus, the Fall Creek YMCA was representative of a YMCA branch that was being run as a far-reaching community center. Indeed, according to Henderson’s case study, the Fall Creek branch was moreover “a model that should be closely studied and distributed to other metropolitan Black community organizations.” He urged executive directors of other historically black YMCAs to follow Lands’ example of resisting “organizational policies” characteristic of the YMCA structure in favor of adapting to specific needs within minority communities.<sup>158</sup>

Henderson also briefly discussed two other executive directors of branches that functioned as “model Black YMCA operations.” They were John Cox, General Executive of the Butler Street YMCA in Atlanta, Georgia, and Douglas Evans, General Executive of the Dryades YMCA in New Orleans, Louisiana. (The Dryades YMCA is still in operation as of December 2013.) The Butler Street and Dryades YMCA operations, like the Fall Creek YMCA, functioned as social service agencies rather than organizations dependent on enrollment economies. Henderson emphasized that “less than \$60,000.00

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<sup>156</sup> Burlock with Lands, March 1, 2012; Leigh Darbee, “Lockefield Gardens,” in *The Encyclopedia of Indianapolis*.

<sup>157</sup> Burlock with Lands, March 1, 2012.

<sup>158</sup> Henderson, “A Case Study Summary.”

was collected in YMCA membership dues of a combined total expenditure of \$700,000.00” for both branches. Therefore the Butler Street and Dryades YMCAs did not function as conventional branches in the 1970s because they offered services that were supported by other sources of income besides membership dues for general programming.<sup>159</sup>

In the 1970s the Fall Creek YMCA operation also relied on donations rather than membership dues (see “Partnerships with Non-profit Organizations” on page 60). Lands recognized the necessity of actively fundraising for black YMCA operations in order to offset their limited enrollment economies. “Most of those white Y’s are named for philanthropists,” Lands explained. “We needed money we couldn’t go to [Mr.] Fall Creek and get some money... We were pretty much solely funded by monies coming in.” Lands took on the responsibility to raise these funds, refusing to shift the burden of financial

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<sup>159</sup> Henderson, “A Case Study Summary,” African-American Registry, *A Home in Atlanta: The Butler YMCA!*, [http://www.aaregistry.org/historic\\_events/view/home-atlanta-butler-ymca](http://www.aaregistry.org/historic_events/view/home-atlanta-butler-ymca); “Historic Butler Street YMCA closes,” 11Alive News, December 12, 2012, <http://www.11alive.com/rss/article/267997/37/Historic-Butler-Street-YMCA-closes>; “Fire in Atlanta’s old Butler Street YMCA building,” 11Alive News, March 21, 2013, <http://www.11alive.com/news/article/284310/40/Fire-in-Atlantas-old-Butler-Street-YMCA-building>; Dryades YMCA, *About: Always Here for our Community*, [http://dryadesymca.com/?page\\_id=111](http://dryadesymca.com/?page_id=111); YMCA of Greater New York, *Guest Rooms*, <http://www.ymcanyc.org/association/guest-rooms/harlemrooms>; YMCA of Greater New York, *About Us*, <http://www.ymcanyc.org/association/pages/about#history>; YMCA of Greater New York, *Contact Us*, <http://www.ymcanyc.org/association/pages/contact>.

The Butler YMCA, informally dubbed The Black City Hall of Atlanta, was founded in 1894 and moved to its site off of Auburn Avenue in 1920. The YMCA acted as a central recreational and meeting space for African-American youth and adults. Martin Luther King, Jr. and Vernon Jordan were among the many young black men in Atlanta who became members. YMCA facilitators eventually established The Hungry Club in 1942. The forum provided opportunities for black and white leaders to hold open discussions. Sadly, the Butler YMCA closed in December 2012. The YMCA facility was designated as unsafe by a fire inspector and the branch lost its official charter from the National YMCA Program. Since its close community leaders have made plans to renovate and re-utilize the building as a community service center. As of March 2013 the building provided transitional housing.

The Dryades YMCA in New Orleans was established in 1905. Henderson also compared the Fall Creek YMCA to the Harlem YMCA, another historically black YMCA. The Harlem YMCA is one of the branches of the YMCA of Greater New York that are located throughout New York City’s five boroughs. The YMCA of Greater New York was founded in 1852 and currently boasts the official slogan “We’re here for Good.” The Dryades YMCA and Harlem YMCA (which runs guest rooms) were active operations at the time of this project.

support to members who were in need, when he was the Executive Director of the Fall Creek YMCA.<sup>160</sup>

While administrators like Scott Gaalaas and Thomas Mulcahy conceptualized functional YMCAs as self-sustaining businesses, Henderson and Lands understood YMCA operations with memberships comprising “serviceable Black masses” to be community-centered operations. They thought that such operations should be run to meet social needs rather than conventional organizational standards. It was those social needs that Black YMCA operations addressed that absolved their executive directors from implementing “the conventional means of sustaining a YMCA,” claimed Henderson.<sup>161</sup>

Such an unconventional conception of YMCAs in majority-black communities emphasized the continuation of programming and alternative services. To Henderson and his BAN-WYS peers, the question facing African-American YMCAs across the nation even in the 1970s was whether or not they could maintain their utility in needy communities and resist “corporate identification,” which included streamlining services to focus on physical fitness. Henderson went on in his case study to acknowledge the conflict between meeting the needs of a mostly non-white, inner-city membership base and maintaining a YMCA branch: “I must realistically confess that the application of a YMCA to the needs of the poor and non-white are not embodied in the historical, traditional, conventional mind, body and spirit doctrines of the puritan, Christian YMCA.” Henderson stressed that it was difficult for executive directors to apply the organizational characteristics of the YMCA to disadvantaged communities because the

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<sup>160</sup> Burlock with Lands, March 1, 2012.

<sup>161</sup> Henderson, “A Case Study Summary.”

characteristics of the YMCA had changed. According to Henderson, by the late twentieth century the YMCA had changed from an organization that promoted “a human concern for young men with social problems” into “a capitalistic, corporate amalgamation” that supported the “selfish exercise of individual YMCA members’ minds and bodies.” Therefore YMCAs that offered programs in relation to specific social problems within their communities were actually more traditional YMCA operations in comparison to other branches, like the Monroe County and New Castle YMCAs, which promoted physical fitness over social service programming during the 1980s.<sup>162</sup>

Henderson concluded that the survival of YMCAs within inner-city communities was dependent on executive directors continuing to facilitate “the greater cause” of social service rather than solely focus on membership revenue. Again he stressed that “The need for YMCA membership is of no consequence when the need for human survival is so great.”<sup>163</sup> Valjean Dickinson and Wilbur Peck were unspecific about how the Fall Creek YMCA would attract members with expensive physical exercise programs *and* function as a human service agency in 1982, after Dickinson replaced John Lands as the executive director of the branch. YMCA administrators like Scott Gaalaas and Thomas Mulcahy focused on facilitating physical exercise programs and cost-efficient renovations in order to attract members.<sup>164</sup> In contrast, other YMCA administrators and supporters of BAN-

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<sup>162</sup> Henderson, “A Case Study Summary.”

<sup>163</sup> Henderson, “A Case Study Summary.”

<sup>164</sup> Swiatek, “Durable YMCAs.”



WYS were developing concepts of YMCA branches that could attract as well as adapt to the needs of a disadvantaged membership base.<sup>165</sup>

**“YMCA organizational and program patterns must be flexible”<sup>166</sup>**

Another concept paper about the survival of historically black YMCA branches during and after the 1970s was written by Jesse N. Alexander, Jr. In 1969, Alexander became the Director of the Black and Nonwhite Concerns Division of the national YMCA and consequently joined the YMCA of the USA’s National Board of Directors. (The idea to create this position was introduced at the 1968 BAN-WYS conference.)<sup>167</sup> Alexander’s concept paper—dated August 1975 and included in a “Programmatic and Development Plan” for Fall Creek that John Lands and Wilbur Peck jointly submitted to Lilly Endowment Incorporated in 1976—was another proposal that argued for running YMCAs as social service operations. Similar to Henderson in his case study summary, presented to the BAN-WYS conference in 1974, Alexander, who was the Director of Human Rights with the National Council of YMCAs, also discussed the survival of YMCAs in black communities into the 1980s. Alexander also detailed how such a great social cause was feasible within the parameters of a budget for hundreds of YMCAs that functioned similarly to the Fall Creek YMCA.<sup>168</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> Jesse N. Alexander, Jr., “The YMCA in Black Communities,” in Programmatic and Development Plan, 1976-1980.

<sup>166</sup> Alexander, “The YMCA in Black Communities.”

<sup>167</sup> Jesse N. Alexander, Jr. and Leo B. Mash, “The YMCA in Black Communities: One Hundred and Twenty-Five Years, 1853-1978, Selected Black Leaders of the YMCA,” June 15, 1977, Kautz Family YMCA Archives, Elmer L. Anderson Library, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis; Also refer to the Jesse Alexander papers (Y.USA.6) at the Kautz Family YMCA Archives, <http://special.lib.umn.edu/findaid/xml/yusa0006.xml>.

The financial viability of YMCAs in black communities, he proposed, was dependent on them maintaining relevance to the needs of those communities. According to Alexander, YMCA branches needed to reflect “the rich diversity of values among its constituents” rather than align with a singular organizational pattern. He specifically concluded that “YMCA organizational and program patterns must be flexible enough to live with rich, Black Cultural values.” In other words, YMCAs with majority-black membership bases should not be made, either by executive directors or a metropolitan association, to change their mission to align with the organizational characteristics of other conventional branches. Instead, Alexander proposed that administrators adapt the organizational characteristics of Black YMCAs to their surrounding communities in order to “maintain relevance” within these communities, which would benefit from programs that supported “cultural pluralism” and other activities besides physical exercise.<sup>169</sup>

Alexander delineated a three-point plan to overhaul YMCA branches in black communities and thus transition these “units” into “ethnic oriented YMCAs.” The first component of this tentative plan was to be completed between December 1975 and November 1976 and would involve the selection of fifteen to twenty YMCAs in black communities to serve as models for the implementation of “a long range community planning and development process.” The process would eventually become a national program. The second component of the plan was to be facilitated by YMCA administrators of Black YMCA operations between December 1976 and November 1977 and would involve developing mobile teams to train volunteers and staff at model YMCAs, as well as selecting thirty additional branches to “join the project as models.”

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<sup>168</sup> Alexander, “The YMCA in Black Communities.”

<sup>169</sup> Alexander, “The YMCA in Black Communities.”

The third component of the plan was to be completed between December 1977 and 1985 and would involve the preparation of program packages for YMCAs in black communities nationwide, constituting “a national program innovation thrust” that related to the ethnicity of members.<sup>170</sup>

The program package would have outlined programs that promoted “a total cultural experience.” According to Alexander, such racialized programming ideally included African heritage programs like African Guides, African Princesses, and African Youth Society clubs. He also listed programming that promoted achievements and entrepreneurial ventures by African Americans, much like the Monster Meetings facilitated by the Senate Avenue YMCA, as well as arts events. In short, implementing culture-specific programs at branches would relate the YMCAs to their communities and thus attract members in underserved areas.<sup>171</sup>

Alexander anticipated that the implementation of a national program and innovative culture-specific activities at YMCAs with majority black memberships between 1975 and 1985 would produce positive end results. He predicted that in just four years “registered Black participants” in YMCAs across the nation, especially in black communities, would increase from 740,000 to 800,000, and that “ethnic oriented YMCAs” would be able to rely on “a redesigned national YMCA support system.” Alexander asserted that the development of such a national support system for programs that provided “a total cultural experience” and innovative activities was necessary to maintain YMCAs in black communities. “It is no longer enough,” he explained in his

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<sup>170</sup> Alexander, “The YMCA in Black Communities.”

<sup>171</sup> Alexander, “The YMCA in Black Communities.”

proposal, “to simply raise more money” or “to copy successful programs.” Like Henderson, Alexander stressed in his proposal that the organizational characteristics of YMCA branches must adapt to the culture and social needs of its surrounding membership.<sup>172</sup>

While exploring whether or not BAN-WYS took action to implement either Henderson’s concepts or Alexander’s proposal to any extent is beyond the scope of this project, it is important to demonstrate that there were conflicting visions of how YMCAs in black communities should function during an economic downturn and compete against newer fitness organization. YM administrators like Gaalaas and Mulcahy claimed that the solicitation of members through general physical fitness programming was necessary for the survival of all branches during the late 1970s and early 1980s. Conversely, members and supporters of BAN-WYS envisioned the YMCA as a traditional humanitarian operation with organizational characteristics that could be made to manifest “cultural pluralism,” especially the culture of potential members in black communities.<sup>173</sup>

Conflicting concepts about how branches should function were based upon different understandings of what model YMCAs should be within their communities. As Zald maintained in *Organizational Change* (1970), using the Chicago YMCA as an example, changes to a YMCA’s mission were driven by the visions of administrators. “These changes,” he stated, “were not compelled by inexorable, deterministic forces requiring [the YMCA] to adapt or face disaster. Rather, moral choices and values regarding what the YMCA *ought* to be, operating in conjunction with social pressures

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<sup>172</sup> Alexander, “The YMCA in Black Communities.”

<sup>173</sup> Alexander, “The YMCA in Black Communities.”

and opportunities, explain the directions of change.” Gaalaas, Mulcahy, Henderson, and Alexander proposed changes to conventional YMCA characteristics that they thought were uneconomical or culturally homogenous. Their claims were predicated on how they thought YMCAs *should* function in relation to the financial needs of individual branches or social needs of majority-black communities.<sup>174</sup>

Henderson and Alexander, who submitted proposals to BAN-WYS and Lilly Incorporated in 1974 and 1975 respectively, identified historically black YMCAs like the Fall Creek Parkway YMCA as models of branches that facilitated cultural and community-centered programs that were financially viable with the support of other Black YMCAs and the national YMCA organization. In 1981 though the new executive director of the Fall Creek YMCA identified the historically black operation not as a model to preserve and expand but as a branch that needed to compete with “health spas” by offering physical fitness services.<sup>175</sup> Such opposing conceptions of the Fall Creek YMCA would be reflected in the controversy over the decision by the metropolitan association to close the branch in September 2003.

### **The Methodological Virtues of Using the Conflict over Fall Creek as a Lens on Large-Scale Forces in Near-downtown Indianapolis**

Conflicting visions over the survival of the Fall Creek YMCA reflected larger conflicts over the trajectory of its surrounding community. Therefore, presenting a more comprehensive account of what happened to the Fall Creek YMCA —through the inclusion of multiple narrators and their conflicting visions—is important to revealing

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<sup>174</sup> Zald, *Organizational Change*, 158.

<sup>175</sup> Bishop, “Spruced Up Fall Creek ‘Y.’”

what happened to the downtown area of Indianapolis. Like the disagreements between YM administrators across the nation, larger conflicts between proponents of urban revitalization and opposing community members in Indianapolis concerned the implementation of long-term plans and the beneficiary groups of such plans.

The Bottoms community that made up the service area of Fall Creek and was located northwest of Indianapolis' downtown area would only become increasingly vulnerable to the post-desegregation dismantlement of black neighborhoods as well as urban revitalization projects during the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>176</sup> Vocal battle lines formed between visions to revitalize the black community and plans to redevelop Indianapolis' downtown area. This larger post-Lands era context will first be discussed in Chapter Three. How the narrative and closing of the Fall Creek YMCA was influenced by this context, as well as reflective of polarized understandings concerning the dual processes of school desegregation and urban revitalization, are the subjects of Chapter Four.

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<sup>176</sup> Thornbrough, *Indiana Blacks*, 223-4.

### Chapter Three: The Movement to Desegregate and Redevelop Indianapolis' Pat Ward's Bottoms Community, 1960-1982

The Fall Creek Parkway YMCA provides a significant small-scale representation of the large-scale changes and controversies that defined its wider environment. As a reporter for the *Indianapolis Star Magazine*, named Ralph L. Brooks, observed in 1954, “The history of the [Indianapolis] YMCA follows closely the patterns of the story of Indianapolis during the past century. Its problems were pretty much those of the city, and it solved them in typical Indianapolis fashion.”<sup>177</sup> Similarly, in order to study the smaller *story* of Indianapolis' historically black YMCA, it is crucial to first position the branch within the context of larger *patterns*, and to identify the dual processes that changed the cityscape of Indianapolis and by extension affected the Fall Creek YMCA.

#### **A Space as the (Social) Product of Desegregation: School Busing and Outmigration, 1970s-1990s**

The Greater Indianapolis and Senate Avenue YMCA Boards established the Fall Creek YMCA within the heart of the downtown black community in 1959. This community was made up of black residential neighborhoods, Crispus Attucks High School, the Madame Walker Urban Life Center at 617 Indiana Avenue (both Crispus Attucks and the Walker Building opened in 1927), and other businesses that were owned and patronized by African Americans. Black spaces along Indiana Avenue included famed jazz club venues, restaurants, taverns, theaters, barber and beauty shops, billiard halls, meetings places for associations of African-American lawyers and doctors, Baptist

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<sup>177</sup> Brooks, “YMCA Celebrates,” December 12, 1954.

and A.M.E. churches, as well as Flanner House, which served as a social service agency for African Americans that facilitated employment and educational programs in the community.<sup>178</sup>

It is important to understand that this social environment was a product of segregation measures that were perpetuated by local politics and practices in the early twentieth century. As discussed in Chapter One: The History of the Indianapolis and Senate Avenue YMCAs, the city council passed an ordinance in 1926 that barred blacks from moving to all-white communities.<sup>179</sup> Following the success of the local NAACP chapter in repealing the law, de facto segregation led to the continued relegation of Indianapolis blacks to segregated communities. One of the oldest of these communities was Pat Ward's Bottoms or the Bottoms situated "northwest of downtown," intersected by Indiana Avenue, and within Center Township, Marion County, Indiana.<sup>180</sup> Examination of the 1960 and 1970 census tracts in Center Township, which are part of the standard metropolitan statistical area (SMSA) of Indianapolis, reveals that the percentage of black families in the area surrounding Fall Creek was significant.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>178</sup> Emma Lou Thornbrough, "African-Americans," Stanley Warren, "Crispus Attucks High School," Wilma Gibbs, "Madame Walker Urban Life Center," Michelle D. Hale, "Indiana Avenue," and Michelle D. Hale, "Flanner House," in *The Encyclopedia of Indianapolis*.

<sup>179</sup> Thornbrough, "African-Americans," in *The Encyclopedia of Indianapolis*, pp. 5-14.

<sup>180</sup> Pierce, *Polite Protest*, 58; Warren, *The Senate Avenue YMCA*, 90.

<sup>181</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Censuses of Population and Housing: 1960 Census Tracts*, Final Report PHC (1)-64 (Washington, D.C.: G.P.O, 1962); U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of Population and Housing: 1970 Census Tracts*, Final Report PHC (1)-92 (Washington, D.C.: G.P.O, 197-).

