

SHILOH: NONPROFIT, CHURCH, AND THE UNDERSERVED CITY

by

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ABSTRACT

Especially since the election of Donald J. Trump as president of the United States, scholars have attempted to understand white evangelicals in American society. Of particular interest is evangelicals' understanding of race and the role it plays in their worldview. Scholars have studied white evangelicals' theology as well as their movements to gain power and social acceptance as these relate to race. However, in conversation with scholars' studies of white evangelical theology and power, this dissertation looks at evangelicals' view of race through the lens of two of their most important social structures: the nonprofit and the church. By studying a particular nonprofit, Shiloh, and its relationship to a number of churches, including its larger, more generalized support structure of churches of Christ in the South, this text examines how both the nonprofit structure and the church structure allowed or did not allow believers to come into direct contact with the underserved population in New York City and the surrounding areas. That direct contact, or lack thereof, affected the theological worldview of and the ability for activism from evangelical Christians in a number of ways, which this dissertation also explores.

The dissertation examines Shiloh, a churches of Christ nonprofit begun as a summer camp in 1951 to evangelize the entire Northeastern United States. The chapters in the dissertation chronologically follow the nonprofit through the latter decades of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first. As Shiloh progressed over time, evangelical participants realized the need for more intensive relationships with Black and Brown residents of New York City beyond the scope of a summer camp. Using 100 oral history interviews and approximately 2000 photographs and scanned documents from the history of the nonprofit, this dissertation intimately

examines how white evangelicals entered into contact with Black and Brown residents of New York City and how this contact changed them. The dissertation also examines multiple churches associated with Shiloh over time and the structural inability of those churches to enter into relational contact with city residents, a conundrum that negatively affected Shiloh workers over time and that also kept church members' theology from being less activist. That the churches were unable to address the needs of city residents but that a nonprofit was structurally able to do so provides the central argument of this dissertation: one significant barrier for evangelical understanding of racial inequity may be the historically wrought structure of *church*, a structure from which the majority of their worldview originates.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES	ix
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 1 - SHILOH IN THE 1950s AND EARLY 1960s, AND EASTSIDE CHURCH OF CHRIST, MANHATTAN CHURCH OF CHRIST.	25
PLACING SHILOH IN CONTEXT: SHILOH AS INTEGRATED WHEN OTHER ENTITIES WERE NOT	26
EASTSIDE CHURCH OF CHRIST AND MANHATTAN CHURCH OF CHRIST	33
RACE, ETHNICITY, AND THE RELATIONSHIP TO EVANGELISM	38
SHILOH AND EASTSIDE DEAL WITH URBAN POVERTY	52
CHANGING VIEWS ON RACE BECAUSE OF RELATIONSHIPS	71
CONCLUSION.	75
CHAPTER 2: SHILOH IN THE 1960S	77
THE RACIAL ATMOSPHERE IN NEW YORK CITY: HOUSING AND RACE IN TWO SAMPLE NEW YORK CITY NEIGHBORHOODS	80
PERSPECTIVES FROM SHILOH, 1960S: SAFETY	94
A SAFE SPACE: WHAT WAS SHILOH LIKE?	101
CONCLUSION	113
CHAPTER 3: WEST ISLIP CHURCH OF CHRIST AND FAITH CORPS	115
SOUTH TO NORTH: A NEW CHURCH CREATED FOR THE EVANGELISM OF NEW YORK	115
WEST ISLIP CHURCH OF CHRIST’S INNER CITY FAITH CORPS	123
DON HAYMES AND BETTY HAYMES IN EAST NEW YORK	131
CONCLUSION	143
CHAPTER 4: SHILOH IN THE 1970S, PART 1	145
THE SOCIAL CONTRACT ON FIRE: THE KERNER COMMISSION REPORT, RIOTS, AND FIRES	154

THE SOCIAL CONTRACT ON FIRE: FAIR PLANS AND FIRES	158
RESILIENCE: CHILDREN AT PLAY	162
RESILIENCE: CHILDREN PLAYING IN EAST NEW YORK AND BROWNSVILLE IN THE 1970S	168
SHILOH IN THE CITY: OUT FROM THE SUBURBAN CHURCH AND INTO THE WORLD	183
SHILOH IN THE CITY: RELATIONSHIPS	199
CONCLUSION	209
CHAPTER 5: SHILOH IN THE 1970S, PART II	210
EXPECTATIONS	211
SAFETY	227
CONCLUSION	241
CHAPTER 6: CHURCHES AND SHILOH	235
OVERSIGHT: THE NORTHERN CHURCHES AND THE SHILOH PROGRAMS IN THE 1970S	239
SOUTHERN CHURCHES AND THE SOCIAL GOSPEL	242
ENFORCING DENOMINATION: THE END OF THE YEAR-ROUND PROGRAM	247
FORMER SHILOH WORKERS OPERATE WITHOUT SHILOH OR THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST: NEHEMIAH HOUSES	250
CONNECTION WITH BLACK CHURCHES OF CHRIST: SHILOH IN THE 1980S	256
CAMPERS IN THE 1980S	264
FOLLOW-UP WORK AND CONSERVATIVE EMPHASIS AT SHILOH	269
CONCLUSION	273
CHAPTER 7: SHILOH IN THE MID-1990S AND BEYOND	287
RESTRUCTURING SHILOH TO BECOME A RELIGIOUS NONPROFIT	275

IN EVANGELICALISM--AND IN ELIMINATING RACIAL BIAS--RELATIONSHIPS MATTER	286
SHILOH AND CHURCH	295
CONCLUSION	300
CONCLUSION	301
BIBLIOGRAPHY	314

LIST OF FIGURES

1.1	Wildwood Church of Christ and Newark Colored Church of Christ.....	30
1.2	Spanish-speaking congregation (Iglacia de Cristo) of Eastside Church of Christ.....	42
1.3	Interracial group at Eastside Church of Christ's English-speaking congregation.....	43
1.4	Group of children in front of Eastside Church of Christ.....	44
1.5	Shiloh counselor and camper at New York Yankees game.....	49
1.6	Camp Shiloh campers outside of tent.....	50
1.7	Lake at Camp Shiloh.....	63
1.8	Eastside Church of Christ building.....	64
1.9	Ray Newton.....	67
1.10	Campers and counselor at Camp Shiloh.....	76
2.1	Homeowner's Loan Corporation description of Bedford-Styvessant.....	86
2.2	Homeowner's Loan Corporation map of Brooklyn, New York.....	87
2.3	Group outside a school during the Ocean Hill-Brownsville school strike.....	93
2.4	Image from a Shiloh pamphlet showing Black children praying.....	97
2.5	Camp Shiloh, 1964 second summer session campers.....	102
2.6	Two sighted campers walking with a blind camper.....	104
3.1	Don Haymes and son, Malcolm.....	132
3.2	Great Society pin.....	137
3.3	Model Cities pin.....	137
3.4	Community teachers pin.....	139
3.5	Pin from behind the picket line, Ocean Hill-Brownsville school strike.....	139
3.6	Stairwell in tenement housing in East New York.....	141
3.7	Tenement housing, East New York.....	142
4.1	New York City map.....	151

4.2	Brooklyn map, with neighborhoods.....	152
4.3	Children, mothers, and other caregivers, after school in New Lots.....	164
4.4	Child hanging from street fixture.....	168
4.5	Children playing in abandoned building.....	173
4.6	Child in empty lot.....	173
4.7	Three children jumping from small brick ledge.....	174
4.8 and 4.9	Children peering out of windows.....	175
4.10	Two girls playing outside.....	176
4.11	Boy twisting his body on the sidewalk.....	177
4.12	Children walking playfully on sidewalk.....	178
4.13	Cover of Shiloh publication, <i>Hope</i> , showing children on a makeshift cart.....	179
4.14	Two girls making faces at each other.....	180
4.15	Children in Halloween masks.....	180
4.16 and 4.17	Boy and Shiloh worker looking out window next to fire escape.....	201
4.18	Shiloh worker and two children ride the subway together.....	202
4.19	Two boys are part of a “sponge toss” game.....	202
4.20	Front cover of <i>The Gospel According to the Children at Shiloh</i>	204
5.1	Four boys and their mothers on Mother’s Day.....	213
5.2	Drawing of “Super Shiloh” worker.....	215
5.3	Bryan Hale, Buzzy Neal, and David Lipscomb College representative with Shiloh basketball team.....	228
5.4	Shiloh worker and four boys in East New York.....	228
5.5	Kids in the Shiloh program atop the Statue of Liberty.....	232
5.6	Two boys in the Shiloh program atop Pike’s Peak.....	233
6.1	Letter of agreement between Key Foods and East Brooklyn Churches.....	254
6.2	Brother Walter Maxwell and Sister Pauline Maxwell.....	272

Introduction

The words of the prophets are written on the subway walls, and tenement halls . . .
-Paul Simon, "The Sound of Silence."

Power has always been a part of the American story, especially when considering American racialization. As Ta-Nahesi Coates has written, the dream of white supremacy, though it is based on the fiction that white Western culture has dubbed *race*, is nevertheless the great fiction that underlies America, past and present, and has continually shaped the course of this country.¹ Scholars of religion, even in some white conservative Christian circles, have recognized this truth and have seen American Christian religion as one of the many systemic aspects of the racialized history of America. White American Christian religion, like almost every other facet of white American life, is based on and benefits from the realities of American racial injustice, and yet almost always white Christians obscure, ignore, or are blind to the realities of white social power.²

White evangelicalism in America is not an exception. Born near the birth of America itself, white American evangelicalism accommodated beliefs and actions to the existence and to the persistence of enslavement in the South, ultimately siding with enslavers and giving overt permission for enslavement as long as white evangelicals themselves were able to convert enslaved people to evangelical

¹ Ta-Nehisi Coates, *Between the World and Me*, (New York: Spiegel and Grau, 2015), 10-11.

² See Richard T. Hughes, *Myths America Lives By: White Supremacy and the Stories that Give Us Meaning*, (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2008).

Christianity.³ Contemporary scholars of evangelicalism note that during the years since enslavement, white evangelicals have almost continually remained complicit with American racism or have been actively racist themselves during the historical flashpoints of Reconstruction, Jim Crow, the Classic Civil Rights era, and racialized events in today's society.⁴ Even as these flashpoints have expressed an evolving white view of Black life and personhood, all of the views have been predicated on white privilege and power.⁵

Many current scholars of the topic of evangelical religion and race have been rightly concerned about theological issues within evangelicalism that perpetuate American racial injustice.⁶ For example, white evangelicals have even absorbed

³ See Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The Invisible Institution in the Antebellum South*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

⁴ See Jemar Tisby, *The Color of Compromise: The Truth about the Evangelical Church's Complicity in Racism*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2019).

⁵ Michael O. Emerson and Christian Smith, *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 8.

⁶ For views of theological issues within American evangelicalism that lead to racist action, see Mark A. Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995). Noll sees the issue of evangelicals in the world as having three parts: theological, cultural, and institutional. For more on theological issues of white evangelicals, see Johnathan Wilson-Hartgrove, *Reconstructing the Gospel: Finding Freedom from Slaveholder Religion*, (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP, 2018); Joel Edward Goza, *America's Unholy Ghosts: The Racist Roots of Our Faith and Politics*, (Eugene, Oregon: Cascade Books, 2019); Barklay Key, *Race and Restoration: Churches of Christ and the Black Freedom Struggle*, (Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 2020); Robert P. Jones, *White Too Long: The Legacy of White Supremacy in the*

Confederate myths that have served as religious parables for them.⁷ Other scholars of the topic of religion and race have viewed the unhealthy use of power to gain control and to subjugate outsider groups as an inherent aspect of what white religion has become in America. Some of these scholars chronicle how American religious leaders obtain and use power to shape the American political and social scene or that white religious leaders and practitioners, including evangelicals, have accommodated themselves to existing white power structures throughout American history.⁸ These perspectives on white American religious power as theologically prone to racism or simply transactional in a search for power and accommodation are useful and should not be discarded. But the case study in this dissertation suggests that the structure of how American evangelicalism is built may play just as important a role in how white

United States, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2020); Isabel Wilkerson, *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents*, (New York: Random House, 2020).

⁷ Robert P. Jones, *White Too Long*, 89-92.

⁸ For further reading on how white evangelicals have obtained various kinds of cultural power, see Lisa McGirr, *Suburban Warriors: Origins of the New American Right*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002); Christine Leigh Heyrman, *Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt*, (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The Invisible Institution in the Antebellum South*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Kevin M. Kruse, *One Nation Under God: How Corporate America Invented Christian America*, (New York: Basic Books, 2015); Kristen Kobes Du Mez, *Jesus and John Wayne: How White Evangelicals Corrupted a Faith and Fractured a Nation*, (New York: Liveright Publishing Company, 2020); Edward J. Blum, *Reforging the White Republic: Race, Religion, and American Nationalism 1865-1898*, (Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 2005); Jemar Tisby, *Color of Compromise: The Truth About the American Church's Complicity in Racism*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2019); Wes Crawford, *Shattering the Illusion: How African American Churches Moved from Segregation to Independence*, (Abilene, Texas: Abilene Christian University Press, 2013).

evangelicals perceive race and oppression as their theological shortcomings or their overt grasps for power or acceptance.

Since the Civil Rights Movement in the mid-twentieth century, evangelicals have believed in inadequate solutions to issues of racial injustice, often portraying their solutions to wider systemic problems in terms of requiring the oppressed to make better spiritual and interpersonal choices. Providing inadequate solutions to systemic problems, solutions such as prayer or personal conversion in answer to large and complex problems, is chronicled in a number of scholarly works, but the book *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America* lays out multiple aspects of the evangelical response and a complex explanation of how evangelicals have come to the particular point in the American racialization process in which they exist. Although contemporary white evangelicals are concerned about the problem of race in America, the authors reveal, they do not perceive it accurately because of a specific “cultural toolkit” that comprises their worldview, and, in part because of their imperfect perception, they only add to the problem of American racialization instead of solving it.⁹ One major reason for their lack of problem-solving on this issue is that evangelicals have historically been predominantly concerned with evangelism as a single issue of concern, and have therefore tended to ignore other American social and cultural issues. Also, since the mid-1960s, the growth of urban Northern cities as places to which Black Americans migrated to escape Jim Crow has been another significant issue in the racialization of America, and the evolving “ghetto” has been an issue that white evangelicals did not

⁹ Michael O. Emerson and Christian Smith, *Divided by Faith*, 21.

well recognize or viewed as one to be resolved with simple courtesy in interpersonal relationships.¹⁰

The case study that follows in this text acknowledges the importance of theology in understanding the ways that evangelicals function in a racialized society but places greater emphasis on the aforementioned cultural toolkit possessed by evangelicals, a toolkit that limits them in their ability to act, and this study further expands the toolkit concept into one in which entire church congregations operate and become a system in and of themselves. Functionally, churches themselves do not operate in a way that would reduce their own racial bias because they are not structurally able to enact outreach in a way that makes a difference in their own lives. It is the congregations in this study that often either hinder or seek to redefine outreach efforts to the underserved residents of New York City, and in some moments they are simply unable to act with the necessary outreach.

Conversely, it is an evangelical nonprofit that operates as an outreach and allows for change to occur. Christopher P. Scheitle positions religious nonprofits as delivering one particular aspect of religion that the church endeavors to deliver, such as outreach to groups of people that the church wants to serve, whereas the church exists to provide a number of religious services, possibly including but not limited to outreach. In this sense, a religious nonprofit is more often religiously specialist

¹⁰ Emerson and Smith, 46.

whereas the church is more religiously generalist.¹¹ This can also at times put the nonprofit in conflict or competition with the church.¹²

The case study herein also confirms some scholars' conceptions of the dynamism of theological thought in evangelicalism, in that theology itself is capable of change according to the lived experience of the adherent, and of particular relevance here, capable of change in regards to the particular topic of race and how it fits in with one's theological outlook. Some religious scholars have examined the changes that adherents have made in various contexts.¹³ Others have looked at how religion has served as a positive force for social change as it envelops larger concepts of racial injustice.¹⁴ The arc of the case study within this dissertation follows both of these arguments: that religion can change when adherents are exposed to new vantage points, and that it is possible for evangelical religion to contain theological and practical concepts of racial justice within its particular boundaries.

¹¹ Christopher P. Scheitle, *Beyond the Congregation: The World of Christian Nonprofits*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 45-49.

¹² Scheitle, *Beyond the Congregation*, 9-10.

¹³ For further reading about how evangelical religion is dynamic and can be so in regards to views about race, see Christine Leigh Heyrman, *Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt*, (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

¹⁴ For texts about how religion can combat or alleviate racial injustice, see Christopher H. Evans, *The Social Gospel in American Religion: A History*, (New York: New York University Press, 2017); Clarence Taylor, *The Black Churches of Brooklyn*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994); Charles Marsh, *The Beloved Community: How Faith Shapes Justice from the Civil Rights Movement to Today*, (New York: Basic Books, 2006).

The nonprofit under consideration in this dissertation, called Shiloh, is an interesting case study to examine church and nonprofit within the context of American racialization in urban New York City and the surrounding areas. Shiloh is a nonprofit in which the majority of volunteers and staff have been and are white evangelicals from the rural and suburban South who traveled north to New York City and New Jersey to work with underserved children and youth from urban areas, primarily from underserved neighborhoods in New York City. Doing so exposed them to new understandings of the complex situations of race, poverty, and inequity. Shiloh has also mostly drawn those staff and volunteers from the white churches of Christ, an almost exclusively Southern (and sometimes Western) conservative group, who, although practitioners for the most part would not identify themselves as evangelicals, have typified many of the conservative aspects of the white evangelical movement over time, including embracing the conservatism of fundamentalism as a statement against modernity in fueling religious thought.¹⁵

Because Shiloh operated as a religiously “specialist” organization in the ways that Scheitle describes, its outreach to the city and to city residents has put Shiloh evangelicals into contact with people and places that the mostly Southern churches of Christ, as a whole, never encountered, and therefore the contact never changed the mainstream churches nor their theology. Shiloh staff and volunteers observed and engaged with race and urbanity in ways that its sponsors and their counterparts in the North did not experience. There were times in which Shiloh and the larger churches of Christ as a denomination were in concert, and times in which they were in

¹⁵ Richard T. Hughes, *Reviving the Ancient Faith: The Story of the Churches of Christ in America*, (Abilene, Texas: Abilene Christian University Press, 1996), 256-258.

conflict.¹⁶ But in essence Shiloh's function as an outreach to specific groups put it in a different position than the church from which it came, and in an entirely different relationship to race, as a whole, than the church from whence it sprang. Therefore Shiloh is first a case study for looking at the white churches of Christ/evangelicals and race and how Shiloh's membership interacted across racial lines, and in addition it also proves the point that the nonprofit goes beyond the church in its particular interactions and can reveal differences that new experiences can bring about that churches do not experience.

Several churches of Christ practitioners established Shiloh in 1951 as a summer camp in New Jersey for children and youth from New York City. Those children and youth, especially from the 1960s onward, have been Black and Brown (Latinx). The summer camp aspect has been the most continuous aspect of Shiloh's existence. As such, and because of the perspective of its evangelical founders, Shiloh has largely focused on establishing relationships with these children and youth and at times their families. Relationship is a particularly central aspect of what sociologists Emerson

¹⁶ The church of Christ does not view themselves this way, and yet they have historically acted not as individual churches acting independently under the unique leadership of Christ, but as a religious group, often as a denomination, acting under the leadership of certain writers, leaders, and administrators and working in accordance with the larger culture around them. They are treated as a coherent and organized Christian sect in this dissertation. For the justification for this argument see Richard T. Hughes, *Reviving the Ancient Faith: The Story of the Churches of Christ in America*, (Abilene, Texas: Abilene Christian University Press, 1996). For the explanation of the gatekeepers of authority and doctrine in the church of Christ, see Wes Crawford, *Shattering the Illusion: How African American Churches of Christ Moved from Segregation to Independence*, (Abilene, Texas: Abilene Christian University Press: 2013).

and Smith call “the evangelical cultural toolkit” in the aforementioned book, *Divided by Faith*. Evangelicals use individual relationships as one of the most central and significant ways that they understand interactions with the world.¹⁷ Shiloh is no different. Relationships, as previously mentioned, have been and are central to Shiloh’s operation and mission.

But Emerson and Smith also discuss important ways in which white evangelical views on race can begin to shift while still retaining and upholding an evangelical identity. They reference *contact theory*, a sociological theory that maintains that when a white person has certain kinds of contact with people of color, their views on race can change.¹⁸ Staff and volunteers of Shiloh, as they developed and enhanced relationships, allowed for different kinds of racial contact over its history, and these contacts allowed for small changes and big changes in racial attitudes among the white evangelicals. Contact theory is an important element of the larger argument herein, because evangelicals use relationships as primary aspects of their worldview, and when they experienced relational contact, their theology and even their activity changed.

Furthermore, in addition to talking about the toolkit with which white evangelicals operate, Emerson and Smith also maintain that evangelical religion does possess the ability to be transformative, even radical, in terms of understanding and acting against systemic racialization. This transformation often happens, they say, on the margins of evangelical life, because prophetic voices on these issues are not

¹⁷ Emerson and Smith, 76-77. They explain that they mean *white* evangelical.

¹⁸ Emerson and Smith, 84.

central to white evangelical understanding.¹⁹ These contentions are borne out by other works about evangelicals, both white and Black, including writings about Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the early phases of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, the founders and practitioners of the social gospel in American Christianity even into the current century, Jim Wallis, John Perkins, and others.²⁰ Evangelicalism has a significant, but not predominant, thread of social justice.

Shiloh, as a nonprofit in which relationships were emphasized and through which change occurred, offered the opportunity for such religious expression, the transformative or even at times radical set of beliefs in the white evangelical faith. Many white evangelicals who went to Shiloh found their faith moved and stretched in ways they found invigorating, challenging, and new. Some of them were already thinking about the intersections of race and religion, and Shiloh drew them into participation and enlargement. Some were not thinking about those intersections before they traveled north, and Shiloh gave them the opportunity to see the world in new ways. In any case, contact through relationships emphasized in the nonprofit allowed these white evangelicals to understand a worldview that included a more complex view of race and to therefore develop and expand a more complex cultural toolkit, perhaps even a different spiritual vision. Some saw integration or interacted with Black Power practitioners for the first time. Others participated in social action on behalf of the poor or simply had contact with people they never had touched or talked to before. Some, because of these new experiences, also began to see

¹⁹ Emerson and Smith, 164-165.

²⁰ See Christopher H. Evans, *The Social Gospel in American Religion: A History*, (New York: New York University Press, 2017)

systemic racism and its often-accompanying impoverishment that affected individuals they knew. As evangelicals, they almost always saw these new racial interactions in spiritual terms. And as evangelicals, they were led first by relationship, and then they went further into deeper understandings, even of power dynamics. These were new insights that they were not able to gain through church.

Studying Shiloh provides the opportunity to examine the way that white evangelicals from the South viewed race and the city and the North--all concepts that many white evangelicals have often framed negatively, all freighted with prejudice and distrust among many in the church of Christ and Southern evangelicalism. In an articulation of a typical Southern evangelical view of his time, Marshall Keeble, one of the great Black churches of Christ evangelists across the South, commented that in the North everyone was mean and no one cared for each other like they did in the South.²¹ White people in Shiloh did display views of urban life that were biased, fearful, naive, and perhaps harmful. This study provides an opportunity to seek out and examine those views of the urban North. Especially in its pamphlets back home to the Southern churches, Shiloh might portray the city as a sinful and dirty place. Biased religious views of the city implied racial violence or lack of ability of the poor to see God properly. *And yet*, Shiloh and this study of Shiloh also provides the reader with the opportunity to also examine the ways in which white evangelicals were able to put the evangelical cultural toolkit into place in a positive sense, too: times in which evangelicals were seeking out justice, searching for new meanings, and trying to find ways to restore racial inequities. Shiloh, a nonprofit that

²¹ Marshall Keeble, interviewed by J.E. Choate, ca. 1965. Cassette recording of interview.

Disciples of Christ Historical Society, Bethany, WV.

intersected with and went beyond the white evangelical church, offers the scholar an opportunity to witness and examine the white evangelical church's stereotypical, often negative view of Black and Brown people in the city which they did not understand, *and* to examine new (to them) spiritual dynamism in regards to race and the city. Herein the nonprofit allowed them the opportunity, structurally, to struggle with these larger concepts.

Many of the people interviewed for this project, both white evangelicals and Black and Brown children over the generations and their families, spoke fondly about Shiloh. Most often, they spoke glowingly about relationships they made through Shiloh. It was relationships that brought whites to a new understanding, and it was relationships that gave them new views of faith. Again, Emerson and Smith offer useful predictive analysis when they include relationships alongside the healing of the gaping wounds of structural inequality:

[White] evangelicals have some important contributions to offer for the solution to the racial divide in the United States--such as their stress on primary relationships, and the need for confession and forgiveness. These may be important because, given the long, tumultuous history of U.S. black-white relations, solutions that only call for structural change are probably as naive as solutions that ask individuals to make friends across race. The collective wounds over race run deep. They need to be healed. And for healing to take place, there will have to be forgiveness.²²

The dynamics under discussion within this dissertation are not perfect in either the category of relationship nor of creating structural equity, and the text will examine some of the ways in which Shiloh workers do not view racialization in perfect ways, but the study here does confirm the importance of both relationship and restitution of structural inequity. The contents herein warrant the inclusion of cross-cultural

²² Emerson and Smith, *Divided by Faith*, 170-171.

relationships as, at many times, one of Shiloh's strengths within the larger evangelical framework.

This study also examines church, in its dynamic, sometimes adversarial relationship to nonprofits, occasionally impeding the outreach and relational function of Shiloh. Southern churches that sponsored Shiloh at times viewed the nonprofit members' progress neither as theological change nor as attempts at positive contribution to racial reconciliation. Nor did they often engage with that theological change, but instead they saw Shiloh's activities beyond the act of baptism as a movement away from what evangelicals should *do* as church members. Churches thought Shiloh should evangelize and baptize. The concern over Shiloh's activity was not always necessarily a matter of strict theological emphasis for churches, but instead often was an extension of the understanding of what evangelicals should *do*, and that *doing* had been defined within the boundaries, for several American centuries, by church life. The emphasis on what Southern churches thought Shiloh should be *doing* suggests another aspect of the evangelical cultural toolkit at work, one which has not allowed congregations of white evangelicals to see past the functionality of church and into the broader world where cross-cultural contact is more likely to occur. Even the Northern churches of Christ that partnered with Shiloh on various levels at various points in time found it difficult to maintain a consistent outreach with Shiloh children and youth. Though they may have agreed with Shiloh's purposes, they were almost never able to partner with Shiloh fully, even if they theoretically supported Shiloh's work. Almost universally they could not oversee nor follow up on a consistent basis with underserved children, and therefore they, too, missed the experiential learning that came with contact with city children and the city itself.

Those that did attempt to follow up with underserved children and families either eventually faded or found that they had other missions to accomplish.

Even if they believed in Shiloh's mission of relationship and outreach on a daily basis, churches herein also were not able to meet the larger desire of working with underserved children and youth on a regular basis as year-round partners to Shiloh's summer camp efforts. At multiple points in the history of Shiloh, evangelicals hoped that Northern churches could work alongside Shiloh, which would operate as a camp that recruited children from underserved neighborhoods and then sent these children to Northern churches to interact with them throughout the year. This model worked to some extent at various times, but overall, churches lacked the functional capacity to envision or enact continuous outreach to the youth and families in these neighborhoods. Even when Shiloh members started new churches in the North, these churches were still mostly unable to embody this concept. This often left Shiloh workers, as part of a parachurch organization but acting at the desire of churches, as the outreach arm of Southern and Northern churches, and as such they had to navigate the relationship between church and parachurch throughout Shiloh's history. Shiloh workers throughout the history of the organization often believed that they had been called to go deeper into relationship with urban children and youth because they recognized the problems of inequity that plagued the city, and they also recognized the compelling humanity of the city residents with whom they had entered into relationship.

Ultimately in the 1990s Shiloh would organize itself more functionally as an evangelical nonprofit with fewer ties to their supporting denomination, the churches of Christ, in order to fully commit to relationships in the way they felt was appropriate

to helping children and youth in the city. This movement away from denomination would release them from operating functionally in the way that churches wanted them to operate, as an outreach for evangelism only. It would allow Shiloh to view race within the city from within the perspective of deeper relationships with urban children and youth and to interact with city residents on a more daily basis, and this would continue to change evangelical worldviews.

This work deals specifically with the group called the churches of Christ. The churches of Christ were born out of the Cane Ridge Revival in Kentucky in the very first part of the nineteenth century and were shaped by deeply American religious impulses. Two men named Barton Stone and Alexander Campbell became the major influences of the new movement. Barton Stone, one of the men who planned the Cane Ridge revival, led a group that broke away from the Presbyterian Church to try to lead a simple, separatist life. His view of the end times made him skeptical of the culture around him. Alexander Campbell was a Southern itinerant preacher, and he tried to restore the church he found plainly outlined in the biblical book of Acts. His call was to the republican virtues of common sense and self-reliance, especially in interpretation of the Bible. Both men were distrustful of the many religious groups that proliferated on the American frontier, and called for a religious unity. The group that they influenced, out of which the churches of Christ eventually grew, was called the Stone-Campbell Movement. The two separate and perhaps conflicting concepts of radical restoration and of unity gave the churches of Christ an idiosyncratic, combative flavor as they grew to become a significant group in the American South and at times the American West into the twentieth century.²³ For

²³ Richard T. Hughes, *Reviving the Ancient Faith*, 10-28.

the most part, that internal idiosyncratic and combative nature is not necessarily a part of the story that follows, although there are a few aspects of the churches of Christ that should be noted here.

Studying the churches of Christ as a group presents a particular challenge and a particular advantage within this study's evaluation of evangelicalism. The challenge is that the churches of Christ as a whole do not, and have never, seen themselves as evangelicals. They see themselves instead as an affiliation of independent churches who are the only group that has accurately interpreted the true church as laid out in the biblical book of Acts. However, religious scholars define evangelicals as having four characteristics that the churches of Christ clearly exhibit. Those four characteristics, first outlined by David Bebbington in 1989, are conversionism, or an emphasis on a transformative religious experience; biblicism, or the reverence of the Bible as the primary religious authority; activism, or the desire to spread their faith to others; and crucicentricity, or the emphasis on the work of Jesus through crucifixion.²⁴ By exhibiting all of these characteristics, the churches of Christ clearly fit the definition of evangelicalism. In addition, some scholars have noted that modern churches of Christ have much more in common with present-day evangelicals than they do with the religious groups from which they were historically rooted.²⁵

The advantage of studying the churches of Christ for a work like this one is that, unlike Baptists or Methodists, they never formed overarching denominational

²⁴ Noll, *Scandal*, 8.

²⁵ William R. Baker, "Introduction: Evangelicalism and the Stone-Campbell Movement," in *Evangelicalism and the Stone-Campbell Movement*, William R. Baker, ed. (Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 2002), 26.

structures that oversaw their activities. Because of this lack of visible organizational oversight, it is therefore possible to view practitioners in an unfiltered way, free from the hierarchical commands that would come from the decision makers at the top of mission boards or conventions. The churches of Christ offer the historian a view of evangelicals and their churches operating on their own, presenting a clearer picture of adherents “in the field” of both mission work and of church than other evangelical groups might.²⁶

Perhaps a perceptive and knowledgeable reader might wonder about the premise of this dissertation as it examines churches of Christ churches and nonprofits and compares these with the larger evangelical landscape. The churches of Christ have always been specific about restoration of the biblical church in ways that Baptists and Methodists have not been. How then to justify examining churches of Christ churches as part of a statement about evangelical churches overall? Might the churches of Christ simply view church differently than other evangelicals, even if their other characteristics are similar or the same, and therefore this study is unwarranted when it moves to examine churches of Christ churches as part of an evangelical whole? In answer to this, it is helpful to review an essay by Stanley J. Grenz, a church scholar and an active member of the churches of Christ. His opening statement, written about evangelicals in comparing the two groups, corroborates the central premise of this dissertation. He writes that, because evangelicalism had not spent time forming a particularly rich ecclesiology, or concept of church, evangelical church has, by default, become largely an inept actor in the

²⁶ See also Barklay Key, *Race and Restoration*, 3-4. Key follows a similar argument to begin the overall thesis in his text.

larger world. This lack of thought has made the evangelical parachurch, or nonprofit entity, the “face of evangelicalism” in the world. Even though Grenz finds that the churches of Christ have indeed focused their ecclesiology, and that ecclesiology is more intensive and more closely based on the blueprint found in the Bible than the larger evangelical culture and its still nascent view of church, his statements still bear out the same findings as this dissertation. The church, as this dissertation’s findings show, however it is thought about in the churches of Christ, is still an impotent actor in the world and must rely on the parachurch for its public-facing work, just as Grenz describes in regards to evangelicalism. In addition to his statement about the church versus parachurch conundrum, Grenz does not see the churches of Christ’s ecclesiology, as essential as it might be to them, as capable of moving the group past the weaknesses of church in the larger world, nor does he see their conception of church positioning them for appropriate activity that engages the world’s issues and values.²⁷ This dissertation arrives at similar conclusions.