According to Final Report PHC (1)-64, the U.S. Bureau of the Census defines census tracts as "small areas into which large cities and adjacent areas have been divided for statistical purposes ... generally designed to be relatively uniform with respect to population characteristics, economic status, and living conditions. The average tract has about 4,000 residents" (1). Census tracts are subdivisions within standard metropolitan statistical areas. An SMSA, not including New England, "is a country or group of contiguous counties which contains at least one city of 50,000 inhabitants or more, or 'twin cities' with a combined population of at least 50,000" (3).



The Fall Creek YMCA branch was central to this social geography. Such geography complemented Lands' conception of the branch as a focal point in its majority black near-Westside community.<sup>182</sup> As such, Fall Creek became the center of a social terrain that was increasingly affected by citywide desegregation measures, specifically inner city-to-township busing between the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>183</sup>

Like the membership at the Fall Creek branch when it was established on West 10<sup>th</sup> Street and Indiana Avenue, the student populations of the Indianapolis public schools that served colored communities were all-black.<sup>184</sup> The all-white Indianapolis Board of School Commissioners perpetuated this deliberate segregation-by-residency strategy through commissioning the construction of new high schools in suburban areas—where whites fled growing black populations in their previously all-white communities—and refusing the advice of NAACP members and integrationists to redistrict colored schools and thus avoid overcrowding. In this way the school board managed to invalidate the 1949 Indiana School Desegregation Act and thus relegate blacks in Indianapolis to predominantly black institutions well into the 1960s, when NAACP president Andrew Ramsey petitioned the Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare to conduct a federal investigation and intervention into the discriminatory actions of the school board. In May 1968 the Civil Rights Commission of the U.S. Justice Department, empowered by the 1964 Civil Rights Act, charged Indianapolis Public Schools with “overt racial discrimination in the assignment of students and faculty members.” On August 18, 1971,

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<sup>182</sup> Burlock with Lands, March 1, 2012.

<sup>183</sup> Thornbrough, *Indiana Blacks*, 159.

<sup>184</sup> IPS is the largest school system out of the eleven school districts or corporations in Marion County, Indiana, serving student residents within city boundaries.

U.S. District Court Judge S. Hugh Dillin found the Board of School Commissioners and the Superintendent guilty of school district gerrymandering policies that used “residential patterns” as a pretext to maintain segregation in Indianapolis schools.<sup>185</sup>

Judge Dillin’s decision in *U.S. v. Board of School Commissioners* to redress segregation in IPS became part of a more extensive order that encompassed dismantling segregated colored communities and integrating outlying townships in Marion County. In his 1971 decision Dillin ordered the school board to desegregate faculty and staff at Indianapolis schools as well as to open negotiations with schools in suburban districts concerning busing black students. Dillin ordered the implementation of one-way busing between IPS and suburban townships in 1973. He also made the State of Indiana as well as “suburban school corporations” outside IPS boundaries defendants in the school desegregation case, citing the recent consolidation of county and city governments in 1969 following the UniGov law, as well as the discriminatory actions of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction and State Board of Education, as evidence of the role of state agencies in maintaining segregation at the expense of the black population.<sup>186</sup>

Following a series of appeals by the Indianapolis school board, the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals ultimately agreed with Dillin concerning the culpability of the state of Indiana in maintaining inequality in its schools and through its policies.<sup>187</sup> In a

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<sup>185</sup> Thornbrough, *Indiana Blacks*, 154 (see 149-156).

<sup>186</sup> Thornbrough, *Indiana Blacks*, 156-158, 225; Pierce, *Polite Protest*, 110-112.

The Unified Government or UniGov law was adopted by the Indiana General Assembly in 1969. UniGov incorporated the “heavily Republican suburbs” of Marion County into a unified city-county government. “The result was a regular Republican advantage in city politics and a concurrent disadvantage to Democrats, of whom black voters constitute a large percentage” (Thornbrough 225).

<sup>187</sup> Emma Lou Thornbrough, “The Indianapolis School Busing Case,” pp. 69-72 in *We the People: Indiana and the United States Constitution* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1987), 84-85.

different decision the court also upheld that interdistrict busing to outlying suburban townships was necessary to redress de jure segregation in Marion County. Full-scale busing of both black and white IPS pupils began in September 1980. While busing orders excluded Speedway, Beech Grove, Washington, and Pike townships due to their satisfactory number of African-American students, nearly 6,000 IPS pupils were bused to six other suburban school districts in Marion County (Lawrence, Wayne, Decatur, Franklin, Perry, and Warren).<sup>188</sup>

As a result of busing orders that were set in motion over a decade earlier, when Ramsey's petition was answered by the U.S. Civil Rights Commission, approximately 5,500 to 7,000 IPS students were bused long hours to schools (elementary, junior high schools, and high schools) outside IPS boundaries every school year until 1999. Student enrollment at IPS schools had dropped 64,000 by 1998, and while it is arguable that such a decrease was connected to other demographic factors, busing did contribute to the falling enrollment rate.<sup>189</sup> (Ensuing appeals on the part of IPS will be discussed later on in this chapter.) While a comprehensive analysis of the blocks in black communities that were redistricted is beyond the scope of this research, an examination of population and housing census data from 1980 for the area surrounding the intersection of Indiana Avenue and West 10<sup>th</sup> Street in Center Township shows that 2,000+ families were

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<sup>188</sup> Thornbrough, *Indiana Blacks*, 159-60.

<sup>189</sup> "Q&A," ca. 1998, Indianapolis Public Schools Desegregation Case Collection, 1971-1999, Box 1, Folder 15: "IPS & Township Schools Busing Agreement, 1998–Newsclippings," Indiana Historical Society; Leonard N. Fleming and Barb Albert, "Agreement ends busing order," June 23, 1998, IPS Desegregation Case Collection, 1971-1999, Box 1, Folder 15, Indiana Historical Society.

The approximation is based on information in a "Q&A" section of a newspaper clipping which explained that 5,500 IPS students were bused to Decatur, Franklin, Lawrence, Perry, Warren, and Wayne township schools during the 1998 school year. Another newsclipping reports that 7,000 black IPS pupils were bused to township schools during the 1981 school year.

affected by the 1980 interdistrict measure (hereafter described as the IPS-to-suburbia busing plan).<sup>190</sup>

Moreover, blacks with means (i.e., middle-class blacks) took advantage of antidiscrimination measures like the 1968 Housing Act through relocating to outlying townships including Wayne, Washington, and Lawrence. While over 50 percent of Marion County's total African-American population resided in Center Township in 1980, only 34 percent did by 1990.<sup>191</sup> Given that the Fall Creek YMCA was central to the black community located in Center Township, and that it had particularly catered to IPS students with its summer camp and afterschool programs, it is clear that the branch was affected by the increasing dismantlement and decline of the social geography that made up the membership base of its service area.<sup>192</sup> Thus, while Fall Creek was the product of its majority black community between the time of its establishment and the Lands era, the branch would also become the product of the desegregation and out-migration that intensified in the late 1970s and 1980s, ironically facilitated by preceding civil rights legislation.

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<sup>190</sup> U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of Population and Housing: Census Tracts*, Final Report PHC 80-2-187 (Washington, D.C.: G.P.O., 1983).

<sup>191</sup> Thornbrough, *Indiana Blacks*, 190.

<sup>192</sup> Mayer N. Zald and Patricia D. Wallace, "From Evangelism to General Service: The Transformation of the YMCA," *Administrative Science Quarterly* 8, no. 2 (1963): 234.

Zald identified four factors in the growth and adaptability of the YMCA: 1) the YMCA's "enrollment economy" or dependence on a fee-paying clientele; 2) the YMCA's "federated structure" or the extent to which its branches function autonomously; 3) the YMCA's "broad character-development goals" which legitimize a diversity of programs; and 4) the YMCA secretary's conception of associational goals. The Fall Creek YMCA's enrollment economy was most likely affected by the 1980 busing order to the extent that IPS students who were bused long hours to and from school would not have had enough time to participate in Fall Creek YMCA programs. In other words, Fall Creek potentially lost as many students or members to busing measures as did IPS. See Emma Lou Thornbrough, "The Indianapolis School Busing Case," pp. 69-72 in *We the People: Indiana and the United States Constitution* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1987), 89.

## **A Space as the (Physical) Product of Urban Revitalization: The Expansion of an Urban Campus, 1970s-1980s**

The effect of desegregation and black flight on the social geography of Center Township was simultaneous with the physical dismantlement of its black community. Gentrification was a contemporaneous nationwide movement in the 1950s that manifested itself in state practices and urban revitalization plans which were for the benefit of entrepreneurial interests rather than the public or community targeted for redevelopment.<sup>193</sup> In Indianapolis, urban revitalization projects included the land acquisitions process that was implemented by Indiana University in order to create “a unified IU campus” at its Michigan Street site on the near Westside of the city. The same land acquired by IU during its land acquisitions process, which included houses, lots, as well as commercial and industrial properties, would later become the site of campus buildings belonging to Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis.<sup>194</sup>

Indiana University hired Charles O. Hardy, who was on staff at Albion College in Michigan as an assistant professor of economics at the time, to serve as “the point man in a land acquisitions program” that was facilitated by the university’s real estate department. The purpose of the program was to acquire real estate for the consolidation of IU operations in near-downtown Indianapolis. This program was already underway even before the university appointed Hardy as the full-time manager. “In both Bloomington and Indianapolis ... land and property purchases were made in the name of the Hoosier Realty Corporation, an Indiana University Foundation unit, and the

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<sup>193</sup> Arnold R. Hirsch, introduction to *Urban Policy in Twentieth-Century America*, ed. Arnold R. Hirsch and Raymond A. Mohl (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1993), ix-xiii.

<sup>194</sup> Gray, *IUPUI*, 48, 79-80.

university was able to get reimbursement from the state, at exact cost, for such purchases,” explained Ralph D. Gray, Professor Emeritus of History at IUPUI, in his 2003 book *IUPUI: The Making of an University*. In Indianapolis, the university oversaw the acquisition of “more than 2,000 housing units and lots” located in the black community that was “in the vicinity of the Medical Center” and Pat Ward’s Bottoms.<sup>195</sup>

As the head of the Indiana University Real Estate Department between 1962 and 1972, Hardy oversaw the acquisition of various stores and churches in the Bottoms area, which Hardy ultimately described as a “depressed black neighborhood” and “classic urban slum.” Acquisitions increased in rapidity in the 1960s. These purchases were not federal-funded (i.e., urban renewal) projects and consequently had to be completed by the university itself. “Absentee owners sold their houses to the university, and the renters remained in the home until a ‘better place’ could be found,” explained Gray in *IUPUI*. In order to codify the land acquisitions practices of the university, the Indiana General Assembly passed the Indiana Relocation Assistance Act in 1967. The law legalized procedures that IU had implemented in its land acquisitions process, and ostensibly ensured the uniform and fair treatment of those whose property was purchased by federal or state agencies.<sup>196</sup> By 1968 the presidents of IU and Purdue University, who were Joseph L. Sutton and Frederick L. Hovde respectively, had finalized a plan to merge both Indianapolis campuses on the near Westside. (Purdue operations were located at a site on

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<sup>195</sup> Gray, *IUPUI*, 47-48.

<sup>196</sup> Gray, *IUPUI*, 47-50.

38<sup>th</sup> Street at the time.) The Indiana General Assembly accepted the merger plan in January 1969.<sup>197</sup>

As a consolidated downtown undergraduate campus on the city's near Westside, IUPUI was further expanded to incorporate several new scholastic buildings and student housing complexes over the next two decades, including Cavanaugh Hall, Lecture Hall, and the University Library (now the Joseph Taylor Hall) in 1971; the IU School of Public & Environmental Affairs in 1972; the Nursing Building in 1973; the Engineering and Technology Building in 1975; the University Townhouses (now Graduate Townhouses) in 1981; and the Natatorium and Track & Field Stadium in 1982.<sup>198</sup>

The establishment and expansion of the Downtown Campus of IUPUI were inextricable from other urban revitalization projects that took place northwest of downtown Indianapolis, such as the partial demolition of Lockefield Gardens and the construction of interstate highways. According to Ralph Gray, Professor Emeritus of History at IUPUI, "There would have been no great urban university here [downtown] if Indianapolis had not become a great city." In other words, the development of IUPUI as an urban hub would not have been logical if the downtown service area of Fall Creek had not also been targeted by state agencies and a mayoral administration determined to make the city the urbanized "interstate capital of the nation" (discussed in the next section).<sup>199</sup> The vision of an urban campus complemented a larger vision for the city held by state

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<sup>197</sup> Gray, *IUPUI*, 60, 80-81.

<sup>198</sup> The Trustees of Indiana University, *Campus Timeline*, <http://www.iupui.edu/spirit/history/timeline.html>.

<sup>199</sup> Gray, *IUPUI*, xiv, 49. Gray observed that, "There would have been no great urban university here [downtown] if Indianapolis had not become a great city, and as Mayor Richard Lugar and others repeatedly emphasized, the reverse is also true."

organizations, and yet conflicted with the idea of a cohesive downtown black community. This is because the service area of Fall Creek was a contested space in which the goals of local-state agents, specifically the Indiana State Highway Department and Mayor Hudnut's administration, were implemented at the expense of a preexisting black community.

### **A Space as the (Physical) Product of Gentrification: The Revitalization of Near-downtown Indianapolis and the Central Business District, 1970s-1980s**

Indiana University's state-funded land acquisitions and the later expansion of IUPUI overlapped the Indiana State Highway Department's federal-funded construction of highways in Indianapolis' central business district.<sup>200</sup> The agenda of the state highway department was to connect outlying suburbs to attractions around downtown—like an urban campus and developing business district—with the construction of the fifty-seven mile I-465 as well as I-65. This plan would displace residents in the Bottoms community along Indiana Avenue (See Fig. 2). The Indiana State Highway Department used funds apportioned by the federal government for highway construction under the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956 to finance both I-465 (constructed between 1959 and 1970) and I-65 (completed in 1976). The 1956 Federal-Aid Highway Act authorized \$25 billion for the construction of the national interstate system between 1957 and 1969 and set the federal share of highway project costs incurred by states at ninety percent. That significant federal-state relationship would continue to physically reshape American

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<sup>200</sup> Gray, *IUPUI*, 49. Gray said the following about the overlap: "Indeed, as Hardy commented in a 1990 interview, there was 'more interstate highway construction in Marion County, Indiana, than in any other county in the country.' Moreover, Indiana University's land acquisition activities were 'tiny' compared with the state's, but the 'same brush blackened us both,' Hardy said."



cityscapes.<sup>201</sup> On a local scale, the construction of an interstate highway system in Indianapolis literally paved the way for Mayor William Hudnut's administration to further reshape the central area of the city. In other words, all (interstate) roads led to the near Westside and central business district of Indianapolis by 1976, and the new mayor at the time would make sure that these highways had a heavily redeveloped destination.

The revitalization of Indianapolis' near-downtown area and central business district—which were already connected to suburban neighborhoods through a highway system—was central to the agenda of Mayor William Hudnut's administration (1976-1992). This agenda gave priority to “downtown economic development, big business, bricks-and-mortar projects, sports, and public relations” for sixteen years. A former Presbyterian minister and 11<sup>th</sup> District congressman, Hudnut became the chief executive over a new Indianapolis-Marion County government under UniGov in 1976. He made the economic development of downtown Indianapolis the main focus of his mayoral administration because he wanted to steer the city away from a doughnut-shaped design in which the downtown area would figuratively become a hole that was bordered by an economically-developed suburban ring. Such a focus was integral to Hudnut's plan to turn the city, he repeatedly said, from “India-NO-place” to “India-SHOW-place.”<sup>202</sup>

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<sup>201</sup> Pierce, *Polite Protest*, 80; Indiana Department of Transportation, *INDOT Facts*, <http://www.in.gov/indot/2337.htm>; Richard F. Weingroff, “Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956: Creating the Interstate System,” *Public Roads* 60, no. 1, Summer 1996, <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/publications/publicroads/96summer/p96su10.cfm>.

Refer to the following research project for an extensive history of the federal-aid highway program and Indiana's interstate system from the 1930s through 1972: David Alan Ripple, *History of the Interstate System in Indiana: Volume 4 - Chapters VII-VIII: Development of the National Program* (West Lafayette, Indiana: Joint Highway Research Project, Indiana Department of Transportation and Purdue University, 1975), Publication FHWA/IN/JHRP-75/26, doi: 10.5703/1288284313909.

<sup>202</sup> Michelle D. Hale, “Hudnut, William H., III Administration of (1976-1992),” in *The Encyclopedia of Indianapolis*.

Over the course of his administration, Hudnut established and expanded coalitions with the goal to create public-private partnerships that “provided funding and expertise for city development projects, programs, and services during an era of declining federal grants and subsidies.” These coalitions included a financial advisory group of businessmen who formed the Corporate Community Council as well as a consultative group of businessmen and community leaders who made up the Greater Indianapolis Progress Committee (GIPC). Hudnut relied on GIPC members to conduct studies and then make recommendations on urban revitalization projects based on their findings. With such support and guidance, the Hudnut administration oversaw over thirty large-scale urban revitalization projects in downtown Indianapolis. In addition to the expansion of IUPUI, those projects included the expansion of the IU Medical Center and Indiana Convention Center, renovation of Monument Circle and Union Station, as well as the construction of the IUPUI Natatorium, Hoosier Dome, Indianapolis Sports Center, Major Taylor Velodrome, a number of office buildings, and to an extent the Circle Centre Mall, which “was stalled in the funding stage” at the end of Hudnut’s fourth and last term as mayor. It was the “entrepreneurial spirit” of the Hudnut administration, which was represented by such downtown revitalization projects, combined with its tendency to give less emphasis to other issues, like the improvement of neighborhoods, public transportation, and education, which created an environment of conflict between agents of urban revitalization projects and African-American residents. This conflict was represented in the controversy that surrounded the partial demolition of Lockefield Gardens, Indianapolis’ model three-million-dollar public housing project.<sup>203</sup> As discussed

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<sup>203</sup> Michelle D. Hale, “Hudnut, William H., III Administration of (1976-1992),” and Leigh Darbee, “Lockefield Gardens,” in *The Encyclopedia of Indianapolis*. Also refer to the following book for an

in the section titled, “The Story of the Fall Creek YMCA” (page 41), one of the reasons why the IYMCA and Senate Avenue Boards decided to construct the Fall Creek YMCA facility at the 10<sup>th</sup> Street site was because of the location’s proximity to Lockefield Gardens. The Fall Creek YMCA opened in 1959 to serve the large African-American population at Lockefield Gardens and other prominent locations in the black community near the intersection of 10<sup>th</sup> Street and Indiana Avenue.<sup>204</sup>

The construction of Lockefield Gardens in 1938, which was “bounded by Indiana Avenue and Blake, North, and Locke streets,” was financed with Public Works Administration funds under the New Deal. Lockefield Gardens was a segregated housing complex for African Americans in Indianapolis and had been “considered one of the finest developments of its kind in the country.”<sup>205</sup> At 900 Indiana Avenue, the complex was not even one mile away from the Fall Creek YMCA at 860 West 10<sup>th</sup> Street. The city did not continue to invest in Lockefield Gardens and was prohibited from doing so in 1971 due to Judge Dillin’s ruling in the IPS desegregation case. Dillin prohibited the city from redeveloping the complex because he thought that doing so would contribute to residential and educational segregation in Indianapolis. Lockefield Gardens was ultimately vacated in accordance with a 1973 ruling by the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals. Approximately two-thirds of the housing units were razed in 1983 as part of a sanctioned “Action Plan” between IUPUI, Wishard Memorial Hospital, and the Midtown

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autobiographical account of Hudnut’s four terms as mayor of Indianapolis: William H. Hudnut III, *The Hudnut Years in Indianapolis, 1976-1991* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995).

<sup>204</sup> Leigh Darbee, “Lockefield Gardens,” in *The Encyclopedia of Indianapolis*; Warren, *The Senate Avenue YMCA*, 115, 117.

<sup>205</sup> Leigh Darbee, “Lockefield Gardens,” in *The Encyclopedia of Indianapolis*. Also refer to the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) collection in the Prints and Photographs Division of the Library of Congress, <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/in0282/>.

Economic Development Industrial Corporation (MEDIC). Only seven of the historic buildings remain.<sup>206</sup> With the closing and later demolition of the majority of Lockefield Gardens, a significant component of the Bottoms community and Fall Creek's service area was supplanted and ultimately converted into available housing for medical employees and students (See Fig. 3).<sup>207</sup>

In short, plans to not only redress segregation but also to revitalize the central business district of Indianapolis further challenged both the role and physical position of the Fall Creek YMCA as the center of an immediate and majority black community. Thus, in a time frame of a decade the Fall Creek YMCA changed from being the center of the near-downtown black community known as the Bottoms to the last bastion of Indiana Avenue, situated amid an evolving campus and around the corner from the construction of highways, housing complexes, and other such downtown facilities for suburbanites, students, and medical personnel.

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<sup>206</sup> Gray, *IUPUI*, 146-148; Leigh Darbee, "Lockefield Gardens," in *The Encyclopedia of Indianapolis*.

<sup>207</sup> Downtown Development Research Committee and Indiana Christian Leadership Conference, "Indianapolis: Downtown Development for Whom?" (April 1980), 15. Provided by John Lands and in possession of the author.

**MARION COUNTY  
THOROUGHFARE PLAN  
AS AMENDED BY RESOLUTION 02-CPS-R-010  
CBD INSERT**



Fig. 2. Above. Map of Marion County Thoroughfare Plan-Central Business District (CBD) Insert, 2002. (City of Indianapolis, Division of Planning, Department of Metropolitan Development).

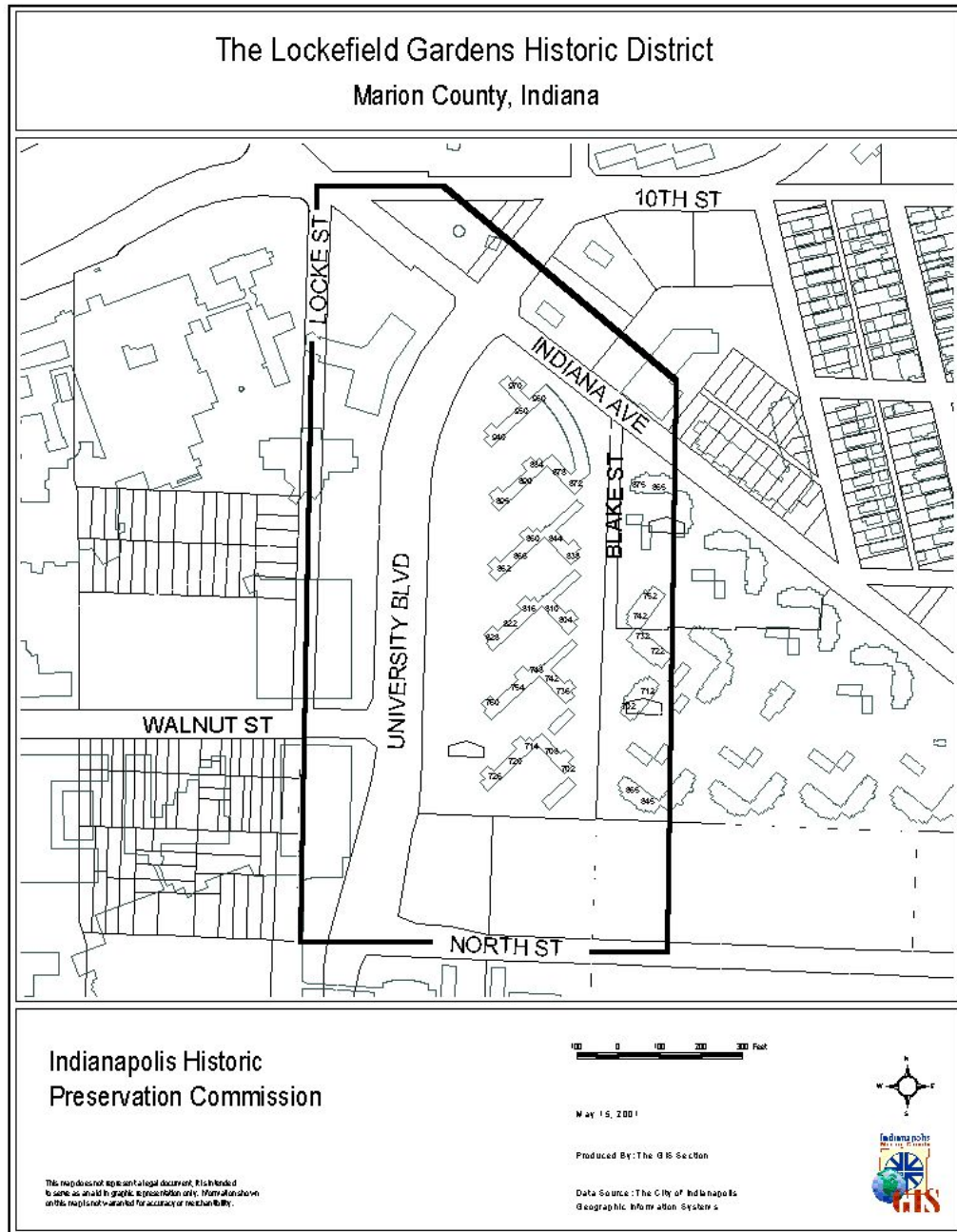


Fig. 3. Above. Map of Lockefield Gardens Historic District, 2001. (City of Indianapolis, Geographic Information Systems).

### Community Leaders versus City Agencies: Advocates against Desegregation, IUPUI's Expansion and Gentrification

Court-ordered desegregation measures and locally funded gentrification projects were challenged by various educational and community advocate groups up until and

even after their implementation. The legal battles and protests that followed Judge Dillin's busing order as well as the action plans of university and city officials demonstrated that the physical area occupied by the Indiana Avenue community, which was also the immediate service area of the Fall Creek YMCA, was a contested space for over two decades. How Fall Creek became a microcosm for such contestations will be discussed in Chapter Four. But, in order to understand the controversy surrounding the financial state and utility of the YMCA during the post-Lands era, it is crucial to first recognize the larger conflicts of vision that informed the controversy that simultaneously surrounded the branch.

One of the conflicts of vision between individuals who fought to protect the downtown black community, and city officials who wanted to change its racial landscape during the lifespan of Fall Creek, concerned the IPS desegregation case. Members of the group Citizens Helping Our Indianapolis Children's Education (CHOICE) challenged Judge Dillin's busing plan as early as 1976, following the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals decision that said UniGov and other "racially motivated" policies "justified an interdistrict remedy." CHOICE members, seven of whom were elected to the school board in 1976, challenged the busing decision on two bases: 1) busing African-American IPS pupils to suburban township schools was discriminatory and would place the "burden of desegregation" on the victims of segregation, and 2) busing IPS pupils to suburban township schools would cause the decline of the IPS school population and consequently affect IPS teachers. CHOICE members alternatively advocated for integration through a "unitary school system for all of Marion County" in which suburban township school pupils were bused to IPS school districts in the city.

Community activists continued to protest the IPS-to-suburbia busing plan in 1980, when officials like Mayor Hudnut publicly acquiesced to the implementation of the district order. Later, IPS protested through a repeated appeals process.<sup>208</sup>

The shortcomings of IPS-to-suburbia busing that were voiced by CHOICE members and similar-minded others in the 1970s became prophetic in the mid-1980s. IPS schools experienced a significant enrollment drop between 1980 and 1998. A decline in student numbers meant that IPS schools received less enrollment-based funding. This was in contrast to township schools that received increased state aid from the Indiana General Assembly to “cover costs of desegregation” and a high student enrollment rate that was augmented, in part, by the number of students bussed from IPS schools. In short, IPS schools in black communities could not afford to continue the desegregation plan that financially benefitted the outlying townships through providing additional funding for transportation costs and faculty programming.<sup>209</sup>

In 1989, the Indianapolis school board took steps to reopen and reverse the desegregation case in an effort to redress the disadvantaged state of IPS. Judge Dillin blocked the attempt. In 1997, IPS requested that Dillin’s busing order be lifted and that bused students return to IPS schools within their district. Again Dillin refused, explaining that “the order would be continuing and permanent.” Finally in 1998, Dillin decided in favor of a phase-out busing plan—which included a separate agreement between federal

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<sup>208</sup> Thornbrough, *Indiana Blacks*, 158-159.

<sup>209</sup> Thornbrough, *Indiana Blacks*, 196.



and city administrations as well as the Indianapolis Housing Agency to check residential segregation—that was to continue for eighteen years.<sup>210</sup>

Vocal critics who were not confident in the potential of the phase-out plan included Gary Orfield, who was at the time a professor at Harvard University and leading expert on urban desegregation as well as busing policies. (Orfield is currently a professor of Urban Planning and co-director of the Civil Rights Project at UCLA.) In his landmark book *Must We Bus? Segregated Schools and National Policy*, published by the Brookings Institution in 1978, Orfield stressed the importance of busing to achieve “successful and stable integration” within metropolitan spaces. He evaluated the feasibility of policies designed by courts to redress “metropolitan apartheid” through eliminating segregation in “big city school systems.”<sup>211</sup> In response to questions about the phase-out plan for IPS, Orfield told *Indianapolis Star* reporters that the court order was “a tragedy” because it would facilitate resegregation.<sup>212</sup>

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<sup>210</sup> Thornbrough, *Indiana Blacks*, 197; Celeste Williams, “Housing Pact’s Success Holds Key to Desegregation,” ca. 1998, IPS Desegregation Case Collection, 1971-1999, Box 1, Folder 15, Indiana Historical Society.

*U.S. v. Board of School Commissioners* was an important agreement between the U.S., IPS, the “Township School Districts” that had received bused IPS students, Indiana Attorney General Jeffrey A. Modisett, as well as Sullen Reed, the State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Morris Wooden, State Auditor, and Joyce Brinkman, State Treasurer. See Box 1, Folder 1: “Indianapolis Public Schools (IPS) and Township Schools Busing Agreement, 1998 (United States District Court vs. IPS, No. IP 68-C-225).”

The separate housing agreement was a contingency of the phase-out order that was decided between Eugene Jones, Indianapolis Housing Agency Executive Director, the federal government, and state authorities. Under this agreement the Housing Agency was required to 1) open and finance a housing counsel and recruitment center for a period of five years, 2) facilitate a mortgage-assistance program, 3) facilitate a “supplemental rental voucher program,” and 4) work with local real estate companies to find affordable housing.

<sup>211</sup> Gary Orfield, *Must We Bus? Segregated Schools and National Policy* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1978), 3; Civil Rights Project/*Proyecto Derechos Civiles* at the University of California, Los Angeles, *Gary Orfield, Ph.D.*, <http://civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/about-us/staff/gary-orfield-ph.d>.

<sup>212</sup> Leonard N. Fleming and Barb Albert, “Agreement ends busing order,” June 23, 1998, IPS Desegregation Case Collection, 1971-1999, Box 1, Folder 15, Indiana Historical Society.

Indianapolis Urban League president Sam H. Jones also thought that depending on the separate housing agreement to redress resegregation would be injudicious. According to an article published in the *Star* in 1998, the Urban League president was “afraid that after the phase out [was] completed there [would not] be any significant change in housing integration.” Both Orfield and Jones were representative of the viewpoint that another federal decision in the IPS desegregation case would place the burden of resegregation on a disadvantaged community.<sup>213</sup> Whether or not the 1998 decision effectively reversed the adverse effects of the 1973 busing order is beyond the time frame and scope of this research. Future research should evaluate the lasting effects of imposing the fiscal burden of desegregation on black communities and IPS.

Like those who opposed desegregation through an IPS-to-suburban township schools busing plan, activists who advocated for the community during the expansion of IUPUI and revitalization of the central business district also resisted state and city-funded revisionary plans on the basis that they were at the expense of an already disadvantaged black community. Members of the organization Homes Before Highways (HBH), led by a young activist named John Torian, championed homeowner’s rights through ensuring that “city and state officials” as well as the IU Real Estate Department paid residents of the Indiana Avenue community—whose homes were acquired through eminent domain by IU for the consolidation of campus operations and the state highway department for

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<sup>213</sup> Leonard N. Fleming and Barb Albert, “Agreement ends busing order,” June 23, 1998, IPS Desegregation Case Collection, 1971-1999, Box 1, Folder 15, Indiana Historical Society. Also refer to “Q&A” newsclipping and Barb Albert, “End of busing brings some concern,” ca. 1998, IPS Desegregation Case Collection, 1971-1999, Box 1, Folder 15, Indiana Historical Society.

It is important to note that black IPS pupils who were bused made up a minority of the student population in township schools. Black students who resided within township districts made up comparably less. Therefore, concerns about how the phase-out plan would lead to the resegregation of township schools, which already had few black students actually residing in their districts, were valid.

the construction of highways—a price that was commensurate with the “prevailing price for the cost of a new home” elsewhere in Indianapolis.<sup>214</sup> Though Torian and HBH accomplished this mission, it was not before many community residents sold their homes at market price, which was an exceedingly cut-rate amount compared to the cost of homes outside of the Indiana Avenue community, to “public agencies” representing the interests of IU.<sup>215</sup>

Another organization that was established later than HBH actually advocated against residents selling at any price. Members of the Indianapolis Community Action Against Poverty (CAAP) unwaveringly opposed the “city’s new campus plan” that was announced in 1964 and backed by the Metropolitan Plan Commission. This plan by the city’s political, “business, and industry leaders” called for the displacement of at least 5,000 residents to make (i.e., gentrify the) space for 1) IU’s new Westside Downtown Campus and 2) the influx of undergraduates, businesspersons, and entrepreneurs that would be attracted to a new urban center complete with a network of highways and “first-class” facilities.<sup>216</sup>

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<sup>214</sup> Pierce, *Polite Protest*, 82; Gerald A. Harrison and Keith A. Good, *Eminent Domain and Condemnation: The Taking of Private Property for Public Use in Indiana* (West Lafayette: Agricultural Economics Extension Publications, Purdue University Department of Agricultural Economics), pp. 1-12, EC-460.

The right to eminent domain allows “governmental bodies, agencies, utilities and other organizations ... to take private property” for the construction of government projects (e.g., schools, interstate highways) as well as “private utility projects” (e.g., pipe lines, power lines) that benefit the public at large (2). Eminent domain is a national and state constitutional provision that has been interpreted in a series of Indiana laws including the 1971 Indiana Relocation Assistance Act and the 1971 addendum, which exempts just compensation payments to landowners from federal taxes (9). Under the 1970 Uniform Relocation Assistance and Land Acquisition Policies Act, and the Indiana Relocation Assistance Act, landowners are legally entitled to receive the “fair market value” for their properties (5). (See PDF of the cited report at <http://www.extension.purdue.edu/extmedia/EC/EC-460.pdf>.)

<sup>215</sup> Pierce, *Polite Protest*, 82.

<sup>216</sup> Gray, *IUPUI*, 50-53.

Community leaders also advocated for the rights of residents in Lockefield Gardens, which “city officials” had planned to raze for the expansion of urban improvement projects as early as 1977. John Lands, who was the executive director of the Fall Creek YMCA at the time, led MEDIC in petitioning for the vacant housing units “to be restored as a racially integrated development” in response to Mayor Hudnut’s comment that opening Lockefield was synonymous with “turning back the clock” through continuing segregation.<sup>217</sup>

Lands also revealed plans to petition the President’s Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. He explained that the closing of Lockefield Gardens, which was a part of Judge Dillin’s desegregation order, deprived “business(es) on Indiana Avenue” of their “last major residential support,” and that this disadvantage should be redressed not by permanent demolition but through incorporating the vision and needs of “black business people and former residents” into citywide urban improvement projects.<sup>218</sup> Similarly, MEDIC member Willard B. Ransom stated at a public hearing that urban improvement or revitalization should not be synonymous with “black removal” for the benefit of a predominantly white middle class.<sup>219</sup>

Lands and other Fall Creek YMCA staff members also traveled to Washington D.C. to ask officials at the U.S. Department of the Interior to intervene in the matter of

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<sup>217</sup> Howard Smulevitz, “Plan To Demolish Lockefield Gardens Opposed by Black Business Group,” *Indianapolis Star*, March 2, 1977, Box Office of the President Fall Creek Closing Files, Green photo album w/gold outlines, YMCA Records.

<sup>218</sup> Smulevitz, “Plan To Demolish Lockefield Gardens,” March 2, 1977, YMCA Records.

<sup>219</sup> “Lockefield controversy continues,” *Indianapolis Recorder*, ca. March 1977, Box Office of the President Fall Creek Closing Files, Green photo album w/gold outlines, YMCA Records.

The article in the *Recorder* reported that State Senator Julia Carson and U.S. Senator Birch Bayh supported advocates of Lockefield Gardens. “If we allow our roots to be destroyed,” explained Carson, “we have in effect allowed a portion of our history to be destroyed also and this would be a very damaging precedent.”

preserving Lockefield Gardens. They were told to organize local meetings between affected parties, which is what Lands had already been facilitating at Fall Creek.<sup>220</sup> The fight to preserve and refurbish Lockefield Gardens continued on after Lands' directorship.

Another community group that resisted local-state urban revitalization plans for Lockefield, this time in the 1980s, was led by a woman named Glory-June Greiff. According to historian Ralph Gray, Professor Emeritus of History at IUPUI, Greiff was "an IUPUI graduate student" who led other activists in forming "a new historic preservation advocacy group in order to save Lockefield Gardens" in 1980 a short time after a plan was agreed upon to demolish two-thirds of the public housing complex. This advocacy group was Historic Indianapolis Incorporated. She and members of Historic Indianapolis, Inc., opposed the "Action Plan" between IUPUI, Wishard Memorial Hospital, and MEDIC to demolish a significant number of housing units in Lockefield Gardens. One of the strategies they employed to demonstrate their opposition included renovating a single housing unit in order to illustrate "the economic feasibility of restoration." Historic Indianapolis, Inc. held a reception in the apartment as their last act of protest. The event was attended by local representatives like Julia Carson. Demolition began on schedule in 1982, two years after the Action Plan was finalized by participating parties.<sup>221</sup>

Organizations like CHOICE and leaders such as Torian, Lands, and Greiff, advocated for the preservation and revitalization of major residential areas in the

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<sup>220</sup> Burlock with Lands, March 1, 2012.