In an interview conducted for this oral history project, a white churches of Christ preacher rhetorically asked, “Is Shiloh a church?”²⁸ In the preacher’s view, Shiloh provided a circle of compassion, worship, community, and love for the people

²⁷ Stanley J. Grenz, “An Evangelical Response to Ferguson, Holloway, and Lowery: Restoring a Trinitarian Understanding of the Church in Practice,” in *Evangelicalism and the Stone-Campbell Movement*, William R. Baker, ed., (Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Press, 2002), 228-234.

²⁸ Tom Robinson, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry November 27, 2012, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History, Waco, TX.

involved in the nonprofit during his era.²⁹ In many ways, Shiloh can indeed be seen as a church during eras of its existence, because it drew together and developed a new circle of people who found spiritual understanding from existing in connection alongside one another. Particularly during a timeframe in which Shiloh moved into the city year round in order to work full time with children and youth in underserved neighborhoods, and found that their actions to meet social needs on a daily basis largely bypassed the wider church's ideas of what they should be doing, the Shiloh workers were setting up their own version of church outside of the one they came from.

The white pastor above spoke about his view of a specific time period in Shiloh's life. Each era in Shiloh's history has been different, sometimes very different, and each era answers the larger questions of church and parachurch in the context of race and religion, under examination here, in a variety of ways. This dissertation chronicles a number of different eras in the life of the nonprofit, each of which reveal different groups and different iterations of the nonprofit's existence, connecting with different churches over time, and each group experienced different things. For example, the Classic Civil Rights Era, beginning in 1964, had what churches of Christ historian Barklay Key called an "incalculable impact" on the general culture of America, even on the white churches of Christ, and Shiloh's history reveals a mostly

²⁹ For a scholarly view of the broad categories of religious behaviors like worship and outreach, see Scheitle, 40-41.

invisible before-and-after effect of the Movement, a fact that will be reflected in the later eras of Shiloh's lifespan.³⁰

The fact that successive generations of Shiloh experienced iterations of the ongoing evolution of New York City's urban core, developing especially in the 1960s forward, also had a profound impact on the way the white evangelicals in this study viewed Black and Brown lives and the city in general. Views of what is encompassed in the word "urban" have shifted because of historical geographical and economic shifts among Black and Brown lives, shifts that affect housing, resources, schools, and all other aspects of material life. Some chapters within this dissertation follow the progression or development of urban neighborhoods that white city dwellers systemically segregated over time. This dissertation follows these progressions not in small part to point out these neighborhoods to be places of American racialization beginning in the twentieth century and moving forward to the twenty-first. How close the white evangelicals came to actually encountering underserved neighborhoods themselves and the accompanying socioeconomic inequities often proportionally impacted the depth of their views of race and a racialized America. The eras of Shiloh followed along with the eras of underserved neighborhood development and the ghettos' long endurance, and this, too, is part of the story that follows. Like white evangelicalism, it is also part of the story of America.

Another historical arc that affects the narrative that follows is the decades-long occurring fracture in the churches of Christ as a whole, who struggled to find their

³⁰ Barklay Key, *Race and Restoration*, 102.

footing after the 1960s in ways in which other evangelicals did not. The churches of Christ traditionally viewed their own spiritual history and the strict biblical interpretation of who they saw themselves to be as a group as central to their identity, and as such their history never included the events of the surrounding culture. The only historical time that mattered to their tradition was the founding of the early church in the Bible and the end of time that was to come. Though they accommodated themselves to the larger American culture throughout the twentieth century, including white suburban life and fundamentalist ideology, they never acknowledged that they were doing so and proclaimed themselves to be purely spiritually countercultural and biblically accurate. During the 1960s and the decades beyond, when the changing American culture forced the churches of Christ to reckon with the larger culture itself and the traditions of the churches of Christ seemed more and more irrelevant to young adherents, the group was internally torn as to how to view their own identity and their interpretation of the Bible. Some chose to continue a focus on the biblical church in the book of Acts, on which they had based their thinking, and to promote it as an antidote to the culture. Others sought to re-emphasize and intensify teaching that promoted separatism and discipline. A third sector of the churches of Christ began to theologically emphasize the gracious nature of God and the importance of relationships with people and God, mirroring and incorporating trends that were occurring in the larger American culture. This internal struggle, and the fact that the churches of Christ had become less zealous about its earlier emphasis on evangelism, also impacted Shiloh as it worked to operate

alongside a larger, internally fractured churches of Christ tradition.³¹ It also informs the story of Shiloh as it occurred in the 1950s and then in the 1960s and beyond.

In *The Color of Compromise*, historian Jemar Tisby advises that white evangelicals must seek out solutions to counterbalance and reverse their history of compromise with racism over the past several centuries. These solutions, he says, require awareness, relationships, and commitment. Among several approaches Tisby puts forward for his contemporaries who are white evangelicals, one in particular that he recommends is that white evangelicals learn from the Black church and from Black theology.³² This approach, along with the findings in the dissertation that follows, suggests that there is a continuum of learning and potential allyship in evangelical religion along which it is possible for white evangelicals to move and remain within evangelicalism. Shiloh, and a few auxiliary entities and persons that share a similar trajectory as those in the nonprofit, give proof that it is possible, though perhaps disruptive and sometimes through a significant movement, to do so, along a continuum. Congregations, this study finds, are essentially not functionally built to make change. Emerson and Smith state that American congregations often see religion not as something external that requires them to enact justice, but instead as ways to fill their spiritual needs and to add more adherents to the church. Voices that are prophetic are often pushed to the side.³³ This case study examines some of the possibilities and difficulties of American evangelicalism

³¹ Richard T. Hughes, *Reviving the Ancient Faith: The Story of the Churches of Christ in America*, (Abilene, Texas: Abilene Christian University Press, 1996), 352-385.

³² Jemar Tisby, *The Color of Compromise: The Truth About the American Church's Complicity in Racism*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2019), 323-358.

³³ Emerson and Smith, *Divided by Faith*, 164-165.

by studying one case of interplay between church and nonprofit, and asserts that these are larger issues that must be resolved if evangelicalism is to have a truly positive impact on American racial justice.

The oral history project out of which this dissertation grew had personal connections for this author. My parents, Phillip and Donna Roseberry, were year-round staff members at Shiloh 1970-1975 and lived in the neighborhood of East New York during those years. My aunt, Diane Roseberry, also worked at the summer camp for several summers in the 1970s. While living in East New York, Phillip Roseberry was shot and killed by a gunman in a housing project in 1975. My mother, Donna Roseberry, was pregnant with me and left Shiloh at that time and moved out of New York City, and I grew up in Nashville, Tennessee. As the Shiloh year-round program clashed with the conservative board (discussed in chapter 6) at the end of the 1970s, most of my parents' generation broke ties with Shiloh but not with each other. This break lasted for several decades. Then when the current generation of Shiloh held a 60th reunion in 2011 and invited its alumni, including its year-round alumni who had lost touch with the organization, the generations re-established connections with each other, and several of the Shiloh alumni from the 1970s hired me, a professional oral historian, to gather and preserve Shiloh's history, with the blessing of the Shiloh nonprofit. I was not a staff member of Shiloh, but I was able to access old files and materials as well as interview people from all generations of Shiloh. My goal was that a third of the project interviews would be with Shiloh administrators throughout its history, a third with staff and volunteers, and a third with the population that was the recipient of Shiloh services. The latter category of interviews did not end up equaling a third of the 100 interviews conducted,

since the population was often very mobile and difficult to track down (Shiloh had a major fire in the 1970s that destroyed many of its old records). The number of interviews with Shiloh kids or former kids ended up being about twenty people, or one fifth of the total number of interviews. For me, understanding East New York and who those people were/are who live there was very important for me, although it was a subset of the larger project. It was not primarily to understand Shiloh as an example of evangelicalism and cross-racial relationships, although of course that theme was deeply woven into every part of Shiloh's history and arose often as the project unfolded.

As for the project itself, I had been a previous graduate student at Baylor University and worked with the Baylor University Institute for Oral History to house the project materials. I later worked as a staff member at the Institute and was able to provide some guidance as the staff there processed the project materials. There was a time, in writing about the East New York and Brownsville neighborhoods, when I asked two of the former children, now adults, who grew up in the neighborhoods, to review parts of my writing,. Now, as a PhD student at MTSU, I have used these materials to write this dissertation several years after the project's end. The Shiloh director has access to all of the project materials, and will have access to this dissertation as well, and it is of interest to a number of former Shiloh staff members.

CHAPTER ONE - SHILOH IN THE 1950s AND EARLY 1960s, AND EASTSIDE CHURCH OF CHRIST AND MANHATTAN CHURCH OF CHRIST

You know, my family was very, very prejudiced. I'd sat in the living room and hear my uncles talk about, "Black people are not going to school with my kids in school in Arkansas," when the integration began [in Little Rock, Arkansas]. When I was in high school, we carried our rebel flags in our hip pocket. I mean, it was a big thing. Save your confederate money; the South's going to rise again, the whole bit. University of Arkansas marched on the football field playing "Dixie" to a hundred and twenty beats a minute. So it was just a way of life, and I thought that's the way everybody lived until I began to find, Oops, there's another point of view here. -Ken Noland, involved with Shiloh 1952 - ca. 1973.

In Shiloh's earliest years, beginning in 1951 and moving into the early 1960s, the Southern churches of Christ denomination that sponsored Shiloh viewed the program as predominantly a summer outreach of relationship and evangelism for the churches of Christ in the Northeast. Those Southern churches of Christ had a significant influence on Shiloh. The Southern churches of Christ viewed the New York City children and youth who attended Shiloh during the summers as conduits for evangelizing the entire city and perhaps the entire Northeast of the United States, hoping to convert the entire region to the faith. Because of its geographical emphasis on recruiting children from poor parts of Manhattan and the Bronx, this often meant that Shiloh worked, increasingly, with Black and Brown children, since parts of the city nearby were becoming increasingly the sites of racial discrimination and inequity. It also meant that Shiloh workers were encountering urban poverty among Black and Brown residents and among residents who were recent European immigrants to New York City in ways that very few churches of Christ members had experienced before. In some ways the attempts to both evangelize and help impoverished people pulled at Shiloh's early mission of evangelism. The encounters

with urban poverty of the children who interacted with these organizations also helped to differentiate Shiloh's partner churches, the Manhattan Church of Christ and the Eastside [sic] Church of Christ, from one another: the Manhattan Church of Christ served wealthier Manhattanites and viewed Shiloh's leadership as evangelists for the larger church, and the Eastside Church of Christ served poorer residents of Manhattan and attempted a year-round helping, teaching, and evangelizing program for Shiloh children and their neighbors when Camp Shiloh was not in session. Eastside and Shiloh attempted both to evangelize and to meet the material needs of the urban community that they encountered, primarily in poor areas of Manhattan. They developed a follow-up program to evangelize the city on a year-round basis, beyond the summer camp, but that program rose and fell away, as did the Eastside congregation for the English-speaking residents of the city. During the 1950s, however, Shiloh succeeded as an evangelical mission organization with its partners. In addition, the integrated nature of camp and of Eastside Church of Christ revealed the nature of evangelicals' view of race as a factor that they saw as only one aspect of their evangelism efforts, but even within the overall emphasis on conversion, the relationships that some churches of Christ Southerners made during this period did affect their perspectives on some issues like urban poverty, integration, or interracial marriage.

Placing Shiloh in Context: Shiloh as Integrated When Other Entities Were Not

As a camp founded in 1951 for underserved children, Camp Shiloh was racially and ethnically integrated from its beginnings. Camp Shiloh's founder, board

member, and significant patron, Clinton Davidson, wrote, “Jesus Christ established the Church of Christ as worldwide, international, interracial religion. Some of our people [in the churches of Christ] doubt the interracial part of it and seem to think that, as Christians, blacks and whites cannot meet on equal terms.”¹ In the year 1939, a decade and a half before *Brown v. the Board of Education of Topeka* and a little over a decade before he founded Camp Shiloh, Davidson wrote to push against “some of our people” in the churches of Christ, a denomination that had spread mostly across the South, who were not supporting that Black and white people could meet together on equal terms. It is somewhat unclear what specific behaviors he was writing about, although it seems likely that the words “meet together” refer to an integrated church service. The camp he established for underserved children in New York would be a visible representation of “blacks and whites” meeting together, although the purposes of the camp were more outreach and evangelistic than church-like.

Shiloh was a blend of several different aspects of United States culture, which, when viewed in comparison to Shiloh during the same time periods, can help show the camp’s integration values within its larger evangelical desires. Churches of Christ colleges, including David Lipscomb College, Abilene Christian College, and Harding College, were power centers for the churches of Christ, and they existed almost exclusively in the South. Most of the churches of Christ colleges of the time, except for Pepperdine College, in California, were not integrated upon Shiloh’s founding. Churches of Christ colleges provided doctrinal influence for generations of churches of Christ students; they formed relationships with many local churches

¹ Clinton Davidson, “Through the Business Man’s Eye,” *Christian Leader*, (May 1, 1939), 12/

and influenced them.² They were also the centers out of which Camp Shiloh recruited its camp counselors.

These colleges were also influenced by churches of Christ congregational donors and leaders who did not overtly support integration. During the 1950s, the same decade in which Camp Shiloh was building its foundation in New York and recruiting camp counselors from churches of Christ colleges, those same colleges were undergoing periodic interactions between students and administration about racial integration. In the 1950s and even as early as the 1940s, many students in churches of Christ colleges favored integration of their schools over and against the desires of many of their college administrators. These students saw the integration of their schools as a moral issue, but administrators also saw segregation as a financial one. Churches of Christ colleges for the most part ignored the issue of race, but administrators who opposed integration still felt it important to give money to evangelistic conversion efforts in the United States and in Africa.³ Students of these colleges, too, were generally not social activists for integration. Even though some students might often favor integration, their ideas of what integration should be often existed on a continuum. Some believed desegregation was fine if it was in the classroom but disapproved of Black and white students sharing a dorm room,

² Wes Crawford, *Shattering the Illusion: How African American Churches Moved from Segregation to Independence*, Abilene: Abilene Christian University Press, 2013), online, np, from Chapter 1.

³ Wes Crawford, *Shattering the Illusion: How African American Churches Moved from Segregation to Independence*, Abilene: Abilene Christian University Press, 2013), online, np, from Chapter 1; Barklay Key, *Race and Restoration: Churches of Christ and the Black Freedom Struggle*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2020), 78.

interracial dating, or people of different races being in social clubs together. Even as the Civil Rights Movement grew in the South in the following decade, very few students in churches of Christ colleges found interest in the movement. In the churches of Christ, without formal denominational hierarchy, college administration could choose to integrate or not, so that they may have chosen to integrate their schools because the federal government threatened to withhold funds if the schools did not integrate.⁴ For example, Harding College accepted three Black students in the year 1963, and at that time Congress was already discussing the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which would withdraw federal support from any institution that did not integrate. Both students and administration of these schools found biblical reasons to support their positions--integration or not.⁵

⁴ Barklay Key, *Race and Restoration: Churches of Christ and the Black Freedom Struggle*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 2020), 69-71. Pepperdine College in Los Angeles was integrated, but it was a very long way from the geographical center of the Church of Christ, the South, and therefore not considered a viable option for many. There were very few Black churches of Christ colleges.

⁵ Key, *Race and Restoration*, 93.

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were most impressed in each of these Churches with the beautiful Church music. The great majority of Jamaica’s population is composed of descendents of African slaves. They are unusually religious, church-going

ned and carried on their meetings without assistance from their elders. The spiritual atmosphere and enthusiasm plus their willingness to walk twelve miles or more (round trip), would put the Young People’s



The Wildwooders at the Newark Colored Church of Christ. Preacher Jackson Simmons second from right, front. Photo by Macon Cunningham.

7

Figure 1.1 White members of Wildwood Church of Christ, from Mendham, New Jersey, and Black members of the Newark Colored Church of Christ meeting together for a church service. Wildwood Church of Christ was established by Clinton Davidson, who founded Shiloh, and the preacher of Newark Colored Church of Christ was Jackson Simmons, who was likely one of the servants on Clinton Davidson’s New Jersey estate property. Ca. 1947. From publication called the Wildwood Call. Pub04001, Shiloh Voices Digital Photo Collection. Baylor University Institute for Oral History,

Camp Shiloh, an integrated camp, preached about “the brotherhood of all mankind” to campers, and this concept may have been attractive for some of the young Black campers, even when they lived in the liberal North.⁶ New York City did not live up to its promise as a bastion of hope for residents of different skin colors. Shiloh campers who were Black New Yorkers would not have been strangers to segregated life in the city, even in their own Northern public schools and

⁶ Pence Dacus, “A History and Evaluation of Camp Shiloh,” Master’s Thesis, August 1958, Abilene Christian College.

neighborhoods. Public schools were not, by law, segregated in New York City, and therefore the 1954 ruling from *Brown v. Board of Education* that so angered white people in Arkansas and other Southern states simply did not apply to New York City and other places in the North. Technically New York City schools were integrated. However, the city's public schools were *de facto* segregated due to zoning laws that sent school-aged children to schools based on their zip codes, a fact that enabled New York City officials to argue that there was simply a "natural" segregation of the city's schools. But far from being natural, Black and Brown children and families were pushed into living in neighborhoods based on the color of their skin through "redlining" practices, in which they were viewed to be at such high risk due to their skin color as to be ineligible for loans or home insurance. Then the city sent these children to schools that were not equally resourced. The city was, indeed, deeply segregated.⁷ Though New York City passed a number of groundbreaking civil rights laws in the middle of the twentieth century to deter discrimination in jobs, privately owned housing, and education, these laws had little effect on how the city operated in practice.⁸ Therefore Shiloh, preaching its gospel of "brotherhood" for everyone, had a message that was different than the home neighborhoods of a number of its campers.

⁷ Matthew F. Delmont, *Why Busing Failed: Race, Media, and The National Resistance to School Desegregation*, (Oakland, California: University of California Press: 2016), 30. Though Black and Brown students and parents pushed for busing in order to integrate the schools in New York City in a mass protest in 1964, white parents protested heavily against busing efforts.

⁸ Ric Burns and James Sanders, *New York: An Illustrated History*, (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1999), 489.

That the integration at Shiloh was different than the larger milieu of the city and its surrounding areas was borne out in an interview with one of the campers during this period of time. Shiloh counselors were not the only ones who interacted with different kinds of people for the first time while at camp. One white Shiloh camper from New Jersey, an attendee from the summer of 1962, remembers being around groups of people, including Spanish speakers and New York City young people from different backgrounds than his own whom he had never been around before. He spent the entire summer at Shiloh that year, and he remembered spending time observing many different kinds of people that were new to him:

And then you'd get the social aspect of your relationship with new people, the influx of new people coming in all the time. It was a teaching experience just adjusting to new people, new lifestyles, new cultures, languages. A lot of them were Spanish-speaking, you know, with an accent, I should say. Not Spanish—well, they probably spoke Spanish—just a different spectrum of especially people that I wasn't really accustomed to being around. You know, when you're talking about—and again, it was the indigent children from the inner city of New York and I was living with them and that was pretty intimidating, and then you learn.⁹

The integration message of Shiloh within the context of the surrounding culture sometimes put Shiloh in a difficult position. There were several examples in which teenagers who were Black during the 1950s were moved by Shiloh's overall message and wanted to go to churches of Christ colleges after they graduated from high school.¹⁰ Shiloh had a cooperative connection with churches of Christ colleges, and since Shiloh believed that churches of Christ colleges would bring new converts into a

⁹ Thomas Gallagher, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, July 6, 2013, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History, Waco, Texas.

¹⁰ Dacus, 99. The exception being Pepperdine College, in California, which was already integrated in 1958. Only a few Black colleges within the churches of Christ did exist at the time.

more mature relationship with Jesus (whereas the believed, for example, a Methodist college would not teach them the truth), the camp in the 1950s actively promoted the idea that campers from New York City should go to churches of Christ colleges in the South. But these schools were not integrated beyond Pepperdine in California, often too far away for many, and so Black students who had been converted at Shiloh could not attend the colleges in the South. One white student of Abilene Christian College who found that there was a Black convert who could not attend the churches of Christ schools in the South, wrote, “Camp Shiloh continues to stress education in the Christian schools, but one question remains: When will the Christian [churches of Christ] colleges integrate so that they may practice what they preach and so that persons who are preaching education for these schools will not be teaching hypocritically?”¹¹ Integration--and the lack thereof--made for an inconsistent ongoing churches of Christ message for young Black and Brown campers who wanted to convert. Although the churches of Christ were able to aptly provide a message that communicated the need for brotherhood and conversion, they did not have a proper way to meet the ongoing needs of a number New Yorkers who did convert.

Eastside Church of Christ and Manhattan Church of Christ

Church was the central institution in churches of Christ culture. Bob Davidson, a Texan, remembers that before he went off to college at Abilene Christian College, he saw that his mother had tears in her eyes. She said to him, ““Son, don’t ever miss a meeting of the church.”” At college he learned to be a preacher, and he remembered teaching young people at Eastside Church of Christ about the Biblical book of Acts,

¹¹ Dacus, “A History and Evaluation of Camp Shiloh,” 99

which was the book on which the churches of Christ modeled all of their church behaviors.¹²

The overall message that Shiloh communicated was predominantly the salvation of all people, and it was here that Shiloh needed its partner churches to continue the message of the churches of Christ beyond the time-bound boundaries of summer camp. This was a goal that, in theory, most excited the churches of Christ in the South. Shiloh's stated goal in the 1950s through the mid-1960s was to evangelize a part of the country that had very little churches of Christ presence. Eddie Grindley, himself both an immigrant to the United States from Ireland and a convert to the churches of Christ from Catholicism, did extensive fundraising and public relations work for camp during this period. He also visited New Yorkers in their homes for evangelistic efforts that began in 1947 when he was hired by the Manhattan Church of Christ, one of the few churches of Christ in New York City, located in a wealthy part of Manhattan. In an article entitled, "Preaching to All Nations without Leaving the United States," written the first year of Shiloh's existence and the fourth year that Grindley had been in New York City, Eddie Grindley cited the biblical mandate to preach the Christian gospel to all the nations of the world. He further expanded upon why that mandate was so successful through the establishment of Camp Shiloh in New York City:

Because today in New York City there are people from practically "every nation under heaven," it is possible to "make disciples of all nations," without going outside the city. If you sit on a bench at Bronx Park Zoo, representatives of at least 30 nations will pass by you any summer Sunday afternoon. At other parks it is not unusual to see a group of men sitting on the ground smoking water pipes, just as they do in Turkey. . .

¹² Robert and Anita Davidson interview.

For 45 years the church has realized that the greatest foreign mission field is right on its doorstep--right in the midst of 10,000,000 people in the Greater New York area. But until the method of coordinating a summer camp with house-to-house [evangelism] work in the New York area, the church has not been able to find a method of reaching this great field. Through this method, however, the church has baptized approximately 159 in the last three and one quarter years.¹³

Grindley's method of reaching all nations in New York City was to partner with Camp Shiloh, an outreach he called in other writings "the camp method," in combination with "house-to-house work," or "follow-up evangelism" directly in the city on a longer-term basis during the rest of the year. He operated that house-to-house work himself and recruited others to join him. He even was a part of founding the Eastside Church of Christ on the Upper East Side of Manhattan, a less wealthy area than where the Manhattan Church of Christ stood, to conduct his work. His goal appeared simple on the surface: once a person became interested in the God preached at Shiloh and hopefully was baptized at camp, Grindley and other workers, partnering with Eastside Church of Christ on the Upper East Side of Manhattan, could follow up in homes and make sure children and their families understood the gospel and continued to live it. For this follow-up work, Grindley also recruited teachers from churches of Christ colleges in the South to teach lessons at Eastside Church of Christ, and he also invited Southern churches of Christ students who had been camp counselors at Shiloh to work with his congregation on the East Side of Manhattan, asking them to join "the Lord's Forces" of converting others, sometimes for several years at a time.¹⁴

¹³ Eddie Grindley. "Preaching to All Nations without Leaving the United States," *Firm Foundation*, (Oct. 2, 1951, Vol 68, no. 40), np.

¹⁴ Grindley, Eddie, "10 New Workers Added to the Lord's Forces in New York City and Surrounding Area," pamphlet, ca. 1957, in author's possession.

This goal of wide-scale evangelism fit with the goals of many of the churches of Christ congregations of the period. The churches of Christ significantly increased their missionary efforts in the two decades after World War II. In the years 1946-7, there were only forty-six missionaries sponsored by the churches of Christ, but by the year 1967, the churches of Christ sponsored 724 missionaries. At this time they also significantly increased their numbers at home in the United States South and West, from 682,000 in 1946-7 to around 2,350,000 in 1967.¹⁵ There was an obvious emphasis at this time period on church growth and evangelism.

The consideration of race, including integration, was not an overt aspect of the Shiloh and Eastside plan at this time, but it was contained and described within the evangelistic strategy for converting all nations of the world to the churches of Christ. Grindley and the Shiloh leadership continued the theme of preaching to all nations and backgrounds, including people from Puerto Rico and other Latinx backgrounds, in a 1951 pamphlet about Shiloh that listed the baptisms in the camp's first year by nationality in a year when Puerto Rico was a self-governing nation:

Baptisms this summer include those from Armenia, Ireland, Ecuador, France, Italy, and Spain. We also had children from Poland and Germany who had been baptized in similar work. In addition to the above countries, there were children at Camp Shiloh this summer from Japan, Scotland, Holland, Hungary, Norway, Columbia, Puerto Rico, Mexico, and others. Where else could one preach to so many nations simultaneously in a more effective way?¹⁶

The earthly categories of race, ethnicity and nation of origin were important signifiers for Shiloh leadership during this period, primarily because they helped accomplish the *spiritual* goal of diversity, of reaching out to diverse people groups in a spiritual way.

¹⁵ Hughes, *Reviving the Ancient Faith*, 235.

¹⁶ Grindley, Eddie. "Camp Shiloh, Mendham. New Jersey, 1951," np. Pub24028.

It was exciting to them that New York was very diverse. New York City itself and Camp Shiloh in New Jersey, where the campers went in the summer, were equally vibrant locations for teaching new people of many genealogical backgrounds about Jesus and the churches of Christ. Eddie Grindley served as Eastside's English-speaking preacher.

Eddie Grindley's dedication to Shiloh and to Eastside Church of Christ was unwavering, but the follow-up, year-round work that he promoted through Eastside could be challenging work, and the Southern churches of Christ did not support it as he would have hoped. At one point in the 1950s, he reported to one Southern congregation that he needed extra help in this year-round work. The elders of that church agreed to sponsor someone to help Grindley in New York, but did not allow him to choose this person and selected him themselves. When the new helper and his wife moved to the East Side of Manhattan, the wife did not wish to live there and convinced the family to move, and the church continued to sponsor the newcomer when he and his wife moved far away from East Side and Shiloh. "The local congregation [Eastside]." wrote a chronicler of this event, "was helpless in the matter because they felt that the minister was controlled by the Southern Church."

Apparently this one instance was not the only example of such difficulty. Because the "Southern churches support the man, and not the work," it was difficult to maintain a vibrant follow-up program in the most urban areas of New York City. The follow-up program, in fact, dwindled. One solution to this problem, proposed by Shiloh's board, was to have local ministers come to camp and to get to know the children. Another was that perhaps that Shiloh should only accept children near a local church of Christ so that churches would be able to follow up with children after

camp was over.¹⁷ It was clear that, although Eddie Grindley and Eastside were working working tirelessly to reach out to the poor communities around them, the churches were not supporting a proper follow-up program at the hoped-for size and scope and that the churches of Christ in the South were not prepared to meet the needs of urban residents on a long-term basis.

Race, Ethnicity, and the Relationship to Evangelism

Eddie Grindley himself was a convert to the churches of Christ from an Irish Catholic background, and he himself personified the (white) submission of personal ethnicity and Irish Catholicism to an evangelical, churches of Christ identity. He became a convert as a young family man living in America when his wife, Stella, who had grown up in the small-town Texas churches of Christ, tried to convince him that his mother, a Catholic, was not in heaven “because she had not been baptized in the Church of Christ.” As he read the Bible to prove his wife wrong, he changed his mind about the matter completely. His marriage to Stella and his study of the Bible under her influence transformed him into a new man, and he left behind his life of drink and gambling, an aching childhood of poverty and neglect; and from early in his marriage forward he was ready to become what might be seen as an evangelist for the churches of Christ.¹⁸ His Irishness was viewed as charming to his friends in the church, but his country of origin was seen as a future mission field for him.¹⁹ A

¹⁷ Pence Dacus, 101-2.

¹⁸ Mamie Grindley Mason, addition to “Edvard Flude Grindley, better known as Eddie Grindley,” by Eddie Grindley, informal autobiography, 8, in author’s possession.

¹⁹ Sam Lanford interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, September 12, 2012. Transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

colleague wrote that Grindley “will never be satisfied until he personally takes the gospel to Ireland.”²⁰ Catholicism seemed particularly interesting to him in his evangelistic efforts in New York City, though he reached out to many groups in the city. Grindley self-identified so strongly with the Protestant churches of Christ instead of the Catholicism of his homeland that he viewed both his Irish background and his former Catholicism as only a prelude to the predominating factors of his present life, that of a member of the churches of Christ and an evangelist. Churches of Christ colleagues and even his own American family often spoke of him as someone changed. He worked constantly in outreach. He wrote about the Catholic Church as an entity separate from his own identity: “Let us not forget,” he penned, “This [the Catholic Church] is the same church that gave our workers in Italy so much trouble.”²¹ By “our workers,” he meant *us*, the churches of Christ. He carried a business card that read, “Eddie Grindley, Servant of the Lord. If I can serve you in any way, let me know,” and he handed out this business card constantly in New York City.²²

²⁰ Lovell, James L. , James L. Lovell, ed. 1965, “North Atlantic Directory of Church of Christ, East Side,” in *History of the Churches of Christ: Virginia to Newfoundland*, np. Abilene Christian University, Digital Commons at ACU, https://digitalcommons.acu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1071&context=crs_books. accessed Sept. 26, 2021.

²¹ Eddie Grindley, “Priest Orders Woman Stop Studying Bible or Boy Expelled from Parochial School,” Unknown churches of Christ publication, ca. 1950, pub24062, Shiloh Voices Digital Scans Collection, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

²² Eddie Grindley’s business card; Sam Lanford, “For the Children,”

Eddie Grindley, viewed by many within his sphere as the charming, beloved, and loving Irish evangelist, was revered at Shiloh and in the Southern churches of Christ. His two counterparts at Eastside, Antonio Ochoa and Ochoa's successor, Jose Cuellar, who successively led the Spanish-speaking congregations at the Eastside Church of Christ, were not as heavily mentioned in the records of either group, even though they created what Shiloh and the churches of Christ wanted: a long-term, stable congregation of New Yorkers from diverse backgrounds in the city. True, Eastside was a small church, but the Spanish-speaking congregation of Eastside, made up mostly Puerto Ricans from the Upper East Side of Manhattan and Spanish Harlem, consisted of families.²³ Grindley was invited to speak multiple times about evangelism in churches of Christ Colleges like Harding, but Ochoa and Cuellar were not. The English-speaking congregation of Eastside disbanded a few decades after its creation, but the Spanish-speaking congregation still exists today, still called *Iglacia de Cristo*.

Leadership in the larger churches of Christ wrote of Antonio Ochoa's Columbian background, in particular, even more than they did of Grindley's conversion, as a brief, successful prelude to his conversion experience to the true church. The preacher at the Manhattan Church of Christ, E.J. Summerlin, wrote an article about Ochoa that discussed Ochoa's background as a Catholic priest in Columbia who wanted more freedom to preach from the Bible as it should be taught, "and he feared losing his own soul." After fleeing to the Panama Canal Zone, Ochoa came to New York City. Within a month of his arrival, he began spending extensive time with Summerlin, who talked with him about the Bible and baptized him. Summerlin was

²³ Ken Noland interview.

ecstatic for the new convert and also for the translator and evangelist on behalf of those who spoke Spanish in New York City.²⁴ Another author, W.H. Dilbeck, had convinced Ochoa about the churches of Christ while he and Ochoa lived in the Panama Canal Zone.²⁵ Dilbeck wrote more specifically about Ochoa's past and characterized the Catholicism of Ochoa's homeland of Columbia and of other Latin and Central American countries as repressive and potentially violent. Dilbeck outlined some of the threats that state-sponsored Catholicism posed to Ochoa in Columbia, but he did not clarify for his readers that Catholicism itself was not inherently repressive, and he characterized the Episcopalian faith Ochoa had once explored as false doctrine. He did not discuss the situation in Columbia as being anything other than repressive Catholicism.²⁶ In a few years, Ochoa would be asked to leave Eastside Church of Christ for teaching Jehovah's Witness doctrine to the Spanish-speaking congregation there.²⁷ His life as chronicled by the white churches of Christ in the 1950s was a series of religious choices toward and away from the truth, with little regard to his position in a broader context of world events, personal attempts to survive in complex situations, and constant search for a working faith. It

²⁴ Summerlin, E.J.. "Great Opportunity Arises with Spanish-Speaking People in New York," unknown churches of Christ publication. Pub24057. Part of collage of clippings. See Pub24053 for full display), Baylor University Institute for Oral History, Shiloh Voices Photo Collection.