<sup>221</sup> Gray, *IUPUI*, 146-148; Leigh Darbee, "Lockefield Gardens," in *The Encyclopedia of Indianapolis*.

downtown black community, as well as for the rights of the students and families who occupied this contested space. Moreover, committees and activist groups disputed the general narrative promoted by state and city administrators concerning desegregation, gentrification, and urban revitalization measures. This narrative was supported by local-state agents such as the IU Real Estate Department, Indiana State Highway Department, U.S. District Court, as well as the Hudnut administration and local advisory groups like the Greater Indianapolis Progress Committee (GIPC). It stressed that the large-scale processes of desegregation and urban revitalization were progressive and inevitable rather than detrimental and disruptive to the downtown black community.

Members of the Downtown Development Research Committee and Indiana Christian Leadership Conference are two additional groups that advocated against this general narrative, depicting the proponents of downtown changes as accountable agencies rather than justifiable entities in the decline of institutions in the black community. This same objective was undertaken by community groups in the form of appeals and protests against busing or urban revitalization measures. Members of the Downtown Development Research Committee and Indiana Christian Leadership Conference additionally detailed their contrarian vision of progress in a 1980 report titled *Indianapolis: Downtown Development for Whom?*<sup>222</sup>

The unidentified authors of the report who were representing both groups explained that “downtown development” by way of gentrification and urban revitalization projects employed by the city and state was ideally, “the commitment of public resources to facilitate and help finance private corporate developments in the

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<sup>222</sup> Downtown Development Research Committee and Indiana Christian Leadership Conference, “Indianapolis: Downtown Development for Whom?” (April 1980). Provided by John Lands and in possession of the author.

downtown area, with the idea that the benefits will ‘trickle down’ to the city’s residents.”<sup>223</sup> Local-state advisory groups that supported urban redevelopment plans in the downtown area of Indianapolis identified these trickle-down benefits as job opportunities at the new facilities that displaced and replaced downtown community residents.<sup>224</sup> The authors of the report though argued that downtown development for non-residential use actually created a “dead-end” service economy, the kind which actually “perpetuate[d] underemployment” as well as competition for neighborhood businesses. They concluded that representatives of GIPC, the Metropolitan Development Commission (MDC), and other organizations that spearheaded urban revitalization projects promoted a vision of “major progress and accomplishments for Indianapolis” that was not inclusive for it involved action plans that situated, as other groups had similarly observed, the burden of “progress” on the entire black community which included students, homeowners, and Lockefield residents.<sup>225</sup>

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<sup>223</sup> DDRC and ICLC, “Downtown Development,” (April 1980). Provided by John Lands and in possession of the author.

<sup>224</sup> Gray, *IUPUI*, 61.

<sup>225</sup> DDRC and ICLC, “Downtown Development,” (April 1980), 2-3; Greater Indianapolis Progress Committee, *History*, <http://indygipc.org/about/history/>.

That downtown development projects did not benefit low-to-middle income individuals was not surprising to writers of the report, for the roll call of those groups which facilitated urban revitalization projects revealed their corporate rather than civic affiliations. The Metropolitan Development Commission (MDC) group, which supervised the Department of Metropolitan Development and designated *slum* areas as blighted, included individuals appointed by the City-County Council, County Commissioners, and Mayor Hudnut, as well as the presidents of local banks, insurance companies, and other local businesses. The writers also detailed the private-over-public interests of the Greater Indianapolis Progress Committee. In 1979 the GIPC was a self-advertised bipartisan, non-profit organization that heavily promoted downtown development projects. Officers at the time were usually heads of insurance companies, Indianapolis power and water companies, banks, construction companies, and even university presidents (7-8).

According to the GIPC web site, the organization “has been a leading force in major progress and accomplishments for Indianapolis since its formation” in 1965 by Mayor John Barton.

The authors of *Downtown Development for Whom?* describe the manifestation of the local-state vision or urban revitalization of downtown Indianapolis as the story “of cynicism and racism,” in which “the marvels of downtown revitalization” were foils to the “deceit and broken promises” of corporate interests and local politics.<sup>226</sup> Contrasting visions between proponents of city-state projects and community advocates illustrate that the narrative of downtown Indianapolis is fundamentally a story of expansionist interests versus the outcries of community organizers. By the late twentieth century, the former school of thought had achieved its planned ends in Indianapolis’ majority black near-Westside community through the implementation of measures that physically displaced “Bottoms” neighborhoods and by extension the immediate service area of Fall Creek at Indiana Avenue and 10<sup>th</sup> Street.

### **A Case Study of Competing Visions about the Fall Creek YMCA**

The conflict between proponents of citywide urban revitalization plans and community groups discussed in this chapter was reflected in the controversy that surrounded the close of the Fall Creek Parkway YMCA. On one hand, YMCA administrators at the national and metropolitan levels envisioned Fall Creek as a branch that should change to align with standard mission goals. On the other hand, the branch’s administrators, members, and advocates envisioned Fall Creek as an institution that could maintain the legacy of its predecessor as well as remain active within its community. The competing visions about Fall Creek would escalate into conflicting interpretations of the necessity and financial viability of the branch within an environment marked by

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<sup>226</sup> DDRC and ICLC, “Downtown Development,” 12-13.



urbanization and demographic changes. Chapter Four incorporates the extraordinary memories of ordinary people who were instrumental within the conflict over the utility and sustainability of the Fall Creek YMCA during the last two years that the branch was open in order to present a metanarrative of what happened to the branch and its surrounding Bottoms community.

#### Chapter Four: The Manifestation of Competing Visions over the Mission and Service Area of the Fall Creek YMCA within Indianapolis' "Bottoms" Area, 2000-2003

The Fall Creek Parkway YMCA offered physical fitness and educational programming for adults and youth, as well as dormitory services for needy individuals, from the 1980s to the 2000s. Such needs were central to the core mission of the organization. Educational and fitness-focused activities facilitated at Fall Creek included After School Child Care programs catering to 300 students at 9 IPS school sites, a ten-week Summer Day Camp program, the WNBA Girls Basketball Program for youth aged seven through fourteen, the Y-Zone Gospel Choir, as well as physical fitness classes in martial arts for teens and water aerobics for seniors. Local day care centers and senior groups, like Wishard Senior Connection and the Arthritis Foundation, also used facilities at the Fall Creek YMCA and participated in swimming classes.<sup>227</sup>

The branch though was reportedly functioning under annual six-figure operating losses between 1990 and 2000 within its downtown service area. Studies commissioned by the Executive Committee of the Greater Indianapolis YMCA attributed such fiscal debt, which in 1999 totaled \$468,000, to "insufficient adult membership support" and the overall demographic decline of the black membership base within "a little more than a mile radius" from the branch.<sup>228</sup> The metropolitan organization would cite such financial

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<sup>227</sup> Key Documents, Fall Creek, Executive Committee Review, July 26, 2000, Box Office of the President Fall Creek Closing Files, Fall Creek 2000, YMCA Records; "The Truth About the Fall Creek YMCA," *Indianapolis Recorder*, September 26, 2003, page A5.

According to a paid advertisement published in the *Indianapolis Recorder*, the Metropolitan YMCA raised grant money and donations to fund the Y-Zone Gospel Choir's trip to Prague to participate in the 2003 European Area YMCA Youth Summit.

<sup>228</sup> Key Documents, Fall Creek, Executive Committee Review, July 26, 2000, YMCA Records.

and demographic decline as its reasons for voting to close the dormitory section of Fall Creek in 2002 and the branch itself a year later.<sup>229</sup>

Both decisions were opposed and challenged through the public protests and campaigns of community groups that envisioned the Fall Creek YMCA as an operation that was still financially feasible and significant to Indianapolis blacks, in spite of the recent desegregation and urban revitalization processes that reduced the black population of the Bottoms area. The remainder of the chapter will be a chronological account of the conflict between the metropolitan association and community groups concerning the utility (read their visions) of the Fall Creek YMCA facility and whether or not its physical presence in the urbanized social geography of near-downtown Indianapolis was still viable and needed.

### **Closing the Dormitory Section of the Fall Creek Parkway YMCA, January - March 2002**

**“The need is not there like it used to be”<sup>230</sup>**

In a statement printed on January 31, 2002, the Executive Committee of the Greater Indianapolis Metropolitan YMCA explained that its members had voted to officially close Fall Creek’s dormitories on March 29 of that year. Residents who remained would be assisted in securing other affordable housing. The statement concluded that renovating the dormitories was not cost-effective and that consequently the “limited resources” of the metropolitan association “would be better spent on

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<sup>229</sup> “An Open Letter To The Community,” *Indianapolis Recorder*, September 26, 2003, sec. page A5.

<sup>230</sup> Michael J. Rochon, “Fall Creek Y to close dorm; 53 must move,” *Indianapolis Star*, February 7, 2002, Box 19 Baxter disaster and Fall Creek Y, Correspondence 2000, YMCA Records. Quote by Lou Gerig, a member of the Metropolitan YMCA Board.

furthering the branch's core mission which is to serve children and teens."<sup>231</sup> This statement was printed on fliers that were posted inside the dormitory building.<sup>232</sup>

Lou Gerig, who was a member of the Metropolitan YMCA Board at the time, reiterated in an interview with *Indianapolis Star* reporter Michael Rochon that renovating the dormitories would have been a costly undertaking. He estimated that an air-conditioning system and other refurbishments would cost "six or seven figures." Such an expense was unwarranted, Gerig reasoned, given that the dormitory section offered an outmoded service. "Historically, the YMCA has been a facility where a person can go to live," Gerig told Rochon in February 2002. He went on to conclude that, "Now, the need is not there like it used to be," and that for this reason the board had decided to re-channel its funding solely to youth programming.<sup>233</sup>

Community leaders like Amos Brown III, an African-American correspondent for the *Indianapolis Recorder*, and Carl Drummer, another African-American community leader who was the Center Township Trustee (i.e., Overseer of the Poor who was responsible for Center Township, Indianapolis, according to Indiana Code 12-20-1-1),

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<sup>231</sup> Fall Creek Dormitory Statement, January 31, 2002, Box 19 Baxter disaster and Fall Creek Y, Correspondence 2002, YMCA Records.

<sup>232</sup> Rochon, "Fall Creek Y to close dorm; 53 must move," *Indianapolis Star*, February 7, 2002, YMCA Records.

<sup>233</sup> Rochon, "Fall Creek Y to close dorm; 53 must move;" Michael J. Rochon, "Residents must find place to go after Fall Creek Y dorm closes," *Indianapolis Star*, March 4, 2002, sec. B.; Letter from David Roettger of Roettger Bailey, Inc. Architecture & Interiors, to Norris Lineweaver, September 26, 2000, Box 19 Baxter disaster and Fall Creek Y, Correspondence 2000, YMCA Records; "Sketches of Fall Creek's Site Plan and floor plans," Box 19 Baxter disaster and Fall Creek Y, Correspondence 2000, YMCA Records.

The Greater Indianapolis Metropolitan YMCA Board had Roettger Bailey Incorporated draw up sketches of Fall Creek's site plan as well as to detail the square footage of functioning rooms in the branch facility (e.g., West/East Dance and Activity Room, Computer Room, Offices, Lounge, Storage, Hallways, Restrooms, etcetera). This study was commissioned to ascertain the feasibility of renovating the building. The Executive Committee of the metropolitan association voted to close the facility two years later.

thought otherwise. Brown, Drummer, and other community leaders said that the need for the Fall Creek YMCA to offer dormitory services was still present and significant within the surrounding area.<sup>234</sup>

**“Other community leaders weren’t consulted”<sup>235</sup>**

Those community leaders who were displeased and moreover distrustful of the decision by the Metropolitan YMCA Executive Committee to close the dormitory section of the Fall Creek YMCA in March 2002 viewed the statement issued by the committee as unexpected. According to Amos Brown, “The sudden decision to close the Fall Creek Y’s residential facility took elected officials and community leaders by surprise.” He went on to explain that the office of Mayor Bart Peterson was informed “nearly a week after the YMCA’s leadership made their decision,” and that “Other community leaders weren’t consulted.”<sup>236</sup> In one of his “Just Tellin’ It” editorials published in the *Recorder* on February 22, 2002, Brown faulted the members of the Greater Indianapolis YMCA for not facilitating an open discussion about its decision to close the dormitory section of Fall Creek. Such a lack of communication made their decision, in Brown’s opinion, “ill-timed, ill-conceived” and the cause of “ill-will within [the] African-American community.” It is important to note that the “Just Tellin’ It” editorial closed with a usual caveat, which was that “Amos Brown’s opinions are not necessarily those of The

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<sup>234</sup> Amos Brown III, “Fall Creek YMCA residential dorm to close March 29,” *Indianapolis Recorder*, February 8, 2002; Center Township of Marion County, Indianapolis, “What We Do,” 2009 [http://www.centergov.org/what\\_we\\_do.htm](http://www.centergov.org/what_we_do.htm).

<sup>235</sup> Brown, “Fall Creek YMCA residential dorm to close March 29,” *Indianapolis Recorder*, February 8, 2002. Quote by Amos Brown.

<sup>236</sup> Brown, “Fall Creek YMCA residential dorm to close March 29.”

*Indianapolis Recorder*” or in other words other African Americans who managed the newspaper. And yet, some African-American leaders in Indianapolis shared the editorialist’s opinions about the decision of the Greater Indianapolis YMCA to close Fall Creek’s dormitory section in March 2002.<sup>237</sup>

Carl Drummer was one of the leaders who shared the same opinions as Brown. Drummer, who was the Center Township Trustee or Overseer of the Poor in downtown Indianapolis, thought that the metropolitan association should have consulted community leaders prior to its decision to discontinue dormitory services at the Fall Creek YMCA. According to Doug Walker, the president of the Metropolitan YMCA Board of Directors, he and the Board had ““been in contact with the trustee’s office,”” and that the executive director of the Fall Creek YMCA had contacted ““housing facility people.”” Still, Drummer told Amos Brown in a *Recorder* article published on February 8, 2002, that he was not contacted along with other community leaders. Like Brown, Drummer faulted the metropolitan association for not making the decision to close the dormitory section a matter of public discussion. ““It is unfair to the community to close this facility without coming together with local leaders to discuss other alternatives.”” He thought that the decision to close the dormitory section of Fall Creek should have been a social issue rather than a financial matter, and thus confirmed Brown in his conclusion that the decision should have been the responsibility of the Bottoms community as opposed to an organization like the Metropolitan YMCA.<sup>238</sup>

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<sup>237</sup> Brown, “Just Tellin’ It: It’s time to build a new Fall Creek YMA; plus Ameritech responds to my criticism,” *Indianapolis Recorder*, February 22, 2002. Author’s Note: Content reflected in title will be discussed later on in Chapter Four.

<sup>238</sup> Brown, “Fall Creek YMCA residential dorm to close March 29.”

## The New “Purpose” of the YMCA

The conflict between community leaders and the metropolitan association over the dormitory section at the Fall Creek YMCA was fundamentally a conflict between opposing visions concerning how the branch should serve its community. More specifically, the conflict was between two polarized understandings of who the branch should serve within its community. Through voting to close the dormitory section the Executive Committee became part of a national trend that involved YMCA administrators phasing out available housing services and redirecting those funds and personnel to facilitate programming that targeted families and youth.

A representative for the YMCA of the USA office in Chicago named Arnold Collins informed *Indianapolis Star* reporter Michael Rochon that the YMCA residential sections, which had served young male workers in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, were being used more frequently in 2000 by men who suffered from “mental and emotional problems, or who [were] one step away from being homeless.”<sup>239</sup> This shift was reflected in the occupancy at Fall Creek’s dormitory section. According to LeVester Hobbs, who became Director of Fall Creek’s dormitory section in 1991, occupants at the facility had comprised ex-addicts, ex-offenders, as well as individuals who had relocated to Indianapolis and were seeking transitional housing.<sup>240</sup> These occupants were largely different from the groups of people who benefitted from the Senate Avenue YMCA’s dormitory services beginning in 1913, which included traveling students, athletic teams,

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<sup>239</sup> Rochon, “Residents must find place to go after Fall Creek Y dorm closes,” *Indianapolis Star*, March 4, 2002, YMCA Records.

<sup>240</sup> Interview, Melissa Burlock with LeVester Hobbs, former Acting Executive Director of the Fall Creek Parkway YMCA, 2000-2003, April 26, 2012, Indianapolis, audio recording, IUPUI Special Collections and Archives, e-Archives, <https://archives.iupui.edu/handle/2450/6955/browse?type=title>.

and musicians as well as physically-handicapped individuals, railway employees, and convention-goers along with the “indigent homeless.”<sup>241</sup>

Thus between the early 1900s and 2002 the dormitory section of Indianapolis’ historically black YMCA, which moved from its location on Senate Avenue in 1959, had changed into a facility that provided shelter for the needy more so than hostel services for young working-class men. “That [model],” explained Collins to Rochon, “is not the purpose why the YMCA was built.” In order to realign branches nationwide with the core purpose or organizational vision that had characterized the YMCA organization since the early 1900s, which was to mainly serve families and youth, national headquarters encouraged applicable branch YMCAs to close their dormitories. (As of 2002, less than 5 percent of the 2,432 YMCA branches across the U.S. offered low-income housing services.)<sup>242</sup> It is important to note that such closings, while in agreement with recommendations from the national office, were autonomous decisions. In response to questions about the decline in dormitory services offered by YMCA branches, Ryan Bean, Reference and Outreach Archivist at the Kautz Family YMCA Archives at the University of Minnesota, explained that, “Each YMCA is a local and independent enterprise and they make the decision as to which services to provide.” He described the

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<sup>241</sup> *People are Our Business*, Box III of IV, YMCA Records.

<sup>242</sup> Rochon, “Residents must find place to go after Fall Creek Y dorm closes,” *Indianapolis Star*, March 4, 2002, YMCA Records; Ryan Bean, e-mail to author, January 31, 2014.

The National YMCA and local branches throughout the nation identified families and youth as target constituents early on in the history of the organization. Ryan Bean, Kautz Family YMCA Reference and Outreach Archivist, informed the author that, “The Y had family programming as early as the 1930’s with Father & Son Indian Guides, (which grew out of earlier father/son dinners). They became a massive provider of daycare in the 60’s in response to [an] increasing number of families becoming dual income. And today they are pretty explicit in being a family destination, (but not as explicit as the YWCA).”



phase-out of dormitory services as an “organic” process.<sup>243</sup> Norris Lineweaver, President and CEO of the Greater Indianapolis YMCA, connected the decision by the metropolitan association to close Fall Creek’s dormitory section to his own understanding of how a YMCA branch should function within its community.

Lineweaver served as the President and CEO of the IYMCA or metropolitan association from 1994 to 2005. He would retire (albeit actively) in 2009 after a prestigious career that involved nearly forty years of nonprofit management. Involvement with YMCA controversies was, it seemed, generational. His father, a World War II veteran, was dismissed from his position at a YMCA because he bused African-American youths to an all-white branch. Born in Portland, Oregon, to a Marine army family, Lineweaver became “used to letting go and saying goodbye,” and developing new friendships. He spent his childhood in mainland China before moving with his family to live in several different places. Perhaps such childhood experiences would later inform his understanding of the necessity of change when he oversaw YMCA branches in Indianapolis.<sup>244</sup> He explained to *Star* reporter Rochon that closing Fall Creek’s

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<sup>243</sup> Ryan Bean, e-mail to author, January 31, 2014. Ryan Bean, Kautz Family YMCA Reference and Outreach Archivist, informed the author that, “I’m not aware of [the shift to dormitories] being a national policy. Each YMCA is a local and independent enterprise and they make the decision as to which services to provide. From what I understand the shift was organic.”

The author did not locate any item(s) in the Kautz Family YMCA Archives that explicitly articulated the agenda of National YMCA departments/committees for phasing out low-income or transitional housing services in the twenty-first century. Future research should study how the purposes and connotations of transitional housing have changed in general and the consequent response of non-profit organizations in the U.S.

<sup>244</sup> Interview, Melissa Burlock with Norris Lineweaver, former President & CEO of the Greater Indianapolis YMCA, 1994-2005, April 10, 2012, Indianapolis, audio recording, IUPUI Special Collections and Archives, e-Archives, <https://archives.iupui.edu/handle/2450/6955/browse?type=title>.

Following his tenure between 1994 and 2005 as President and CEO of the Greater Indianapolis YMCA, Lineweaver became the Director General of the Jerusalem International YMCA in Jerusalem, Israel. He retired from this position in January 2009.

dormitories would help to change the branch from partly functioning as a social service agency to wholly becoming a community center for families and young people.<sup>245</sup>

In another *Indianapolis Star* article that was published before the official close of the dormitories, Doug Walker, Chairman of the Greater Indianapolis YMCA Board of Directors, echoed that serving families and youth was “the central mission of the YMCA.” Walker argued that redirecting the Fall Creek YMCA to carry out such a mission or functional vision meant giving the branch “a chance to succeed.” Thus, the decision of the metropolitan association to close Fall Creek’s dormitories reflected the agenda and standard vision that was set by the YMCA of the USA office in Chicago and followed by other branches nationwide.<sup>246</sup>

### **The Historical “Home” of the Fall Creek YMCA**

In contrast, some community leaders thought that the decision by the Metropolitan YMCA did not reflect a commitment to the Indianapolis black community. The agenda of these leaders was to meet the needs of low-income, inner-city residents who remained in Center Township even if this population did not meet the targeted standard of family units and young people. Local leaders like Carl Drummer understood the Fall Creek YMCA as a branch that offered a shelter that traditional homeless shelters and assisted living organizations did not provide for the disadvantaged in the inner city. In a *Recorder* cover story by Amos Brown, he was quoted contending that the purpose of

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<sup>245</sup> Rochon, “Residents must find place to go after Fall Creek Y dorm closes,” *Indianapolis Star*, March 4, 2002, YMCA Records.

<sup>246</sup> Doug Walker, “Fall Creek YMCA’s reasons to close dorm,” *Indianapolis Star*, March 14, 2002. Walker also noted that the board of directors gave a 60-day notice before the close of the dormitories even though the metropolitan association was only legally obligated to give a 30-day notice.

the Fall Creek YMCA was to continue to serve as a space for alternative, low-cost housing. The Fall Creek YMCA he said, “served as a home for men who in our community are in need of transitional housing, or just have nowhere else to go.” Drummer’s own Center Township office had been recommending “thousands of men” to the Fall Creek dormitories since 1991. “Where,” he asked, “will these men go, with the issue of overcrowding already present in local shelters? What other facilities, if any, can provide similar services to our community?”<sup>247</sup> According to Hobbs, who became the director of Fall Creek’s dormitory section in 1991, these men included individuals who needed transitional housing and emotional help services like counseling sessions.<sup>248</sup>

As the Residence Hall Director, Hobbs’ goal was “to provide safe housing for individuals and also to make an impact in their lives ... to be a positive influence.” Dorm residents stayed anywhere between a couple of weeks to some months (Hobbs recalled that one resident had lived in the dormitories for over ten years) and were afforded outreach services such as monthly counseling sessions. Hobbs also remembered that the dormitories never dropped below a 75 to 80 percent rate of occupancy even up until closing. “There was always a need,” he explained, to serve families, youth, and low-income, inner city residents in near-downtown Indianapolis.<sup>249</sup>

In short, leaders who opposed the close of the longstanding dormitory section of the Fall Creek YMCA fought to preserve its tradition of partly functioning as a social service agency in the way that Hobbs described the dormitories. The Metropolitan

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<sup>247</sup> Brown, “Fall Creek YMCA residential dorm to close March 29.”

<sup>248</sup> Burlock with Hobbs, April 26, 2012; Rochon, “Residents must find place to go after Fall Creek Y dorm closes,” *Indianapolis Star*, March 4, 2002, YMCA Records.

<sup>249</sup> Burlock with Hobbs, April 26, 2012.

YMCA Executive Committee though felt that the branch should change to meet the guidelines set by the YMCA of the USA in Chicago. The decision to discontinue dormitory services at Fall Creek was a point of contention between administrators at the Metropolitan YMCA and community leaders who had different understandings of which groups the branch should continue to retain within its inner-city community.

### **Fulfilling the “Promise” of the Dormitory Section**

At the close of the dormitories in March 2002, seventy-eight men had been relocated to other assisted living residences. In an effort to re-establish credibility with Amos Brown and the correspondent’s readership, Norris Lineweaver, Greater Indianapolis YMCA President, sent a letter to the *Recorder* editorialist detailing the relocation process of the remaining residents. Twelve men had received financial help from the YMCA. Lineweaver had moreover worked dutifully with LeVester Hobbs, Residence Hall Director, to ensure that “No one became a homeless statistic” because of lacking funds or needing a letter of recommendation to secure housing. Therefore, he concluded, “The promise for which the YMCA dormitory was originally designed—to provide transition housing until permanent placement could be found—was fulfilled to this end.”<sup>250</sup> Although the Metropolitan YMCA discontinued dormitory services offered by Fall Creek in spite of dissent by vocal community leaders, the President of the Greater Indianapolis YMCA had worked to ensure that the services were closed in a conscientious manner.

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<sup>250</sup> Burlock with Lineweaver, April 10, 2012; Letter from Norris Lineweaver to Mr. Amos Brown, April 2, 2002, Box 19 Baxter disaster and Fall Creek Y, Correspondence 2002, YMCA Records.

Controversy between Lineweaver, the Metropolitan and Fall Creek YMCA Boards, as well as other community leaders materialized only a year later concerning the closing of the Fall Creek branch. Similar to the disputes that surrounded the closing of the dormitory section of the Fall Creek YMCA, conflicts between the Greater Indianapolis YMCA and community leaders who advocated for the Fall Creek YMCA would again reflect contrasting visions associated with the role of the branch within its service area.

### **Closing the Fall Creek Parkway YMCA Branch, June - September 2003**

#### **“If we’re not changing, we’re falling back”<sup>251</sup>**

On June 25, 2003, the Metropolitan YMCA Board of Directors made the decision to close the Fall Creek YMCA branch effective September 30 of that year.<sup>252</sup> Norris Lineweaver, President and CEO of the Greater Indianapolis YMCA, and the board members took “full responsibility” for their decision, which was based on “objective assessments” of the social geography that made up the service area of the Fall Creek YMCA in Center Township.<sup>253</sup> The metropolitan association commissioned external agencies to conduct assessments or studies of all of its branches. These studies allowed Lineweaver and the Board of Directors to establish a model of a self-sustaining or successful YMCA, and to compare the Fall Creek YMCA to this traditional model. “Successful YMCAs,” Lineweaver reflected, “are successful because they’re convenient to a minimum population of 30,000 people. That’s a benchmark from experience of over

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<sup>251</sup> Burlock with Lineweaver, April 10, 2012. Quote by Norris Lineweaver.

<sup>252</sup> Jon Murray, “Future uncertain for Fall Creek Y,” *Indianapolis Star*, August 7, 2003; Immediate Release, YMCA Programs to Continue After Building Closes, June 25, 2003, Box 19 Baxter disaster and Fall Creek Y, [next to] Correspondence – 2003, YMCA Records.

<sup>253</sup> Burlock with Lineweaver, April 10, 2012.

2,800 YMCAs around the country in which we collect[ed] statistics and we consult[ed] with our national office.” Subsequent to considering the findings of branch studies on the Fall Creek YMCA that detailed characteristics of its downtown service area, Lineweaver and the board ultimately decided that the branch was cornered into a location—due to the construction of interstate highways and the intensification of IUPUI land acquisitions—at which it could no longer function as a successful, traditional YMCA branch.<sup>254</sup>

Urban revitalization projects, Lineweaver believed, had not only led to the demolition of the physical residential neighborhoods that surrounded Fall Creek, but also resulted in the construction of facilities that “created interesting dynamics of competition” for the branch and consequently “cannibalized” its social capital or membership base. He described the changing social terrain and declining autonomy of the Fall Creek YMCA at the time as a representative dichotomy of “what was happening in terms of the vision for the city moving forward.” This vision was shared by proponents of desegregation measures, construction projects, and urban revitalization ventures, and encompassed the significant displacement and urbanization of the downtown black community, along with its historic institutions.<sup>255</sup>

In September 2003 the metropolitan association board condensed census data and information about the effects of urban revitalization and a declining membership base on the financial status of Fall Creek into two public releases that ran in the *Recorder* and *Indiana Herald*. Titled “An Open Letter to the Community” and “The Truth about the Fall Creek YMCA,” the announcements were written by the Greater Indianapolis YMCA

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<sup>254</sup> Burlock with Lineweaver, April 10, 2012.

<sup>255</sup> Burlock with Lineweaver, April 10, 2012.

Board of Directors and the YMCA Strategic Communications Committee respectively. Both releases were published as one continuous newspaper advertisement in the *Indianapolis Recorder* a short time before the Fall Creek YMCA officially closed on September 30, 2003.<sup>256</sup>

“The Truth” advertisement consists of short responses to twelve questions. According to the YMCA Strategic Communications Committee of the metropolitan association, these questions “had been raised recently regarding the closing of the Fall Creek YMCA facility” and were important to be officially answered. In response to a question about how much money the Fall Creek branch lost annually, the committee listed six-figure net deficits accrued by the Fall Creek facility between 1990 and 2002.<sup>257</sup> Lineweaver remembered how the Greater Indianapolis YMCA, or Fall Creek’s budgetary head, “took financial losses at almost half a million dollars a year until it just became obvious that there was never going to be a recovery to the bottom line.”<sup>258</sup> The committee stated that the cumulative debt of Fall Creek totaled over twelve years was \$5,138,930.<sup>259</sup>

In the “Open Letter,” which consists of bullet-pointed “facts that explain” the closing of Fall Creek, the Greater Indianapolis YMCA Board of Directors said that the financial losses of the Fall Creek YMCA were the result of downtown construction projects negatively affecting the service area of the branch. “The community surrounding

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<sup>256</sup> “An Open Letter To The Community” and “The Truth About the Fall Creek YMCA,” *Indianapolis Recorder*, September 26, 2003, sec. page A5. The public releases ran uninterrupted in the *Recorder*.

<sup>257</sup> “The Truth About the Fall Creek YMCA,” *Indianapolis Recorder*, September 26, 2003, sec. page A5.

<sup>258</sup> Burlock with Lineweaver, April 10, 2012.

<sup>259</sup> “The Truth About the Fall Creek YMCA.”

the facility,” the authors asserted, “has changed radically since it was built in 1958 ... The interstate highway built in the 1970s cut off the Fall Creek YMCA from neighborhoods where most African American moved.” The Board of Directors went on to report that “Census data indicates that since 1960 there has been a 54 percent decline in occupied housing and a 63 percent decline in population living within a mile radius of the Fall Creek facility.” The census data that the Board relied upon to conceptualize the service area of the Fall Creek YMCA included the statistics for the total population, total occupied housing units, and percentage of population over sixty-five, within the following census tracts of Center Township: 3501, 3502, 3503, 3510, 3511, 3512, 3515, 3516, 3533, 3535, 3539 and 3541 (See highlighted tracts in Fig. 4).<sup>260</sup>

In addition to explaining how the demographics within a mile radius of the Fall Creek YMCA, which the Metropolitan YMCA designated as the service area of the branch, changed during the 1960s and 1970s, the Board of Directors also listed the consistent investments and efforts that the Metropolitan YMCA undertook between 1990 and 2002 to “sustain” the Fall Creek Parkway YMCA within those “geographic

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<sup>260</sup> Fax from Chuck Coffey of Indiana Department of Administration to Norris Lineweaver, June 15, 2000, Box 19 Baxter disaster and Fall Creek Y, Fall Creek Studies, YMCA Records.

Norris Lineweaver received a fax of an e-mail conversation between Chuck Coffey and Roberta L. Brooker, Indiana State Data Center Coordinator at the State Library. Coffey asked Brooker to compile population and housing data from 1960 to 1990 for the census tracts 3501, 3502, 3503, 3510, 3511, 3512, 3515, 3516, 3533, 3535, 3539, and 3541. Brooker responded with the statistical information and also told Coffey that though the tract numbers changed, “the geographic boundaries for each Census” between 1960 and 1990 remained exactly the same. The census tracts in 1960 were indicated by three digit numbers. For example, 535 in 1960 designated the same area as 3535 in 1970.

In the comments of the fax, Coffey identified the data as “the results of the population analysis of the Fall Creek Branch’s service area,” summarizing that the area suffered from a 63 percent population decrease and a 54 percent decline in occupied housing between 1960 and 1990.



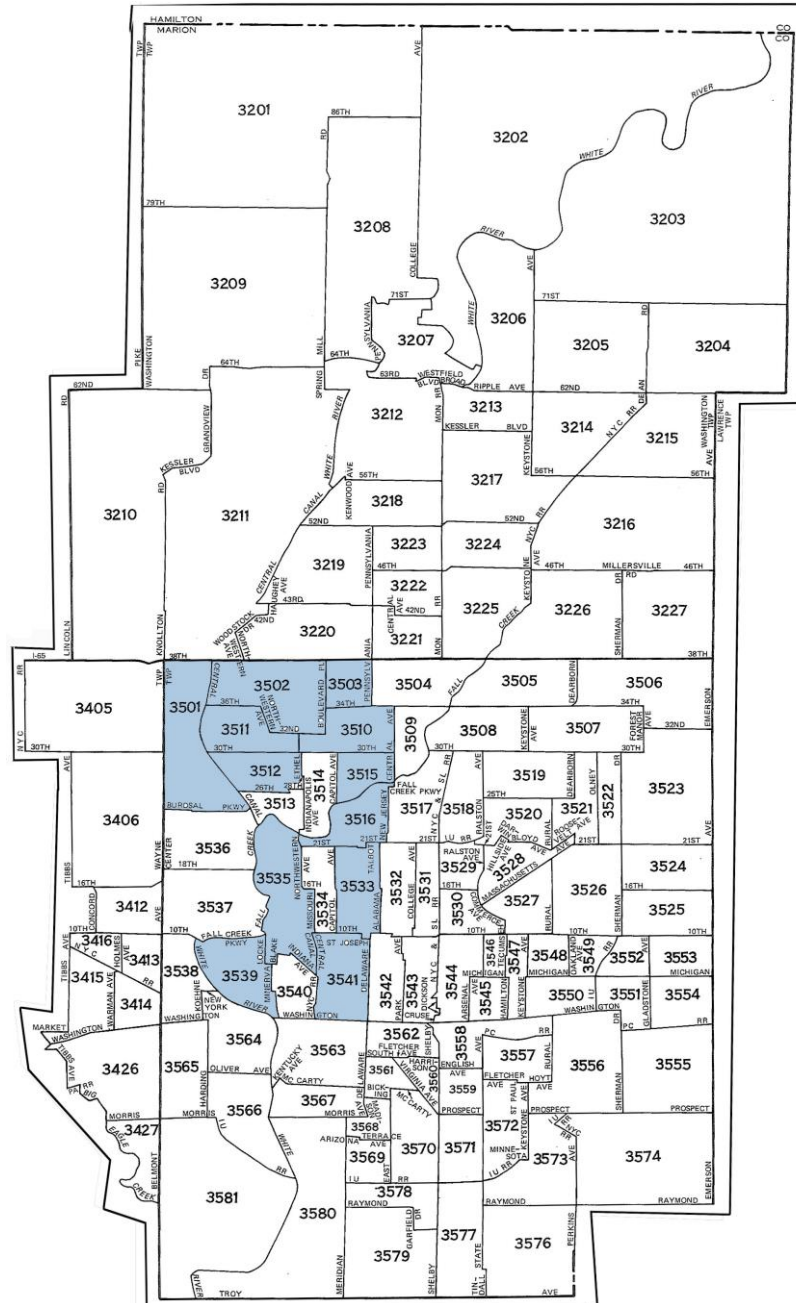


Fig. 4. Above. Census tracts within an inset of the SMSA of Indianapolis, 1970. U.S. Bureau of the Census, *U.S. Census of Population and Housing: 1970 Census Tracts, Final Report PHC (1)-92*.

boundaries.”<sup>261</sup> These attempts included funding the renovation of the facility in 1991, commissioning independent studies to evaluate the branch service area, developing

<sup>261</sup> “An Open Letter To The Community,” *Indianapolis Recorder*, September 26, 2003, sec. page A5; Fax from Chuck Coffey of Indiana Department of Administration to Norris Lineweaver, June 15, 2000, Box 19 Baxter disaster and Fall Creek Y, Fall Creek Studies, YMCA Records.

strategic plans detailing membership revenue and performance goals, pursuing liaisons, as well as investing in promotional campaigns (e.g., membership drives at special events, open houses, newspaper articles in the *Indianapolis Recorder* and *Indiana Herald*).<sup>262</sup> In a concluding statement to the list, the board explained that such studies and strategic plans were unsuccessful in staunching the financial hemorrhaging of Fall Creek as detailed in “The Truth” advertisement, and stressed that the close of Fall Creek was necessary in order for the Greater Indianapolis YMCA to maintain its “fiscal integrity.”<sup>263</sup>

In “The Truth” advertisement the Strategic Communications Committee also assured readers that the plans implemented by the Greater Indianapolis YMCA to sustain the Fall Creek YMCA were not affected by its financial support of other branches in Center Township. In answer to the question, “Is it true that the YMCA of Greater Indianapolis spent \$2.5 million on the YMCA at the Athenaeum?” the committee compared the “the initial capital investment” of \$30,000, which the Greater Indianapolis

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Roberta L. Brooker, who was the Indiana State Data Center Coordinator for the State Library, used the terminology “geographic boundaries” to describe the areas covered by the census tracts that Chuck Coffey asked her to research.