²⁵ W Harland Dilbeck, "Ex-Catholic Contacted in Canal Zone Now Worker in Church in New York City," Unknown churches of Christ Publication, Pub24055. Baylor University Institute for Oral History, Shiloh Voices Digital Photo Collection.

²⁶ W. H. Dilbeck, "Ex-Priest Flees Panama. . ." Unknown churches of Christ publication, Pub24059. Baylor University Institute for Oral History, Shiloh Voices Digital Photo Collection.

²⁷ Lanford, "For the Children".

can be inferred that Ochoa, more so than Grindley, was seen less as a colleague and more as useful or not useful to the churches of Christ because of his background--his ability to speak Spanish, his unique and striking conversion story, and his willingness to connect with Spanish-speaking families in the New York City area.



Figure 1.2 Probably members of the Spanish-speaking congregation of Eastside Church of Christ, called Iglacia de Cristo, ca. 1958. Pub24033. Shiloh Voices Photo Collection. Baylor University Institute for Oral History,



Figure 1.3 An interracial group standing in front of the Eastside Church of Christ building, possibly members of the English-speaking congregation, ca. 1958. Pub24034. Shiloh Voices Photo Collection. Baylor University Institute for Oral History

It was not unusual at this time period for white members of the churches of Christ in the South to work with Black churches of Christ members in order to start a separate Black congregation or to support them in what had started as an integrated church, until the number of Black membership grew to enough of a size to separate and form its own church, thereby creating a veneer of spiritual equality but a reality of paternalism and inequality. Some white churches of Christ replicated this pattern in the North. Even in the North where there were very few churches of Christ, Ward Halbert, who was white, had worked with Paul English, who was a Black member of the churches of Christ who came to New York City from Nashville, to help found what would later become known as Harlem Church of Christ, in 1940. Ward was a preacher at the same church after English's death.²⁸ But Eastside's English-speaking

²⁸ Lovell, James L. *History of the Churches of Christ: Virginia to Newfoundland*, James L. Lovell, ed. 1965, "North Atlantic Directory of Church of Christ, East Side," np. Abilene Christian University, Digital Commons at ACU, <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/55324789.pdf>, accessed Sept. 26, 2021. Incidentally, Ward was at least an acquaintance of Shiloh's founder, Clinton Davidson.

congregation appears to have been more integrated than those examples. A 1956 bulletin described the two congregations of Eastside as “all people--all races.”²⁹ One congregant was the daughter of two formerly enslaved people.³⁰ The interracial nature of this picture below, of children standing in front of the Eastside Church of Christ building, seems striking, and, although it may not have represented what the Eastside congregation looked like at all times, it still is a picture that departs from what churches of Christ looked like in the South or what other congregations in the North looked like.



Figure 1.4 Children standing in front of the Eastside Church of Christ, ca. 1958, with a few adults in back row. The two signs in the window read, “Church of Christ” and “Iglecia de Cristo”. Pht13005. Shiloh Voices Photo Collection, Baylor University Institute for Oral History,

²⁹ “The Eastside Story,” brochure published by Eastside Church of Christ, ca. 1956. Brochure in author’s possession.

³⁰ Sam Lanford, “For the Children,” unpublished manuscript.

Grindley wrote an article about one camper, a thirteen-year-old boy whose family had moved to New York from Puerto Rico only two years before and who had enjoyed his time at camp and who wanted to come back. To Grindley, boys like this one, with a positive attitude toward Shiloh and its Bible teachings, represented a gateway to other congregations of Spanish speakers. “There are approximately forty to fifty religious groups from Central and South America whose beliefs are similar to the Church [of Christ],” Grindley wrote, “They need only to be ‘taught the way of the Lord more perfectly.’” Grindley here clearly viewed the young man from Puerto Rico, as well as Ochoa, as gateways to reaching Spanish-speaking New York for the churches of Christ faith, which he (and others in the Southern churches of Christ who would be reading his words) viewed as the true “way of the Lord.” True Christians needed to present the way in order for the Spanish-speaking New Yorkers to understand it “more perfectly.” Grindley went on to say that his counterpart, Antonio Ochoa, “an ex-Catholic priest from Columbia” was working with the (white) preacher of the Manhattan Church of Christ to accomplish these goals “under the supervision of the Manhattan Church [of Christ].”³¹

Grindley and Ochoa, and later Ochoa’s successor, Jose Cuellar, recruited from nearby neighborhoods to get people to go to Eastside Church of Christ and Camp

³¹ Eddie Grindley, “Nephtali Ramos, Puerto Rican, age 13.” Publication unknown. Clipping from churches of Christ publication, perhaps *Firm Foundation?* Ca. 1955. Pub24066. From display of clippings about Shiloh and Eastside in the 1950s. (see Pub24053 for full display). Shiloh Voices digital scans collection, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

Shiloh. The English- and Spanish-speaking congregations at Eastside were friendly with each other, and Cuellar and his wife took the youth of both congregations on outings together.³² But English was the language of record spoken at Shiloh, and Eddie Grindley never learned Spanish, so it must be presumed that most of the campers recruited through Eastside spoke English to communicate at Camp Shiloh.³³ However, Dot Box, from El Paso, Texas, the head women's counselor for a number of years in the 1950s, is recorded as having comforted a young Puerto Rican girl in both English and Spanish at Camp Shiloh when the girl first began her monthly period and didn't understand what was happening to her, and so there was at least one example of a counselor who communicated ably in Spanish to a young woman who needed communication in that language.³⁴

Eastside was integrated in a number of ways, and all of this integration allowed for collaborative relationships that even promoted change in some white people from the South. But Eastside faced some of the same challenges as Shiloh at the time, and in more intense, longer-term ways: it was conceived as a year-round entity to evangelize and to "follow up" with Shiloh kids on a regular basis during the year. This meant that Eastside members had to figure out ways of dealing with urban poverty in the surrounding neighborhoods, and the cultural tools that they had did not prepare them for urban poverty.

³² Velma Cuellar, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry January 11, 2013, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

³³ Ibid, 128.

³⁴ Sam Lanford, 96.

There was at least one instance in which three white churches of Christ college students from Shiloh spent two days staying in the home of Jose Cuellar, Ochoa's successor, in order to visit the homes of Spanish-speaking potential Shiloh campers in Manhattan to try to present Shiloh to them and encourage them to send their children there in the summer. The three white college students found that Shiloh had a positive reputation in the neighborhood, even among those who didn't want to send their children to camp, and they felt deeply welcomed, even when language communication was a problem. They spoke to several Catholic families, perhaps from Puerto Rico, and tried to convince these Catholic parents that "their children would be taught no creed of man, but only the Bible," a common churches of Christ claim that positioned the churches of Christ members as possessing the simple, direct, and correct way of interpreting the Bible that God intended, as opposed to any other human interpretation. In this way the three counselors could linguistically obscure their religious differences with the families they encountered, by claiming that they had no particular "creed of man" that would interfere with children's learning the Bible directly and simply.³⁵ Early evidence from Shiloh's first year confirmed that several Catholic mothers [of unknown ethnicity] argued with their parish priest about Shiloh. The priest had told the women to keep their children away from the camp for religious reasons. One mother had replied that "I don't see anything wrong with our children attending. I have been to services, and they only teach the Bible, and furthermore it's only \$8 a week."³⁶ In this way, the obscuring nature of the churches of Christ with race was an advantage for them--it allowed for relationship

³⁵ Bob Johnson, "A Staff Member's Impression of N.Y. Recruiting," *Seeking the Lost*, July, 1964, 7.

³⁶ Dacus, 40.

that focused mainly on the religion of the families as the essential factor, but a wider view of these interactions shows that Shiloh did, indeed, teach a creed and a very specific interpretation of the Bible.

As the above examples show, Eastside Church of Christ workers and Eddie Grindley had close contact with people of other races. They promoted racial integration in church when it was not common to do so, even in New York City, and they entered into relationships with people different than they were. But they also closely followed many other evangelical church's outreach missions: to evangelize and to grow the Eastside church, and this larger mission could serve as a check on the potential racial progressivism that might otherwise have been a part of their outreach experience.

Historian Barklay Key notes that there often existed a difference between what a white member of the churches of Christ meant in the pre-Civil Rights era when he or she spoke about spiritual "brotherhood" with a Black member of the churches of Christ and what that same person meant when it came to supporting material brotherhood of a person with rights.³⁷ Looking at Shiloh in the 1950s, parsing out the distinction between what the leadership and white camp counselors meant by the two kinds of implied brotherhood can be difficult to read, as the two linguistic kinds of brotherhood blended together into one physical location with a spiritual purpose. Obviously, Shiloh was comfortable with many kinds of integration behaviors. Physically, at Camp Shiloh, there seemed to be plenty of opportunities for racial integration that defied the Jim Crow values of the times or the *de facto* segregation of New York City. Here was a summer camp in which young people of various skin

³⁷ Key, 16-18.

colors and racial and ethnic backgrounds swam together in the same lake, slept near each other in the same cabin or tent, did common chores together, embraced one another, drank from the same fountain, hiked side by side, and went on common field trips such as the one below to see an integrated New York Yankees baseball game. Some counselors from the South had never seen integration of any kind before they came to Shiloh.³⁸ There was a kind of material and physical brotherhood evidenced at Shiloh.



Figure 1.5 A white female camp counselor is surrounded by Camp Shiloh kids of different skin colors, during a field trip to a Yankees game on a hot day, ca. 1964. The team was integrated by this time. Pht06043. Shiloh Voices Digital Photos Collection, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

³⁸ See Hugh Fulford, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, July 20, 2012, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.



Figure 1.6 Six boys of different skin colors display their “honor flag” for the cleanliness of their common sleeping tent. Ca. 1964. Pht06026. Shiloh Voices Digital Photo Collection. Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

But there were other reasons for camp to exist besides providing an integrated space for New Yorkers. Camp Shiloh produced newsletter that, in 1964, made a striking claim about the unity that could be found at camp: “Shiloh is the blending place for races, religious attitudes, north, south, east, and west,” it read. The faces in the pictures above, taken in the same year, bolster the claim. Because of Eastside Church of Christ’s outreach to the Spanish-speaking population on the East Side of Manhattan, there were times in which the number of Puerto Rican children at Camp Shiloh outnumbered the number of white children.³⁹ But the name of the aforementioned publication itself, in a much bigger print than the quote above, proclaimed the larger purpose of that integration of race, religion, and geography, and

³⁹ Velma Davis Cuellar, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, January 11, 2013. Transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History, Waco, Texas.

redirected its pluralistic message to a more paternalistic, spiritual one. The newsletter was called *Seeking the Lost*, and as an ongoing publication it promoted the Christian, churches of Christ evangelism that existed at camp.⁴⁰ That integration existed as a lesser subset of a focus on evangelism. Race and ethnicity played a role in Shiloh of the era, one in which the physical and spiritual concepts of relationship, evangelism, and race were intermingled.

As the historian Barklay Key points out, the churches of Christ in the South were not overseen by a larger governing body, as were the Methodists and the Southern Baptists. This fact, plus their historical and ongoing emphasis on what they saw as their particular, unique *unity*, put them in a unique position in the broader scope of Southern evangelicalism. Black and white Churches of Christ, although not integrated, never formally separated from each other over enslavement, as did Methodists and Baptists just before the Civil War. Black and white churches of Christ in the South mixed informally throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and white churches supported Black churches, especially before the Civil Rights Movement.⁴¹ Black and white churches were separate in the churches of Christ, but they viewed themselves as unified in the spirit, and they sometimes intermingled. What that meant in the Jim Crow South was that there were multiple gradations of opinion about integration, but the majority of those opinions fell within specific boundaries. Most white people's perspectives within the church were somewhere along Jim Crow social rules and laws, but now and then some whites in

⁴⁰ Marley, Judy, "What is Camp Shiloh?" *Seeking the Lost*, (Mendham, NJ: Shiloh, Inc, 1964, July, no. 9), 1.

⁴¹ Barklay Key, *Race and Restoration*, 3-4.

the church of Christ ventured into helpful spiritual relationships between Black and white churchmembers and congregations, and there was even a significant push from some for integration of churches of Christ colleges before the Civil Rights Act of 1964. These desires for college integration also varied as to specific end goals that often stopped well before true equality, but they did push against establishment boundaries and rhetoric.⁴² The churches of Christ's evangelical bent also meant that there was often an emphasis on evangelism of other races, from enslavement forward. At Shiloh in New York City, there was integration at the camp but also an evangelistic emphasis, situating camp as an outreach for children and youth of many nations. The camp was staffed by college students who were already evangelical Christians, from the South. Camp Shiloh proclaimed to exist as a unique temporary teaching space set up for the purpose of teaching New York children to be like Jesus and to know Jesus. Shiloh's stance on integration, while admirable in its context, still existed beneath the broader purpose of evangelism at Shiloh. A lack of specific boundaries other than overt conversion led to the possibility of multiple ideas at Shiloh about race, both positive and negative, as this chapter will continue to explore, within the integrated environment.

Shiloh and Eastside Deal with Urban Poverty

The Manhattan neighborhoods to which Eastside appears to be connected (these are at least the neighborhoods where Eddie Grindley is known to have traveled) were Yorkville, the Upper East Side, East Harlem, and sometimes Harlem itself. Residents of the nearby areas who came to Eastside were largely European

⁴² Key, 1-6.

immigrants but also Blacks, Puerto Ricans, Nicaraguans, and Guatemalans.⁴³ Many of the children and families from these New York neighborhoods near Eastside were poor. During the 1950s in New York City, the population and economics of the city itself was changing. Restrictions on European immigration lowered the number of migrants from European countries, but Blacks from the South and Puerto Ricans from that island continued to move into New York City in staggering numbers. These new migrants had to constantly vie for city resources of housing and jobs, as the jobs moved overseas and urban renewal in the city knocked down existing housing and exacerbated conflicts. All of these factors led to youth gangs and violence. The decade was also one that culturally fostered the illusion that suburbanization and upward mobility would solve the country's social ills.⁴⁴

In postwar New York City, the blue-collar jobs that had once sustained young people in the working class left the urban core areas of the city, even as the populations of Black and Brown citizens increased there. The economy of New York shifted to service-sector jobs in which Jews and Italians had historic footholds in the city. Black Americans and Puerto Ricans had few advantages in the new economy after the war as the city changed, and these groups moved to the lower economic rungs as the white-collar populations advanced in income and status. New York City neighborhoods were residentially segregated, and white residents of neighborhoods that surrounded all-Black areas like Harlem violently contested the expansion of Black neighborhoods' boundaries, even as Blacks moved into

⁴³ Ibid, 66. 124

⁴⁴ Schnieder, Eric C. *Vampires, Dragons, and Egyptian Kings: Youth Gangs in Postwar New York*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 27-28.

neighborhoods like Harlem from the South during the Jim Crow era. The most significant work for Black Americans in New York City was female domestic labor, leaving many Black people poor. Puerto Ricans who came to the city were often educated and ready for work, but they, too, were left out of neighborhoods, jobs, and schools that would allow them to advance.⁴⁵

In 1955, the last El train that ran through the heart of Yorkville and the Upper East Side was taken down in Manhattan, and developers began to realize the value of this area. Mom and pop shops were evicted. It was an unnoticeably slow, small, painful demise. There were little or no tenants' rights, developers saw potential for upscaling the neighborhood and tore down the small brownstones. Close to the Eastside Church of Christ building, at 313 East 83rd German 86th street saw the biggest loss in this particular area, as the growth of high rises and developers increased. The immigrant population on Upper East Side eventually disbanded over time.⁴⁶ Even in the mid-1950s, some of Eastside's congregation was already white and wealthy, as the area began to gentrify.⁴⁷

Eastside existed on East 83rd Street in Yorkville at a time of turmoil and growing impoverishment for many in Yorkville, the Upper East Side, Harlem, Spanish Harlem, and the surrounding areas. Eddie Grindley stood outside the church building sweeping the sidewalk in order to invite people in.⁴⁸ Often Eastside's neighbors

⁴⁵ Schneider, *Vampires, Dragons, and Egyptian Kings*, 30-41.

⁴⁶

⁴⁷ Sam Lanford, "For the Children,"

⁴⁸ Velma Davis Cuellar, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, January 11, 2013. Transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

were the European immigrant population near the church, but he also traveled north to Harlem and to Spanish Harlem to gather people to come to Eastside and Shiloh and to evangelize.⁴⁹ In doing so, Grindley and others at Eastside and Shiloh came into close contact with urban poverty.

One camper attended Shiloh with his brother and his cousin. Although both this camper and his brother both asserted that they did not feel coerced to convert through Shiloh's religious offerings, Thomas was the singular one of his family who did convert. The other members of this family remained entirely non-religious, something that Thomas found difficult throughout his life, even as he always found the Christian faith beautiful. This camper also remembered that counselors at Shiloh appeared to want to "fix" him, which seemed to be his word for paying attention to his emotional needs concerning his home life, another relational aspect of Shiloh's religious outreach. His life to that point had been difficult, and he said:

Fix me, you know. I guess they thought we were all troubled children from indigent families and from poverty, and we were, and so I guess they had their work cut out for them as counselors back then. . . They counseled me a lot more than just teaching me to make lanyards in arts and crafts. Their counseling, just talking to an adult. . . about home, and it was always home. That's where all of our problems stemmed, of course, was home.⁵⁰

Though Thomas did not elaborate on the specific ways in which counselors--who were teenagers or just out of their teens--spoke to him about his home life, he said he found it useful. It is highly unlikely that these college-aged counselors had experiences that enabled them to completely identify with Thomas's situation, but it

⁴⁹ Sam and Flo Lanford interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, September 12, 2012. Transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

cannot be discounted that being able to talk with them about it was useful at least to Thomas, and his story also signals the prevalence of encounters that Shiloh counselors were having with campers from urban home lives different than their own.

The churches of Christ had very few outreaches to urban areas in the United States during the twentieth century, even in the South, and so Shiloh was unique from its mid-century beginnings and long into its later history.⁵¹ The way that Shiloh articulated its outreach to urban children at the time was not only evangelism in the sense of sharing facts and dogma on a regular basis but also a practical proving ground for living out the evangelical, churches of Christ way of life, “in play, in work, in cleanliness, in speech, in thoughtfulness, in service--making Christianity a living, working thing, filling every moment of every day. . . where those being taught ‘see a sermon.’”⁵² By providing a space for Christianity to be a “living, working thing,” Shiloh felt it gave urban children a chance to enter a new environment that could help form their hearts and minds. This also speaks to Shiloh’s motivations at this time. In this environment, children who attended camp all summer (it was an option to attend for two weeks at a time or to attend all summer), received “66 hours of Bible study and 30 hours of devotional service in one month.”⁵³

⁵¹ Robert Lee Hill, “Urban Ministry” in *The Encyclopedia of the Stone-Campbell Movement*. Eds. Douglas A. Foster, Paul M. Blowers, Anthony L. Dunnivant, and D. Newell Willams [Grand Rapids: William Erdmans Publishing Co, 2004], 761.

⁵² Article about Camp Shiloh, *World Vision* Vol. 18, Sept. 1952, quoted in Pence Dacus, “A History and Evaluation of Camp Shiloh,” 1952, 22.

⁵³ *Firm Foundation*, Oct. 16, 1951, cited in Pence Dacus, “A History and Evaluation of Camp Shiloh,” 1958, 45.

These ideas again confirmed the rather mixed, confused view Shiloh workers of the time had of urban poverty and its causes and symptoms, both spiritual and material. Shiloh also viewed itself as a small, helpful drop in the bucket that could aid the larger society. “It is true,” one author wrote, directly citing Eddie Grindley, “that most judges, governors, and presidents have said, ‘The greatest factor in developing character, leadership, and the spirit of public service is the study of the Bible while young.’⁵⁴ Grindley definitely felt this way about the transformation of his own life in his conversion to Christianity. In the eyes of Shiloh, that character formation and Bible study would help to solve the “problem of juvenile delinquency” in New York City.⁵⁵ Shiloh was concerned about emotional wellness of young people and about larger issues of gang activity and urban poverty, and they felt Shiloh provided a part of the solution. They articulated their contributions to solving these in attempts at long-term relationship support, which in some ways they tried to provide through follow-up work through Eastside, but also in short-term solutions that involved a long-term God that would meet their needs beyond Shiloh and long-term transition to what they felt was appropriate Christianity:

This is not an emotional appeal, because it is fully realized that one Bible camp like Camp Shiloh will not begin to solve the delinquency problem in New York City. . . Furthermore, in the light of the follow-up program which is so necessary, it is admitted that hardly the surface has been scratched in trying to solve the problem of delinquency in New York City. However, it is contended that summer Bible camps could contribute greatly to alleviating the delinquency in New York City or any other city. The fault does not lie in the camps and what they offer but in the number of camps.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Camp Shiloh Bulletin, 1951, (Article by Eddie Grindley), quoted in Pence Dacus, “A History and Evaluation of Camp Shiloh, 1958, 33.

⁵⁵ Dacus, 34.

⁵⁶ Dacus, 35.

Because these evangelicals did not have a true of the causes and symptoms of urban poverty and what Shiloh sometimes termed “juvenile delinquency,” there were different approaches to the difficulties associated with these problems. As seen in the quotation above, they believed that they could meet the challenges of systemic oppression if they were able to provide a more robust way of communicating the need for conversion, follow-up, and God. Some also provided spiritual solutions to individual needs that seemed to meet the immediate needs of the moment, but which, because of the limited perspective of the Shiloh worker, were inadequate. Bob Davidson was a counselor from the state of Texas who, because he had been the president of the student body at Abilene Christian College and a football player, was assigned as the leader of all the boys’ cabins at Camp Shiloh in 1952, Shiloh’s second year. As he approached one of the boys’ cabins on the first day of camp, he saw one of the boys standing spread-eagle against the outside of the cabin wall, and he saw a group of other boys throwing jack-knives at the first boy to see who could come the closest to him with the knives without hitting him. Davidson quickly put a stop to the situation and took the knives, and at that moment he honed in on one of the boys he felt must be the leader, a young man named Sonny from the East Side of Manhattan. Davidson recalled that he felt he needed to get Sonny’s attention at camp, so he suggested rough-house games throughout the camp session and consistently tackled or dunked Sonny in the camp lake, even when Sonny wasn’t a strong swimmer or didn’t know the rules of the game. One of the games Davidson called Whirl Around Bill, in which he spun around with his arms out and hit Sonny in the shoulder. Davidson later received a letter from Sonny that said he had learned a lot from Shiloh. One of the things he learned was that he didn’t like the games that people played in Texas--the games were too rough. But he also learned that he

needed to become a Christian and wanted to be baptized, would Bob Davidson baptize him and his sister? In the same lake where they had played the rough game of Alligator-Come-Across where Davidson had dunked Sonny, Davidson baptized them both. Decades later Davidson's priorities when thinking about Sonny were still overtly spiritual in nature. He said, "I don't know whether he's still living or anything, but I'd love to know if Sonny. . . is still, you know, doing well with the Lord."⁵⁷ Bob Davidson's view of Sonny's spiritual life and his emphasis on proving himself physically to Sonny still did not meet Sonny's needs within a larger system of disparity and violence. If Davidson was aware of the contours of Sonny's larger situation, it seems likely that Davidson believed the conversion experience and his newfound faith perspective could move Sonny past or through these difficulties.

The Southern churches of Christ workers at Shiloh and Eastside saw the need for spiritual salvation, and this was at times, in their mind, co-mingled with a need for material aid, especially through the influence of Eddie Grindley. Grindley wanted to reach people of any income level and personality and to help them with their needs. Those needs could be deep and varied, and it was sometimes difficult for the Southern transplants to know how to meet them. Sam Lanford, an architect-in-training from the Southern churches of Christ who lived in Yorkville for his job training program and became involved in Eastside's English-speaking congregation as a young spiritual protege of Grindley, used the word "rescue" to describe Grindley's interactions with poor children in the area. He said that "trying to reach out to helpless urchins in Manhattan" left him with very few tools but empathy, because the situation in

⁵⁷ Robert E. and Anita M. Davidson, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, January 21, 2013, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History, Baylor University, Waco Texas.

Manhattan was “as foreign to my upbringing and my work on the farm and ranch in Texas as could be and still be in the English-speaking world.”⁵⁸ New York’s combined diversity and poverty were both new experiences for him, and both seemed to be everywhere. It was Eddie Grindley whom he credited as forming his response to the poverty he saw around him living in Yorkville--a response of relationship and spiritual/material aid. Lanford recalled multiple scenes in which Grindley gave material and spiritual comfort to someone in need: for example, he saw Grindley feed a homeless man steak at the Eastside church building, then Grindley put Lanford on the spot by saying, “This would be a good time to tell him about Jesus, the bread of life, Sam.”⁵⁹

Lanford reported on his four years with Eddie Grindley and Eastside as one in which he was always aware that some people around him were dealing with debilitating poverty and personal difficulty. He learned lessons that were profound to him. One woman who attended Eastside didn’t have the use of her legs and always had to be carried in to church by someone capable of doing so. A man came to the church building inebriated. Lanford recalled another Eastside member as always being dirty and smelling badly. With the consistent encouragement of Eddie Grindley, Sam got involved, and when his new wife, Flo, joined him in the city, she did, too. They attended Eastside regularly, and they went inside people’s apartments who had needs, and they got to know others who had things to share--one woman taught Flo how to make German saurkraut.

⁵⁸ Sam and Flo Lanford interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, September 12, 2012. Transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

⁵⁹ Lanford, “For the Children,”

Sam befriended a Jewish family and Flo an older Black woman, and they saw children playing on the streets, many of whom Sam interpreted as being neglected. He got to know a group of boys who were in a street gang who trusted him enough to meet at his apartment on a semi-regular basis and talk about some of their gang activity--he told them that fighting one-on-one was acceptable but collectively beating up a single member of a rival gang was shameful, and he told them to wait until they were married to have sex. When they told him that the police had hit them with billy clubs after they stole from a candy store, he went to the police station to investigate, and was shocked when he heard the policeman talking so callously about the boys accidentally stepping in front of a bus if he didn't drop the matter. His young wife, Flo, dressed in her white gloves and hat, took the gang of boys to the Metropolitan Museum of Art, where they touched the museum's items and hid in a sarcophagus display and ran around the museum, saying things like, "Your grandmother wore army shoes," and another phrase she would not repeat. Sam Lanford described Grindley as always being in the background during this time, urging Lanford toward relationship, understanding, and self-sacrifice. Flo, who had grown up poor in Appalachia, saw a different kind of poverty in New York City than she had known in her home life, and realized that many people around her in New York, even those who were not as clean as she had been back home, were simply doing the best that they could.⁶⁰ Sam and Flo Lanford were a couple who became deeply invested in the mission of Eastside, in trying to connect with members of their community through the methods of relationship, material aid, spirituality, and church connection. Though it was quite different than any experience in their respective backgrounds,

⁶⁰ Lanford interview.

living in the Upper East Side forced them to acknowledge urban poverty and to try to find solutions.

Eastside's outreach to meet needs of its more underserved members and neighbors was constant. In a brochure about Eastside, a member listed the activities of the church, and the list consumes an entire page of the brochure. The activities ranged across a spectrum of spiritual and physical needs, and also included references to Shiloh and the children of Shiloh. Eastside Church wanted to get to know its neighbors and win their confidence, have its neighbors in their homes, visit them, participate in activities with them, sing at hospitals, "help people who have problems," collect clothing for those who needed it, help sick people, and help neighborhood young people financially who went to churches of Christ schools.

The page of the Eastside brochure also lists "teaching them that christianity [sic] means, among other things, cleanliness, neatness, respect for self and for others, proper care for self and for family, love, trust, faith, industry, honesty; teaching them how to be clean and neat, how to care for themselves and their families, how to love." There was a sense in which some of the Eastside membership tried to meet the material needs of their neighbors, but that often those recruited from the South to help at Eastside, even though they were a very small group, felt themselves to be more stable and more capable than many of their more impoverished New York neighbors. They variously interpreted the needs that they saw around them as material, economic, or spiritual, and as this quote above shows, there were times in which Eastsiders interpreted emotional and material needs that could actually be a result of systemic problems as the result of spiritual poverty. At the same time, Sam and Flo Landford were beginning to see people "doing the best they could," a recognition of the

difficulty of other people's contexts. Their worldviews were stretched as they experienced this kind of inequity.

Eddie Grindley, could often be found whispering in someone's ear, "Jesus loves you and so do I." But although he befriended people far outside of the church's traditional boundaries, Grindley's views of solutions and of societal change at large revolved around the institution of the church, the solutions from within the church, and the networks of people in it.



Figure 1.7 Lake for swimming at Camp Shiloh in Mendham, New Jersey, ca. 1964. Pht06040. Shiloh Voices Digital Photos Collection, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.



Figure 1.8 Eastside Church of Christ in Manhattan, ca. 1956. The large sign in the window says, “Hear!! the Gospel of Christ preached every night at 8pm NOW thru May 10 Welcome.” Pht13001. Shiloh Voices Digital Photos Collection. Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

Though he did not ignore the existence of poverty or the need to be of help, Grindley’s solution for extreme poverty was at times to find new homes for impoverished children, often away from the city and in suburban, churches of Christ homes. Sam Lanford lists several examples of Grindley finding new homes for impoverished children. Ray Newton was one of those children.

Ray Newton and his sister were two young Jewish children from Yorkville in Manhattan. Newton remembered the German-Jewish area of his old neighborhood and his Puerto Rican best friend growing up. He played in Central Park and lived in a walk-up tenement building and laid out on the roof to get cool on hot nights. He played tag on the subway, took buses in the city, went to museums, and once a cop scolded him for opening a fire hydrant to play in in the summertime. His

grandmother spoke no English but she did just fine in New York speaking German and Yiddish to the butcher, and the German and Jewish population of the area got along well enough. Newton remembers going to synagogue and Hebrew school at eight years old, getting himself ready for his bar mitzvah in a few more years. After his father died, the family was very poor, and he remembers that he stuffed cardboard in his shoes when the soles wore out and wore his cousin's hand-me-down clothes, but he didn't mind--he was safe and warm and loved. Eventually Eastside recognized that his family was a family in need. Eddie Grindley visited the family in their home and asked his mother if the children could go to Eastside and Shiloh. Going to a Christian church was too much for his mother, but she agreed to send her children to Camp Shiloh. "And in the fifties," Newton said, "Eddie's mission was to find children of European descent to get out of the city for the summer and to take them to what I've learned to understand was a place of safety and comfort, which was Camp Shiloh." Newton had been to another camp previously through an organization called the Fresh Air Fund but did not enjoy it, and now that summer he was going to Camp Shiloh for two weeks to get out of the city and hopefully enjoy nature in Mendham, New Jersey. At Shiloh there were kids who came from all over--lots of churches of Christ kids came up from the South; kids from "Arkansas and Alabama and at the time what I thought were other foreign countries" had come up as campers, too. Campers came from other places in the Northeast. He went one year, and it was new and scary and different--this idea of Jesus as the Messiah was different, the songs at camp were different than his songs, and the boys and girls didn't swim together--why could he not swim with his sister? It was in the wide open with no city noises, which was scary at first, and there were new people everywhere. Some of the campers from the South treated the Black kids meanly, or

talked about his Jewishness, but the counselors put to a stop to that sort of behavior. The counselors cared for the kids, he said, and took them seriously, and the recreation was fun, and it was good enough that he wanted to go back. So he went back the next year and for a few more years. Then, in 1959, while he and his sister were at camp, his mother died. He and his sister were orphans.

One of the churches that Shiloh counselors had helped to found and grow in the Northeast, Dover Church of Christ in Dover, New Jersey, had a minister named Lee Newton, who helped at Shiloh for a week at a time in the summers, doing dishes and cleaning and other support tasks. It was Lee Newton's family that ultimately adopted Ray and his sister, with significant work behind the scenes from Eddie Grindley--but that specific work behind the scenes is lost to history. His Jewish past was suddenly behind him, and he was a member of a churches of Christ family. At age eleven, Ray Newton had a massive identity change--from Hebrew school to the son of a churches of Christ preacher, and now he found himself with the identity of a Christian and surviving a loss of connection to his Jewish parents. This was an understandably difficult time, and his choices, though he was grateful for this new path, were few. The way he worked through things, he said, is by being a good boy in order to make his new family work, and by accepting the Christian life and the life in the Newton family as his own. He became a believing Christian and used that Christianity to frame his own past. He said:

I have trouble believing that God decided I should be orphaned so I could be a Christian. . . but I do believe that it was his plan that because I was orphaned and that Eddie Grindley was in my life and Shiloh was in my life that that was going to be the way that my life was going to be saved . . . That's part of how I worked through or got through all of those conflicts.

Ray Newton, as a grown man, is now a supporter of Shiloh and is on the Shiloh board.⁶¹ He has accepted a Christian, spiritual view of his past, but still maintains a connection to who he was before. As one of the children who was on the “receiving end” of the Christian emphasis at Shiloh, Newton frames the solutions that Shiloh enacted on his behalf as both dramatic and positive, though harrowing and painful, and his conversion experience as difficult.