<sup>262</sup> “An Open Letter To The Community;” Independent studies found in YMCA Records include the following: (1) Wisconsin Management Resource Center: YMCA of Greater Indianapolis - Fall Creek Parkway Branch Cost Study of the 1995 Budget Calculated September 25, 1995, Box 19 Baxter disaster and Fall Creek Y, Fall Creek Studies, YMCA Records; (2) Downtown YMCAs: The Past, Present & Uncertain Future, by Urban Group C.O.O. Conference, Dallas, TX, 8/96, Box 19 Baxter disaster and Fall Creek Y, Correspondence 1997-1999, YMCA Records; (3) 1996 COO Conference August 13-16, 1996 in Dallas, Texas, Urban Group/Metro 30 Downtown YMCA Survey Results, Box 19 Baxter disaster and Fall Creek Y, Correspondence 1997-1999, YMCA Records; (4) Fall Creek Branch YMCA Organizational Study Prepared by John Baughn, Presented 9-3-99, Box 19 Baxter disaster and Fall Creek Y, Fall Creek Studies, YMCA Records; (5) YMCA Downtown Study: *Fall Creek Overview* Final Report 05-02-2000, By Strategic Marketing & Research, Inc. in Carmel, IN, Box 19 Baxter disaster and Fall Creek Y, Fall Creek Studies, YMCA Records.

<sup>263</sup> “An Open Letter To The Community” and “The Truth About the Fall Creek YMCA.”

YMCA made in support of the Athenaeum, to the \$1.1 million that the metropolitan association spent “to renovate the Fall Creek YMCA” at the same time. Therefore, the decision by the metropolitan association to close Fall Creek followed several efforts which were, according to the Strategic Communications Committee, unmitigated by the financial support of other branches in downtown Indianapolis. The decision was made when administrators at the Metropolitan YMCA concluded that sustaining the Fall Creek YMCA was no longer cost-effective or necessary in order to continue the mission of the YMCA organization.<sup>264</sup>

Similar to its decision to close the dormitories, the Board again aligned its financial-based resolution to close Fall Creek with the core mission of the national YMCA organization that stressed a vision in which families and youth were better served. “The Truth” announcement explained that “The decision to close the [Fall Creek YMCA] will allow the [Greater Indianapolis] YMCA to better channel its resources in an effort to provide more urban outreach efforts.” These efforts included “funding programs for children and youth in Center Township,” and would thus reflect the continued commitment of the Greater Indianapolis YMCA to “an underserved area of Marion County.” Authors of “The Truth” went on to reveal that, in support of such an urban outreach mission, proceeds from the sale of the Fall Creek YMCA would be equally divided between creating an endowment earmarked for youth services in Center Township, and purchasing a site in Pike Township for the construction of another YMCA branch.<sup>265</sup>

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<sup>264</sup> “The Truth About the Fall Creek YMCA.”

<sup>265</sup> “The Truth About the Fall Creek YMCA.” “An Open Letter” also ensured readers that the IYMCA would reassign Fall Creek staff members to other branch positions in the organization, and that

Lineweaver conceptualized his and the decision by the metropolitan association to close the Fall Creek YMCA and divert funding to “Y-Without-Walls” programs in Center Township as being representative of the reshaped physical and social geography of near-downtown Indianapolis. According to LeVester Hobbs, former Acting Executive Director of Fall Creek, Y-Without-Walls or Urban Mission was created before the establishment of Fall Creek and “piggy-backed” or expanded programs that were offered through the branch by managing some programs at offsite locations. (The program was basically a strategy in which the YMCA served communities without the overhead of an actual facility.) The decentralized function of Y-Without-Walls programs, which were implemented at schools and other facilities in Center Township, ideally complemented a membership base that had been dispersed due to desegregation and land acquisition measures. Decentralized activities included afterschool programs and youth groups for teenagers.<sup>266</sup>

Jan Clark, who was an African-American member of the Metropolitan YMCA Board, agreed with Lineweaver that the facilitation of such “decentralized programs at schools and community centers” in Center Township by the Greater Indianapolis YMCA effectively replaced the Fall Creek facility. According to an article published in the *Indianapolis Star* on August 27, 2003, Clark said that the Fall Creek branch was “an outdated model” within a new, urbanized environment.<sup>267</sup> Her concept of the Fall Creek

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youth-centered Fall Creek programs as well as adult classes such as the Senior Connection Water Fitness Program and PACE (People With Arthritis Can Exercise) would continue at other local sites and YMCA branches.

<sup>266</sup> Burlock with Hobbs, April 26, 2012; Jon Murray, “Future uncertain for Fall Creek Y,” *Indianapolis Star*, August 7, 2003; Fall Creek Branch Program Transition Report, October 13, 2003, Box Office of the President Fall Creek Closing Files, Fall Creek 2003, YMCA Records.

<sup>267</sup> Jon Murray, “Fall Creek backers continue fight for Y,” *Indianapolis Star*, August 27, 2003.

YMCA as outdated aligned with how the Metropolitan YMCA Board and Communications Committee represented the branch in their articles “An Open Letter to the Community” and “The Truth about the Fall Creek YMCA.” The position of the metropolitan association was that the Fall Creek YMCA was no longer financially sustainable because of the intensification of surrounding urban revitalization projects and the consequent demographic shift in its immediate service area, and thus the Greater Indianapolis YMCA should in turn shift its focus and funding to cost-efficient, decentralized programming in Center Township.<sup>268</sup>

Lineweaver reiterated the themes of change and the commitment of the metropolitan association to near-downtown Indianapolis, which were promoted in the dual public releases, through a series of correspondence and newspaper write-ups. Like the authors of “The Truth” advertisement, he framed his writing as a response to perceived questions by community members who opposed the closing of the Fall Creek YMCA and criticized the explanations that the metropolitan association made in support of the decision.

For example, Lineweaver distributed follow-up letters to Congresswoman Julia Carson and other community leaders who had received letters from Jocelyn-Tandy Adande, spokeswoman for a group of community members who wanted the Fall Creek branch to remain open at its historical location in near-downtown Indianapolis (discussed later). In these follow-up letters he pointed out how the demographics within the designated service area of the branch had “dramatically” declined. Lineweaver also stated that the Metropolitan YMCA Board had implemented a “series of new initiatives” to sustain the branch within its service area until “escalating financial challenges” due to a

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<sup>268</sup> “An Open Letter To The Community” and “The Truth About the Fall Creek YMCA.”

decreased membership base made such efforts in vain. He went on to describe a new, decentralized YMCA model and how the closing and sale of the Fall Creek branch would open opportunities for the Metropolitan YMCA to expand its new model in urban neighborhoods.<sup>269</sup>

The new model Lineweaver discussed was the Urban Mission branch, which was a branch that did not “have a facility of its own” and was essentially a “YMCA without walls.” The Metropolitan YMCA Board developed the branch “to take the mission of the YMCA directly to schools, churches, public parks and other accessible spaces ... to reach children where they are.” Lineweaver concluded the letter by assuring his recipient readers that proceeds from the sale of the Fall Creek YMCA would fund an endowment for youth-centered programming and the construction of a YMCA in Pike Township at the bequest of African-American leaders. (Proceeds from the sale of the Fall Creek YMCA in March 2004 were ultimately earmarked for these purposes.) In this way Lineweaver defended the mission of the Metropolitan YMCA. His follow-up correspondence was one of the approaches he employed to articulate the demographic studies and consequent plans of the Metropolitan YMCA.<sup>270</sup>

Lineweaver also introduced a write-up in the *Indianapolis Star* titled “Fall Creek YMCA closes but programs remain,” as a “response to a letter that appeared in *The Star* on Aug. 25 regarding the closing of the Fall Creek YMCA.” The response was an

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<sup>269</sup> Letter from Norris Lineweaver to Julia Carson, August 4, 2003, Box 19 Baxter disaster and Fall Creek Y, [next to] Correspondence – 2003, YMCA Records.

<sup>270</sup> Burlock with Hobbs, April 26, 2012; Letter from Norris Lineweaver to Julia Carson, August 4, 2003, Box 19 Baxter disaster and Fall Creek Y, [next to] Correspondence – 2003, YMCA Records; “YMCA Programs to Continue After Building Closes,” June 25, 2003, Box Office of the President Fall Creek Closing Files, Fall Creek 2003, YMCA Records.

LeVester Hobbs related that the IYMCA eventually opened an Urban Mission/Meadows YMCA facility in 2013 to act as a home or central office space for Y-Without-Walls staff.

additional summary of the statistical information concerning Fall Creek's service area that was delineated in "An Open Letter," in which he concluded that "With the gradual shift in population from the city center to outlying areas, the neighborhood around the building has changed dramatically" since it opened in 1959. He also pointed out that the membership of the Fall Creek branch had consequently become "more diverse" or in other words was increasingly made up of whites. Lineweaver went on to conclude that the sale of the branch would "allow the [Greater Indianapolis] YMCA to better channel its resources to provide more urban outreach efforts, especially for children and youth." He stressed on behalf of the Metropolitan YMCA that "While we are closing the doors on a building that has served our community with distinction, we are confident that we are opening the way to better service" youth and families "in our urban neighborhoods." Therefore, replacing and rechanneling the resources from the Fall Creek branch, according to Lineweaver, allowed the Greater Indianapolis Metropolitan YMCA to better serve the target membership base of young people and family units.<sup>271</sup>

The metropolitan YMCA also aligned with the traditional youth-centered mission of the national office in Chicago, YMCA of the USA, in 2002 with its decision to close the dormitory section of Fall Creek. In both instances the metropolitan association based its decision to close doors off of a vision of how a YMCA branch should function and financially support itself within a changed social geography. The Metropolitan YMCA board moreover issued public statements to underline that its decisions did not conflict with, but rather demonstrated, a commitment to serve the urban neighborhoods of Indianapolis.<sup>272</sup>

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<sup>271</sup> Norris Lineweaver, "Fall Creek YMCA closes but programs remain," *Indianapolis Star*, n.d.

Thus, the Greater Indianapolis YMCA represented itself through public releases and follow-up correspondence as an organization that made difficult decisions to ensure that its branches adopted the core mission of the national organization and also adapted to the changes (i.e., vision) that local-state agencies implemented within Indianapolis' downtown black community. "If we're not changing," Lineweaver reflected, "we're falling back ... we have to be always intentional about taking steps to be sure that there are other opportunities in which we can serve people better by changing the way in which we engage them."<sup>273</sup> The steps that he and the Metropolitan YMCA Board of Directors took in September 2003 to change how the Fall Creek YMCA served its targeted membership base were informed not just by data and financial analyses, but also founded upon an understanding or vision of how the YMCA should continue to function in consideration of the large-scale changes taking place in the downtown area of Indianapolis.

**"It will be a great loss"**<sup>274</sup>

In contrast, Fall Creek YMCA members and advocates conceptualized the facility as a symbol of local black history that represented a significant legacy of racial solidarity along Indiana Avenue. Moreover, advocates of this understanding envisioned the Fall Creek branch as an institution that could continue to be supported by, and of service to,

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<sup>272</sup> Swiatek, "Durable YMCAs;" Fall Creek Dormitory Statement, January 31, 2002, Box 19 Baxter disaster and Fall Creek Y, Correspondence 2002, YMCA Records.

<sup>273</sup> Burlock with Lineweaver, April 10, 2012.

<sup>274</sup> *Indianapolis Recorder*, "Your Voice: How do you feel about Fall Creek YMCA closing in September?" July 4, 2003. Quote by Frank Shirley, who was an African-American man interviewed by a reporter for the *Recorder*.



youth and families residing in Center Township, albeit from outside the immediate radius of its original service area. Potential members in this new service area could reach the downtown area and Fall Creek using public transportation.<sup>275</sup>

Individuals and groups who aligned with the vision of Fall Creek as a necessary and accessible institution took steps to oppose the decision by Lineweaver and the Metropolitan YMCA to close the branch. These advocates argued that the building itself and programming facilitated at the site were still viable enterprises in spite of recent demographic shifts as well as downtown construction and gentrification projects. Jean Ely, president of the Fall Creek YMCA Board of Managers, represented community leaders who emphasized the history of “the branch’s commitment to community outreach” and role in civil rights activism—rather than a later history of escalating debt—as an objective reason to preserve the Fall Creek YMCA in Indianapolis.<sup>276</sup>

Ely’s understanding of the historic importance of Fall Creek was encapsulated in an *Indiana Herald* editorial printed in August 2003. The author of the editorial asked her readers, “So why do we need a Fall Creek YMCA?” and went on to explain that, “The reason we need a Fall Creek YMCA is the same reason we need [an] Indiana Black Expo. To dispose of either would be to wipe clean the history of a people that was experienced at a great cost.”<sup>277</sup> Parents whose children attended programs also valued the branch for its role in its present context. Their sentiments about the contemporaneous utility of the branch in the near-Westside community were voiced by individuals like IUPUI employee

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<sup>275</sup> Burlock with Jocelyn-Tandy Adande, July 23, 2012.

<sup>276</sup> Ericka C. Wheeler, “The fight to save Fall Creek YMCA isn’t over yet,” *Indianapolis Recorder*, August 8, 2003.

<sup>277</sup> C. Nickerson Bolden, editorial titled “Lest We Forget,” *Indiana Herald*, August 2, 2003.

Tiffany Robinson, whose three children participated in drama and dancing classes at the Fall Creek YM, which was of course close to her on-campus job. ““If they take this [i.e., the Fall Creek Parkway YMCA] away, they won’t be able to do it,”” she told *Indianapolis Star* reporter Jon Murray.<sup>278</sup> Carole Keppler, a Fall Creek YMCA member, felt similar to Robinson in that she perceived her branch as a necessary institution for community service at its physical location. “Moving that Y out in Pike Township,” she explained, “is not helping the Downtown area ... It’s just taking one more thing to the suburbs.”<sup>279</sup>

Keppler and similar-minded individuals did not foresee the IYMCA’s Y-Without-Walls organization and programming as satisfactory substitutes for an actual YMCA facility in the inner city. “I feel it’s bad,” said Gloria Shepherd to the *Recorder* when asked about how she felt concerning the close of the Fall Creek YMCA, “because a lot of the kids over in that area will not have anywhere to go, and I do not think that it is fair.” Frank Shirley was another individual who, much like Ely, Robinson, Keppler, and Shepherd, understood the closing as the loss of an instrumental social space and testament to a significant legacy in Indianapolis’ downtown area. “I think that it is a great loss to the Black community,” Shirley also told the *Recorder*, “because I grew up in the Lockefield Gardens area and I remember the YMCA as a great asset for the community. It will be a great loss.” Thus community members who opposed the decision by the Greater Indianapolis Metropolitan YMCA to close the Fall Creek branch associated the

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<sup>278</sup> Jon Murray, “Fall Creek YMCA to close: Officials cite losses, demographic shifts near IUPUI campus,” June 26, 2003.

<sup>279</sup> Murray, “Future uncertain for Fall Creek Y,” *Indianapolis Star*, August 7, 2003.

physical presence of the facility with its programming, and therefore felt that closing the facility would diminish its social impact within a disadvantaged community.<sup>280</sup>

LeVester Hobbs, who was the Building Services Director at the Jordan YMCA branch at the time of this project, reiterated this building-focused idea while reflecting on his time as Acting Executive Director or Director of Operations of the Fall Creek branch between 2000 and 2003. It was during this time that he functioned as a self-described “bridge” between the black community that remained in Center Township and the metropolitan association.<sup>281</sup> He asserted that “to really run an effective YMCA program you need a [central] building.”<sup>282</sup> Jean Ely, Fall Creek Board President, also thought that preserving the Fall Creek YMCA facility was necessary to continuing centralized youth-centered activities in the downtown area. She conceptualized Fall Creek as not only an institution that physically paid homage to a legacy of racial solidarity and civic agency in Black Indianapolis, but also as a space where children, like her three kids who participated in swimming, wrestling, and basketball activities at the Fall Creek YMCA, could “belong.”<sup>283</sup>

Such a vision of the past and present use of the Fall Creek YMCA facility informed the steps that Ely and other civic leaders undertook to prevent the close of the branch and thus deter the plan of the metropolitan association to implement its vision,

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<sup>280</sup> *Indianapolis Recorder*, “Your Voice: How do you feel about Fall Creek YMCA closing in September?” July 4, 2003.

<sup>281</sup> Burlock with Hobbs, April 26, 2012. Hobbs described his position in 2003 as one of a peacekeeper who was “loyal to the community in which [he] ... grew up in” and “loyal to the YMCA of Greater Indianapolis,” his employer.

<sup>282</sup> Burlock with Hobbs, April 26, 2012. Hobbs also mentioned that the IYMCA eventually opened the Urban Mission/Meadows YMCA in 2013 to act as a home or central office space for Y-Without-Walls staff.

<sup>283</sup> Murray, “Future uncertain for Fall Creek Y,” *Indianapolis Star*, August 7, 2003.

based on service area studies, of changing downtown YMCA services into a decentralized organizational model.<sup>284</sup> Ely actually demonstrated that she understood the Fall Creek YMCA as a community-based institution independent from the larger IYMCA through a letter campaign. In a “Declaration of Independence Letter” she addressed to Philip B. Roby, Chairman of the Greater Indianapolis YMCA Board of Directors, Ely explained her understanding of how the visions held by the IYMCA and the Fall Creek YMCA Board were juxtaposed: “Our belief is that the focus by the YMCA of Greater Indianapolis on the Fall Creek YMCA as a Fitness Center has detracted from the overall mission and core values of the YMCA in that branch.” She attributed the “deletion of traditional YMCA programs and programs that focus on the cultural heritage of many of our [i.e., Fall Creek YMCA] members” to the superimposition of the traditional IYMCA model onto the functional operations of the Fall Creek Parkway branch.<sup>285</sup>

While the vision of Fall Creek held by the metropolitan association led directors to vote to close the YMCA, the concept of the branch as remaining separate and viable to Indianapolis blacks motivated Fall Creek board members to vote to “seek independent status” from the Greater Indianapolis YMCA on September 22, 2003.<sup>286</sup> Another civic and activist group leader who mounted efforts to deter the metropolitan association in

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<sup>284</sup> Murray, “Fall Creek backers continue fight for Y,” *Indianapolis Star*, August 27, 2003.

<sup>285</sup> Fax from Jean Ely to Norris Lineweaver, September 26, 2003, Box 19 Baxter disaster and Fall Creek Y, [next to] Correspondence – 2003, YMCA Records. Ely also copied (i.e., Cc’ed) the letter to Dennis Ryerson, Editor and Vice President of the *Indianapolis Star*, Disa Watson, President of the Midtown Economic and Industrial Corporation, and Ellen K. Annala, United Way of Central Indiana’s President and CEO.

<sup>286</sup> Fax from Jean Ely to Norris Lineweaver, September 26, 2003, Box 19 Baxter disaster and Fall Creek Y, [next to] Correspondence – 2003, YMCA Records.

closing Fall Creek, and thus prevent the manifestation of its vision over that of branch and community members, was Jocelyn-Tandy Adande.