Figure 1.9 Ray Newton in his home in 2012. The picture on his wall reads, “Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.” Photograph by author. Shiloh Voices digital photo collection, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

Another pair of young people from New York City were adopted by churches of Christ families, and they also frame Shiloh’s solution to their problematic home life as dramatic as well as ultimately positive when framed against their difficult beginnings. Carol Pitman Boyd and Cathy Pitman Freund were two sisters who lived on the East Side of Manhattan. Carol remembers that, though she had a tender and loving

⁶¹ Ray Newton, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, September 14, 2012, Transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History, Waco, TX.

relationship with her mother who was raising her on the East Side, as a ten-year-old girl who was the oldest child in the family, she felt like she was the caretaker of her family instead of her mother. If the gas was turned off in their tenement apartment, Carol was the person who went to the gas company to ask for help--her mother seemed incapable of doing so and often worried about eviction or losing the gas in the home. She remembered her mother often crying in her chair at night. The home was not clean, and neither were the people in it. Carol often asked people on the street for money to ride the bus. When her mother gave birth to a fourth child, Carol went from nearby apartment to apartment begging for baby items.

Carol began attending Eastside and befriended some of the people there, including Eddie Grindley, and Sam and Flo Lanford, whom she remembers taught her some basic domestic life skills. One of her new friends let her pick out a new dress to purchase. Although the East Side pamphlet referenced above shows the churchmembers' direct connection between morality and cleanliness, Carol said she never felt that these people judged her but only accepted her. It is less clear what the churchmembers thought of adult members of her family and community. After two years or so of these associations and several summers that she characterized as wonderful at Camp Shiloh, paid for by some of her new East Side friends, she found that she was going to live with Ken Noland's parents in Arkansas, and her sister, Cathy, was going to live with one of the Camp Shiloh cooks, in El Paso, Texas. Again Eddie Grindley had been behind the scenes doing work with the parties involved, but Carol and Cathy are unaware of what he did precisely. She believed that there was a paper that their mother signed. This is a wrenching circumstance, and Eddie Grindley's work as well as his thoughts behind the process are not fully

known. Sam Lanford wrote about Eddie's work with adopting out children as part of the same rescuing process above. Carol and Cathy both spoke with love of their mother and each other, and, though there were very difficult aspects of both their new lives, they spoke with gratitude for the efforts of the Shiloh workers. Carol called Ken Noland "my special angel" and his wife "also my angel in human form" and reiterates their compassion and sacrifice in caring for her. She remained connected to her birth mother throughout her life, and she married a former Shiloh camper whom she met at later when both were attending Harding College. Carol and Cathy reunited in their twenties, and continued to reconnect throughout their adult life. One of their brothers died, and another they lost track of. Carol, too, accepted the churches of Christ in her life, and attended Harding College as a young adult.⁶²

These were deeply complex situations with no easy solutions, and they were very real lives involved. Eddie Grindley, Eastside, and the people involved used church, camp, Christian religion, personal relationships, and churches of Christ networks as the tools by which they entered these lives and through which they attempted to solve complex problems. As seen above, three of those children affected frame their experiences positively. There may be others who do not. Ultimately, the suburban, churches of Christ family was one of the solutions that Eddie Grindley used to address the poverty around him. Still, these are very dramatic examples of how the churches of Christ saw itself, the church, and the membership of the church, as solutions to the difficulties of urban life. Eastside Church of Christ, in many ways an exception to the rule that churches are not often built for outreach and material aid on a consistent basis, still believed itself to have been built for evangelism. These churches of

⁶² Correspondence with Carol Ann Pitman Boyd, 2020, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

Christ believed the church be a full-throated answer to many urban problems. When church itself could not solve issues of impoverishment, these churches of Christ evangelicals, who were among the very few in that denomination thinking about urban issues at all, had to improvise solutions, some for better and some for worse.

If Grindley, the Lanfords, and others were learning--with both imperfect ideas and with compassionate intent--that the churches of Christ must learn to interact with urban poverty, there were those affiliated with Shiloh who did not have the same level of relationship experiences as they did. One of the families that Sam and Flo Lanford befriended were two young white sisters, the oldest of whom was twelve years old. These two sisters attended East Side Church of Christ and Shiloh. Twelve years later, in 1966, the chair of the board of Shiloh wrote a fundraising letter for the camp and used the story of the oldest daughter as a positive example of the churches of Christ's influence in the life of a family who needed the church's care. The board chair, who was not involved on any deep level with city residents, used the situation to gather donors around a story that he felt had gone from a difficult one to a successful one. The board chair specifically used race and the idea of a Black man having sex with a white woman as a reason that Shiloh had been needed in the young girl's life. Although his views were singular and not necessarily representative of Shiloh at large, he was writing on Shiloh's behalf at the time, and his views still fit, although awkwardly, into the larger themes of the submission of race to evangelism. He wrote, on Shiloh stationary, "For example, twelve years ago, Alice (not her real name), whose father was in the penitentiary, came to Shiloh. A Negro man had taken her white father's place, and her mother had a baby by him. Alice met Jesus at Shiloh and the church saw she continued to know him after the camp closed. Today

she is the head of a Christian home and is a powerful influence for Christ in her community.”⁶³ Here Alice’s family story, in which her mother replaced her incarcerated white father with “a Negro man” and had a baby by him, is a quick interracial morality play with a beginning, middle, and end. The beginning represented both poverty and poverty of spirit. The middle would need the workings of Jesus and of good Christians to move forward, and the end would place Alice into her proper role as “the head of a Christian home” and a “powerful influence for Christ in her community.” The influence of good Christians could affect such change in Alice’s life, and this was why good Christians should support Shiloh and its urban mission. On a spectrum of understanding about urban poverty, this board chair, a man named Reuel Lemmons, had the least contact and the least empathetic response to race, urban poverty, and systemic inequality, and he placed his beliefs about each of these in a spiritual, transactional, framework.

Changing Views on Race Because of Relationships

The board chair mentioned above did not develop relationships with those in the city at camp or through Eastside, and because of this, the city did not change him. However, there were those who did develop those relationships who found themselves changed as they attempted to deal with urban poverty and the realities of racial injustice. Though the churches of Christ were not specifically focused on relationships at this time, still they became important at Shiloh. Like Eddie Grindley and the Lanfords, who learned and attempted to learn to interact with urban poverty,

⁶³ Reuel Lemmons, fundraising letter for Shiloh, December 5, 1966. I will discuss Reuel Lemmons more in the next chapter.

there were others who viewed race differently than their churches of Christ counterparts in the South because they developed relationships in New York City. Velma Davis Cuellar, who worked as Eddie Grindley's secretary at Eastside for nine years, said that she learned that portraying someone's life in print for fundraising purposes was a delicate thing, one that required understanding of that person's perspective. She said that using a case study for fundraising purposes was putting the private details of a life into the public sphere, and doing this in a disagreeable manner could turn someone away. She was aware of people who resented that their lives were used in this way because of the differences in the way that Shiloh or Eastside saw the situation and the way that the individual saw their own situation. "While you may see their situation as a very ugly one," she said, "for them it was just a painful situation. And so they don't want to represent it in that way. So that's something that's true, I think, in any kind of project that's meant to help people get a better life."⁶⁴ Velma Cuellar had to navigate the difference between what she might see as an "ugly" situation and what the person deep within the setting would see as "painful," a difference that required her to attempt a new kind of examination of both her context and theirs. She said it was easier to connect in this way with children than with adults, because adults had more firm views about their extended personal situations and environments. Her contemplations on the subject show an awareness that her perspective might be an external one and the other perspective an internal one, a level of awareness other outsiders may not have fully achieved. But her stated preferences for working with children show the difficulty and struggle she had in truly

⁶⁴ Velma Davis Cuellar, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry January 11, 2013, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History, Baylor University Waco, TX.

identifying with what neighborhood adults were feeling and saying about their own lives.

Despite the board chair and his 1966 fundraising letter with its reductive portrayal of race, at Eastside and Shiloh there was the possibility of interracial collaboration and even behavior that pushed beyond the norms of the larger society. Interracial love and sex were not anathemas for everyone at Shiloh and Eastside. The same Velma Davis Cuellar who tried to think more about how to portray other people in fundraising letters came to Eastside as a graduate from Harding College. She had served as George Benson's secretary at Harding. Benson, the president of Harding College, had stated that blackbirds and redbirds did not mate, and neither should the different races.⁶⁵ And yet, Velma Davis, his former student secretary, was compelled to go to Eastside and work as Eddie Grindley's secretary a few years after graduation. She learned Spanish and married Jose Cuellar, the Tejano, churches of Christ preacher at the Spanish-speaking congregation at Eastside. The couple took in a homeless girl in New York, worked with both Puerto Rican and European youth and children at Eastside, and later returned to Jose's home state of Texas, where they found that interracial marriage was not celebrated. They became missionaries to Puerto Rico for seventeen years, where they set up a Christian camp. Some of the campers who had been to Shiloh as children, now grown men with families, served as counselors in the camp the Cuellars ran in Puerto Rico. They were married until his death.⁶⁶ Because of her time at Eastside Church of Christ, Velma Davis Cuellar was

⁶⁵ Key, 85.

⁶⁶ Velma Davis Cuellar, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry January 11, 2013, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History, Baylor University Waco, TX.

able to push past societal boundaries of how her life “should” look and whom she should marry, and it changed the course of her future.

Ken Noland was a young man from Arkansas who was steeped in the churches of Christ and in the segregated, Jim Crow South in his home state when he first went north as a counselor to Camp Shiloh in 1952 and witnessed racial integration for the first time. As he fell in love with the camp in New Jersey for New York City kids and became more and more involved in it as a counselor and then as a leader, summer after summer, he began to change his perspective on what his uncles and community members had taught him about segregation. He befriended several Black teenagers from New Jersey who attended Camp Shiloh as campers and who expressed their desire to go to a churches of Christ college like he did, in the South. In direct opposition to what he had first been taught by his uncles in Arkansas, men who were deeply tied to segregation and the Confederacy, Noland supported a camp counselor friend who approached the administration of their churches of Christ school, Harding College in Searcy, Arkansas, to advocate that their college admit their new camper friends as students. Noland now supported integration. Harding was not integrated at the time, and its leadership had opposed integration. The response to the request from Harding’s administration was that allowing Black students at Harding would lead to too much of a drop in financial donations to the school, and therefore Harding would not admit the young Black women. The administration then promptly closed the matter.⁶⁷ Ken Noland had changed, but his college had not.

⁶⁷ Ken Noland, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, August 5, 2013, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

A number of Shiloh counselors who connected with their time at camp, like Ken Noland, moved to New York City and New Jersey to settle after graduation from college. As a result, a number of white churches of Christ that were once struggling grew in size, proving again the counselors' overarching commitment to the churches of Christ ethos above all else but also signaling a change in view as to where and how the churches of Christ could exist. It should be noted, however, that a number of these churches were not in the urban core of the city itself and were often in predominantly white neighborhoods that surrounded the city. Ken Noland's family could not understand why he continued to go north to work at Shiloh for a decade--and ultimately to live in New Jersey. The North was so unfriendly, they told him, but because of Shiloh's influence he wanted to help churches of Christ in the North grow and moved to Monmouth, New Jersey, to work with a church that had been started a few months previous to their arrival and that was, at that time, young enough to meet in a Fred Astaire dance studio before they found their permanent building.⁶⁸

Conclusion

In the 1950s and into the 1960s, Shiloh and its partner, Eastside Church of Christ, attempted to reach out to a wide variety of people, many of them children. Amid the swimming, playing, skits, and baseball games on the grand New Jersey estate property at Camp Shiloh, there was also Bible study and singing, attuned to the purpose of teaching young people about Jesus. This was a Protestant, churches of Christ Jesus, up from the South and steeped in the value of personal relationships and Bible study, working through ideas of brotherhood and sisterhood with people of

⁶⁸ Ken Noland interview.

many backgrounds. The church was to be the most important element in all of their lives. The relationships and the impetus to help were the two most utilized ideas that the Southerners brought with them, because, as the city changed, there would be many people around them who needed help. Their impetus for relationship was, indeed, helpful. In forming relationships, Shiloh and Eastside workers sometimes found themselves connecting with New York City residents in ways they had not planned. But even in the 1950s, the city was changing in such a way that emphasis on relationships and conversions alone would not fully meet the deepest needs of the city, as the founders had hoped they would. The themes of relationship and meeting needs would follow Shiloh into the 1960s, where the city itself, as its population changed, would challenge the churches of Christ Southerners who came to work in the North. They would continue to find their traditional, church-held understandings of the world did not meet an increasingly obvious racialized landscape and would need to spiritually change as relationships developed.



Figure 1.10 Ca. 1964, camp counselor prepares to catch something thrown in the air with an open mouth. There are several skin colors represented in the picture. Pht06029, Shiloh Voices Digital Photos Collection. Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

CHAPTER TWO: SHILOH IN THE 1960s

I did not realize until last year how such a large number of teen-agers are suffering from emotional maladjustment. That is really the trouble with the young people in several sections of Brooklyn and West Harlem and East Harlem in Manhattan. I understand that quite a few members of the Church of Christ have the same difficulty. Camp Shiloh is ideally equipped and operated to get these people adjusted properly in one season (two months). I mean that Camp Shiloh is an ideal place and its staff members are ideal people for the Lord to work through to bring about these emotional adjustments. - Clinton Davidson, Shiloh founder, 1965.¹

The 1950s were a dramatic time for evangelism efforts among evangelicals, and this focus continued well into the 1960s.² The mid-1960s was also a time in which the Northern cities of the United States continued to change dramatically as more and more Black residents left the South to escape Jim Crow. During this time period the Classic Civil Rights Movement also entered into the consciousness of mainstream America. All of these factors affected Shiloh in ways that intensified and sometimes shifted but did not change the dynamics seen in the previous chapter: New York City was a place where Black people tried to make a new life as a place of safety, and that place was not often as safe for them as they would have hoped; Southern evangelicals, bent on evangelism, encountered urban racial inequity often for the first time, and, through relationships and exposure to the city, new concepts about race and inequality could change their spiritual outlooks. Still operating with little churches of Christ

¹ Clinton Davidson, letter to James L. Lovell, December 27, 1965. Center for Restoration Studies, Abilene Christian University, Abilene, TX.

² Thomas C. Breg, "Proclaiming Together? Convergence and Divergence in Mainline and Evangelical Evangelism, 1945-1967," *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (Winter, 1996), 49-50.

presence in the North, Shiloh workers improvised ways to meet the spiritual and material needs of urban New Yorkers, hoping to create a safe space for underserved children and youth at Shiloh. At times they were able to do so, especially through relationships and the aforementioned changes in their own worldviews. The Civil Rights Movement made some of them aware of racial inequities that might exist in the lives of Shiloh campers, and this affected the nature of their relationships and gave evangelicals more perspectives of systemic oppression. Yet, at times evangelicals were not able to create a safe space at Shiloh, especially because they operated with less daily presence in the lives of Shiloh children than at many other times in Shiloh's history, and they were not able to fully understand the depth of racial inequity in the city. Therefore Shiloh's perceptions of race from the early 1960s to 1967 were still uneven overall but followed traceable patterns. The unevenness of these perceptions at Shiloh mirrors the complex changes that the country encountered during this time period.³

Some of the aspects of Shiloh changed from its earliest era during this time, and some stayed the same. In the 1960s, Shiloh's informal follow-up program through Eastside Church of Christ faded away, and, even with some less formal connections with Eastside still remaining, Shiloh remained largely as a summer camp only, connected mostly to its donor churches in the South. Evangelicals had founded other churches in nearby areas, but they had much less direct connection with the lives of campers than Eastside had. Shiloh's relational bent, part of the longtime

³ Alexander Bloom and Winni Breines, "'Past as Prologue:' The 1950s as an Introduction to the 1960s," in *Takin' It to the Streets: A Sixties Reader, Second Edition*, Alexander Bloom and Winni Breines, eds., (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 1-11.

“evangelical cultural toolkit,” continued to be an influential aspect of Shiloh’s work.⁴ It compelled Shiloh staff to create a safe space for children of many races and backgrounds. At the same time, the lack of ability, or perhaps even willingness, to understand the nuances of systemic racism that impacted young Black Americans could forge elements that may have been hurtful or detrimental to campers of color, even in the short span of time at summer camp.

This chapter begins, not with Shiloh, but with New York City itself. Beginning in this way lays bare the racial atmosphere of the city where many of the campers lived and the way in which the city as a whole treated its Black residents. This treatment can be viewed especially in terms of space and resources. An overarching theme for the beginning of this chapter is that racism was not and is not confined to the South. To understand what New York City was like for its Black residents, it is important to first understand this fact. Adjacent to this understanding, this chapter also emphasizes the Civil Rights Movement as not simply a Southern phenomenon but one that existed in the North through movements to gain equal housing and jobs, such as through the Congress for Racial Equality, and through Black Power movements, such as the Black Panthers, who will appear in this chapter and in further chapters of this text.⁵ Riots were also “the language of the unheard,” as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said in a speech in 1967.⁶ All of these were ways in which Black

⁴ Michael O. Emerson and Christian Smith, *Divided by Faith: Evangelical Religion and the Problem of Race in America*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 117-119.

⁵ Brian Parnell, *Fighting Jim Crow in the county of Kings: the Congress of Racial Equality in Brooklyn*, (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2013), 1-29.

⁶ Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. “The Other America,” speech given in 1967 at Stanford University.

Transcript <https://www.crmvet.org/docs/otheram.htm> accessed November 4, 2021.

Americans tried to communicate the absence of the American Dream in their lives and communities. Beginning with this broader historical view of inequity will allow this chapter to properly position Shiloh campers as well as show how camp staff, who were not from the area, perceived kids and treated them, Northern urban Black and Brown children and youth, in their larger contexts. The chapter then shifts to the ways in which the white, Southern evangelicals of Shiloh created a space in which they were able to teach and learn from campers.

The Racial Atmosphere in New York City: Housing and Race in Two Sample New York City Neighborhoods

In the early 1970s, housewife Mrs. Johnson, living in the neighborhood of East New York in Brooklyn, is quoted as saying, “I came to New York in [19]57. . . I was very disappointed in New York. Most Southerners, when they come to New York, I guess they are looking for heaven.”⁷ Her words and sentiment echo the title and theme of Clyde Brown’s 1965 autobiographical novel, *Manchild in the Promised Land*, in which the main character and his family escape the South to move to a new life in Harlem but do not find it to be the promised land after all.⁸ Whether the North was the promised land or not, it certainly was an incredibly common journey for Black Americans to go from South to North. Historian Isabel Wilkerson’s Pulitzer-Prize-winning work, *The Warmth of Other Suns*, was named after a moving footnote in author Richard Wright’s autobiography, *Black Boy*, that expresses the longing within that journey itself. Wilkerson meters out Wright’s footnote as if it were poetry:

⁷Doug Shafer, “The Johnson Family,” *Hope*, Camp Shiloh, Inc., (Spring, 1975): 7. , Baylor University Institute for Oral History, Shiloh Voices Digital Photo Collection. Her first name is unknown.

⁸Clyde Brown, *Manchild in the Promised Land*, reprint, (New York: Simon and Schuster 2011).

*I was leaving the South
To fling myself into the unknown. . .
I was taking a part of the South
To transplant in alien soil,
To see if it could grow differently,
If it could drink of new and cool rains,
Bend in strange winds,
Respond to the warmth of other suns
And, perhaps, to bloom.⁹*

Through a storehouse of oral history interviews, Wilkerson uncovers the silent movement of the Great Migration that an incredible number of Black Americans took, one by one, from the South to cities in the North in an epic and unplanned migration. Though quiet and often unrecorded, this movement had impact; in fact, it reshaped America. It began in the early part of the Twentieth Century and lasted through the 1970s. Overall, around 6,000,000 African Americans left their difficulties in the American South to make new lives and to hope for something better in places like New York City and Syracuse, Chicago and Oakland, Milwaukee, Detroit, Newark, and Philadelphia.¹⁰ Beginning after World War I, they fled lynchings and other extreme violence, poverty, and Jim Crow. In the 1960s alone, writes Wilkerson, 1,000,000 African Americans fled north “because of the barefaced violence during the South’s last stand against civil rights, [when] it was actually more treacherous to leave certain isolated precincts of the rural South than perhaps at any time since slavery.”¹¹ The 1960s, therefore, were a particularly transformative time in

⁹Isabel Wilkerson, *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of American’s Great Migration*. (New York: Vintage Books, 2010), epigraph, np.

¹⁰ Wilkerson, 8-15.

¹¹ Wilkerson, 218.

American history, for many reasons, North and South, a fact that will impact the narrative to come.

Just as Mrs. Johnson and her family found in East New York, the North was not always heaven, nor was it the Promised Land, as Clyde Brown also discovered. Although Jim Crow was not officially in effect in New York, that place was still rife with challenge. Isabel Wilkerson writes:

The parts of the city [New York City] that black migrants could afford—Harlem, Bedford-Stuyvesant, the Bronx—had been hard and forbidding places to raise children, especially for some of the trusting and untutored people from the small-town South. The migrants had been so relieved to escape Jim Crow that many underestimated or dared not think about the dangers in the big cities they were running to—the gangs, the guns, the drugs, the prostitution. They could not have fully anticipated the effects of all these things on children left unsupervised, parents off at work, no village of extended family to watch over them as might have been the case back in the South. Many did not recognize the signs of trouble when they surfaced and could not inculcate their children against them or intercede effectively when the outside world seeped into their lives.¹²

Wilkerson here describes a people who have not anticipated that their new geography will cause them trouble and pain through a certain kind of urban overcrowding and yet isolation, though a different kind of pain than they found in their old life in the South before and during Jim Crow. Particularly telling is the passage Wilkerson writes about youth and children, and the generational breaks that would await the migrants. While escaping some of the horrors that had plagued them in North Carolina—which was the primary place of origin for those migrants who ended up in New York City—they faced difficulty combating the new pressures and dangers that found them in the northern city.

In New York City, African Americans fled the South and filled Harlem in the northern part of the borough of Manhattan, and, when Harlem became overcrowded

¹² Wilkerson, 438.

and could not support any newcomers, those new people also moved into the neighborhood of Bedford-Stuyvesant in Brooklyn. Between 1940 and 1950, the Black population of Bedford-Stuyvesant almost doubled because of the migration, growing from 108,263 to an overwhelming 208,478 Black Americans. Bed-Stuy, as this neighborhood is known, could not contain the large number Black and Puerto Rican residents during this time, and they moved into other nearby neighborhoods as well.¹³ White occupants in Bed-Stuy realized that newcomers were racially different and left the neighborhood for the suburbs. This was white flight, and it occurred with a tragic regularity all over the country. People of color moved into existing neighborhoods, white people left because people of color were moving in.¹⁴ One middle-aged Black family moved into Bed-Stuy in 1960, and neighbors threw rocks through the couple's window and twice set debris ablaze and then tampered with the neighborhood fire extinguishers, seriously hindering firefighters from saving their

¹³ While this paper speaks primarily of residents of East New York and Brownsville with Black skin, migrants from Puerto Rico who came to the mainland United States through New York City in large numbers especially in the 1950s have their own stories, and they, too, were on the receiving end of systemic and personal racism that mirrored that which affected black New Yorkers. I refer to them in this paper as "Brown" residents of East New York or Brownsville. Though their stories are different, they often ended up living in Bedford-Stuyvesant, East New York, Brownsville, and the Bronx through similar systemic discrimination as discussed here. Several witnesses quoted in this dissertation have roots in Puerto Rico.

For more on the political history of Puerto Ricans in New York City, see Lorin Thomas, *Puerto Rican Citizen: History and Political Identity in Twentieth Century New York City*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).

¹⁴ Harold X. Connolly, *A Ghetto Grows in Brooklyn*, (New York: New York University Press, 1977), 131-2.

house from destruction.¹⁵ Housing had been long segregated in America, and across the United States, the Federal Housing Administration insured only segregated neighborhood home ownership until 1949, and it was only in 1962 that the FHA required housing applicants to pledge nondiscrimination.¹⁶ In 1949, the official Code of Ethics for the National Association of Real Estate Boards instructed real estate agents that they should never sell property to anyone of any race whose presence would be “detrimental” to the property values in that neighborhood. According to this official Code of Ethics, a bootlegger, a madame, or a gangster was on the same moral plane as a Black man who wanted his children to go to college and to live “among whites”, and agents should actively work against such immoral forces entering a “respectable neighborhood” made up of white people, as each of these would add to neighborhood blight.¹⁷ As federal rules changed but societal expectations did not, real estate agents, who realized that they could make more money when there were many Black people crowded into apartment buildings in a city neighborhood because they had no other place to go, encouraged racial changes with subtle and not-so-subtle tactics that exploited white racial fears.¹⁸ In addition, New York City’s urban redevelopment plans decimated already existing

¹⁵ Brian Purnell, *Fighting Jim Crow in the County of Kings: The Congress of Racial Equality in Brooklyn*, (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2013), 68.

¹⁶ “Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders,” 260.

¹⁷ “Realtors Call ‘Madams’ and Negroes ‘Blights,’” 1949, NAACP Papers, NAACP Protests Against Racially Derogatory Media Advertising, Jan 1, 1949-Dec 31, 1949. Folder: 001441_012_0273. <https://congressional.proquest.com/histvault?q=001441-012-0273&accountid=4886>

¹⁸ See Norris Vitcheck, Alfred Balk, “Confessions of a Block-Buster,” *Saturday Evening Post*, 1962, <http://www.saturdayeveningpost.com/wp-content/uploads/satevepost/Confessions-of-a-Block-Buster.pdf>. Accessed November 15, 2020. See also Connolly, *A Ghetto Grows in Brooklyn*.

neighborhoods and left poor Black and Brown citizens with quite literally no relocation options—though they had been promised relocation—and little choice but to move into neighborhoods that were “transitional” and declining, like Brownsville in Brooklyn.²² And so the neighborhoods changed. Those whites who remained in neighborhoods just beyond Bed-Stuy refused Blacks in their neighborhoods, and these neighborhoods were segregated.²³ In neighboring East New York and New Lots, housing projects that were once occupied by white residents were transformed over the course of the decade into outposts of racial isolation, secluding Black residents within the projects. After 1960, as more Black migrants fled the South, this trend deeply intensified, and 286,000 more Black people moved to the area. Bed-Stuy was overrun, and the area that was now being called a ghetto expanded outward to envelop neighboring Brownsville, and almost all of East New York, Crown Heights, and some of Bushwick and Flatbush. In East New York a complete neighborhood transformation took less than ten years.²⁴

²² Robert Caro, *The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York*, (New York: Random House), 966-972.

²³ Connolly, 132.

²⁴ Connolly, 132-134.

FORM 8
10-1-37

New York City

AREA DESCRIPTION - SECURITY MAP OF

1. AREA CHARACTERISTICS:

a. Description of Terrain. Flat.

b. Favorable Influences. Substantial row brick construction - Many brown stone front and sides.

c. Detrimental Influences. Obsolescence and poor upkeep. Infiltration of Negroes. Elevated structures on Lexington Ave., Fulton St. and Atlantic Avenue and Broadway.

d. Percentage of land improved 95%; e. Trend of desirability next 10-15 yrs. static

2. INHABITANTS: merchants; b. Estimated annual family income \$ 1800-3500.

a. Occupation 90 Clerks - laborers; c. Foreign-born families \$; d. Negro 35%; e. Infiltration of Negroes (steady); f. Relief families Many; g. Population is increasing; decreasing; static Yes

3. BUILDINGS:

	PREDOMINATING	OTHER TYPE	OTHER TYPE
a. Type	3-4 family 4-6 rms.	2 family 5-7 rms.	1 family 7-12 rms.
b. Construction	Brick	Brick - frame	Brick - frame
c. Average Age	30 Years	35 Years	40 Years
d. Repair	Fair	Poor - fair	Poor - fair
e. Occupancy	90 %	95 %	90 %
f. Home ownership	None	None	None
g. Constructed past yr.	None	None	None
h. 1929 Price range	\$ 10,000-15,000 100%	\$ 5,500-14,000 100%	\$ 7,000-12,000 100%
i. 1935 Price range	\$ 5,000-8,000 52	\$ 5,000-7,000 51	\$ 2,500-5,500 42
j. 1938 Price range	\$ 5,000-8,000 52	\$ 5,000-7,000 51	\$ 2,500-5,500 42
k. Sales demand	Surplus	Poor	Poor
l. Activity	Poor	Poor	Poor
m. 1929 Rent range	\$ 40-60 100%	\$ 45-65 100%	\$ 50-75 100%
n. 1934 Rent range	\$ 20-40 60	\$ 25-40 59	\$ 40-60 80
o. 1938 Rent range	\$ 25-40 65	\$ 30-40 64	\$ 40-60 80
p. Rental demand	Fair	Fair	Fair
q. Activity	Fair	Fair	Fair

4. AVAILABILITY OF MORTGAGE FUNDS: a. Home purchase Limited; b. Home building None

5. CLARIFYING REMARKS: 3% brick 6-8 family tenements 4-8 rooms some with stores renting \$2-10 per room. Sign some modern units at \$10-15 per room. Colored infiltration a definitely adverse influence on neighborhood desirability although Negroes will buy properties at fair prices and usually rent same. There is a proposal to remove the elevated structure on Fulton Street.

6. NAME AND LOCATION Bedford-Stuyvesant Brooklyn SECURITY GRADE D AREA NO. 8

ASSIGNED VALUES 10% of market value

Figure 2.1 A Homeowner's Loan Corporation area description of Bedford-Stuyvesant in Brooklyn in the year 1937 describing the neighborhood for the possibility of offering home loans. Note that in the "Clarifying Remarks" it was considered an "adverse influence on neighborhood" that there was an increasing "Colored infiltration," in Bed-Stuy.²⁵

²⁵ Robert K. Nelson, LaDale Winling, Richard Marciano, Nathan Connolly, et al., "Mapping Inequality," *American Panorama*, ed. Robert K. Nelson and Edward L. Ayers,

<https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining/#loc=11/40.654/-74.106&city=brooklyn-ny&area=D9&dimage=1/40/-154.426> accessed November 4, 2021.

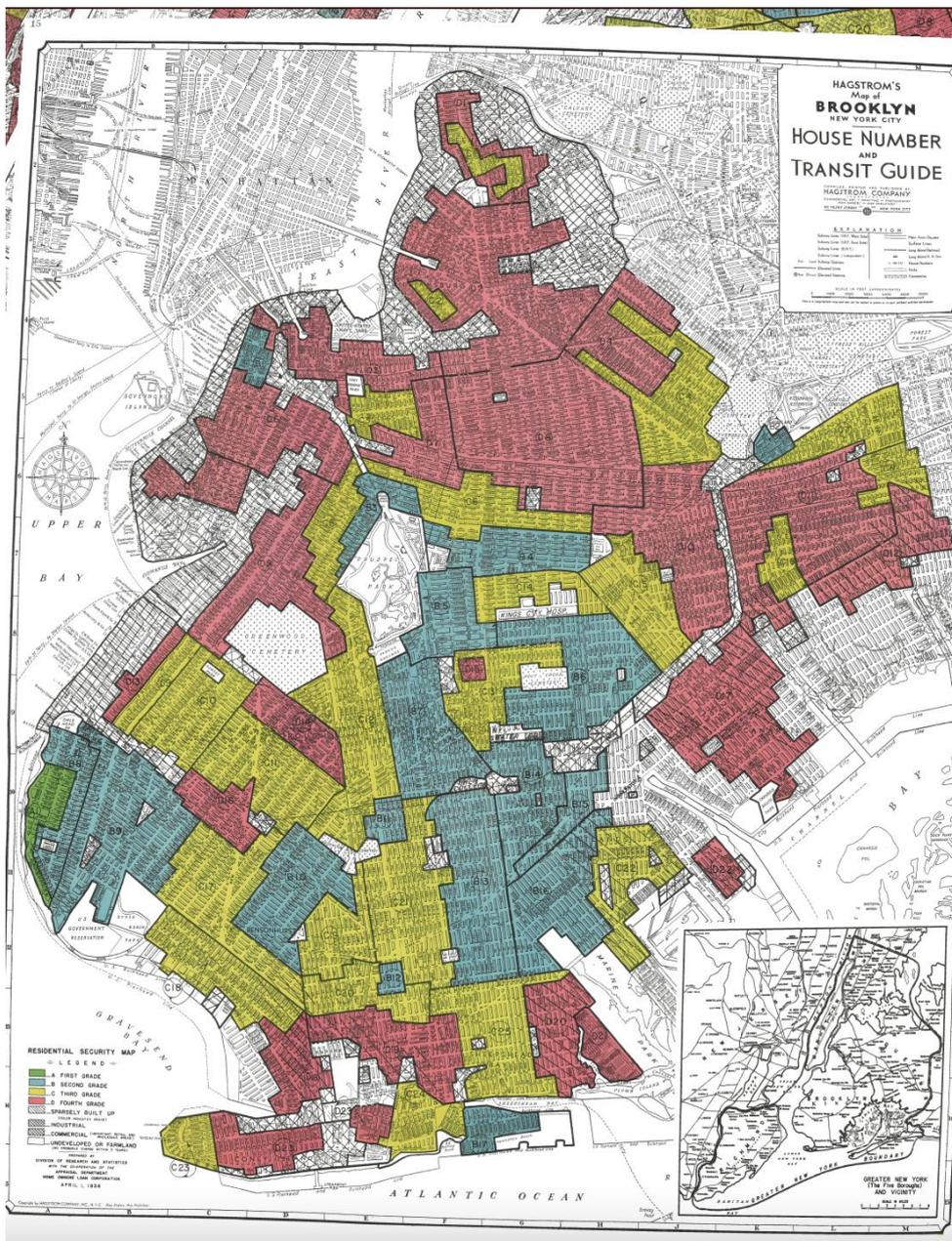


Figure 2.2 A Homeowner’s Loan Corporation map of Brooklyn, New York, from 1938. The colors on the map represent different levels of desirability as communicated by the HLC to potential mortgage lenders in the city. “Hazardous” areas, such as Bed-Stuy and East New York, were shaded in red, and the corporation advised lenders not to make loans or make them sparingly in these areas because of “detrimental influences in a pronounced degree, undesirable population, or an infiltration of it.” Yellow areas like Brownsville were said to be “definitely declining”²⁶

²⁶ Brooklyn New York, “Mapping Inequality: Redlining in New Deal America,”

<https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining/#loc=11/40.654/-74.2&city=brooklyn-ny> American

Panorama, ed. Robert K. Nelson and Edward L. Ayers, Accessed August 18, 2022

Carmelia Goffe, an African American woman who was born in 1948, was not a migrant to New York. She grew up in the Brownsville neighborhood, which had been a stable, mixed-race neighborhood predominated by friendly Jewish and working-class African American residents in the early decades of the twentieth century. But she also remembers that the neighborhood changed, and so, too, did the landscape. Tenement housing had been changing for the worse for decades. Community activists in the 1940s and 1950s had lobbied for better housing in Brownsville. At that time, housing projects seemed like hopeful alternatives to tenement living, as resident activists realized that tenements were failing there. As New York City's industrial jobs vanished overseas—600,000 jobs gone from the city in the span of thirty years—and more and more African Americans simultaneously poured into the cities, housing projects that had been built for the working poor were now used mainly for unemployed Welfare recipients.²⁷ Goffe remembered: "Living in the projects you didn't see it so much, but as you went on the streets beyond, it was really, really bad. It was getting worse and worse. The tenements, there were tenement buildings were being abandoned and left to decay. And it looked bad."²⁸

Locally these changes could mean housing deadlock and destruction for residents within these neighborhoods. The Central Brooklyn Model Cities Program, a plan for both East New York and Brownsville that began in 1961, was an urban renewal effort to build homes and schools and central resources like recreational centers and

²⁷Greg Donaldson, *The Ville: Cops and Kids in Urban America*, (New York: Ticknor and Fields, 1993), 3-4.

²⁸ Carmelia Goffe, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry. Digital recording, November 15, 2012. Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

childcare centers in the area.²⁹ But the project was unorganized, delays were lengthy, and the project only served to knock down buildings instead of build them.³⁰ In East New York, the Johnson family, whose matriarch vocalized disappointment about New York quoted above, was able to move into a Model Cities apartment in the early 1970s, although the disappointment with this small apartment caused the family to think about actually going back to the South. It had taken the large family thirteen years on a New York City Housing Authority waiting list to move into their apartment, despite daily visits to the Housing Authority to try to get into a new place to live. For all those thirteen years, Mr. Johnson—a veteran—his wife and six young children had been living in apartments with poor heating and unreliable landlords. Now they considered the rewards of their efforts to be less than hopeful and New York City to be less than paradise.³¹ Overall, despite the extensive planning conducted by the Central Brooklyn Model Cities Program to build and rehabilitate thousands of buildings in Brownsville, East New York, and Bedford-Stuyvesant with funds to be provided under the federal Model Cities Demonstration Act, very few of these plans actually made any meaningful changes in any of these neighborhoods.³²

White New Yorkers accused Black New Yorkers of creating all of the negative conditions—and now the increasingly negative connotations—of the term “ghetto,” and as the neighborhoods changed to house Black and Brown residents, to be “urban” and “Black” came to be viewed as unemployed and criminal, and the poor urban

²⁹ Pritchett, *Brownsville, Brooklyn*, 244.

³⁰ Pritchett, 243-245.

³¹ Shafer, “The Johnson Family”.

³² Pritchett, 244-245.

ghetto came to mean a place that was decayed and dirty. Whites took social goods with them as they left neighborhoods, and they viewed Black people as the purveyors of social ill health.³³

Black and Brown residents of Brooklyn had groups that did try mightily to change the situation. The Brooklyn chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) took on housing discrimination one case at a time, over and over again, to try and visibly prove to white America that their housing tactics were unjust and their accusations against Black urban dwellers were based on false stereotypes. Beginning in 1960, they fought segregated housing by testing white landlords in parts of the city on whether those landlords would accept Black tenants, including in Brownsville, and as a result they helped many Black residents move into all-white buildings.³⁴ They also used small- and large-scale direct action such as sit-ins and protests, and in 1970 they used the Fair Housing Act to challenge discriminatory housing practices of one of the city's largest building companies that had helped create neighborhoods like East New York and Brownsville in the 1960s.³⁵ They demonstrated for construction jobs at significant sites, and they organized rent strikes for better housing in buildings in Bed-Stuy and Brownsville.³⁶

But the winds of change blew across New York, as it did the rest of the country. A more intense kind of protest, a riot, rose in Harlem in 1966, a violent, angry event. As the decade turned the corner, many Black citizens and young activists seemed fed up and frustrated by the small-scale victories that they were winning and with the

³³ Purnell, *Fighting Jim Crow in the County of Kings*, 63.

³⁴ Purnell, 67.

³⁵ Purnell, 75, 87.

³⁶ Purnell, 213-215, 254.

many times that direct action had not actually worked on behalf of justice. They were angry at the larger system that looked away from them, acted against them, and then blamed them for the problems in their own neighborhoods. And the city itself forgot that it had needed activists in the first place. It touted its solidarity with Black residents of Selma, Alabama, and openly celebrated New York City's lack of racial problems in 1965 at a special Brooklyn rally in support of Selma. The gloss had once again been painted over the wound. Under the new leadership of those like Sonny Carson in the late 1960s, the direct action of Brooklyn CORE would fade, and the new activism would become more demanding. The city, by refusing to systemically co-operate with moderates, handed power to more strident voices instead.³⁷

Riots were one way for those with little other recourse to express outrage and anger. In 1966, a riot erupted in East New York, which by then had become an unsteady mix of Italians and African Americans, as African American residents moved in to the neighborhood that had been previously predominantly Italian. A group called SPONGE [Society for the Prevention of Negroes Getting Everything] held a protest march and shouted, "Go Back to Africa, N*****!" as if unaware of the racism that had led the residents to the neighborhood to begin with.³⁸ Many Italians in East New York had built their own brick homes by hand and did not want to surrender them to the newcomers, and they blamed race for the community's postwar ills. This 1966 East New York riot erupted in gunfire and looting. When

³⁷ Purnell, 289-295.

³⁸ Throughout this work, I have chosen not to print out racial slurs in full. When the original sources printed the words in full, I have replaced some letters with asterisks.

Mayor John Lindsay came to restore order, whites threw rocks at his car and told him to go home, too. A Black boy was killed in the violence. The New York Times ran a picture of the riot as its front-page story. “Such imagery,” writes Samuel G. Freedman, “proved nearly as destructive [to the stability of the neighborhood] as the event itself.” Whites became increasingly frightened, and, as a result of the riots, the Italians in the neighborhood left. The Italian blocks south of Livonia Avenue became inhabited by only Black people almost immediately thereafter. By the end of 1966, East New York had undergone a racial change of eighty percent in a single decade.³⁹ When asked if he had seen his East New York neighborhood change, Chino Cruz replied, “I’ve seen it change in a year.” Then he followed simply with, “We had riots in the sixties.”⁴⁰

³⁹Samuel G. Freedman. *Upon This Rock: The Miracles of the Black Church* (New York: HarperPerennial,1993),105.

⁴⁰Chino Cruz, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry. Digital recording. November 21, 2012. Baylor University Institute for Oral History.



Figure 2.3 Small crowd, likely of students and a teacher, in the 1968 Ocean-Hill Brownsville strike to gain community control of schools. This strike is also discussed in the next chapter. Pht08007. Shiloh Voices Digital Photos collection. Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

In 1970, shortly after the 1968 citywide crisis that erupted as the Ocean Hill-Brownsville communities tried to claim local control of their own overcrowded school district in which they felt their children were not being properly educated, two people in the Brownsville neighborhood set fire to their own trash in the streets because of their frustration with the irregularity of trash pickup in Brownsville. The people of Brownsville were not able to keep their streets clean, and the Sanitation Department blamed the trouble on broken equipment on the infrequency of trash service, but Brownsville residents—and Brooklyn CORE⁴¹—said that the department did not want to come into their neighborhood because of racial bias. Residents had demonstrated and had complained to the city, but their efforts produced no changes. The two men who set their trash on fire were arrested, and then a riot erupted in the

⁴¹ Pritchett, 239-40; Purnell, 154.

neighborhood, with people burning trash and looting stores in Brownsville for two days.⁴²

That same year in May, another riot burst forth in Brownsville from a nonviolent protest against the city's announcement of dramatic budget cuts in the city's funding that would assist the poor. The large peaceful demonstration against the announcement turned violent when police tried to clear the crowd from a blocked intersection and some of the crowd began to physically interact with the policemen. Soon people were setting fires in empty cars and buildings, and the fire department had to fight 100 fires in Brownsville that day, all while evading bottles and rocks thrown by rioters and looters.⁴³

Riots could get people's attention. After the riots across East New York in 1966 into 1967, Mayor Lindsay sent funds to areas that had been affected by riots in East New York, Bed Stuy, and the South Bronx. These areas had received no previous attention by the city.⁴⁴ New York City did not have the widespread violence of other major riots across the country that occurred from 1964 to 1966, such as in Detroit or Los Angeles, but it was certainly not immune to what can be described as riots during this period, nor was any urban area in America.⁴⁵

Perspectives from Shiloh, 1960s: Safety

Within this context, it is now time to shift to Shiloh itself, a place that operated in New Jersey to work with children mostly from New York City and a few other urban

⁴² Pritchett, 239-40.

⁴³ Pritchett, 241.

⁴⁴ Walter Thabit, *How East New York Became a Ghetto*, (New York: New York University Press, 2003), 69.

⁴⁵ Pritchett, 192.

areas. When looking at Shiloh in the 1960s, it was clear that creating a place of safety for children was important to Shiloh. What is not clear is the precise definition of the word and what it meant to them within its larger context. Was the city safe? For whom and from what? Safety can be a spiritual concept, a psychological one, and/or a physical one. Shiloh was intended to be a safe space for urban children—in what ways did it succeed and fail to be so? It also might be viewed as a safe space in which counselors and staff came to new interactions and relationships with children who were different than themselves and learned new things from those interactions. *Safety* can mean more than one thing at once.

Though they had not come from a region or culture that had been positively invested in the Civil Rights Movement or even that viewed the Movement in a positive way, these churches of Christ evangelicals did arrive at Shiloh with a desire to help individuals, and this included children of all skin colors.⁴⁶ Attitudes varied as to systemic racism, and often knowledge of these issues continued to be limited in Southern churches of Christ, though also varied. Some Shiloh personnel viewed the city itself as a bad, unsafe place, and a mid-1960s pamphlet warned about the city as such to potential Shiloh donors, with city children as the innocents who might grow up blending into the depraved lifestyle the city afforded. The pamphlet spelled out the potential situation in the city in dramatic language:

Witnesses and victims of the uncivilization [emphasis mine] in which they are caught, thousands of children who live in the inner city confront the hot summer--many are without supervision, without love, without care--left to their own devices.

⁴⁶ For more on the way that the churches of Christ, both Black and white, interacted with the Classic Civil Rights Movement of the era, see Barklay Key, *Race and Restoration: Churches of Christ and the Black Freedom Struggle*, (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2020).

And, tragically, these devices have led many to crime, gang warfare, violence, and human cruelty.

Muggings, rapes, mainlining, and perversions make the suggestive motions of the neighborhood kids dancing the Frug, the Swim, and the Watusi seem relatively harmless.

Pawns of the circumstances and carelessnesses surrounding them, many of these children have no higher example than the common, the suggestive, and the carnal.⁴⁷

Clearly there was a problem, and the writer of the pamphlet blamed the issues on a lack of love and carefulness. The author, however, did not see what Isabel Wilkerson saw as she wrote the passage above--that it was often not lack of love that caused hardship for Black migrants from the North to the South, but it was in fact love that caused them to migrate, and hope for a better and safer future. They did not find the city to be as hospitable as they had thought it would be, and the overcrowding and resistance they encountered were most difficult for them as they tried to raise their children in a new, more chaotic cityscape. The sort of stereotype of the city and its many inhabitants perpetuated by the author of the pamphlet echoed the same ideology that New York City whites harbored about Blacks who lived in the crowded, growing urban cores, namely, that Blacks as a group were responsible for what white city dwellers characterized as the overall “uncivilization” of the inner city. Though the author of the pamphlet used a broader brush to characterize the entire city instead of a section of it like the white New Yorkers did, the larger point had significant similarities and stereotypes. But in this case, the pamphleteer saw Shiloh as providing a solution to the problem of the city, positioning itself as the good in the spiritual battle of good versus evil in the lives of urban children.

⁴⁷ “Camp Shiloh,” Shiloh pamphlet, ca. 1964. Pub06041 and Pub06042. Shiloh Voices digital scans collection. Baylor University Institute for Oral History, Waco, TX.

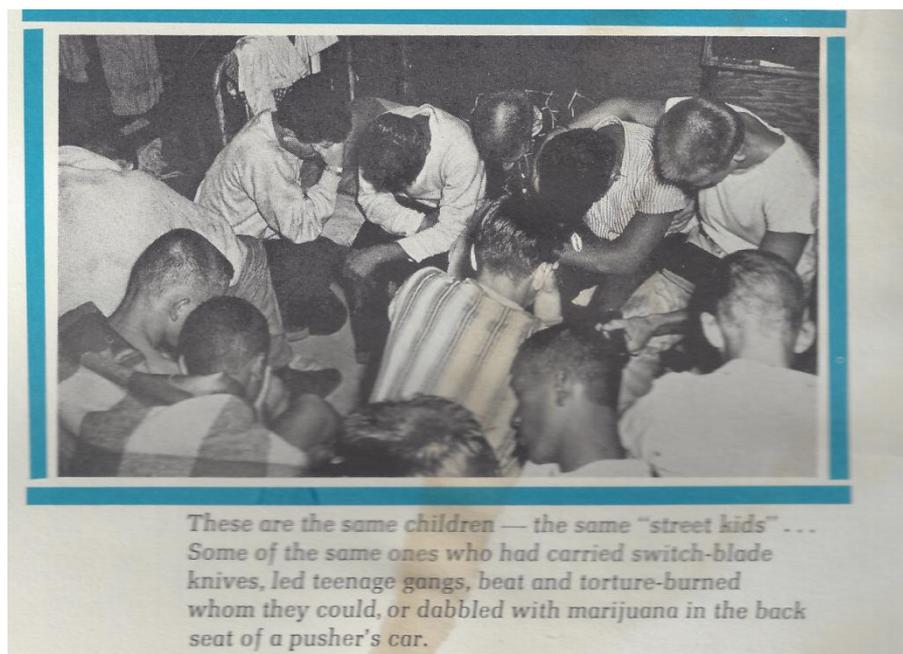


Figure 2.4 The same ca. 1964 pamphlet shows a group of mostly Black young men praying at Shiloh, and the language below the picture suggests that the young men in the image had been violent but does not actually name these particular teenagers as such, thereby forcing those pictured to become the literal embodiment of stereotypical criminality in the city. Pub06041. Shiloh Digital Photos Collection. Baylor University Institute for Oral History,

Those who wrote this pamphlet about Shiloh did not write with the consensus that all Shiloh counselors and leadership had about the city itself, however. Three counselors, John White and Johnny and Polly Adams, each remember loving the city as an exciting place full of adventure and diversity. John White said that Shiloh was a camp that drew counselors to the North who already were more open, counseling types than those who preferred to remain among the more strict, dogmatic members of the Southern churches of Christ. White also implied in his views an association of a lack of harsh dogma with an openness to different people and to different types of people. John White himself embodied an openness to difference: he had come to New York from the South, where he had lived in multiple states as the son of a

churches of Christ preacher who moved often, and he remembered his father having little patience for the racial prejudices of Southern whites. He remembered his father inviting a Black man to sit up front in the first pew next to him. John White continued his father's legacy of challenging racial beliefs of others--when he was a student teacher in Augusta, Arkansas, and talked about integrated schools he had attended in his life, his students thought he was a communist.

White recalled his years as a counselor at Camp Shiloh 1958-1964 as very special, and he said that, thanks to what he characterized as Shiloh founder Clinton Davidson's openness about "racial mixing and cultural mixing," Shiloh was likely the most diverse Christian camp in the country. There were rich white children from New Jersey, middle-class whites who were relatives of the camp leaders and staff, a two-thirds majority of Black children from the urban areas of New York City, and "quite a few Hispanics from the city." John White called this mix of backgrounds at Shiloh "an amazing mixture of kids," and, in contrast to the pamphleteer's notions of New York City, he saw the city at large as being rich with excitement. After his first short experience knocking on doors in Spanish Harlem to recruit campers for Shiloh in the mid 1950s, he said he felt a deep connection to New York. About this initial trip he recalled:

The trip to New York City, I just thought, "This is better than I could have dreamed of. I just love New York City." I went nuts over it, and I dreamed about it. And while I was in Arkansas the next couple of years, I kept thinking, "I would love to get back there sometime."

I loved the variety of racial backgrounds, and the variety of cuisines in the restaurants, and there was an excitement. And I know it sounds odd to people who haven't been there, lived in it, but there was a total lack of provincialism compared to where I'd lived before that was just exciting, exhilarating.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ John White, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry June 16, 2012, Transcript of audio, Baylor

University Institute for Oral History, Waco, TX.

Though the unknown pamphleteer and John White each saw something quite different in the city's diverse identity, both envisioned relational Shiloh as a spiritually safe space, an antidote to difficulties in the lives of individual children and youth who attended Shiloh. The pamphlet once again presented the issue in dramatic and overtly spiritual terms, contrasting Shiloh and the love of God with any experience the city might have to offer:

Here [at Camp Shiloh], the mind can be expanded, love can be experienced...love that has become meaningful for the first time. In this setting, faith in God and man can grow. Life takes on new meaning. Friendships develop. New purpose and self-control are achieved. Christ is exalted and the Golden Rule practiced. Disturbed, distraught, and ill-treated children from the hot city can find release and peace--within and without.⁴⁹

John White also saw Shiloh as a positive force in the lives of children who had difficult lives. He said that there were both poor and middle-class Black children at Shiloh, and in his view the poor children were often troubled and in need of love and support that the counselors at Shiloh were able to provide. He saw young people release their inhibitions and learn to trust the white Southerners who turned out to actually be nice to them, against their own expectations. Over and over again, he said, he saw children soften, gain confidence, develop skills and relationships in ways that surprised and delighted him. Though the contours of his perspective of how Shiloh changed young people may be in some ways similar to the author of the pamphlet, he also can be contrasted with that overall view. He saw the children at camp as owners of their own spirituality. He said:

⁴⁹ "Camp Shiloh," Shiloh pamphlet, ca. 1964. Pub06041 and Pub06042. Shiloh Voices digital scans collection. Baylor University Institute for Oral History, Waco, TX.

And some of the most lovely experiences I've ever had in worship were listening to the prayers of these kids. The straightforward, non-stained glass language that they used, and the intensity of their devotion and praise to God and thanks for the world they were in were just all so rich kind of an experience. So I got to hear a variety from the youngest about eight years old up through the high school kids doing this, and it was—they took it seriously and really got into it every night.

The author of the pamphlet is unknown, but it is not a complete surprise that the written literature about Shiloh during this time would differ from this counselor's recollections. The author of the pamphlet may have been communicating to a Southern audience and appealing to them for funds in language they hypothetically understood, but the author likely also did not spend much time at the camp with the children themselves. Both of these factors are certainly true for the board member beginning in 1966 and editor of the Shiloh newsletter, *Seeking the Lost*, beginning in 1965, Reuel Lemmons.⁵⁰ In a 1968 churches of Christ publication, Lemmons would cast aspersions upon Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the Civil Rights Movement after King's death and claimed that there was no racial prejudice in the churches of Christ.⁵¹ Lemmons had been the editor of the very popular churches of Christ journal, *Firm Foundation*, a churches of Christ publication that had, before the 1968 article, spent no time discussing race.⁵² As a Shiloh spokesperson he both

⁵⁰ For the dates in which Reuel Lemmons began his associations with Shiloh, see *Seeking the Lost*, Vol. 11, no. 2, Aug. 1966, p. 3, Shiloh Voices digital scans collection, Baylor University Institute for Oral History, Pub06019, and "Minutes of Meeting between Operating Committee and Trustees of Camp Shiloh, Inc.," August 4, 1965, Center for Restoration Studies, Abilene Christian University.

⁵¹ Richard T. Hughes, *Reviving the Ancient Faith: The Story of the Churches of Christ in America*, (Abilene: Abilene Christian University Press, 1996), 296

⁵² Hughes, *Reviving the Ancient Faith*, 296.

understood and misunderstood how to communicate the lives of Shiloh campers to the donors in the Southern churches.

A Safe Space: What was Shiloh Like?

Both Ken Noland and John White describe Camp Shiloh in the early to mid-1960s as promoting high levels of camper activity so that kids would be able to use up their considerable energy with positive, supervised behaviors. Shiloh campers spent time in nature--sometimes for the first time--slept under the stars, played games, shot arrows in archery time and played tennis, had theme days, cleaned the camp, participated in swim lessons for everyone, swam after the lessons, ate, rested, participated in Bible study and heard short motivational talks in chapel, performed skits, went on field trips, and sang a lot of group songs.⁵³ Shiloh was interested in making sure that campers poured their energies into camp-sanctioned activities. Ken Noland said:

We did all kinds of things that were exciting for the age group that we dealt with. The older kids, we'd take them on flashlight hikes in the middle of the woods at night, and that's so they could get a taste of holding hands with a girl that they're interested in, but at the same under close supervision. And we'd run those older kids, particularly the boys, so hard during the day that when they hit the bed at night, they were—it was lights out and they were asleep because we ran them to death.⁵⁴

As they had been in the 1950s, Shiloh campers continued to be a diverse group of children. John White remembered significant diversity at camp. The picture of the

⁵³ *Seeking the Lost*, July 1964, p. 3

⁵⁴ Ken Noland, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, August 5, 2013, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

second two-week session of camp in 1964 shows less intensive diversity than White's recollection, so it may be that he recalled a different percentage than the history shows, or it could be that the proportions of diversity that he remembered wasn't as present in this particular session as it was in others. Still, the picture below of the second session of camp in 1964 shows a good number of children of different skin colors sitting, intermixed, together as one large group of campers.⁵⁵

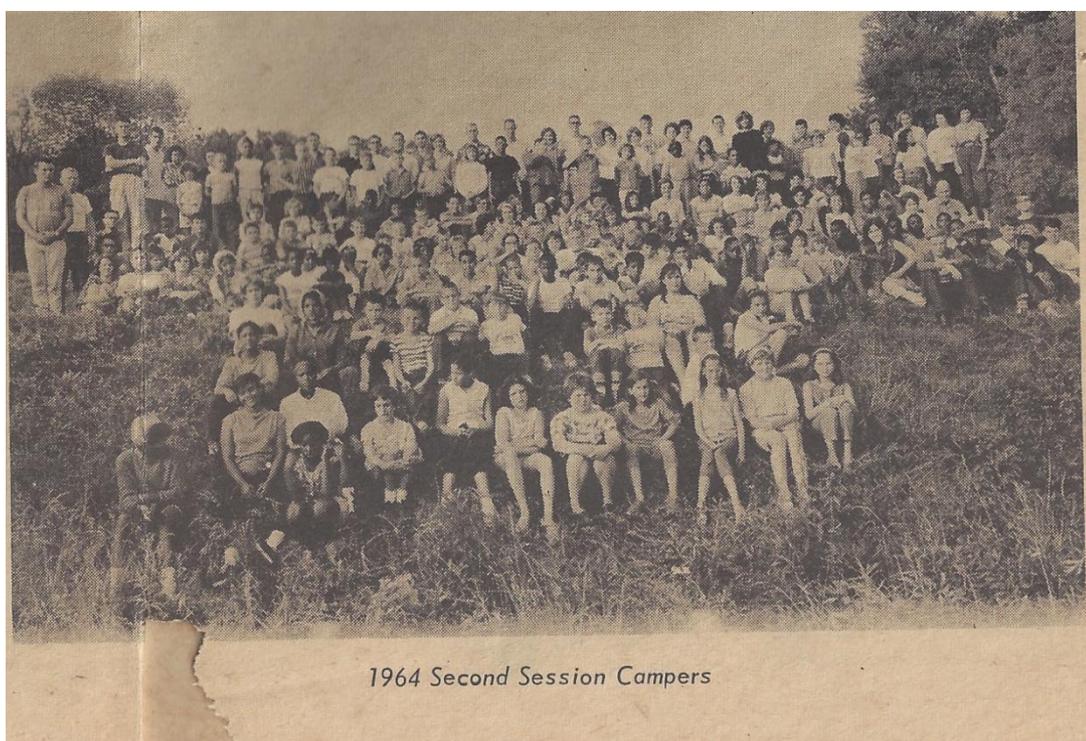


Figure 2.5 Second Session of summer camp at Shiloh in 1964. The image is from the Shiloh publication, Seeking the Lost. Pub06004. Shiloh Voices Digital Photos Collection. Baylor University Institute for Oral History,

Shiloh was a place where Christian virtue and interpersonal kindness were promoted and celebrated. In Shiloh's newsletter, the editor praised two young white

⁵⁵ Seeking the Lost, July 1964, no. 9, p. 2. Shiloh Voices digital scans collection, Baylor University Institute for Oral History. Pub06004.

boys who had become friends, Rickey and Mickey. The two boys were holding hands with and helping guide an older boy who was blind.⁵⁶ A Hungarian boy who was the lone non-English speaker at camp one year was at a disadvantage, but people at camp worked together to show him how things worked and to teach him new words. A deaf boy, who was probably one of the few differently-abled children at camp at that time, leaned up against John White's guitar and felt its vibrations as White played it.⁵⁷

Singing was pervasive at camp, and counselors incorporated religious songs, silly songs, songs praising Camp Shiloh, and folks songs of the era into the routine at camp. One camp director, described as a "straight-arrow" kind of man, did not want camp cabins to "raid" each other because campers could trip and fall at night and hurt themselves; but another year another camp director successfully promoted a "no rule but the Golden Rule" policy, winning over the counselors under his charge to this looser way of interacting with campers.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ *Seeking the Lost*, Vol. 11, No. 2, August, 1966. Shiloh Voices digital scans collection, Baylor University Institute for Oral History, Pub06017.

⁵⁷ John White, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, June 16, 2012, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

⁵⁸ Robert, "Buzzy" Neil, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, August 15, 2012, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History,; John White interview.



Figure 2.6 Two sighted campers, Mickey and Rickey, guide Alex Ross, who is blind. From the Shiloh publication, Seeking the Lost, Pub06017. Shiloh Voices Photo Collection. Baylor University Institute for Oral History, .

A white camper from New Jersey who first came to camp in 1964 called it “Narnia,” in reference to the wondrous land of magic in C.S. Lewis’s books, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, and multiple counselors spoke of it with the same kind of reverence. John White explained that a well-run camp was a great leveler for kids of all classes, since no one wore fancy clothes at camp, and when a child hit a ball well or did some other activity well, no one cared who his or her daddy was. Everyone also took a turn cleaning up and washing dishes.⁵⁹

However, despite the perception of many counselors that Shiloh was a place of equality and virtue, those perspectives were almost always from white Southerners

⁵⁹ John White interview.

and heavily colored by their own racial, religious, and regional contexts. For instance, when Robert “Buzzy” Neil first arrived as a camp counselor in 1964, he says that there were just as many white church kids as there were inner city kids, and yet, near the end of the decade, when he became camp director (1968-1970), the church kids began to dwindle away because the poor kids were so aggressive.⁶⁰ It is likely, too, that counselors were faced with existing problems that camp could not resolve, nor could as a camp create virtue and equality. Several counselors during this period of time mentioned children who lived in poverty, had difficult backgrounds or home lives, and who might have behavioral problems, even significant ones. John White remembered a schizophrenic boy; Buzzy Neil recalls a number of children who had to be removed from their homes by the state, which then paid for the campers to come to Camp Shiloh; and Johnny Adams remembered a boy waiting in line at mealtime who flinched as if he thought Adams was going to hit him when Adams reached up to straighten the glasses on his own face.⁶¹ The State Welfare, the Child Placement Center, the Methodist Mission, and other groups all sent children to Shiloh in 1964, if not additional years in the mid-1960s.⁶²

There were very, very few Black counselors in the 1960s. There were zero Black staff members pictured in the 1964 staff photo of Camp Shiloh as well as the 1966 photo, and there was one Black woman pictured in the 1968 camp counselor and

⁶⁰ Robert “Buzzy” Neil interview

⁶¹ Johnny and Polly Adams, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, January 18, 2013, Transcript of digital Audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

⁶² “Shiloh is a Mission Point,” *Seeking the Lost*, July 1964, no. 9, p. 3, Pht06004.

staff photo.⁶³ In addition to the lack of Black leadership, there were several examples of how the white counselors and staff did things that were tone-deaf towards the systemic oppression of Black people and did not create a safe space for them psychologically. Some of the entertainment portions of the camp were nationalistic and seemed to little recognize the struggles of Black Americans to achieve the same rights and comforts as other fellow citizens in the South, the North, and all across America. On July 4, 1964, Shiloh had a large presentation called “America: The Promise, the Land, the People.” This presentation consisted of speeches, special effects, a flag ceremony, the National Anthem, as well as “patriotic songs to emphasize the noble ideals to which Christian citizens should aspire.”⁶⁴ The written article about the event did not elaborate on the idea of what the “noble ideals” might entail, nor did this activity appear enough as a regular occurrence to be able to fully extrapolate, but the inclusion here of patriotism is a startling reminder of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s 1963 metaphor of the “bad check” that the American nation had written to its Black citizens--“noble ideals” for “Christian citizens” had never been equally offered *to* everyone in America, even in New York, and yet high standards and virtue seemed to be expected *of* everyone, despite the lack of recognition of their limited circumstances. It is not known how many of the campers responded to that particular program. But there were additional programs as well that we can imagine from the perspective of a young Black camper or his or her parents. In the middle of the camp season of 1964, Shiloh incorporated another

⁶³ *Seeking the Lost*, July 1964, no. 9, p. 5; *Seeking the Lost* Vol. 11, no. 2, np; Shiloh summer staff picture, 1968. Pht06007 and Pht06008.

⁶⁴ *Seeking the Lost*, July, 1964, No. 9, p. 4.

“secular” program to entertain and educate the campers. This particular session also incorporated speeches and songs meant to inspire, but the directors of the program intended to show both sides and both perspectives of those who fought in the Civil War, a topic that showed deep insensitivity to the descendants of former enslaved persons.⁶⁵ The nickname of the former estate house in which many of the camp activities were held was the “Big House,” a phrase that originally had plantation enslavement connotations. Although the mansion was not named such in order to recall Southern plantation phraseology, there could have been a better word choice for a camp that hoped to communicate safety and lovingkindness to Black children. In at least one session, after the sun went down, Shiloh leadership burned crosses on the hillside at camp to show children a symbol of the burning love of Jesus.⁶⁶ Although Shiloh’s intent was to communicate love, the symbol was already a deeply negative one, especially during the contemporaneous time period of the 1960s when whites burned crosses as intimidation and hate symbols, even in the North. Though Shiloh leadership did not use the burning crosses as a means to intimidate, it was naive to believe that these symbols would not negatively affect Black campers simply because they lived in the North.

As shortsighted and clumsy as these activities were, Shiloh counselors still viewed Camp Shiloh as an incredibly special and safe place, and as different for them. For a number of them, Shiloh was different than the dry, legalistic Southern churches of Christ where they themselves had spent so much time. Counselors like John White, Buzzy Neil, and Ken Noland dedicated themselves to Shiloh year after year,

⁶⁵ *Seeking the Lost*, July, 1964, Pub06011.

⁶⁶ Robert “Buzzy” Neil interview.

and John White went so far as to call Shiloh his “life.” Polly Adams also contrasted Shiloh with church at home: she spoke of a freedom she felt at Shiloh. One reason for this freedom was because she did not have to wear white gloves and girdles and formal clothing to be in an atmosphere where she could learn more about God like she did attending David Lipscomb College, a churches of Christ college, in Nashville. She also said that, compared to the “sort of” fun of other camps she had experienced and would experience later on, Shiloh was fun “on steroids”. It was joyful all the time, and at Shiloh she experienced a way to make Christianity actually really fun. Plus, it was the job of every counselor to be in the business of liking and loving the kids, a job she enjoyed.⁶⁷ Christianity was fun, service was fun. The specialness of serving others was a consistent theme for these Shiloh counselors.