**We “would’ve won the battle”<sup>287</sup>**

As a community activist who was experienced in running for public offices (first for a congressional seat and then mayor), Adande was intimate not only with other leaders and groups that made up the grassroots of Black Indianapolis, but also the political dynamics that facilitated the gentrification of historically black areas and institutions. She was moreover knowledgeable about the role that the Fall Creek YMCA played as part of a network of “community centers” that were patronized by residents in predominantly black neighborhoods, and had consequently developed a vision of the branch that paralleled the concept held by advocates like Ely and other Fall Creek board members. As a young girl Adande grew up on the Eastside of Indianapolis and recalled the various community centers that offered structured and safe recreational activities (e.g., swimming, softball, track, skating, and parties) for African-American youth. Adande also remembered the programmatic mission of the Fall Creek YMCA as family-centered. Her brothers listened to speakers at Monster Meetings and also attended a Father and Son Banquet with their Dad. As an adult, Adande continued to view the Fall Creek YMCA as a necessary space in Center Township for remaining families and youth. When asked by community members to chair a volunteer committee organized to maintain the facility and its legacy, she readily accepted.<sup>288</sup>

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<sup>287</sup> Burlock with Jocelyn-Tandy Adande, July 23, 2012. Quote by Jocelyn-Tandy Adande.

This movement of community leaders included the Members United to Save Fall Creek, for whom Adande acted as spokesperson. Members United to Save Fall Creek (also known as the United to Save the Fall Creek YMCA group) was an umbrella organization that incorporated the Fall Creek Board of Managers as well as several other community organizations, including the Crispus Attucks Alumni Association, Concerned Clergy of Indianapolis, Prince Hall Masonic Association, Historic Landmarks of Indianapolis, and the Fall Creek Reformation League.<sup>289</sup> The Fall Creek Reformation League was organized a short time after the IYMCA made the decision to close the Fall Creek branch by individuals who wanted to “purchase [the] branch to preserve its legacy in the African-American community.” According to Adande in an *Indianapolis Star* article, the league of activists included members of the YMCA, community-based organizations, “churches, Masonic groups, sororities, fraternities,” as well as “elected officials and other concerned citizens” who also advocated for Fall Creek.<sup>290</sup>

Together with the Fall Creek Reformation League, the Members United coalition distributed informational flyers and a petition to keep the Fall Creek YM open at the 2003 Black Expo event. Members United also launched a membership drive.<sup>291</sup> Some members of the Fall Creek YMCA also held demonstrations in front of the Association

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<sup>288</sup> Burlock with Jocelyn-Tandy Adande, July 23, 2012; Letter to Philip B. Roby from Jocelyn-Tandy Adande, July 25, 2003, Box 19 Baxter disaster and Fall Creek Y, [next to] Correspondence – 2003, YMCA Records.

<sup>289</sup> Letter to the Editor from Jocelyn-Tandy Adande, August 20, 2003, Box 19 Baxter disaster and Fall Creek Y, [next to] Correspondence – 2003, YMCA Records.

<sup>290</sup> Jocelyn-Tandy Adande, “Answers sought on plan to close Fall Creek YMCA,” *Indianapolis Star*, August, 25, 2003.

<sup>291</sup> “Groups Rally To Save Fall Creek YMCA,” *Indiana Herald*, August 2, 2003; Ericka C. Wheeler, “The fight to save Fall Creek YMCA isn’t over yet,” *Indianapolis Recorder*, August 8, 2003; Distribution from Jocelyn-Tandy Adande letter, July 31, 2003, Box Office of the President Fall Creek Closing Files, Fall Creek Media, YMCA Records.

Office of the Greater Indianapolis YMCA at 615 North Alabama Street on August 26 and September 27, 2003, to protest its decision to close the branch and demand that the association make the Fall Creek YMCA an independent organization.<sup>292</sup>

Adande also launched an extensive letter campaign on behalf of the Members United coalition, soliciting the support of local leaders such as Senator Richard Lugar; Mayor Bart Peterson; Philip Roby, Chairman of the Metropolitan YMCA Board; Norris Lineweaver; and newspaper editors. She also faxed a copy of her “Letter to the Editor” message to the national YMCA office, YMCA of the USA. In the comments section of the cover sheet to this fax she wrote, “Metropolitan YMCA Board’s conduct regarding poor community relations,” continuing on in the body of the letter to fault the metropolitan association for “an intentional lack of communication” with community members who opposed its decision to close the Fall Creek YMCA.<sup>293</sup>

Adande also reiterated the theme of distrust in a short write-up published in the *Indianapolis Star* on August 25, 2003. She indicated that the Greater Indianapolis YMCA had misrepresented statistical information in order to conclude that there was not a sufficient membership base in the immediate area of Fall Creek. In particular “Norris Lineweaver,” Adande began, had “said that Downtown demographics can no longer support the Fall Creek branch of the YMCA. However, in recent years, he has opened two new branches within Center Township.” Adande identified the Urban Mission and

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<sup>292</sup> Jon Murray, “Foes of Y’s shutdown not giving up,” *Indianapolis Star*, September 27, 2003.

<sup>293</sup> Letter to the Editor from Jocelyn-Tandy Adande, August 20, 2003, Box 19 Baxter disaster and Fall Creek Y, [next to] Correspondence – 2003, YMCA Records.

Adande faxed the letter to YMCA of the USA from her office, J.E. Tandy Consulting, on August 21, 2003. A copy of her fax cover sheet to the YMCA of the USA, letter to the editor, and other letters addressed to Philip Roby, Chairman of the Metropolitan YMCA Board, Mayor Bart Peterson, Senator Richard G. Lugar, and Norris Lineweaver, were included in a fax sent to Norris Lineweaver on September 4, 2003.

Athenaeum as the new branches, and concluded that the metropolitan association had siphoned crucial funds away from the Fall Creek YMCA to those competing organizations.<sup>294</sup> Her distrust of administrators at the Greater Indianapolis YMCA reflected her distrust of their vision of the Fall Creek YMCA as a facility that was no longer financially viable or necessary to serve the downtown area.

As the spokesperson for the Members United coalition, Adande promoted a conflicting vision for the Fall Creek YMCA that the board of directors, members, and community activists fought to continue in near-downtown Indianapolis. She understood that urban revitalization projects and the expansion of IUPUI had forcibly relocated Indianapolis blacks “farther from Downtown.”<sup>295</sup> But, she also concluded that downtown revitalization and construction projects should have had no bearing on the ultimate trajectory of the branch, and certainly did not justify the decision by the metropolitan association to close the doors of its facility to the inner-city community.<sup>296</sup>

Her vision of the Fall Creek YMCA as an accessible and feasible operation was informed by an alternative understanding of the changes that reshaped the area northwest of downtown Indianapolis. Even though the service area of the Fall Creek YMCA had been significantly disrupted by urban revitalization projects, she emphasized that the branch “was on a main bus line from downtown” and thus accessible by a membership base that included kids from low-income families, IUPUI students, and senior citizens.<sup>297</sup>

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<sup>294</sup> Adande, “Answers sought on plan to close Fall Creek YMCA,” *Indianapolis Star*, August, 25, 2003.

<sup>295</sup> Jon Murray, “Future uncertain for Fall Creek Y,” *Indianapolis Star*, August 7, 2003

<sup>296</sup> Burlock with Jocelyn-Tandy Adande, July 23, 2012.

<sup>297</sup> Burlock with Jocelyn-Tandy Adande, July 23, 2012.



In direct contrast to the Metropolitan YMCA Board of Directors, who based their decision to close Fall Creek off of demographics “within a mile radius” of the branch (See Fig. 4), Adande envisioned the service area of the Fall Creek YMCA encompassing communities outside of a one-mile radius.<sup>298</sup> She contended that the service area of Fall Creek included those outlying suburban neighborhoods where, according to the metropolitan association’s own estimation, more African Americans began to reside in the 1970’s.<sup>299</sup> She thought that potential members who resided in areas located outside of a mile radius of near-downtown Indianapolis would be able to frequent Fall Creek through the use of the public transit system, which connected suburban neighborhoods to the downtown area (See Fig. 5).<sup>300</sup>

It is important to note that such a vision of relying on a bus system for the transportation of individuals to near-downtown Indianapolis was implicitly challenged by the development of an extensive interstate system within the central business district of Indianapolis.<sup>301</sup> Future research should examine the construction of the highway system and controversies that surrounded making Indianapolis into the “interstate capital of the nation.”<sup>302</sup> Adande’s idea of accessibility emphasized not only the previous history and

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<sup>298</sup> Burlock with Jocelyn-Tandy Adande, July 23, 2012; “An Open Letter To The Community” and “The Truth About the Fall Creek YMCA,” *Indianapolis Recorder*, September 26, 2003, sec. page A5.

<sup>299</sup> “An Open Letter To The Community” and “The Truth About the Fall Creek YMCA,” *Indianapolis Recorder*, September 26, 2003, sec. page A5.

<sup>300</sup> Burlock with Jocelyn-Tandy Adande, July 23, 2012; Indianapolis Public Transportation Corporation, *IndyGo System Information*, System Map, <http://www.indygo.net/pages/indygo-system-map>.

<sup>301</sup> DDRC and ICLC, “Downtown Development,” (April 1980), 10-11. Writers asserted that “Perhaps one of the clearest examples of local government’s emphasis on downtown at the expense of neighborhood residents is in the area of public transportation.” They went on to explain how “The highways that knocked down houses throughout the inner city were not built for inner-city residents ... who require an adequate ‘city-wide’ transportation system.”

<sup>302</sup> Gray, *IUPUI*, 49.

utility of the Fall Creek YMCA before the completion of I-465 and I-65, but also the central geography of the branch at that time as evidence of its necessity and sustainability in near-downtown Indianapolis.<sup>303</sup>

Adande had also expected the growing middle-class clientele who lived, worked, and enjoyed recreational facilities downtown to frequent the Fall Creek YMCA through the week and on weekends. As such, she reflected, “We would’ve been able to expand [a] network of contributors because there was a large white population utilizing that Y before it closed ... that’s who lived downtown [then] and it was convenient for them.” She furthermore thought that, in spite of the rising financial debt that had been attached to the Fall Creek YMCA, Members United to Save Fall Creek and supporters “would’ve won the battle” to keep Fall Creek actively utilized and economically feasible. Adande remembered receiving support from Senator Lugar. She also said that she would have been able to marshal together affluent African-American churches, sororities, fraternities, leading businessmen, and middle-class blacks outside of Center Township, to create a new revenue source for the Fall Creek YMCA had the metropolitan association postponed its decision in June to permanently close the longstanding branch.<sup>304</sup>

The vision that Adande had for the Fall Creek YMCA as a community-centered operation at the heart of the city had also burdened the hearts and directed the activism of various community leaders and YMCA members. On September 30, 2003, though their vision would end with closed doors.<sup>305</sup>

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<sup>303</sup> Burlock with Jocelyn-Tandy Adande, July 23, 2012.

<sup>304</sup> Burlock with Jocelyn-Tandy Adande, July 23, 2012

<sup>305</sup> Burlock with Jocelyn-Tandy Adande, July 23, 2012; Murray, “Future uncertain for Fall Creek Y,” *Indianapolis Star*, August 7, 2003.

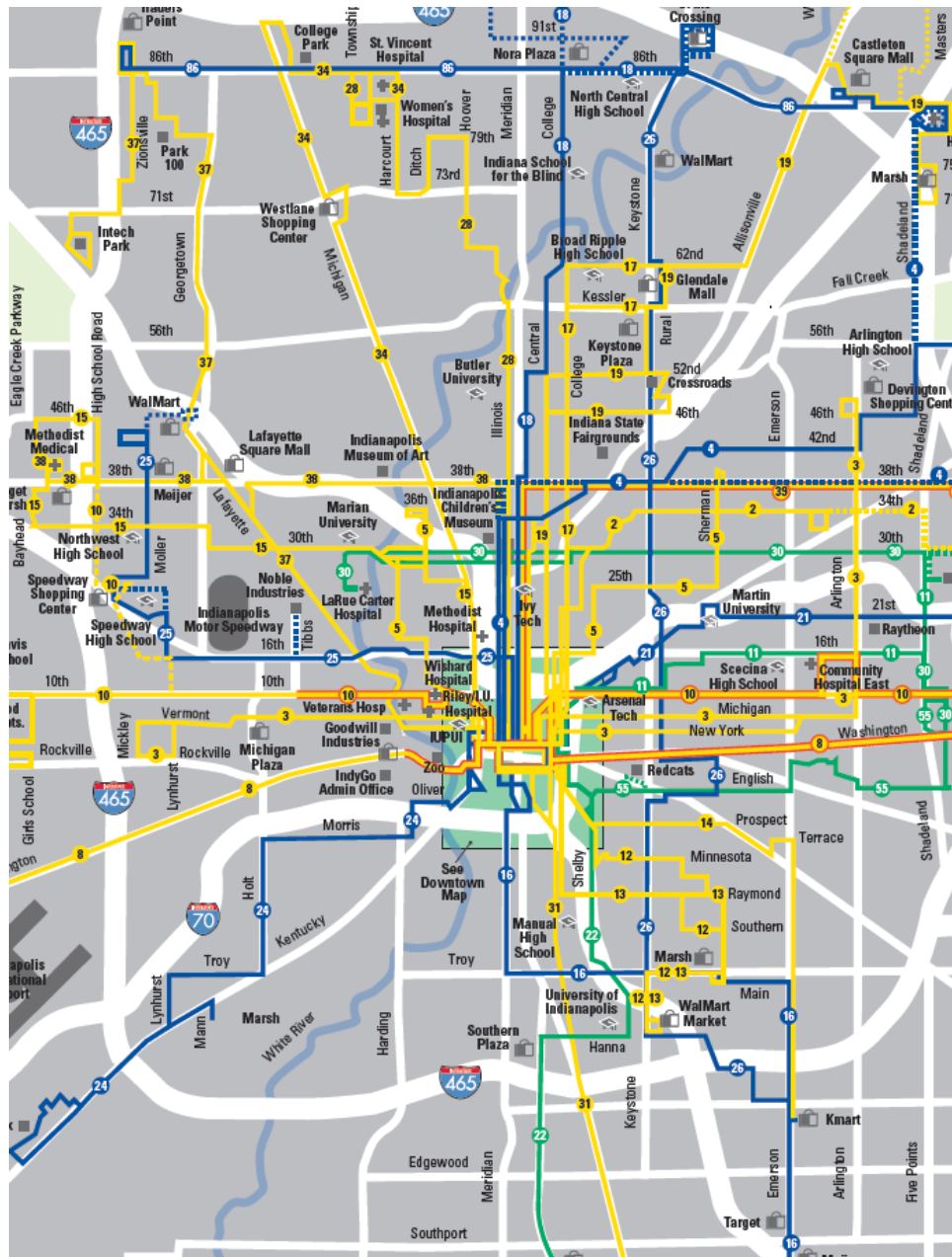


Fig. 5. Above. Indianapolis Public Transit Map, 2013. (<http://www.indygo.net/pages/indygo-system-map>).

“A positive step in the right direction”<sup>306</sup>

Amos Brown, news correspondent for the *Indianapolis Recorder*, actually aligned with the metropolitan association in asserting that the Fall Creek YMCA could not be

<sup>306</sup> Brown, “Just Tellin’ It: YMCA’s Lineweaver speaks; Classic’s a big success, Jazz Fest’s a big flop,” *Indianapolis Recorder*, October 10, 2003.

sustained at its downtown location due to declining demographics. In a “Just Tellin’ It” editorial published in the *Recorder* in July 2003, Brown stated that in contrast to the 1960s “just 29 percent of our African-American community” lived within the immediate area of the Fall Creek YMCA by 2000.” “That brutal demographic fact,” he concluded, “not scheming white conspiracies, is why the Fall Creek YMCA couldn’t survive.” Brown faulted the Greater Indianapolis Metropolitan YMCA and other YM leaders for not building a new Fall Creek YMCA in another more sustainable location sooner, citing “timid leadership from the white-dominated Metropolitan YMCA Board and myopic and misguided opposition from some Black leaders” as reasons for inaction on behalf of the historical branch. However, he mostly attributed the failure to build a new Fall Creek YMCA within a service area that was immediate to “growing Black communities” to African Americans.<sup>307</sup>

Brown believed in the economic power of African Americans to jointly establish centers of solidarity and service where they lived. “Our African-American community could have long ago raised the money to build a new Fall Creek YMCA,” he contended. “If Black people can raise and generate tens of millions of dollars building huge Black megachurches all over Indianapolis, I know Blacks could’ve raised the money to move and build a new Fall Creek.”<sup>308</sup> His claim that African Americans could raise funds to keep the branch open was similar to Adande’s plan to solicit support from prominent majority-black organizations. Adande though reasoned that such communal support

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<sup>307</sup> Brown, “Just Tellin’ It: Two deaths, a closing, a landmark decision and Clarence Thomas’ idiocy,” *Indianapolis Recorder*, July 4, 2003.

<sup>308</sup> Brown, “Just Tellin’ It: Two deaths, a closing,” *Indianapolis Recorder*, July 4, 2003.

would have been sufficient enough to sustain Fall Creek at its location at 10<sup>th</sup> Street and Indiana Avenue, which she perceived as being the center of a wider service area.<sup>309</sup>

Therefore Brown agreed with the decision of the metropolitan association to build a new Fall Creek YMCA. Both based their decisions off of demographic studies concerning the immediate service area of the historical Fall Creek YMCA. Brown also promoted the plan by the Metropolitan YMCA Board to build a new YMCA branch in Pike Township, which he described in 2003 as the “fastest growing Black area” in Indianapolis.<sup>310</sup> Even though Brown agreed with the decision of the Metropolitan YMCA Board to build a new YMCA branch in Pike Township he distrusted the association’s leader, Norris Lineweaver. His mistrust of Lineweaver aligned him with Adande and other community members who similarly distrusted the President and CEO of the Greater Indianapolis YMCA.<sup>311</sup>

In a “Just Tellin’ It” editorial published in the *Recorder* on October 3, 2003, Brown criticized the dual newspaper releases published by the Metropolitan YMCA on September 26, 2003, titled “An Open Letter to the Community” and “The Truth About the Fall Creek,” claiming that the statements evidenced the “wrecked credibility of Norris Lineweaver and the YMCA system with African Americans.” According to Brown, the full-page notice that ran in the *Recorder* and *Indiana Herald* “was the most guilt-ridden, inaccurate, incompetent defense of a position by an Indianapolis institution I’ve seen in years.” He went on to contend that “The YMCA’s ‘explanation’ of the Fall Creek

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<sup>309</sup> Burlock with Jocelyn-Tandy Adande, July 23, 2012.

<sup>310</sup> “An Open Letter to the Community” and “The Truth about the Fall Creek YMCA,” *Indianapolis Recorder*, September 26, 2003, sec. page A5; Brown, “Just Tellin’ It: Two deaths, a closing,” *Indianapolis Recorder*, July 4, 2003.

<sup>311</sup> Brown, “Just Tellin’ It: County Clerk Sadler, YMCA’s Lineweaver’s disdain and disregard of Indy,” *Indianapolis Recorder*, October 3, 2003.