Southern churches of Christ, like almost every other white church and denomination, were clearly intimidated and disturbed by what they perceived as the unruly behavior of protests on the part of Black Americans during the classic Civil Rights era and into the era of riots and more militant activity. The president of David Lipscomb College in Nashville, Tennessee, Athens Pullius, called Carl Helms, the first African American student to attend the school for a full four years as an undergraduate, into his office in the late 1960s. Pullius began the meeting with, “What are your intentions?” Helms, a quiet, studious scientist interested in physics and chess, had no idea what the meeting was about or what the question meant. He answered not as the stereotypical militant Black leader that Pullius expected him to be, but instead as just what he was: a science student face to face

⁶⁷ Johnny and Polly Adams interview.

with his college president. “Well,” he replied, unsure of the answer he was supposed to give, “I’d like to have more equipment for the science lab.”⁶⁸ In the 1960s and 1970s, Lipscomb viewed itself as a haven of calm in the middle of the chaotic world around it, but this was a slight-of-hand way of ignoring the world, including the Civil Rights Movement, and the issues behind it.⁶⁹ In this way, Pullias and Lipscomb echoed the larger perspectives of Southern white churches of Christ that the Civil Rights Movement was at best disruptive to the peace and at worst communist or anarchic.⁷⁰

In contrast, Shiloh provided not only a safe space for the children and youth who attended camp to play, get to know Southern whites who cared about them, and to experience nature and a time away from the city, but it was also, unintentionally, a safe place for the Southern white counselors to begin to understand, in small, tangible, ways, Black and Brown life, joy, and also the struggles of Black and Brown people to maintain dignity and rights. Those interactions might be as small and intimate as John White learning to cut the hair of many of the young Black children and teens who stayed at camp all summer long--he treasured the moments he got to do that, and he still had the pair of scissors he used for the job.⁷¹ The interactions might be as

⁶⁸ Carl Helms, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, July 24 2012, Transcript of digital audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

⁶⁹ *Backlog*, [David Lipscomb College yearbook] (David Lipscomb College, Nashville: 1977), 7. Carolyn Wilson Digital Collections, David Lipscomb University, <https://archive.org/details/backlog197756davi/page/7/mode/1up?view=theater&ui=embed&wrapper=full&q=nashville>. Accessed April 25, 2023.

⁷⁰ Key, *Race and Restoration*, 110-117.

⁷¹ John White, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry June 16, 2012, Transcript of digital audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History..

large-scale as Johnny and Polly Adams discussing the nearby Newark riots as the children around them mentioned those riots. Johnny and Polly found themselves hoping that society would change for the better for the Black residents of Newark--Johnny and Polly, a psychology major and a sociology major, respectively, found themselves the only two people they knew at Shiloh who wanted to talk about these issues in the same way, and they fell in love after having had those discussions and were married not long after that summer.⁷²

Buzzy Neil was a counselor beginning in 1964, and he was camp director 1968-1970. He remembered young Black campers who were influenced by or who were part of the Black Panthers coming to camp. When these campers arrived at Shiloh, they looked around and announced that they were going to burn the place down. Neil remembered that, not only did they not burn the place down, but that some of them stayed and some of them left. Those who stayed enjoyed themselves in the same way a lot of the other campers did that summer. Tom Wheeler remembered a counselor who saw a young camper wearing an armband of red, green, and black, who asked the camper what it meant. When the camper explained to the counselor that it meant African heritage and freedom, the counselor showed up the next morning with the same colors on his own arm. "It's simply about fairness," was his explanation for the change.⁷³ John White and Tom Wheeler both remember learning songs and dances that the kids brought with them to camp, while the kids

⁷² Johnny and Polly Adams interview.

⁷³ Tom Wheeler, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, August 17, 2012, Transcript of digital audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

learned folk songs that the counselors were interested in.⁷⁴ The white counselors were seeing things, in small glimpses, through the eyes of the campers.

But they did not always see the full picture of how the world was different for themselves versus others. Spirituality was supposed to keep one safe in their eyes. If things like riots, Black Panthers, and the dangers of the city itself were intimidating or intense in the view of white Shiloh workers, they articulated that they were grateful for divine protection and safety in a place like New York. Perhaps they did not have an answer for whether or not God kept Black and Brown people safe there and why or why not. John White's first experience with the city--the experience that had so excited him about New York itself--had been a short but dazzling entree into Spanish Harlem, knocking on doors to recruit for Camp Shiloh before he himself had ever been to camp. He later found out that the area where he drove the counselors to recruit and let them out of his car--110th Street and Park Avenue--at the time was the area with around the highest percentage of junkies in the world. "But," said White, "God spares the fools and the children of the world in special ways, and we never had any problem."⁷⁵ For White, it was God who kept the group safe in a very dangerous part of the city, but it was perhaps difficult for him to perceive and understand what kind of protection was or was not offered to people who lived in vastly different circumstances than he did and who lived outside of a protective white suburban bubble.

Growing out of the psychologically safe space that Shiloh provided for white counselors to get to know Black children and youth, the counselors were able to more

⁷⁴ Tom Wheeler interview, John White interview

⁷⁵ John White interview.

deeply enter into the worlds in which campers lived, often a new awakening for them. Johnny and Polly visited the home of a Black camper whom they had befriended named Jeffrey. Johnny contrasted his own rural Texas home that had no running water with the eight-story tenement building in the Bronx where Jeffrey lived. Jeffrey was gracious to them and wanted to be a good host, and his mother was welcoming and seemed to like them. The camper had made Johnny a lanyard at Camp Shiloh, which Johnny still owned around fifty years later, a gift that Johnny said the child was doing his best to say, "I like you." All of this was a contrast for Johnny to a town in the South where the two would later attend a church of Christ, a town that chose to bulldoze the city swimming pool rather than allow Black children to swim in it with the town's white children.

As Johnny and Polly explored the city and what it meant to be a city dweller like Jeffrey, they were able to enter into a space for exploring issues of racial difference and inequity as well. Polly said:

As I had mentioned, I'm from the Deep South. And so those were stirring issues for me, because I had never been around anybody but people just like me. And that summer I came to understand humanity--the humanity of everybody, and that we're so much alike, even if our color, skin color, is not the same, or our orientation is, you know, different. We have joys and sorrows and cares, and we're a whole lot more alike than we are different, kind of thing. I carried that with me then. . . ⁷⁶

Johnny and Polly Adams also carried that sense of common humanity into their future professional lives. Polly became a licensed social worker with at-risk adolescents and their families, a choice she attributes to the time she spent at Shiloh, and Johnny worked as a social worker then as a family therapist in a state hospital, a private hospital, and a children's' home that he thought felt like Shiloh all year round.

⁷⁶ Johnny and Polly Adams interview.

Ken Noland became a teacher on Long Island, and after Shiloh Buzzy Neil eventually became a principal in an inner-city school in Nashville. John White worked through his church on Long Island to reach out to kids in nearby underserved neighborhoods. Each of these former counselors from the South credit the experience at Shiloh as being the touchstone experience for their future ministry, faith, or even profession. John White remembered a fellow counselor who told him that he wanted to work with Black kids in his future career as a teacher because he had had such a wonderful experience with them at Shiloh, even though he had come from a hometown where he did not interact with them, and Johnny and Polly also remembered a friend who met churches of Christ leaders throughout the South who began outreach programs at their churches because they had worked at Camp Shiloh as counselors when they were young.⁷⁷ Clearly, the time at Camp Shiloh was contact with people who were racially “not like them” so much so that it changed the course of a number of lives, and at least influenced others to reach out more in service activities.

Conclusion

On a small scale, exposure to children and the struggles of their lives on both a personal and systemic scale helped to shift the perspectives of a number of Shiloh counselors who had come to Shiloh only with the intention of relationship and spiritual guidance. The closer they came to the systemic racism of the city itself, the more they were able to view the difficulties of the children’s lives as part of their own spirituality, though it was difficult at this time to enter into the daily lives of Shiloh children. They tended to embrace ministry and profession more than activism, and Shiloh maintained an uneven stance on race because of its overall lack of exposure to

⁷⁷ Johnny and Polly Adams interview, Ken Noland interview, Robert “Buzzy” Neil interview.

the realities of urban life. At times during this period Shiloh was a place of refuge and safety for Black and Brown youth and children, and at times it was a place wherein Black and Brown children were treated not according to their actual lives in the city but according to the white evangelicals' dominant views and lack of understanding.

In the next chapter, a study of auxiliary groups reveal that they, too, underwent shifts as they encountered specific, daily examples of radicalized space, and they moved some evangelicals toward activist stances. A small group of churches of Christ transplants called the Inner-City Faith Corps left Long Island and their churches of Christ home for a period of time to live in the underserved neighborhood of East New York, Brooklyn. Though they were not Shiloh workers, they were in some ways predecessors, or they at least philosophically prefigured Shiloh's later work in the neighborhood of East New York itself. Their spiritual journeys offered glimpses of how some evangelicals changed their thinking about disparity in urban life.

CHAPTER THREE: WEST ISLIP CHURCH OF CHRIST AND FAITH CORPS

The church is primarily interested in the church, in the preservation of itself as an institution. And what Jesus is interested in is what's happening in the world.

-Don Haymes, Inner City Faith Corps worker.¹

Shiloh was not the only churches of Christ enterprise in the area that underwent a sort of religious conversion during the middle-to-late 1960s in terms of its views on race. A small group called the Inner City Faith Corps from West Islip Church of Christ on Long Island entered into New York City to live and work with the underserved people there, and this action deeply affected them and their theology beyond anything they understood about the world from church. This movement of people, first from South to North, then from the suburbs to the neighborhood of East New York, can be seen as a thematically parallel trajectory to Shiloh's. West Islip Church of Christ, having moved to the North to become part of the city itself on Long Island, required new answers and understandings different than the Southern churches of Christ. Further, the group called the Inner City Faith Corps that moved to live in East New York as outreach missionaries from West Islip Church of Christ found that there were deeper, more pressing situations of poverty and inequity that could not be solved with the tools even from West Islip. The Faith Corps workers tried to address problems of health, housing, and equal access in East New York, and found the church ultimately unable to support their view of church and Gospel.

West Islip Church of Christ on Long Island became affiliated with Shiloh in the 1970s, but before that connection with Shiloh happened, the church itself, and

¹ Don Haymes, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, September 18, 2012, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History, Waco, TX.

especially several members of the church who went on a mission outside of the church, also underwent an arc of change. The change followed the by-now-familiar storyline of evangelical missionaries now themselves finding new experiences of city and race through new ways of being exposed to people and systems. The following narrative is not directly associated with a specific nonprofit *per se* nor with Shiloh at this period of time, but several people, because of a mission-beyond-the-Southern church that changed them, made contact with New York City, first as evangelicals ready to transform the hearts of Northerners in the city, then as a small group encountering forms of racial inequity in Brooklyn.

South to North: A New Church Created for the Evangelism of New York

This part of the historical narrative begins away from East New York or Camp Shiloh, this time on Long Island. Walter Maxwell was a Black man in the Long Island neighborhood who became a Christian in the mid-1960s because of the influence of the West Islip Church of Christ. He had come to New York from North Carolina when he was eighteen because his parents couldn't afford to send him to college like they did for his brother, and New York was the next best opportunity for him. He had a high school education and an engaging personality. But once he got to New York where he had few relatives, he got involved in the city life in a way he would later find to be counterproductive. He loved nightclubs. He said that at that time he was "sowing some wild oats hoping for a crop failure": drinking and gambling and other vices he wouldn't mention.²

² Walter Maxwell, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry April 2, 2013, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

The West Islip Church of Christ was founded for just such a purpose as to reach someone like Walter Maxwell. Its preacher, Dwain Evans, had been a student at the churches of Christ college, Abilene Christian College, in Texas. Just after graduation, in 1955, in the middle of the century in which the churches of Christ were at their height in the South, Evans attended a lecture at his alma mater. One of the lecture speakers, who had come down to Texas from work as a missionary in Bangor, Maine, had spoken eloquently about the Northeast of the United States and the great need for faithful Christian [churches of Christ] workers in the Northeast. Where were the churches of Christ in the Northeast? The message stayed with Evans, and a few years later he took action. He wanted nothing more than to see people come to salvation, in a great unreached land, the Northeastern United States. Evans and fellow Abilene Christian College graduate Rod Spaulding soon undertook their mission from the South to the Northeast with this perspective in mind. They were going to organize what they called an exodus. They traveled around the state of Texas and other states recruiting churches of Christ members whom they would ask to sell their homes, uproot their families, and move to Long Island to form an entirely new church together. The original intent of the exodus was to recruit ten families for this relocation to Long Island in order to evangelize others to the churches of Christ. But the mission was compelling to many more than they had originally intended. “It was a unique hour,” Evans says, “It was not long after John F. Kennedy had said, ‘Ask not what your country can do for you, ask what you can do for your country.’”

Ultimately in 1963 there were eighty-six families who moved to Long Island with the Evanses and the Spauldings to form the new church, West Islip Church of Christ.³

The exodus followed the pattern of the white church in that its invitation to be evangelists was predominantly pitched to the white church. But there was one Black woman in this Exodus, a woman named Wondrous Burns. In New York, Burns befriended Walter Maxwell and his wife, and together she and Mrs. Maxwell set to work on getting Walter to change his wild ways. Together they brought him to a service at West Islip Church of Christ to listen to Dwain Evans preach. Maxwell said he felt like the entire service was set up in advance to convince him to become a Christian and change his ways. As he sat in the church building, listening to the plea from the front, he felt his wife and Wondrous Burns elbowing him in the ribs. Dwain Evans asked the audience if there was someone in the room who needed to become a Christian. He came forward, and, even though he argued with Evans about whether or not to commit and become baptized at this moment in his life, he ultimately did. Thanks to his conversion, Walter Maxwell gave up his old habits and committed fully. He became a churches of Christ preacher, leading one of the first Black churches of Christ on Long Island, and he and his wife adopted several children together. The church expanded to include both an English- and a Spanish-speaking service, but Walter Maxwell was always cognizant of the historical and ongoing breach between the white churches of Christ and the Black churches of Christ.⁴

³ Dwain Evans, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, January 23, 2013, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

⁴ Walter Maxwell interview.

Maxwell's story was a confirmation of the evangelical belief that a religious conversion experience can and should lead to positive behavioral changes and propel a person forward to a good life with church and God at the center. This belief was a key element in evangelical approaches to thinking about residents of the city, in the same way they had done in the rural and suburban South. Maxwell himself accompanied several West Islip members on a preaching trip to Brownsville in Brooklyn for street preaching outreach to Brownsville residents.⁵ In one such outing, preacher Warren Lewis looked around him at empty, burned-out buildings and told people listening on the street that his own heart had once been that empty before he accepted Jesus. This was clearly an invitation for them to change by offering an analogy from Brownsville surroundings as a "before" scenario with a personal relationship to Christ as the ultimate solution to empty feelings in life. The results of this preaching foray into Brownsville were so successful in the eyes of the white evangelicals that they began to formulate plans for doing more work there.⁶ Warren Lewis's words were, the church felt, good news. Yet the group had traveled from the comfortable suburbs of Long Island along roads that all taxpayers, Black and white, had paid for, within a system that excluded Brownsville residents, and had come with a spiritual proposition for those Brownsville residents, one that promised a better life if the citizens underwent a spiritual conversion. They used Brownsville's own damaged housing infrastructure as an example of life without Jesus. Illogically

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Freda Elliott Baker, "The Inner City Faith Corps: An Oral History," in *Restoring the First-Century Church in the Twenty-first Century: Essays on the Stone-Campbell Restoration Movement*, Warren Lewis and Hans Rollmann, eds. (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2005), 478.

and insultingly, Lewis and the West Islip group presented personal conversion to their faith perspective as a direct answer to the systemic inequality of which they themselves were the beneficiaries.

That same year preacher Dwain Evans wrote an article about the city in the churches of Christ journal, *20th Century Christian*, that helped to explain the purpose of Christianity's important relationship to the city as he was beginning to see it. His cited credentials for writing the article were that he was the "minister of the Exodus/Bay Shore church located in the heavily populated northeastern United States," a reference that continued the churches of Christ's portrayal of the region as a monolithic, crowded entity with few churches of Christ present. The article was entitled "The Perils of the City," and in it, Evans described the city as a place with problems that must be solved by Christ. One of the problems in the city, according to Evans, was other denominations besides the churches of Christ who were trying to reach people in the city with a false gospel. The second was what he felt to be the most challenging of all the city's problems, secularism, which Evans rebuked in the name of Jesus and said, "Like a giant octopus this secularism surrounds us and overwhelms us with her ever-present tentacles." And finally, racism, a problem that Evans said, because city dwellers perceived Christianity to be unable to solve the problem of racism, caused those city dwellers to turn instead to Islam (Evans almost surely referred to Black Muslims), something Evans found deeply disturbing. Evans believed that Christianity, despite its heretofore inability to solve the problem of racism, was the answer for the city, and he took the larger churches of Christ to task for failing to solve the problem of overall racism in the world and the city when he said, "There is something tragically wrong when we send missionaries to seventy

nations and some of us refuse to worship with Negroes in our own communities. Christian love and concern will heal the racial wounds and invade the strongholds of race hatred with the message of Christ's peace. We must not falter to reach men of every race in the inner city." Evans said that the conventional methods of traditional evangelism and building of churches would not work in the city and cited instead a street meeting in the Bronx in which he witnessed a young woman talk about how her life had been transformed by Christ.⁷ Tears streamed down his face as he listened to her story.⁸ Though he viewed the city as a whole, Evans portrayed the solution to the city's problems as spiritual and on an individual level, and they were problems that individual relationships with Jesus, one by one, could solve, without racial prejudice before, during, or after any conversion experience. He also implied that the church should be present in an urban setting to alleviate social ills. The underlying message was that the white church had failed in this regard. Like Clinton Davidson before him, he viewed the practice of intentionally segregating worship, something still prevalent in the Southern churches of Christ, as wrong. And so Evans's three-pronged approach in the article was to change the preaching method to match the needs of the city, make churches more racially inclusive, and reach out to the city as Christians with love to offer urban dwellers.

The article was included in a special issue of the churches of Christ magazine that focused on the city and how the church should pay attention to the city. At the time he wrote this article, Dwain Evans and some at the West Islip Church of Christ were

⁷ This street meeting was through a visit to the Pentecostal ministry called Teen Challenge.

⁸ Dwain Evans, "The Perils of the City," *Twentieth Century Christian*, March 1966, 9-10, 42. Center for Restoration Studies, Abilene Christian University.

beginning a small religious metamorphosis in which they partially shifted from one outreach emphasis to another. They had moved north, and the original purpose was fading. The initial exodus mission impulse was so powerful in the beginning that eighty-six families uprooted their lives and moved across the country, and so persistent were they in their evangelizing door to door in the beginning and in teaching classes about the churches of Christ that they baptized 175 people in the first year of their arrival in New York, and one woman said she joined the church “so that the classes would end.”⁹ But in Dwain Evans later looked back on this time, he saw a change in the mission focus:

The tide at West Islip began to turn, so that we were no longer evangelistic-only oriented. . . There became an almost distaste for evangelism. We became involved in social activism. We were among those who pled for the first open housing legislation in a township in the United States. . . Back in the 60s real-estate agents could discriminate against African Americans. It was mainly African Americans. And refuse to show them listings that they had. So when you pass an open housing ordinance, it’s making that illegal. It means that any real-estate agent who does that could be prosecuted.¹⁰

Dwain Evans’s shift from intense evangelism to an activism that opposed systemic racism came after he heard the news of Civil Rights Movement in the South.¹¹ He was also aware of urban life more than he had been before in part because of his relationship with an irascible church member named Don Haymes.

⁹ Don Haymes, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, September 16, 2012 interview No. 1, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

¹⁰ Dwain Evans interview.

¹¹ Dwain Evans, “A Memoir,” in *Restoring the First-Century Church in the Twenty-first Century. Essays on the Stone-Campbell Restoration Movement*, Eds. Warren Lewis and Hans Rollman, (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock: 2005), 457.

Don Haymes was among the first members of the West Islip church to speak about a more permanent outreach to the city.

West Islip Church of Christ's Inner City Faith Corps

Don Haymes saw West Islip as being physically near the heart of the city where he felt the need for outreach. He and a few others came up with a new concept based on the church's original forays into Brownsville. This new enterprise from West Islip Church of Christ in the urban core of New York City would be a full-time mission in which a handful of young members of the church would move into East New York tenement apartments beginning in 1966—East New York was Brownsville's neighbor—and live there full time as a mission group. After all, wasn't Brooklyn just as foreign a mission field as Canada, where the church was sending missionaries? The concept of such a new and strange mission was not an immediate success at West Islip. Some in the church questioned Haymes about his decision to work with "Negroes" in the project. Others questioned the capacity in which he would work, because the proposed enterprise seemed more service-oriented than soul-winning. The questions and pressure continued to such a pitch at the church that Haymes gave the elders and the missions committee of the church a formal response to these issues and also on their questions about his own theological stances.¹²

Haymes appears to have written an initial reply to the elders and the committee shortly before that formal inquiry. In that written response, Haymes

¹² Freda Elliott Baker, "The Inner City Faith Corps: An Oral History," in *Restoring the First-Century Church in the Twenty-first Century: Essays on the Stone-Campbell Restoration Movement*, Eds. Warren Lewis and Hans Rollman, (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock: 2005), 479-481.

admitted that he and the other small group of workers who were planning to live in the city had no real preparation for living and working there, nor did they have much understanding of what that mission would entail for them. In this admission, he revealed how little the churches of Christ itself had thought about urban life, even how to comprehend the simple fact that urban life existed. Haymes knew that moving into a new undertaking the members of the group would be stretched and that their faith would also be stretched. It was not something he felt he was qualified for. He felt that he himself probably had more “influence” with academics in a university setting than with “Negroes in Brownsville.” But despite all of this, he wrote, he was compelled to go to Brooklyn because “the love of Christ leaves me no choice. My own sense of salvation compels me to be a witness in the streets. I can’t avoid this; the gospel demands that I take it seriously and personally.”¹³ So it was his understanding that the spiritual call applied to urban areas in the heart of Brooklyn as well as to neighbors on Long Island.

In a larger report to the elders and missions committee of the church, the full group that was ready to go into the city came together and wrote similarly about the lack of understanding of the city that they currently possessed, and how that lack of knowledge would be compensated for by a reliance on the existing principles of gospel faith: “We approach this work with fear and trembling,” they wrote. “We don’t have too many answers. Our ideas are ‘new,’ (although many are as old as the

¹³ Don Haymes, “To the Elders and Missions Committee of West Islip church,” ca. April 1965, West Islip Church of Christ materials, Box 6, Camp Shiloh Inner City Syllabus. Center for Restoration Studies, Abilene Christian University.

first century), and they have yet to be given trial in our time.”¹⁴ They felt that the eternal reach of the New Testament principles they believed in would stretch across time into the work they would be doing, whatever that work might be.

Churches of Christ evangelicals’ orientation in life and faith had been entirely rural and suburban, and this mission, a work that participants called the Inner City Faith Corps, was decidedly urban. They read a curriculum in preparation for their move in order to orient them to the city, and it was comprised of writings from social workers in the city, meditations on compassion, discussions of the neglect that Black New Yorkers experienced in the city, contemporaneous talks that attempted to push the church toward outreach to the city, acknowledgments of white flight, and other writings. Their leader in the preparation process, Warren Lewis, was very insistent on their examining the readings closely. In some places in the readings the view of the city was a place that whites had abandoned, in others it was a place the church had abandoned. It was at times presented as a place of dereliction, desperation, and want, where the human search for meaning was at its most intense because the church had neglected it, and where drunkards and businessmen alike yearned for the gospel of Jesus, although they did not know that they did so. Faith Corps workers saw their mission as one of somehow--though they did not yet understand how--bringing the gospel of Jesus to people in great need of it.¹⁵

¹⁴ “Project streetLight/New York City: A Report to the Elders and Missions Committee of the West Islip Church,” 29 November 1965, West Islip Church of Christ materials, Box 6, Camp Shiloh Inner City Syllabus. Center for Restoration Studies, Abilene Christian University.

¹⁵ West Islip Church of Christ materials, Box 6, Camp Shiloh Inner City Syllabus. Center for Restoration Studies, Abilene Christian University.

Although they had envisioned one hundred people going and had tried to recruit people for an interracial mission group, in the end only ten white people, both males and females, moved into a few apartments on Williams Avenue on the border between East New York and Brownsville in the summer of 1966.¹⁶ The group later stumbled upon words written on the wall of the local laundromat that verified for them what they saw as the glorious impossibility of their venture ahead:

Black is beautiful.

Brown is cool.

Yellow is mellow.

*White is shit.*¹⁷

The Inner City Faith Corps did not have to wait long before they would have to decide how to act out of their religious intentions within a situation that was both intense and wholly new to them. Not long after they moved in, a feud between two neighborhood families erupted into violence a block from where the Faith Corps team lived. As a result of the initial sparks of anger and violence, rival gangs of Black and Puerto Rican teenagers in the neighborhood fought against each other with pipes, Molotov cocktails, chains, trashcan lids, and other improvised weapons in a large-scale battle that ranged throughout the streets and lasted for several days.¹⁸

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Freda Baker, "The Inner City Faith Corps," 484.

¹⁸ Freda Baker, 486.

The Faith Corps workers decided that they would walk the streets as the warfare continued, and that this was an important moment to prove their goodwill to the neighbors. Having physically left the geography of the church and entered into a new awareness of the racialized space that existed all around them, they still performed actions that they knew as white church members, but they did them in a new context and a new way--for the days that the violence lasted, they walked the streets praying, they took injured people to the hospital, they pleaded with the warring parties to enact peace. They bore witness, at least within the neighborhood and to themselves, to the brutality that some of the police inflicted while the police were trying to keep the neighborhood under control. On one occasion they stopped a teenager from hurting a police officer in an act of retaliation.¹⁹ And perhaps it was humbling to their faith perspective to realize that there were already a few Catholic priests who were working to restore peace among the two fighting groups who helped broker a peace treaty among them, but they proclaimed themselves willing to cooperate with anyone, especially anyone of faith, who was working on behalf of peace and goodwill in the neighborhood.²⁰

After this time, in thinking through what they would do on a day-to-day basis while living in the neighborhood during the year, the Faith Corps group formed a tactic that differed from their lives at the church. Don Haymes gave them a phrase for the group to follow, "Demonstration Precedes Proclamation": they would show

¹⁹ Freda Baker, 486-489.

²⁰ Warren Lewis, "Report: New York City Faith Corps," July 22, 1966. West Islip Church of Christ materials, Box 6, Camp Shiloh Inner City Syllabus. Center for Restoration Studies, Abilene Christian University.

God through good actions instead of speaking about religion. They would not even bring up God unless someone specifically asked them about their beliefs.²¹ Though they conducted a Bible study with several neighborhood people, they saw the “demonstration” of God as being about good deeds that helped people and formed relationships within the community, and they were significantly altering the outreach modality that put baptism as the most immediate need. West Islip Church of Christ felt that the group was not placing enough emphasis on baptisms, but they continued to operate under Haymes’s dictum.

Living in the city on a day-to-day basis and interacting with the residents nearby, the group discovered many new aspects of what it was like for their neighbors to live there. They found that systemic inequities and oppression impacted the very spaces in which apartments existed. The neighborhood was in a food desert, with no grocery stores nearby except one that charged overly high prices for bad meat and wilted produce. Very few people owned cars to drive and find any other food options. There was a “Biblical-sized plague” of roaches in their apartments, there were physicians at the hospital who didn’t give good care to poor people, there were many examples of ill health around them, and there was a general lack of concern from landlords about housing conditions, including proper heating in the cold of winter.²² They were beginning to witness firsthand some of the practical implications on the material landscape that racial oppression had wrought.

²¹ Freda Baker, 489.

²² Freda Baker, 489-497.

Although several of the group left after a few months living in the area, five of them remained for a year, and their “Demonstration Precedes Proclamation” work over time was to provide practical, emotional, and spiritual care for their neighbors as best they could within the circumstances of the neighborhood. One woman, Vickie St. John, was a nurse working for the Visiting Nursing Association, and she gave health care to those of her neighbors who needed it, but she found a level of ill health in the neighborhood that significantly distressed her. Freda Baker, who owned a car, used her vehicle once for the most essential of tasks: she rushed a pregnant woman to the hospital as the woman was nearing time to give birth. The Faith Corps workers formed a club with several of the many neighborhood children and were often trailed by an entourage of kids who spent hours in their apartments. The group started a food co-op to help with food inequities, but the co-op did not last long because the participants always seemed to be in crisis situations and they were unable to maintain it. Faith Corps members visited neighbors, cooked for them, and made friends.²³

Don Haymes recalled that there came a period of time in which he felt he wished to stay in East New York and continue to work, but that West Islip Church of Christ was no longer interested in funding him as a member of Faith Corps. Some elders of the church had warned him not to continue to ask for church support for housing rehabilitation at the church service of an Anglican church in Flatbush, but Haymes continued to do so. He also had to tell the rehabilitation planning committee that he served on at the time that West Islip Church of Christ had made no offers to support housing rehabilitation work with either presence nor funding. “They weren’t very enthused about supporting housing,” he said. “They were going

²³ Freda Baker; Don Haymes interview September 16, 2012, second interview.

to play with the children [Faith Corps often brought children from Brooklyn to the church service on Long Island], but they didn't want to provide them a decent room for them to occupy.” As for the Anglicans to whom he made a presentation about housing, they asked him if they would be able to “teach the faith” in this enterprise, and Haymes replied that he didn't care what they did, as long as they showed up and provided a presence in the planning efforts for housing. He recalled that, “None of them, Black or white, wanted to be where I was or have anyone there as a representative of The Faith, capital T, capital F.”²⁴

Don Haymes and Carolyn Cunningham outstayed West Islip's financial support for the group, and the two of them found jobs with the New York Housing Authority's emergency repair program called “Project RESCU,” [Repair Emergency Services Coming Up] a city program that provided emergency housing repairs and sent the repair bill to landlords. The project employed local residents as both inspectors and repair crews.²⁵ Cunningham said of the work with Project RESCU, “It was some of the best work I did with Faith Corps, because it fulfilled a real need.”²⁶ Carolyn Cunningham had seen firsthand that there were significant needs in the city that needed to be addressed on a large scale, and she viewed her spiritual work as attempting to meet that need.

Freda Baker, one of the Faith Corps workers, remembered her relationships with the children of East New York as some of the most significant ones she had

²⁴ Don Haymes interview, September 16, 2012, second interview.

²⁵ Walter Thabit, 66.

²⁶ Freda Baker, 491-496.

made there and the relationships themselves as signs of goodwill on behalf of the gospel given to the community. When she became pregnant with her first child, she had been so accustomed to seeing the faces of Black children around her that she automatically pictured her own unborn child as having Black or Brown skin. She maintained relationships with some of the children and saw them twenty years later as adults.²⁷

Don Haymes and Betty Haymes in East New York

But Don Haymes pushed back against the concept of relationship as the sole indicator of white Christians preaching and living the gospel message in the city. Though the other Faith Corps workers had come into contact with systemic inequality in many of its forms in East New York--housing, food inequality, lack of resources--Haymes felt that, even more than relationship, and even more than knowing about systemic issues by seeing them, the situation in East New York required a true commitment to solving systemic problems. He would speak later to Shiloh workers who wanted to live in the city, and in standing before them, he would assume the role of someone in the neighborhood speaking to them and articulating what he saw as what Black and Brown urban dwellers were saying to white Christians who were coming to help:

Talk seriously about what this is. "I don't need you to love me. I need you to provide serious assistance to me out of things that you know, to bring me things I don't have, to bring me resources I can't get my hands on. I don't need you to love me. I got a momma. My momma loves me. Don't think for one minute that my momma doesn't love me as much as your momma loves you. Don't

²⁷ Freda Baker, 498-499.

come here with the idea that you bringing me something I don't have. You bring me something that I really don't have that I need, that I really need.²⁸



Figure 3.1 Don Haymes and his son, Malcolm, with a picture of Malcolm Haymes's namesake, Malcolm X, on the wall behind them. Ca. 1970. Pht08010. Shiloh Voices Digital Photo collection. Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

Don Haymes stayed in Brooklyn until 1971, working for Project RESCU and living in local apartment housing. Haymes's experiences of living in a place plagued by systemic inequality informed and shifted his spiritual perspective. He

²⁸ Don Haymes, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, September 18, 2012, Transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History, Waco, TX.

found that both he and the few Catholic priests who were doing mission work in the area all had more in common with each other than with their own respective churches back home, because “we were there. It was being there. It was presence.”²⁹ His presence led him to observe neighborhood Puerto Rican families working ten, twelve, or sixteen hours a day at corner stores to save up money in order to go back to Puerto Rico, and he observed Black families from the Carolinas who, alternatively, “had got the hell out of there, and they were never going back.”³⁰ Presence was akin to witness.

Presence for Don Haymes also meant committing to the neighborhood fully as a commitment to changing the dynamic of wealth inequality. He argued with other white people that being a white Christian in a neighborhood like East New York meant bringing up children there, whereas other white churchgoers felt that bringing up a child in a neighborhood like East New York was too much to ask of the white child. “That is the way things change in the world,” Haymes said, “They don’t change from the outside, they change from the inside. Human beings are going to change upwardly, not downwardly. It’s not going to trickle down. The wealth never trickles down. It just never does.”

He saw for himself the size of wealth as it stood up starkly against inequality in the neighborhood. Once it came in the form of a landlord who owned a large real estate company that had bought out hundreds of two-family homes, inaccurately viewed by the government as owner-occupied, and who rented them out to Welfare

²⁹ Don Haymes, September 16, 2012, first interview.

³⁰ Don Haymes interview, September 16, 2012, second interview.

families and left the families with significant structural problems and no heat in their homes. When Haymes charged him for repairs, the landlord said he'd lost all his money and asked Haymes to help him out, but he drove around with a chauffeur in a Lincoln town car, and Haymes knew that the landlord had made his choices at the expense of poor people.³¹ Taking advantage of poor residents was common in East New York.³²

Don Haymes lived and worked in East New York during several years of struggle and change in the neighborhood. In 1966 after two large-scale riots occurred, the city government, under the banner of the federal government's Great Society program, hired an advocacy planner to work with the local community in order to build affordable housing and infrastructure in the neighborhood according to residents' own plans and wishes. Though the advocacy planning was helpful and made gains in the neighborhood, there was often disappointment because of continued systemic inequalities and plans that implementers did not fulfill. At that time there were very few parks and playgrounds, churches, places for children in public school classrooms, day care centers, stable community organizations, public libraries, hospitals, or other services for residents, and once the riots occurred, the neighborhood then shifted to almost completely Black and Brown poor and often transient residents.³³ Banks had redlined the neighborhood in the early 1960s, and it was now made up of people with

³¹ Don Haymes interview, September 16, 2012, second interview.

³² Walter Thabit, *How East New York Became a Ghetto*, (New York: New York University Press, 2003), 45.

³³ Thabit, *East New York*, 9-54.

no place else to go, and landlords who took advantage of residents and made no effort at upkeep, so the housing infrastructure, already in terrible shape, began to deteriorate even more.³⁴ The FHA knowingly valued buildings for more than they were worth, poor families moved into derelict buildings and defaulted on their exorbitant payments, and the city foreclosed on the buildings, making the rich richer and the poor left with fewer options, and also leaving the neighborhood replete with empty, uninhabitable buildings and empty lots where buildings once stood. There were endless cycles of corruption and lack of progress at the expense of the poor.

Haymes was hesitant to tell specific stories about his work in East New York. He called them his “war stories,” and referred instead to a book called *How East New York Became a Ghetto*, which described tenant and landlord relations as highly contentious and full of anger on both sides. The book also characterizes Project RESCU as one of the few promising enterprises in East New York, and therefore doomed to be discontinued by the government because it showed that intervention was actually possible.³⁵ It describes a neighborhood that met and discussed and organized again and again with the advocacy planner and on their own to attempt to control their own fate through housing and schools, but also a neighborhood that was ground down again and again by uncaring federal and city bureaucracy, real estate corruption and greed, factions, and inaction from existing power structures, both local and citywide. Haymes did tell a few stories of his time in the city, and he prefaced them with his desire to see the neighborhood change for the better:

³⁴ Thabit, 46, 64.

³⁵ Thabit, 69.

I wanted to see change. I wanted to see change on a large scale. I wanted to see change on whatever scale could be made, however it could be made, by whatever means. And you try a lot of things because you have to work with what you have and do the best you can with it.³⁶

Haymes's work itself was within the community to help provide the residents with essential services, but he quickly found that it was not easy to do so. The residents of East New York wanted change, as did he. Haymes told one story of his frustration that led to "whatever means" he could apply to receive better services for the residents of East New York. In this instance, a local daycare center asked him to advocate for them to a community anti-poverty program. The day-care center received its payment from a larger anti-poverty program that was supposed to fund it, and the anti-poverty office continued to send him back and forth from group to group, office to office, to get the check to pay the day-care employees. From Haymes's perspective, this was yet another incident in the ongoing struggle with people who cared more about the smallness of their jobs than the real issues that existed in the troubled neighborhood. To move the situation forward, he gathered children together and brought them to one anti-poverty office to show the administrators the faces of those whose lives they were affecting with their indifference. When the officials continued to try to put him off, he told them he had matches in his pocket, his "two-cent urban renewal kit," and he was going to burn down the building one office at a time, starting with the filing cabinet in front of him.³⁷ Though his actions now sound dramatic and even outlandish, they came from a place of deep frustration with the never-ending cycle of promises that raised the hopes of the community and then dashed them. He did get the check on that occasion, but it was a small part of a

³⁶ Don Haymes interview, September 16, 2012, second interview.

³⁷ Don Haymes interview, September 16, 2012, second interview.

bigger picture that required intense determination and in the end offered little opportunity for significant structural change.

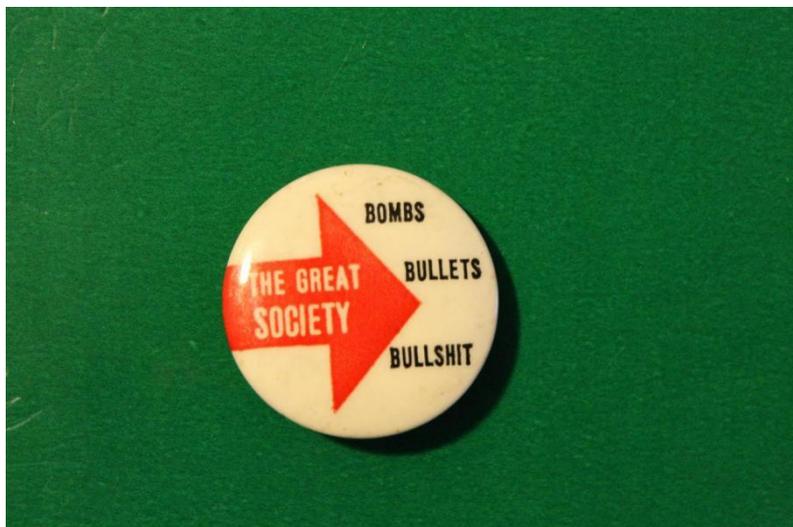


Figure 3.2 A pin belonging to Don Haymes and his wife, Betty Haymes, articulating frustrations with Lyndon Johnson's Great Society as it was actually implemented in East New York. Ca. 1967. Eph08005. Shiloh Voices Digital Scans Collection, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

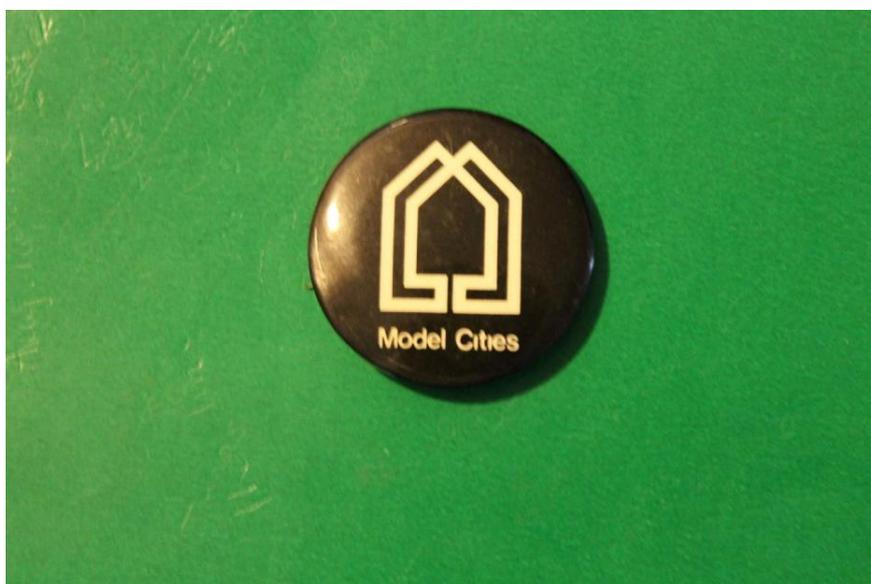


Figure 3.3 A pin belonging to Don and Betty Haymes, with the logo of the Model Cities program on it. The Model Cities program was part of the Great Society and was operating in East New York at the time that the Haymeses lived and worked there. Ca. 1967. Eph08007. Shiloh Voices Digital Scans collection. Baylor University Institute for Oral History,

Don Haymes married during his time in East New York, to a woman named Betty Hollis, who joined him in Brooklyn and taught English in the local public high school, Thomas Jefferson High School. Just as Don found himself in housing, an aspect of East New York life that was of critical concern to residents, so, too, did Betty find herself a part of a very significant community struggle for self-determination through the New York public school system. Education, like housing, was a constant concern for the community of East New York. The residents of the Ocean Hill-Brownsville school district of New York City wanted more control of the curriculum and decisions made in the schools. As their struggle continued throughout the 1960s, the United Federation of Teachers, which was the teachers' union, went on strike to keep their own control of the school system. The Ocean Hill-Brownsville school strike of 1968 was a deeply contentious, lengthy ordeal that had ugly, explicitly racial aspects toward the Black and Brown community as well as toward the predominantly Jewish teachers' union whom the community felt was neglecting student learning in the local Black and Brown neighborhoods. Betty Haymes crossed the teachers' picket line and taught at Thomas Jefferson High School during the strike to show solidarity with the students and their parents, positioning herself as Don had done as an advocate for community self-determination.³⁸

³⁸ Don Haymes interview, Sept. 18. 2012.



Figure 3.4 A pin belonging to Betty Haymes, indicating her support for community control of public education in East New York and Ocean-Hill Brownsville. Ca. 1968. Shiloh Voices Digital Photo Collection. Baylor University Institute for Oral History.



Figure 3.5 A second pin belonging to Betty Haymes indicating her support of community control of the New York City Public City schools in 1968, and her decision not to go on strike at Thomas Jefferson High School. Eph08004. Shiloh Voices digital scans collection, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

During this timeframe, the community of East New York pushed again and again for self-determination and change. Don and Betty Haymes saw themselves as

aligned with the community's goals, especially in the areas of housing and education, and worked with the community to achieve those goals as best they could. Working *with* the community was an important distinction for Don Haymes. When asked if the community members supported what he was doing, he replied:

Community members support what I was doing? I had some community members working with me every day, and we did things together. They weren't supporting what I was doing; I was supporting what they were doing, and they were supporting what I was doing. Do you see, because we were doing it how? Together. I wasn't doing it to anybody or for anybody--doing it with people.³⁹

In aligning himself with the community and their specific struggles for basic services, Haymes was able to see, as the community members themselves saw or felt, the forces that aligned against them in their efforts. This was another form of witness for Haymes, one that shaped his spiritual worldview. He characterized those forces at work in East New York in spiritual terms as forces that always operate across the earth: "The way the various powers of the earth worked in that place, the *excousia* [authority or power] and the *stiocheia*, the elemental spirits of the universe and how they work in the world."⁴⁰ The cynicism of seeing only small victories in the face of enormous odds was, for Haymes in this time and place, a spiritual cynicism that came from truly recognizing the world as it worked for poor people. The elemental spirits of the world always worked to build up the powerful and destroy the less powerful.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid



Figure 3.6 Staircase in tenement housing in East New York, ca. 1971. Pht02057. Shiloh Voices photograph collection, Baylor University Institute for Oral History,



Figure 3.7 Tenement housing in East New York, ca. 1971, with structural issues. Pht02018. Shiloh Voices Digital Photo Collection, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

The Haymeses left East New York in 1971, four and a half years after Don Haymes had first moved to the city with Faith Corps. Though both he and Dwain Evans of the West Islip Church of Christ were already different than the mainstream Southern churches of Christ or traditional evangelicals in their willingness to spiritually innovate and to connect with new kinds of people, they still were both impacted by brand-new understandings of racial inequities that changed them. Don Haymes, especially, because he entered into work by which he attempted to change

systemic inequality, was affected by the existence of systemic inequality, so much so that it impacted the way he viewed his spirituality and his world. The experience of living and working in East New York showed Haymes a broader spiritual landscape. Forces of *authority* and *elemental power* not only worked in and around the world that he came from, but they worked in East New York, as he had seen firsthand. Perhaps they troubled East New York even more than they troubled the American South where he had been raised, or Long Island, where his church home of West Islip was. The physical landscape, the new understanding of racialized space, informed his view of what was most fundamental about the spiritual world.

Conclusion

Dwain Evans, Faith Corps members, and Don and Betty Haymes demonstrated willingness, on various levels, to let the surrounding culture instruct them. They moved into new understandings of the city itself. But Dwain Evans, though operating in an innovative way in a new setting, still found difficulty in perceiving the city's problems as systemic. Indeed, there were times that the Faith Corps workers and the Haymeses may not have had a choice but to see systemic inequities and oppression because the surroundings and the circumstances were so overwhelmingly significant and were pushing against *them* as they worked in the city. Faith Corps workers saw the racialized housing crisis before their eyes and lived in an area often characterized as distressed or blighted. The change of view was particularly meaningful as Don and Betty Haymes reevaluated their understanding of life--now including urban life--in light of racialization of space and resources in East New York. Because they were, much more than West Islip Church of Christ, out of their initial white, Southern worlds, and since they were operating far beyond the church walls,

the Haymeses could not help but understand things anew. Once they were in Brooklyn, they saw that in East New York, things operated systemically in a way that they had not perceived before, and trying to move even small part of that system in a different direction was frustrating and eye-opening. Their solidarity with the community's goals gave them new understanding of life in general and how it must be different for those who lived in skin colors and geographies different than their own.

Even West Islip Church of Christ and other nearby churches were unable to fully embrace the daily, difficult work that Don Haymes was a part of in housing work. The church members Don spoke of viewed his work from within their own church framework and often could not envision the work in the city or wished it involved more baptisms. Eventually, though Don Haymes would let Shiloh workers know that the community needed practical help more than relational support, a subsequent generation of Shiloh workers would soon follow in the Haymeses footsteps and discover new aspects of churches of Christ relationships with the residents of East New York and Brownsville in ways they had not expected nor encountered before. Some of them would connect with West Islip Church of Christ or other churches, and they would find new, intense ways of understanding the city beyond the church's view of life.

CHAPTER FOUR: SHILOH IN THE 1970S, PART 1

Let's say you read about a ghetto and you think, "Oh, that's terrible!" But I don't think that anymore. -Jo Ogle, Shiloh year-round program, East New York, 1968-1975.

Beginning in 1967 and moving through the early 1980s, Shiloh had a program that brought year-long staff, usually white churches of Christ college-aged young people or recent college graduates, to live in a number of neighborhoods in and around New York City, alongside the children with whom they were working and whom they were sending to camp in the summertime. The Shiloh program in the 1970s was Eddie Grindley's and East Side Church of Christ's year-round "follow-up" programmatically fulfilled and actualized on a scale that had not existed before in Shiloh. As a result of their daily interactions with the material inequities of the underserved city neighborhoods and relationships that connected them with the playful resilience of city children, Shiloh year-round program participants underwent similar experiences and transformations as the Inner-City Faith Corps that came out of West Islip Church of Christ. They viewed the spiritual world anew because of their day-to-day interactions with both the city and its youthful residents. Though the Classic Civil Rights Movement around them in their suburban homes had had an impact on many of the workers who went to Shiloh full time in the 1970s, it was even more the lived experiences of housing crises and neighborhood children that impacted them the most and helped them to see that God lived in the city alongside Black and Brown residents. These concepts moved them past what they had learned in their churches growing up.

Focusing on relationships with children in underserved neighborhoods, the Shiloh staff who participated in the year-round program of the 1970s were able to see firsthand the material results of systemic injustices in such physical forms as

inadequate housing, schools, and basic resources. The long-term exposure to systemic oppression and the relationships with people who were affected by oppression was life-altering for many of the white Shiloh staff in the 1970s. Many of them had already been affected by the ongoing presence of the Civil Rights Movement in its most overt phase in the 1960s, and, as a result, the Shiloh year-round program of the 1970s gave the Shiloh staff the opportunity to view their work as religious activism, bringing relational and religious love to the city as a form of what they viewed as reparation. This relational activism that stemmed from the influence of the Movement comingled with the sense of missionary work that already existed at Shiloh. During their time at Shiloh, staffers who served in the 1970s moved into neighborhoods that showed them both the difficulties and resilience of citizens in underserved cities. Like Don Haymes and the Inner-City Faith Corps workers, they were temporary neighbors who bore witnesses to city life in the most neglected areas of New York City. As witnesses, they were able to see the lived experiences of those around them and to live in similar circumstances. As evangelicals, they embraced a theological understanding that focused on relationships with residents, especially the children who played in these underserved neighborhoods. Through the children and relationships with the children they learned to view God as a city dweller as much as a suburban or rural God. This transformed the worldviews that they had previously gleaned from their church homes in the South.

Though the year-round workers felt a sense of activism in their efforts, the concept of activism was not the reason that Shiloh itself started the year-round program, nor was it envisioned as such in previous generations of Shiloh. The initial purpose of the year-round program also was not to change the evangelicals' view of

where God lived. The concept of the year-round program as envisioned by the Shiloh board was focused on the expansion of Shiloh's existing relational efforts toward the children it served at camp. John White, already quoted in chapter 2 of this text, indicated that he and other Shiloh staff in the 1960s longed for a robust year-round program at Shiloh so that the staff could be in the lives and neighborhoods of the children that they worked with, "serving as peacemakers, and showing little kids how to play ball, and buttoning up their coats, and hugging them, and teaching them to respect each other."¹ The concept of working with Shiloh children all year long was a vision that had existed since the 1950s in the partnership with Eastside Church of Christ. The concept of the program, according to John White, who soon thereafter served on the Shiloh board of directors, was to play a more active role in the lives of Camp Shiloh children all year long.

The board of directors of Shiloh in the late 1960s felt the need for a year-round program, but they saw the potential expansion as a full-time missionary effort. The board articulated that such an extension of Shiloh's existing efforts was a way to reach children with the gospel all year, not simply over the summer at camp. The board felt that churches were already stretched too thin to fully reach out to Shiloh children in their neighborhoods during the year, though they felt that local churches of Christ should oversee neighborhood outreach programs, comprised of small groups of young people in various neighborhoods. Around the year 1966 they voted to put a plan into action. The Shiloh year-round program that they proposed looked a bit open-ended when they voted for it, but the board envisioned that, in addition to

¹ John White, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, June 16, 2016. Transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History, Waco, TX.

“watering and cultivation of the sowing” of the gospel planted at camp, Shiloh year-round staff would work with children “in various capacities such as teaching, tutoring, arts and crafts, music, and recreation.” It is unclear how much the Shiloh board was aware of systemic inequity at this time, though John White knew some about inequity from his time at camp. Responses to social inequity were not part of the board’s rationale for expanding their outreach. The board, although they contacted and made reference to the Inner-City Faith Corps in their minutes planning the year-round program, appears to have viewed a year-round program more as a spiritual follow-up enterprise that connected camp children with local churches of Christ than as a program that worked to view or address disparity. The board minutes of the time, in fact, did not pay much programmatic attention to Faith Corps or its methodology, nor did they express a hope to learn from or build upon its work.² However, they were attempting to create a larger-scale enterprise with some significant overlaps to Faith Corps, except the focus would be expressly upon working with neighborhood children whereas Faith Corps was more general and unstructured, and one of their year-round programs overlapped directly with Inner-City Faith Corps’s geographical outreach in East New York. As a result, those who were a part of the Shiloh program would find themselves living within many similar experiences as the Faith Corps workers had.

The plan went forward. In addition to contacting a number of churches in the area, the Shiloh board contacted the Inner-City Faith Corps workers to assess their responses to the board’s proposal of a year-round program. The Faith Corps workers

² Shiloh Board of Trustees, “Proposed Expansion Program for Camp Shiloh, Inc.,” ca. 1966. Shiloh Board of Trustees Minutes, Center for Restoration Studies, Abilene Christian University, Abilene, TX.

gave positive feedback for the proposal.³ These Faith Corps workers, as discussed in Chapter 3, lived and worked in East New York, Brooklyn; and Shiloh established its longest-running year-round program in East New York, in and around the apartments in tenement buildings Faith Corps workers vacated at the end of their service. Don Haymes stayed in East New York for a few more years, working for Project RESCU, and he eventually worked as a consultant for Shiloh, giving talks during year-round workers' orientation to living in the city.⁴ Shiloh workers in East New York attended West Islip Church of Christ, even though the church was miles away in the borough of Long Island. West Islip Church of Christ ostensibly oversaw the East New York program, but it soon became apparent, that, although West Islip welcomed Brooklyn children at Sunday services and even cared for the children at their homes at times on weekends, it was not a feasible plan for churches like West Islip to oversee Shiloh workers in the neighborhoods, especially the neighborhoods of East New York and Brownsville.⁵ Other Shiloh year-round programs in the 1970s included Brownsville in Brooklyn; Dover, New Jersey; the East Village; Hempstead, New York; Manhattan, New York; Red Bank, New Jersey; Riverhead, New York; Westfield, New Jersey; the Bronx; and Newark, New Jersey. Many of these neighborhoods were places near established churches of Christ, at times planted by Shiloh counselors of previous generations who stayed in the area, although the East New York and Brownsville programs were not technically near a church of Christ.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Don Haymes, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, September 18, 2012, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

⁵ More on this will be explored in chapter 6.

The multiple other programs lasted for several years and then were closed due to lack of financial support for Shiloh overall.⁶ The East New York and Brownsville programs were the longest-running year-round Shiloh programs during the 1970s, and, therefore, a good deal of the discussion about the year-round program in this text is from and about these two areas. Because they did not function in any real capacity adjacent to a church of Christ that had been founded by Southern churches of Christ transplants, and because they were in the most underserved areas of the Shiloh year-round enterprise, these two programs interacted most deeply with systemic inequality on a day-to-day basis.

⁶ “List of Shiloh Workers,” ca. 1967. Shiloh Voices Digital Scans Collection., Baylor University Institute for Oral History. For example of a closure of a Shiloh program, see Craig and Lynn Ann Bogart, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry March 24, 2013, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

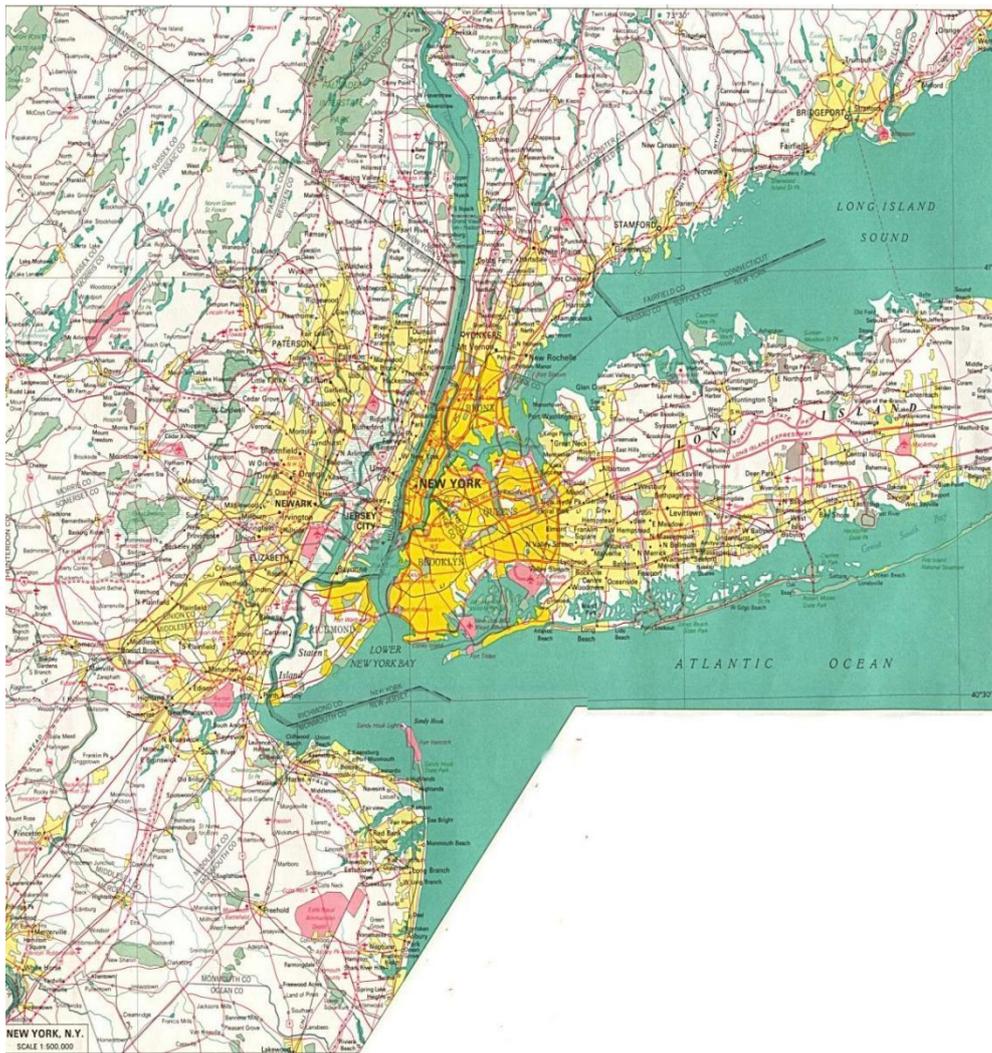


Figure 4.1 A map of New York City. Close inspection reveals the locations of a number of the Shiloh year-round programs and auxiliary entities.⁷

⁷ Orange Smile, Best Destinations CityGuide, Map of New York City,

<https://www.angesmile.com/travelguide/new-york/high-resolution-maps.htm>, Accessed May 10,

2022.



Figure 4.2 A map of Brooklyn neighborhoods, including East New York and Brownsville.⁸

Shiloh workers experienced and witnessed both oppressive conditions and in-depth relationships with Black and Brown residents in the year-round program, especially including the resilient, playful behavior of children in these underserved

⁸ Brooklyn neighborhood map, Mithova's Blog, Printable Maps of Brooklyn NY Neighborhoods, <https://motivasi.my.id> Accessed May 10, 2022.

neighborhoods, and therefore it is first important to examine how both the conditions and the children existed in the 1970s. Chapter 2 of this text discussed East New York and Brownsville in and leading up to the 1960s, especially in regards to housing in the neighborhoods. Chapter 3 showed the intractable nature of housing problems, even as Don Haymes, Project RESCU, neighborhood residents, and others tried to enact housing justice for the neighborhoods in the midst of ongoing difficulties. Chapter 5 will go further in depth about how Shiloh workers integrated the experiences of the city and its residence into their faith. The current chapter begins with a closer examination of the two neighborhoods themselves. The upcoming section of this chapter will begin with a discussion of how constant fires in apartment buildings that continued throughout the 1970s were the natural extension of the housing injustice that had existed for decades. Housing was a material commodity that had not lived up to any social contract for most Black and Brown residents of New York. And yet, further sections of this chapter will discuss how especially children, of whom there were very many in East New York and Brownsville, used the material culture in the living spaces, street spaces, and blocks around them to create a world of play. They proclaimed the resilience of the Black and Brown residents living in the area. Both the difficulty of the situation and the human resilience in the face of it are the immediate contexts that Shiloh workers found when they moved into Brooklyn. They are what Faith Corps workers experienced just before Shiloh arrived. And all of this is what the Black and Brown residents of these neighborhoods of Brooklyn lived with and into on a daily basis. This chapter then moves into how the Shiloh workers lived, in experiential ways, in the neighborhoods that the children they worked with lived in and how they interacted with those children through play, religion, and relationships.

The Social Contract on Fire: The Kerner Commission Report, Riots, and Fires

In this room of darkness, I grow so afraid of monster and darkness. . .
Sometime children parent leave they children in the house [sic].
Anything can happen while the parents is out shop or take care of other business
besides shop [sic].

A child life is in danger. Because you do not know what can happen in the
apartment. Because sometime people don't mean to smoke in bed or other thing
that can start a fire. If a fire start a child life depend on it.

Cynthia have a fire in her house but I don't care about the fire as long as her
family and her are okay. She was one of my best friend. I lost one of my best
friend when I lost Cynthia.⁹

This brief reflection was written in the mid-1970s by a young girl in the East New
York-Brownsville area of Brooklyn. In just a few short lines, this child vividly
portrayed the emotional repercussions that apartment fires have had on her, both in
terms of fear and in terms of loss when a friend had to move because her own
experience with fire, and the writer suggested that the frequency of fire took a toll on
her security and sense of community. In the documentary, *A Decade of Fire*,
filmmakers, too, explored the toll that constant fires had on residents of the nearby
Bronx, their homes in danger and their lives in a state of flux.¹⁰ While the young
child who wrote the reflection above thought that apartment fires could be started
because of someone smoking in bed “or other thing,” historians have also attempted
to ascertain the underlying causes of the persistent fires that raged in the Bronx,

⁹ Unknown child's writing. Shiloh Voices digital scans collection. Ca. 1973. Baylor University
Institute for Oral History.

¹⁰ Vivian Vázquez, *Decade of Fire*, Independent Lens, PBS, November 9,
2019. <https://www.pbs.org/video/decade-of-fire-uoty1d/>. Accessed November 19, 2020.

See also Valeria Ricciulli, “In the 1970s, the Bronx was Burning, but Some Residents were
Rebuilding,” *Curbed New York*, May 3, 2019.
<https://ny.curbed.com/2019/5/3/18525908/south-bronx-fires-decade-of-fire-vivian-vazquez-documenta>
[ry](#) Accessed November 20, 2020.

Brooklyn, and other areas of New York City in this decade. Joe Flood writes that a misguided city methodology and tendency for closing firehouse locations especially in poor neighborhoods allowed for the flames to burn longer and deeper for low-income residents of the city.¹¹ In *A Decade of Fire*, Bronx residents and the filmmaker seek to refute the myth that residents themselves caused apartment fires. They point to redlining by government-backed mortgage insurance companies that created segregated neighborhoods in the first place, and they say that, in the absence of someone taking care of them, in a fire set by an absentee landlord for the insurance money, they had to take care of themselves.¹²

Frequent fires were just one symptom of inadequate housing in underserved New York neighborhoods. Fires plagued these neighborhoods because of poor housing, and so did riots. Neighborhood riots often were attempts that neighborhood residents made to get the attention of mainstream society and to point out the disparities in housing and other inequities. As discussed in chapter 2, neighborhoods across the country, including Newark, Brownsville, East New York, and others were plagued by citizen riots in the 1960s. Mainstream society across America witnessed riots with increasing bewilderment. But government officials wanted to understand the problem. President Lyndon Johnson sought to understand the national problem of riots with a commission and a report. The Kerner Commission, set into action by

¹¹Joe Flood, “Why the Bronx Burned,” New York Post, May 16, 2020.

<https://nypost.com/2010/05/16/why-the-bronx-burned/> Accessed Nov. 15, 2020. Flood’s book is *The Fires: How a Computer Formula, Big Ideas, and the Best of Intentions Burned Down New York City—and Determined the Future of Cities* (Riverhead).

¹²Valeria Ricciulli, “In the 1970s, the Bronx was Burning,” *Curbed New York*.

President Johnson in 1967, was chaired by Otto Kerner, then the governor of Illinois. The mayor of New York City, John Lindsay, was the commission's vice chairman. The 425-page report probed the incidence of riots from many angles, and it laid the blame and responsibility heavily on white society and white racism that had marginalized Black and Brown citizens into situations in which they had little recourse. Riots, the report read, were not planned or organized by specific leaders in communities and were not directed at particular white people. They were most often the result of tensions that had built up over prior weeks in poor neighborhoods, and they seemed to spill over into anger at symbols of white institutions and white power-holding. The "typical rioter" was Black, young, male, smart, aware, underemployed, and distrustful of his elders and of politics to help the community receive benefit. What the rioter wanted was to be a fuller member of society, and his complaints about being underrepresented and poorly housed were real.¹³

The report discussed multiple issues and factors of riots, including news coverage and policing, but it went into even more depth about the causes of distress in inner cities that led to riot conditions themselves. It covered inequality in housing, justice, history (the report gave a brief history of Black Americans going back to enslavement), and schools. The report provided recommendations at every level in order to attempt to equalize these factors. As for insurance, since the topic was so complex, the report referred the reader to the findings and recommendations of the National Advisory Panel on Insurance in Riot-Affected Areas, which the Kerner Commission officially endorsed. But the Kerner Report did say that insurance companies did not well insure urban core areas at the best of times, and that the risk of

¹³ "Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders," 3-4.

riots made companies even more likely to turn away entire areas simply because they were in the urban core.¹⁴

The Kerner Report repeatedly encouraged its readership that it was not too late to solve these systemic inequalities in American cities, but it warned that not attempting to do so would carry disastrous and inhumane consequences. It also contained a lengthy quote from President Johnson from a speech he gave when he addressed the United States on the issue of civil disorders on July 27, 1967. His address, which was given upon commissioning the Kerner Report, suggested that he saw the problem as an inadequacy in fulfilling the social contract of America's promise. Johnson said, in part:

The only genuine, long-range solution for what has happened lies in an attack—mounted at every level—upon the conditions that breed despair and violence. All of us know what these conditions are: ignorance, discrimination, slums, poverty, disease, not enough jobs. We should attack these conditions—not because we are frightened by conflict, but because we are fired by conscience. We should attack them because there is simply no other way to achieve a decent and orderly America. . .¹⁵

But President Johnson had expected the commission's results would uphold his work on civil rights. He had appointed no radicals or young people on his commission. As the findings of the report surfaced and were widely distributed, Johnson was immediately embarrassed at the full-throated indictment against white society and even against his own legacy, which now seemed to have moved the needle for civil rights only a little. As a result, he refused to acknowledge the report

¹⁴ "Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders," 306-307. At the time of the commission report, New York City had a plan that required mandatory inspection of buildings in order to prevent the wholesale dismissal of "blighted" areas. As we have seen, this did not always solve the problem in New York.