YMCA's closing, was insulting, error-filled and raised more questions than ever about the YMCA's incompetent stewardship of Fall Creek." Brown supported these accusations by questioning the accuracy of the deficits listed in "An Open Letter." He also asserted that "Lineweaver ignored" a report completed by a task force from United Way in 2000 which encouraged the Metropolitan YMCA Board to consider the Fall Creek branch as an important physical space within Center Township. In short, Brown disagreed with how the metropolitan association justified its decision to close the Fall Creek YMCA.<sup>312</sup>

Despite his doubt in the credibility of Lineweaver and the Metropolitan YMCA, Brown still did not entirely represent community leaders such as Adande who campaigned for the Fall Creek branch to remain at its near-downtown location. Adande's vision of a sustainable branch depended on blacks and whites taking advantage of the accessibility of Fall Creek. In contrast, Brown only considered African-Americans who lived within the immediate vicinity the Fall Creek YMCA as potential members and felt that this constituency would be unable to support the branch at its 10<sup>th</sup> Street location. He explained, "I still feel that the Fall Creek YMCA can't be viable, long-term, at its current location, if it must depend solely on patronage from our African-American community." But, he did reflect the feelings that Adande and other individuals in the Members United to save Fall Creek organization experienced over the closing of the branch. Like them, Brown communicated anger and apprehensiveness about the decisions made by the Metropolitan YMCA. "I don't believe," he emphasized in the "Just Tellin' It" article, "all

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<sup>312</sup> Brown, "Just Tellin' It: County Clerk Sadler, YMCA's Lineweaver's disdain," *Indianapolis Recorder*, October 3, 2003.

the YMCA's rationale and reasoning as to why Fall Creek must be closed for good." He also did not trust the president and CEO of the YMCA of Greater Indianapolis.<sup>313</sup>

Brown echoed the voices of the opposition through stating that "Those fighting to save Fall Creek must be given a reasonable opportunity to create a business plan to try and operate it independent of Norris Lineweaver's control." According to Brown, "Lineweaver's ham-handed, haughty, tactless, boneheaded handling of the Fall Creek YMCA situation" had contributed to "new fissures between the YMCA and our African-American community that'll take years to repair." In short, Brown felt that the decision to close and relocate YMCA services to other urban areas was valid, but that administrators at the Metropolitan YMCA had been arrogant and "tactless" in their communication and too-swift implementation of that decision.<sup>314</sup> But, his critical assessment of Lineweaver and the Metropolitan YMCA changed by the time his next "Just Tellin' It" was published in the *Recorder* on October 7, 2003. In this editorial, Brown altogether removed himself from the polarized position of community organizations that advocated for the Fall Creek facility to remain open where it had stood for forty-four years.<sup>315</sup>

In his "Just Tellin' It" editorial titled "YMCA's Lineweaver speaks," published in the *Recorder* a week after his negative review of the Metropolitan YMCA's newspaper advertisement, Brown withdrew previous criticisms about Lineweaver and the metropolitan association. He explained that he and the president of the Greater Indianapolis Metropolitan YMCA "had never really talked" and that the opportunity to

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<sup>313</sup> Brown, "Just Tellin' It: County Clerk Sadler, YMCA's Lineweaver's disdain."

<sup>314</sup> Brown, "Just Tellin' It: County Clerk Sadler, YMCA's Lineweaver's disdain."

<sup>315</sup> Brown, "Just Tellin' It: YMCA's Lineweaver speaks, Classic's a big success, Jazz Fests' a big flop," October 10, 2003.

interview Lineweaver on his WDNI-TV/Channel 65 program came *after* he submitted the previous “Just Tellin’ It” column to editors at the *Recorder*.<sup>316</sup>

In summary of their talk, Brown said, “During our interview, Lineweaver didn’t come across as the strident, unfeeling man last week’s column depicted.” This is because Lineweaver recounted how he had formed liaisons with African-American community leaders, such as members of the Interdenominational Ministers Alliance, and had pledged that these liaisons were the beginning of better communication between the Greater Indianapolis YMCA and residents in urban neighborhoods. Lineweaver also assured Brown that the mission of the metropolitan association was to meet the needs of people in Center Township. In answer to a question about the demand by the Fall Creek YMCA Board to make the branch independent, Lineweaver explained that the Metropolitan YMCA would have had to surrender ““providing services in Center Township”” in order to relinquish their jurisdiction over Fall Creek.<sup>317</sup> Thus, through relating Lineweaver’s willingness to communicate and continue YMCA services in Center Township, Brown presented Lineweaver completely different than he did in the preceding column.<sup>318</sup>

Brown moreover attributed the heated conflict between the Metropolitan YMCA and African American community members to a series of miscommunications on part of the metropolitan association. For instance, he claimed that the significance of a decentralized Urban Mission branch to Center Township was not “adequately explained to our African-American community.” Brown concluded that the Metropolitan YMCA

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<sup>316</sup> Brown, “Just Tellin’ It: YMCA’s Lineweaver speaks.”

<sup>317</sup> Brown, “Just Tellin’ It: YMCA’s Lineweaver speaks;” Fax from Jean Ely to Norris Lineweaver, (“Declaration of Independence” letter by the Fall Creek YMCA Board), September 26, 2003, Box 19 Baxter disaster and Fall Creek Y, [next to] Correspondence – 2003, YMCA Records.

<sup>318</sup> Brown, “Just Tellin’ It: YMCA’s Lineweaver speaks.”



needed to correct such miscommunications in order to “win back Black folks’ trust and respect” and move forward with the support of community leaders in building new YMCAs and facilitating YMCA-Without-Walls programming. “Our African-American community remains deeply hurt over the Fall Creek YMCA closing,” said Brown. But, he also described the effort made by Lineweaver to “open dialogue” with African-American community leaders as “a positive step in the right direction” for the Metropolitan YMCA following its controversial decision to permanently close the Fall Creek branch.<sup>319</sup>

### **The Tragedy of the Fall Creek YMCA facility: “No Longer Here in the City”<sup>320</sup>**

If it was a positive step for African-American community leaders to correctly understand the mission of the Greater Indianapolis YMCA, then it would have been a step beyond for administrators at the Greater Indianapolis YMCA to completely understand the mission and vision that many community leaders had for the Fall Creek YMCA. It is the contention of this thesis that more communication *and* compromise on the part of the Metropolitan YMCA could have won the association the trust of community members, especially individuals in the Members United organization, who felt that Lineweaver and the Metropolitan Board were “intentionally” uncooperative.<sup>321</sup>

Such efforts to find a middle ground on the battlefield surrounding Fall Creek would have stimulated questions rather than final decisions. For instance, the Metropolitan YMCA envisioned the service area of Fall Creek as being within a mile

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<sup>319</sup> Brown, “Just Tellin’ It: YMCA’s Lineweaver speaks.”

<sup>320</sup> Burlock with Jocelyn-Tandy Adande, July 23, 2012. Quote by Jocelyn-Tandy Adande.

<sup>321</sup> Letter to the Editor from Jocelyn-Tandy Adande, August 20, 2003, Box 19 Baxter disaster and Fall Creek Y, [next to] Correspondence – 2003, YMCA Records.

radius of the branch, and had done demographic studies about this particular area. Adande envisioned the branch as being the center of a larger service area that was accessible through public transportation. Would members of the Metropolitan YMCA Board have drawn different, more hopeful conclusions about a potentially larger, more inclusive service area of the Fall Creek YMCA? Also, the Metropolitan YMCA initiated various fundraising methods and improvement plans between 1990 and 2002 in an ultimately futile effort to sustain Fall Creek at its historical location.<sup>322</sup> And yet, there were alternative programmatic and financial plans that African-American YM leaders such as Jesse Alexander and BAN-WYS supporters like Ronald Henderson developed earlier on in the 1970s to promote the survival of historically Black YMCA operations.<sup>323</sup> What would have been the end-result for the Fall Creek YMCA and similar YMCAs nationwide had the Greater Indianapolis YMCA and YMCA of the USA implemented concept plans by individuals who were committed to the continuation of inner-city YMCA branches? Moreover, had the Greater Indianapolis YMCA taken into account different visions concerning the service area and mission of the Fall Creek YMCA, would the branch have remained open like the historically black YMCAs in New Orleans and Harlem?<sup>324</sup>

Questions about how the Greater Indianapolis Metropolitan YMCA could have compromised with community members who opposed its decision in 2003 reveal that

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<sup>322</sup> “An Open Letter To The Community” and “The Truth About the Fall Creek YMCA.”

<sup>323</sup> Henderson, A Case Study Summary: Conception of 21 YMCA Units in Black Communities, 4. Provided by John Lands and in possession of the author; Alexander, “The YMCA in Black Communities,” in Programmatic and Development Plan, 1976-1980.

<sup>324</sup> Dryades YMCA, *About: Always Here for our Community*, [http://dryadesymca.com/?page\\_id=111](http://dryadesymca.com/?page_id=111); YMCA of Greater New York, *About Us*, <http://www.ymcanyc.org/association/pages/about#history>.

closing the Fall Creek YMCA was not the only logical, meticulously developed approach to employ in order to better serve communities in Indianapolis. Neither was funding decentralized programming or running the YMCA like a business as YM directors Scott Gaalaas and Thomas Mulcahy suggested in 1983.<sup>325</sup> Indeed YMCA and community leaders who supported Black YMCAs challenged the assumption that one streamlined mode of operation was inevitable as opposed to disruptive as early as the 1970s.<sup>326</sup> Three decades later, advocates of Fall Creek challenged the rationale that discontinuing the branch at 10<sup>th</sup> Street and Indiana Avenue was necessary and not damaging. As Adande lamented, “Everything that I held dear, that helped shaped my life and my friends’ lives” was “no longer here in the city of Indianapolis.” As he reflected on his three-year tenure as Interim Director of the Fall Creek YMCA, Hobbs also said that he felt a sense of failure because it had been his goal to keep the branch open in near-downtown Indianapolis. This loss might not have happened in light of innovative ideas developed by community leaders like John Lands and members of BAN-WYS in the 1970s, and members of the Fall Creek YMCA Board and supporting community groups in 2003.<sup>327</sup>

In the end, the closing of the Fall Creek branch left behind a skeletal, decentralized program for youth-centered services. Such a model of operation came at the price of an institution that had functioned as a center of racial solidarity and alternative services for forty-four years in Indianapolis.<sup>328</sup> What happened at and around 10<sup>th</sup> Street

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<sup>325</sup> Swiatek, “Durable YMCAs.”

<sup>326</sup> Henderson, “A Case Study Summary;” Alexander, “The YMCA in Black Communities.”

<sup>327</sup> Burlock with Jocelyn-Tandy Adande, July 23, 2012; Burlock with Hobbs, April 26, 2012.

<sup>328</sup> Fall Creek Branch Program Transition Report, October 13, 2003, Box Office of the President Fall Creek Closing Files, Fall Creek 2003, YMCA Records; Murray, “Future uncertain for Fall Creek Y,” *Indianapolis Star*, August 7, 2003; Immediate Release, YMCA Programs to Continue After Building

and Indiana Avenue provides evidence that there are multiple, sometimes conflicting narrators whether it is a narrative about what happened to a city, or about what happened to an organization located within a community of that city. The tragedy of the narrative about what happened to the Fall Creek YMCA in 2003 was that while there were two visions about how the branch ought to have functioned within its community, only one was manifested. One of the results of this vision was the close and sale of the facility.

### **The Sale of the Fall Creek YMCA facility, October 2003 – March 2004**

The Greater Indianapolis YMCA Board of Directors resolved to create a Fall Creek Parkway Task Force on October 29, 2003, to handle transactions concerning the Fall Creek branch approximately a month following the close of the facility. Members of the task force were to “review proposals related to the YMCA’s disposition of the Fall Creek YMCA facility” and recommend a buyer to the board in February of the next year. The board also advised the task force to consider not only the offered price in its recommendation, and if such payment would help the IYMCA “meet its fiduciary and stewardship responsibilities,” but also the qualifications of the buyer to reuse the property to the benefit of the community. Groups that submitted proposals included churches, non-profit organizations, and real estate agencies, such as Mount Olive Missionary Baptist Church, Fall Creek Family Center Incorporated, Oaks Academy, Lighthouse Ministries Incorporated, and Meridian Real Estate.<sup>329</sup> In the meantime the board desired to increase

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Closes, June 25, 2003, Box 19 Baxter disaster and Fall Creek Y, [next to] Correspondence – 2003, YMCA Records.

<sup>329</sup> Young Men’s Christian Association of Greater Indianapolis Board of Directors’ Meeting on October 29, 2003, Box 19 Baxter disaster and Fall Creek Y, Sale of Fall Creek Property, YMCA Records.

The following individuals were members of the Fall Creek Parkway Taskforce: William G. Mays, who served as Chair of the taskforce, Mary Moses Cochran, Lacy M. Johnson of Ice Miller LLP, Legal

outreach services in Center Township and continue facilitating programming (e.g., senior fitness classes, youth sports, before-and-after school programs) that had taken place in the Fall Creek YMCA at offsite locations.<sup>330</sup>

An advertisement for sale of the Fall Creek YMCA property at the minimum bid of \$1 million, which was published in the *Indianapolis Star*, reiterated that while the task force would recommend a buyer, the board of trustees made the final decision in the sale of the facility and property. Board members made this decision in March 2004, consenting to an agreement in which the Greater Indianapolis YMCA sold the Fall Creek YMCA property to the Center Township trustee office for the purchase price of \$1.5 million.<sup>331</sup> As the metropolitan board had decided a year earlier, the purchase price was earmarked to fund an endowment for youth programming in “neighborhoods generally inaccessible to traditional YMCA programs,” and the purchase of a strategic property in Pike Township to build another branch.<sup>332</sup>

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Counsel, Ramona Powell, Isadore Rivas, Michael Rodman, and Joseph A. Slash of the Indianapolis Urban League. Ex-officio members were David Sease of Sease Gerig & Associates, Lou Gerig, Norris Lineweaver, Byron L. Myers of Ice Miller LLP, Legal Counsel, and Dale Stackhouse.

<sup>330</sup> Fall Creek Branch Program Transition Report, October 13, 2003, Box Office of the President Fall Creek Closing Files, Fall Creek 2003, YMCA Records.

As of October 13, 2003, several programs that were originally offered at Fall Creek were being managed by YMCA and Urban Mission staff at other branches such as Ransburg, Athenaeum, and Benjamin Harrison, and at local sites including City View Christian Center, Rodius Park, ten IPS elementary schools, and Crispus Attucks Middle School. Programs included Senior Connection Water Fitness and PACE, youth karate, youth basketball, child care programs, the Y-Zone Gospel Choir, Indianapolis YMCA Men and Women’s Club, and the Generation Y Afterschool Program.

<sup>331</sup> “Fall Creek YMCA property for sale at \$1 million,” *Indianapolis Star*, November 21, 2003, sec. B2 (The article also stated that “Two community groups continue to oppose the closing” of the branch at 860 West 10<sup>th</sup> Street); “Purchase Agreement” 12 pp. Attachment in Email from Norris Lineweaver to Norris Lineweaver, Cc: Brenda Burns; Janet Allaby; Byron Myers; Dale Stackhouse, March 7, 2004, Box 19 Baxter disaster and Fall Creek Y, Fall Creek Purchase Agreement, YMCA Records.

<sup>332</sup> “YMCA Programs to Continue After Building Closes,” June 25, 2003, Box Office of the President Fall Creek Closing Files, Fall Creek 2003, YMCA Records.

Center Township reopened the facility that had originally been the Fall Creek YMCA as Center Township Healthplex. The fitness center closed in 2009, and the following year the building was demolished to make space for the Avenue, which is a retail-residential space that targets IUPUI students and medical personnel in the downtown area of Indianapolis.<sup>333</sup> The lamp stand (Matthew 5:15 NASB) that had been the neighborhood YMCA, a source of community programming, and space for racial solidarity, had been removed.

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<sup>333</sup> Cat Anderson, "Demolition of YMCA making way for residential-retail complex," *Eyewitness News*, May 19, 2010, <http://www.wthr.com/Global/story.asp?S=12505993>; Evan Shields, "Apartment site to go up after old Fall Creek YMCA comes down," *IndyStar*, June 9, 2010, <http://www.indystar.com/article/20100609/LOCAL18/6090338/Apartment-site-go-up-after-old-Fall-Creek-YMCA-comes-down>.

## Conclusion: A Tale of One YMCA and Two Visions

What happened at 860 West 10<sup>th</sup> Street was a microcosm of what happened in Indianapolis during the 1970s and 1980s. The conflict between the Fall Creek and Metropolitan YMCAs over the mission and service area of the Fall Creek branch is an appropriate case study for the conflict that took place between community groups and agents of desegregation and urban revitalization measures. Understanding a YMCA branch as being representative of its segregated community, or a model of the changes taking place in its urban environment, has been validated by fundamental works by the historian Nina Baym and organization studies scholar Mayer Zald. Zald furthermore examined inherent conflicts between YMCA branches and their metropolitan associations.

This thesis is the analysis of the conflicts that happened between the Fall Creek YMCA administration, community leaders, and the Metropolitan YMCA administration over how the Fall Creek branch should have served its historically black community. I used materials from the organizational records of the Greater Indianapolis YMCA and oral history interviews with different YMCA and community leaders to build a dialogue between representatives who were on opposing sides of the battles for control of the Fall Creek YMCA and its downtown community in Indianapolis.

In short, the narrative of the Fall Creek Parkway YMCA reflected its community and, later on, larger conflicts that went on in the city. Branch administrators like John Lands, Jean Ely, and LeVester Hobbs, facilitated programming that specifically addressed the needs of people in the historically black Bottoms community. This

population included African-American families, IPS students, and individuals on limited incomes. But, the role of the Fall Creek YMCA as a viable branch was challenged by citywide urban revitalization projects and desegregation measures. Such changes included the expansion of Indiana University by the IU Real Estate Department; creation of a highway network by the Indiana State Highway department; redevelopment of the downtown area and central business district by the Hudnut administration and local advisory groups like the Greater Indianapolis Progress Committee (GIPC); and the court-ordered busing of IPS students to suburban township schools.

The Greater Indianapolis YMCA Board cited urban revitalization and demographic changes as justifications for its decision to close the Fall Creek YMCA in newspaper advertisements, articles, and correspondence, and shifted to a decentralized mode of operation in Center Township. In contrast, community leaders and members of advocacy groups who opposed the close of the Fall Creek YMCA contended through letter campaigns, newspaper articles, and demonstrations, that the branch was still necessary and viable because of its historical importance and potential to adapt to a changed environment and downtown demographic base. Conflicting visions about the mission of the Fall Creek YMCA—should it conform to the community or conventional YMCA characteristics?—as well as the service area of the branch—did it belong to African-American residents and community leaders or the majority-white Metropolitan YMCA Board?—created competing understandings about the social role and financial sustainability of the branch at its historical location in near-downtown Indianapolis.

Examining conflicting visions about the Fall Creek YMCA, and how they reflected controversies over changes in the surrounding area, is crucial to understanding



the history of Indianapolis' inner-city community and the city itself. In presenting these two visions about one YMCA branch, as well as contemplating the manifestation of one instead of the other, I hoped to reveal that visions have physical consequences as well as that the implementation of visions is deliberate and not inevitable, and should be described as disruptive to preexisting environments. Moreover, I wanted to demonstrate that it is necessary to conscientiously include the conflicting visions of different narrators in order to relate the full story about what happened within a given space and time period.

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