¹⁵Ibid, 297

or to act upon its many recommendations for improving life and safety for inner city dwellers, including housing recommendations. He would not sign letters thanking the commissioners for their work. The underlying conditions of riot, including housing injustice, would go essentially unaddressed.¹⁶

The Social Contract on Fire: FAIR Plans and Fires

Though President Johnson chose not to act on the Kerner Commission report, other government efforts did make such attempts. For instance, in 1968, Congress enacted the Urban Property Insurance and Reinsurance Act to redress the under-service of insurance that had plagued swaths of inner core urban areas for decades and that were exacerbated by riot conditions in the late 1960s. This act created Fair Access to Insurance Requirements (FAIR) Plans, in which state authorities in cooperating states made insurance more readily available despite the possibility of risk that existed beyond the property owner's control. Properties would be inspected, then the properties would be insured by participating insurance companies, and those companies would be reinsured by HUD and each state would contribute above certain costs.¹⁷ In New York, the New York Property Insurance Underwriting Association still exists today, and is one of the largest FAIR Plans in the United States. It offers "fire, extended coverage, vandalism and malicious mischief, Broad Form Perils, sprinkler leakage, and time element coverages" to properties that

¹⁶ Jill LePore, "The History of the 'Riot' Report: How Government Commissions Became Alibis for Inaction," *New Yorker*, June 15, 2020.

<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2020/06/22/the-history-of-the-riot-report> Accessed Nov. 17, 2020. Published in the print edition of the June 22, 2020, issue with the headline, "The Riot Report".

¹⁷ Joanne Dwyer, "Fair Plans, History, Holtzman, and the Arson-for-Profit Hazard," *Fordham University School of Urban Law Journal*, 1978, (vol.7, no. 3), 617-628.

meet “minimal insurability standards.”¹⁸ NYPIUA became a program for low-income housing restoration across the city, although once riots ceased, insurance redlining often crept back into play across the nation.¹⁹

When President Johnson left office and Richard Nixon gained the presidency, Nixon assumed a position of “benign neglect” towards Black and Brown residents of the inner city, influenced by the Democratic New York state senator who wrote to the president that people in the Bronx were burning their own housing to the ground and must not want it. There would be no more efforts of the Great Society under the Nixon administration.²⁰ And though insurance means the possibility of restoration, insurance also means money, and during the 1970s, unscrupulous building owners found it profitable to set their own buildings in the inner city on fire and collect the insurance rewards. In the 1970s, absentee landlord Henry Katkin set fires in thirty-seven buildings in Brownsville, East New York, Bushwick, and the South Bronx, all of them occupied. He collected almost \$2 million in insurance money before he was sent to jail in 1984.²¹ Landlord Joe Bald was part of a ring of arson-for-profit that included Katkin and others, and Bald, with links to the mafia, set

¹⁸ “Quick Reference Fact Sheet,” New York Property Insurance Underwriting Association. nypiua.com, Accessed November 17, 2020.

¹⁹ “Homepage,” New York Property Insurance Underwriting Association, <https://www.nypiua.com>. Accessed Nov. 17, 2020; Dwyer, “Fair Plans,” 630.

²⁰ Jeff Chang, *Can’t Stop, Won’t Stop: A History of the Hip-Hop Generation*, (New York: Picador, 2005), 14.

²¹ “Out of the Shadows: A Trail of Neighborhood Destruction Ends in Prison,” [no author listed] *City Limits Magazine*, December, 1984, 22.

<https://www.scribd.com/document/79611324/City-Limits-Magazine-December-1984-Issue>. Accessed Nov. 28, 2020.

up shell companies to gain interest in buildings across the city, including those insured by FAIR plans, Lloyds of London, and other companies. He and his ring of associates collected \$5 million in insurance money from fires. They were not the only ones. FAIR plan neighborhoods were prime targets of for-profit arsonists. The problem was widespread. New York's alternative newspaper, *The Village Voice*, investigated the topic in 1980, and in the article, the authors made it plain that any suggestions to improve the way the private housing market functioned in these areas had failed or remained untried, and what remained in its place only the profitability of arson:

Arson is the cremation ritual of a diseased housing system. A striking fact for anyone who tours a New York neighborhood ravaged by arson and abandonment is that there are still many people living there—in public housing. The private sector has been unable to create an attractive level of profit from low-income housing (without subsidies or tax shelters) for decades. . .

There is simply no incentive for banks, landlords, insurance companies for anyone else with money to invest in building or rebuilding dwellings at reasonable rents. So landlords are encouraged to let their low-income housing fall apart until they've milked the last dollar of rent and evaded every dollar of taxes. Ultimately, the easiest and most lucrative step is to burn it, or to sell it to someone else who will burn it. In housing, the final stage of capitalism is arson.²²

Most of the fires in the city may or may not have been arson, according to at least one historian. Joe Flood contends that most fires in the Bronx and Brooklyn that raged in the 1970s were not due to arson but had more banal causes like cigarettes, bad wiring, and space heaters.²³ Whatever the cause, deaths by fire more than

²² Joe Conason and Jack Newfield, "Arson for Hire," *Village Voice*, June 2, 1980, np.

<https://www.villagevoice.com/2005/10/18/arson-for-hire/> Accessed November 20, 2020.

²³ Joe Flood, "Why the Bronx Burned," *New York Post*, May 16, 2010.

<https://nypost.com/2010/05/16/why-the-bronx-burned/> Accessed November 17, 2020.

doubled in New York City in the 1970s, and they decreased in the rest of the country. Lack of investment in housing for the poor was an essential cause.²⁴

Of course, fire itself had an uprooting effect for people who lived in East New York and Brownsville in the 1970s. Kenneth Hart was a young man growing up at that time in East New York. He remembered that the economic impacts of apartment fires forced his mother to send him and his siblings to live with various relatives around the city. But his mother reached a point where, out of sheer will, she determined that she would care for all of her children under the same roof, and she did so. The memory of her effort brings tears to Hart's eyes decades later.²⁵ Yolanda Melendez-Bentley remembers her family moving from East New York to Brownsville after a fire in her childhood apartment building uprooted her family and community members.²⁶ Firefighters themselves remember a constant burning smell in the Bronx and the collapse of Brooklyn neighborhoods due to fires.²⁷ Firefighters saved buildings and people, but they also were disruptive figures: they knocked down doors to put out fires in apartment buildings, leaving the possibility of theft in their wake.²⁸ After the fires, children played in what remained of burned-out buildings in

²⁴ Flood, "Why the Bronx Burned," *New York Post*.

²⁵ Kenneth Hart, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, March 30, 2013, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

²⁶ Yolanda Melendez-Bentley, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, June 24, 2012, transcript of audio Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

²⁷ Flood, "Why the Bronx Burned," np.

²⁸ Donna Roseberry, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, August 9, 2012, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

East New York and Brownsville.²⁹ Photographs of the neighborhoods in that era show the rubble of lost tenement buildings all around the neighborhoods in places where people lived, ate, played, and raised their families³⁰ Though Kenneth Hart described his childhood overall in warm and loving terms, he was still a child whose resilient, close-knit family operated within difficult circumstances beyond their control. He and others around him were thoughtful people who contributed to their communities and societies in numerous ways, but they did so under a flammable social contract that asked them to sacrifice and to exist within various crises that were not of their own making.

Resilience: Children at Play

“I was born in the bathroom. My mother was there. When I was little my mother took me outside. When I grow [sic] up my mother let me play outside by myself. Then I was bigger: 3,4,5,6,7. Then I play all the time with my friends. We play cards and Mickey Mouse and we have parties and we go to the store, and we eat. We climbed big tree--as big as a building. We used to open the doors for the girls. . . . And now I’m seven. THE END.” -Junito Rivera.³¹

Junito Rivera’s short but meaningful description of his life so far was dictated to a Shiloh worker who lived in his neighborhood in the year-round Shiloh program. Junito’s account of himself starts with the essentials: he talks about his birth, and for that particular event, he acknowledges that his mother was present. When he was a little bit older, he states, his mother went outside his building with him. Now that he is more mature, he has been able to go outside with his friends for quite some time,

²⁹ See the Shiloh Voices Digital Photograph Collection, especially photographs donated by Preston Pierce and John Harris. Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Junito Rivera, *The Gospel According to the Children at Shiloh*, Shiloh, Inc. 1973. Shiloh Voices digital scans collection, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

and at his current age of seven he plays “all the time” with his friends: games of cards, Mickey Mouse, parties, going to the store, climbing a big tree, opening doors for girls. Junito separates his life into the time before he could go outside and play, and the time that exists now, when he can.

Junito was born in the mid-1960s and gave the above autobiographical statement around 1972 to one of the Shiloh workers living in his neighborhood in Brooklyn. The neighborhoods of East New York and Brownsville were filled with young people like him: the population in his immediate area was 51 percent under the age of seventeen, in contrast to 27 percent in New York City overall. In fact, when six schools on six city blocks in the area between East New York and Brownsville (an area called New Lots) let out between 2:45 and 3:01 on weekday afternoons, approximately 7,000 children made their way onto the neighborhood streets to walk a few blocks to their homes.³²

³² *Hope*, Winter, 1975-1976, Shiloh Inc, 6. Pub05052. Shiloh Voices Digital Collection, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.



Figure 4.3 Ca. 1975. Children leave school for the afternoon in the New Lots area, between East New York and Brownsville, in Brooklyn, NYC. The street scene is crowded and boisterous with the energy of children and their mothers and caregivers. Pub05052. Shiloh Voices Digital Photos Collection, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

The existence of so many children in the neighborhood necessitated a culture of play, no matter how much society or building fires or anything else in the environment proclaimed the neighborhood a hazardous or uninviting space. Dr. Franco La Secla argues that children have a right to be outside in the street to play and should not be hindered by perceptions of adult utility of urban structures. “Street life,” he says, “is the real meaning of built spaces. Children represent this meaning

more than adults do.”³³ Whether Dr. La Secla is correct or not that children in streets are the “true meaning” of built space even more than adult interaction with those spaces, it is certainly correct that street life in East New York and Brownsville was often made up of children in spaces originally made for adults and defined for them, and, though there may have been dangers and structural instability in the neighborhoods, often what they did with their urban space was play.

Recreational facilities were scarce for these overcrowded neighborhoods, from private facilities like the YMCA to public parks--Betsy Head Park in Brownsville being an exception, but it was simply too small for the large numbers of residents in Brownsville. Wendell Pritchett notes that, in Brownsville, “There were almost no places for local children to play.”³⁴

³³ Franco La Secla and Lucy Bullivant, “The Space of Play,” *RSA Journal*, Vol. 146, No. 5488 (1999), 99.

³⁴ Pritchett, 57-58.

Pulitzer-Prize winning biographer, Robert Caro, writes that longtime city planner and parks commissioner of New York City, Robert Moses, purposefully refused to put appropriate parks and recreational facilities in neighborhoods where Black people lived. See for example Robert Caro, *The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York*, (New York: Vintage, 1975), 557-561. Some more current scholars challenge Caro’s view that Moses was intentionally racist in building parks and public works and/or not building them in Black and Brown neighborhoods. Marta Gutman points out that Betsy Head pool in the then-mixed neighborhood of Brownsville, and built by the WPA under Moses’s direction, was integrated, as was Moses’s intent. Gutman, drawing on Marta Biondi, says that patterns that shaped New York to the detriment of Black residents cannot be attributed to one man alone. They occurred after the reform era when Southern segregationists and Northern

When the weather turned nice enough to play outside, children like Junito took to the outdoor environment to play on their respective blocks. Scholars say that children use spaces differently than adults do because their view of geography is both real and imagined. They might use spaces that exist on the periphery of the geographical utility that adults use (such as playing in waste dumps), spaces made for them by adults (such as schools and playgrounds), or spaces they re-purpose for their own uses (such as skateboarders using park benches to skate upon). Whatever the kind of space, children are ultimately utilizing space and material culture to create their own worlds.³⁵

City Play, a book about children and how they play outside in New York City, a book that focuses particularly on children who are not from wealthy New York families, offers the following reflection on how urban play humanizes an environment that may not initially feel humanizing:

Urban play, particularly outdoor play, is especially revealing in its interactions with the imposed environment. Through play, city objects, often made of metal and concrete, harsh and imposing, are imbued with human values, associations

politicians allied and fueled a new vision of public policy infused with racial prejudice.

Marta Gutman, "Race, Place, and Play: Robert Moses and the WPA Swimming Pools in New York City," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* Vol. 67, No. 4 (Dec. 2008), 534. Both authors do, however, suggest a lack of recreational facilities in Black neighborhoods.

³⁵ Richard Yarwood and Naomi Tyrrell, "Why Children's Geographies?," *Geography*, Autumn 2012, Vol. 97, No. 3, Special issue on children's and young people's geographies (Autumn 2012), 123.

and memories. Play is one of the ways we develop a sense of neighborhood in a large city. Play is one of the ways a city street becomes ‘our block’.³⁶

Not only are lived landscapes the places that children imbue with “human values, associations, and memories,” but for them, the spaces in which children live and call their own are the spaces in which the children of a place “build and negotiate their identity.”³⁷

City Play offers descriptions of three ways in which children turn their material environment into an imaginative, humanistic arena that is their own. They use the method of incorporation, by which they include elements of the urban landscape in their play. They might incorporate fire hydrants, walls, sidewalks, grates, steps, lampposts, rooftops, vacant lots, the rhythm of the subway noises, and other urban features into their play, using those features as part of the play experience.³⁸ They use transformation, by which they recast urban material elements into other roles within the rules of their imaginative worlds and games, like using a manhole cover as second base in a street baseball game.³⁹ And, especially in urban environments where space is limited, they attempt to find and delineate the boundaries of “their” space for

³⁶ Amanda Dargan and Steven Zeitlin, *City Play*, New Brunswick: Rutgers, 1990), 10.

³⁷ Margarita Sánchez Romero, Eva Alarcón García and Gonzalo Aranda Jiménez,

“Children, Childhood, and Space: Multidisciplinary Approaches to Identity,” in *Children’s Spaces and Identity* by Margarita Sánchez Romero, Eva Alarcón García and Gonzalo Aranda Jiménez, (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2015), 4.

³⁸ Dargan and Zeitlin, *City Play*, 40-103.

³⁹ Dargan and Zeitlin, 106-133.

play, including spaces that might be private and just for them.⁴⁰ In other examinations of play, scholars say it can be divided into two other kinds of categories: *ludis*, meaning structured, rule-bound game play, and *paidia*, or unstructured play.⁴¹



Figure 4.4 A child re-purposes a street fixture, clearly made for adult utility, for a moment of unstructured play. East New York, ca. 1975. Pht01542. Shiloh Voices Photo Collection. Baylor University Institute for Oral History, .

Resilience: Children Playing in East New York and Brownsville in the 1970s

Shiloh workers in the 1970s were able to capture the children’s activities in multiple photographs, and they also created a book in 1973 in which the children told their versions of Bible stories in the first half of the book and their own autobiographical stories in the second half. These two sources heavily inform this

⁴⁰ Dargan and Zeitlin, 136-162.

⁴¹ Naomi Adiv, “*Paidia* meets *Ludis*: New York City Municipal Pools and the Infrastructure of Play,” *Social Science History*, Vol. 39, No. 3 (Fall 2015), 431.

section of this chapter and illuminate the way that children in these neighborhoods played within the aforementioned categories of play. Viewing photographs and examining testimonies in which the children were not interacting with white workers or acting at their specific direction reveals the way that children played in their own neighborhoods. This is important because, despite the harsh circumstances, the children's play activities reveal a sense of Black and Brown resilience and community that existed in these neighborhoods above and beyond Shiloh's interactions with them.

The childrens' play movements in the neighborhoods of East New York and Brownsville matched recognizable notions of play and echoed the photographs in the book *City Play*, (which focused on child agency in play but not on specific Black and Brown landscapes of play in New York City). Examining the evidence in the collection of Shiloh materials gives evidence for the answers to a number of questions about the Black and Brown landscape at this time: What materials existed in these neighborhoods that were contemporaneously derided as the home of the "urban underclass"?⁴² What did the children do with the materials in the neighborhoods to create a children's landscape and material culture? What limits might they have experienced in their play? Though the Shiloh materials capture a small sample of the substantial number of children who lived in these neighborhoods and of the large numbers of blocks to play on, they do show patterns that may have existed across East New York and Brownsville.

Books like *Can't Stop, Won't Stop: A History of the Hip-Hop Generation* and many like it show that, under similar conditions at the same time in the nearby South

⁴² Pritchett, 255-256.

Bronx, young people invented hip-hop culture in the 1970s as creative expression and used the tools they had at hand to create and play, carving out their identities in the midst of painful social neglect and housing disparity. Hip-hop historian Jeff Chang writes about how the youth transformed the neglect they felt in the South Bronx, including transforming the landscape with their graffiti as a self-expression and inventing a novel dance culture as a language. “Give them an apocalypse,” Chang writes of the youth of the time, “and they would dance.”⁴³ As shown in the section above on play, children use space and the exploration of space to help form their identities. Children in East New York and Brownsville were using the landscape and the materials for play, though they, too, were often neglected by mainstream society.

Some of the children talked about or were pictured in photographs taken by Shiloh workers participated in activities alone (although of course the presence of a photographer means the child was not completely alone), and some of the children were with others. A narrator in an interview spoke about his mother and the collection of neighborhood mothers in East New York who watched over him and his siblings and friends and made sure they were safe and well behaved.⁴⁴ One girl wrote, “I got a sister and a brother. Both of my sister and my brother like to play [with] me. When people bothering me, my sisters and brothers take up for me. -Laura Thomas.” Laura Thomas’s testimony acknowledges both the benefits and

⁴³ Jeff Chang, *Can’t Stop, Won’t Stop: A History of the Hip-Hop Generation*, (New York: Picator, 2005), 19.

⁴⁴ Kenneth Hart, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry. Digital recording, March 30, 2013. Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

challenges of a neighborhood with lots of other children around (you have plenty of possibilities for friends and family to stick up for you, but there also might be plenty of people who bother you or get on your nerves). But the categories delineated in the following text are not about social play as compared to individual play. They are about how these children used and interacted with material culture of their neighborhood, the housing and city landscape already discussed, in various ways. Children incorporated the landscape into play in separate categories, inside play and outside play; they transformed materials into elements of imagination; they participated in structured play (much of the play in previous categories can be considered unstructured); and they delineated what space was theirs.⁴⁵ They also played in another category that did not include materials: they used their bodies for play, which suggested the use of space as a kind of material commodity that they could physically occupy in play.

In their autobiographical statements, children were often specific about identifying themselves with a sense of place. They talked about playing in the school park or the gym at school, but more often than playing at school they gave their own address or their school's name as an autobiographical identifier. Laura Thomas drew a picture of buildings and sunshine and dictated her description of the picture to the Shiloh worker she knew, who also described Laura's facial expression as she spoke. The Shiloh worker wrote: "'This is my street,' said Laura, as she

⁴⁵I did not include the delineation of boundaries in neighborhood space as a particular category for my study, since the evidence was not available to support the creation of boundaries. But I do begin the study with evidence that children viewed neighborhoods and places as their own and existed within boundaries that they could understand.

smiled really big. ‘And the big house is where I live.’” In a newsletter profile, another child stood on a roof and, with a sweeping smile, told the Shiloh photographer, “This is my neighborhood.” One girl said, “I live 541 Saratoga between Pitkin and Sutter [street names].” Arnold Johnson reported, “My name is Arnold. My family live 531 Dumont Avenue. My school is P.S. 174 . . .” Quite a few other children included their school names and addresses, too, supporting the theory that children’s sense of place within the landscape was important to their self-identities, and that where they lived and played was important to them.

Because of the importance of place, the first category of play herein is the interaction with the built landscape that existed permanently in the outdoor environment. Children often interacted with the built environment physically. Most of the pictures for this category were of unstructured play and many involved climbing. Children interacted with fire hydrants (as sprinklers to play in), rooftops (walking, hanging out, posing, one family kept pigeons), walls (climbing, pretending to measure or fix, playing hide-and-seek), stoops, half walls (jumping from, standing on top of), windows, fences (climbing or leaning variations), chimneys (leaning against on rooftops), street fixtures, concrete pediments (climbing, getting on top of), and empty lots (running in, chasing in, hanging out in). They sometimes played in the rubble in empty lots where buildings had been burned or torn down, and they also played in abandoned or condemned buildings and peeked through holes in walls.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Children also played in empty lots and rubble through the bombings in England during World War II and found these spaces rich with play possibility. See Becky Willans, “Debris and Delight: Children’s Play During the Second World War.” in *Practice-Based Research in Children’s Play*, by Wendy Russell, Stuart Lester, and Hilary Smith (Bristol: Bristol University Press, 2017), 35-52.



Figure 4.5 Three children smile and peek through a hole in a wall in an interior of an apartment building, perhaps abandoned and scarred by fire. A “police bar” is propped against the apartment door from the inside to prevent theft. Ca.1974. Pht02060. Shiloh Voices Photo Collection. Baylor University Institute for Oral History,



Figure 4.6 A boy poses in a lot where he has climbed on top of a tree trunk. Ca. 1973. Pht01250. Shiloh Voices Photo Collection. Baylor University Institute for Oral History.



Figure 4.7 Three boys jump down from a half wall on the outside of a building, each moving in different ways but approaching the jump together. East New York, Ca. 1976. Pht18086. Shiloh Voices Photo Collection. Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

The next category was inside activity, and there were only a few activities that appeared in this category in these photographs, though it may have had to do with the Shiloh workers' relationships to the children that did not often take place within the childrens' own apartments. This category involved photographs or testimonies of children playing on chairs (rocking), sitting on a dresser, and climbing on other people or furniture, cleaning activities that the children (especially girls) reported that they enjoyed or would enjoy doing someday (one girl's dream was to cook dinner). Multiple pictures exist of children leaning out their windows to watch or communicate with someone outside. Open windows offered many opportunities for interaction with the exterior world from the inside, and that interaction might be playful. Buildings could be quite close to one another, and there were situations in which a child could see someone else in a building across from them or interact with them on the street below, offering more opportunities for playfulness.

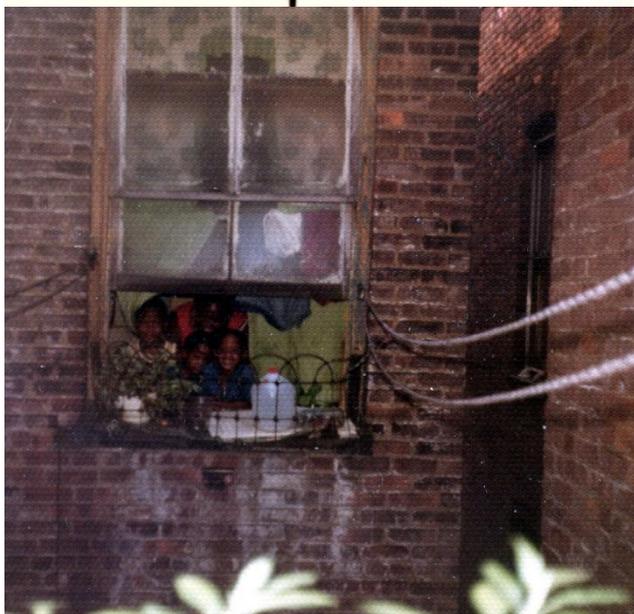


Figure 4.8 and figure 4.9 Both photographs are of children playfully peering out their windows. In the first picture one girl pays attention to the street below and smiles, in the second picture the children appear to be interacting with the photographer, who is taking the picture from the building across from them. Pht17044 and Pht11026. Shiloh Voices Digital Photo Collection. Baylor University Institute for Oral History,

A third category was organized play, and most of these were anecdotal and gathered from the autobiographical statements that the children made. Children mentioned liking basketball (a popular activity that appeared in photographs of even very young boys), handball, skelley (a sidewalk game created with chalk and played

with bottle caps) punch ball, football, hopscotch, jump rope, “playing games,” boxing, and racing. One boy named Teeter made this statement about himself: “My name is Teeter. I like racing. I race all kinds of things. Beat ’em, too.” Another man who grew up in the neighborhood remembers racing popsicle sticks in the flowing water in the drain on the street when he was a boy. The game of skelley has been noted as a common New York City sidewalk game for children, suggesting that children in East New York and Brownsville participated in a common city game culture.



Figure 4.10 Two girls play on a fence and an organized game is drawn on the pavement behind them. East New York, Ca. 1973. Pht01912. Shiloh Voices Digital Photo Collection. Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

A fourth category was play, mostly outside but sometimes inside, in which children simply used their bodies to play, with no object or material. They wrestled with each other, jumped, swung their bodies when they walked, shaped their bodies, made faces, sang and made rhymes, danced, fought, played house, laughed, dressed up younger siblings, listened to music (like the Jackson Five), acted, balanced, and

said they liked to “play in the rain and in the sun.”⁴⁷ This category suggests that play can be physical and can be viewed as a way of taking up space in the landscape, as well as moving through space.



Figure 4..11 A boy shapes his body on the sidewalk while others watch. He is perhaps in the process of breaking (breakdancing). Ca, 1975. Pht01509. Shiloh Voices Digital Photo Collection. Baylor University Institute for Oral History, .

⁴⁷ In a boy named Horace’s autobiographical statement, he pretended that he worked for the Jackson Five.



Figure 4.12 Five children walk together in East New York, ca. 1973. One girl swings her arms and laughs, another balances her body on the bottom of an iron fence. One boy gestures with his arms. Though they might not appear to be playing, their body movements are playful. Pht17032. Shiloh Voices Digital Photo Collection. Baylor University Institute for Oral History,

The final category found in Shiloh materials is play activity that required the presence of an object, perhaps a purchased object, to create or enhance a play situation. Some of these objects were toys but these were often not very complex--the onus was usually on the child to create the imaginative situation. These objects included Halloween masks, a toy gun, cards, balloons, items purchased at the corner store, candy and ice cream, crochet items, books, writing materials, art supplies, skates, cleaning supplies, school supplies, soda, candy bars, popcorn, jump ropes, Double dutch ropes, jelly rope, balloons, cardboard, chalk, refashioned street junk, homemade go carts, wood, and items to fix and repair. This category suggests that perhaps parents bought items for children to play with

that were inexpensive and available. Children used these objects to create imaginative situations. Children also likely refashioned some objects and repaired others as a form of play and interaction.

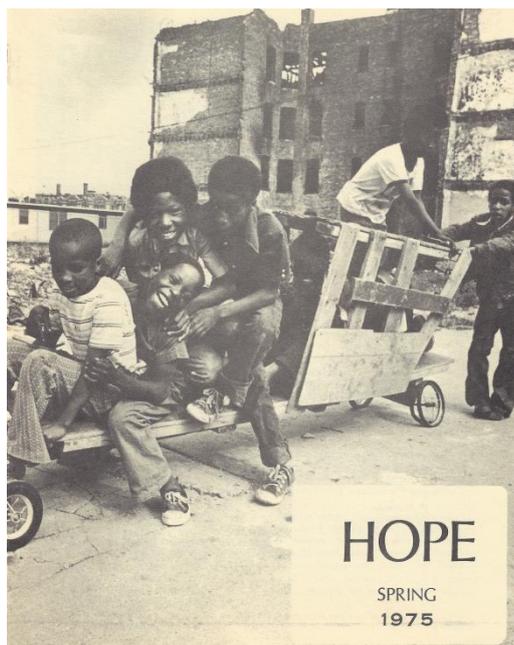


Figure 4.13 A group of boys who appear on the cover of the Spring 1975 Shiloh newsletter crowd into and onto a homemade go-cart for a ride. Pub05062. Shiloh Voices Digital Photo Collection. Baylor University Institute for Oral History,



Figure 4.14 Two girls interact playfully together. One girl sticks her tongue out at the other, the second blows up a balloon and wraps her arm around the first girl's shoulder. A boy appears to be playing in the background. Pht11017. Shiloh Voices Digital Photo Collection.. Baylor University Institute for Oral History.



Figure 4.15 Children dress for Halloween. Some of the characters appear to be Supergirl, the devil, Kiss, and Frankenstein. A pumpkin for candy sits on a table in the background. Ca. 1976. Pht11022. Shiloh Voices Digital Photo Collection. Baylor University Institute for Oral History,

There have been some important books written about how East New York and Brownsville were transformed into Black and Brown neighborhoods suffering from societal neglect, and a number of books written about the famous 1968 school strike that affected Brownsville schools, school children, and all of New York City's race relations. The book *The Ville: Cops and Kids in Urban America* looks at life of a few teenagers in Brownsville in the 1980s. *Upon This Rock: Miracles of a Black Church* recounts adult life in East New York for a number of residents in the 1980s and forward. But the era of the 1970s, which Wendell Pritchett acknowledges as one of the most difficult eras for residents in Brownsville, in which poverty was most deeply entrenched, has little representation in the historical record in terms of residents' lived experience.⁴⁸ In particular, the significant percentage of the population in these neighborhoods was children, a category of people who have extraordinarily little presence in the historical record in general, and the activities of these young residents of East New York and Brownsville have not been well studied. These were the residents of East New York and Brownsville that populated the neighborhoods, In addition, they were the city residents with whom Shiloh had the most profound contact.

In *Black Landscapes Matter*, Austin Allen refutes the popular conception that housing projects might be Black landscapes. How could they be? Allen wonders.

⁴⁸ Pritchett, 250-255.

Did Black people make them or own them?⁴⁹ The same might be true for tenement and public housing in Brooklyn. Black and Brown children played in landscapes in Brooklyn not designed or owned by them, nor made for them as children to use. Still, these children did use the materials at hand in order to learn about their worlds and to create new ones for their specific intentions. They incorporated built objects and transformed their spaces for interior worlds: they peeked out windows, played games, danced, raced, ate candy, blew up balloons, and dressed as Frankenstein. They protected their little siblings if someone was bothersome. They rejoiced when their mothers let them go outside with their friends. As children can, they used a built environment for very human purposes. They identified blocks and neighborhoods as belonging to them, and they climbed on top of the things that would support them. They used objects to help them imagine and laugh, and they used their bodies to explore open space. They played; they made the landscape their own.

In following the playful resilience and joy of children in these neighborhoods, this dissertation echoes the notion in the book *City Play*, which says, “Our goal is to learn from the indigenous adaptations of city children while not falling into a trap of our own devising--a trap that would conclude that what this city really needs is more vacant lots filled with urban debris.”⁵⁰ That the children played and were joyful is a sign of the specialness of children and the resilience of their spirits.

⁴⁹ Austin Allen, “Site of the Unseen: The Racial Gaming of American Landscapes,” in *Black Landscapes Matter* by Walter Hood and Grace Mitchell Tada. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2020), ebook: np.

⁵⁰ Dargan and Zeitlin, 28.

Shiloh in the City: Out from the Suburban Church and into the World

Shiloh workers entered the city and its neighborhoods and were immediately impacted by both the material environment around them, so unlike their own at home, and the urban children with whom they would have relationships. Though much of their understanding and previous training before they came to Shiloh had led them to a sympathy with Black and Brown residents of the city, the depth of their understanding came from the learning they gathered from seeing firsthand oppression, difficulty, and the beauty and resilience of their Black and Brown neighbors in the year-round programs, especially the children living their lives and moving through the world through play.

First, though, they were compelled to go to Shiloh, not by a sense of missionary outreach and the need to compel others toward conversion experiences, but often by witnessing Black social action as it occurred around them in their home states. That social action forced them to see disparity in neighborhoods and churches where they often had sparse or uneven levels of interaction with Black and Brown people. When they were children themselves on the heels of school integration laws that were not enforced in many cities, some of the Shiloh workers had interactions with people of different skin colors growing up, and others did not, even to the point of having none at all. Preston Pierce from Pueblo, Colorado, had friends who were Black and Brown when he was growing up, but Jo Ogle remembers being in junior high school before she ever saw a Black person.⁵¹ Karen Davis came from Tennessee and remembers waiting for the bus a half a mile from her home in

⁵¹ Preston Pierce, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry July 28, 2012, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History; Jo Ogle, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry September 14, 2012, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

sixth through eighth grades, and seeing Black children being sent to an all-Black school in her county. These were children who had already been driven fifty miles to get to their bus stop that morning, and she remembers thinking the situation was unfair.⁵² Craig Bogart remembered a young Black student attending his school and that other white students treated her very poorly. He thought that their treatment of her wasn't right. He remembers she withdrew after only a few weeks at the school.⁵³

Churches were segregated in the South, but Charlie Newman remembers a punishment he received from his local white minister that involved race in a way that was supposed to be a reprimand but was actually pleasant to him. Newman was a capable songleader even in high school, and he wanted to lead songs in his own way and add a Psalm at the beginning of the songs he led at his white church of Christ in his hometown of Nashville. The minister of the church, feeling that he could not control Newman, sent him over to “the Black, poorer church of Christ on the other side of town” and told him to lead songs there. “Think of the absurdity of that,” Newman reflected as he remembered the minister’s decision. Newman taught the Black congregation one song, then he continued to attend church there on Wednesday

⁵² Karen Davis, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry August 29, 2012, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for ORal History.

⁵³ Craig and Lynn and Bogart, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry March 24, 2013, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

evenings and learn the songs that the Black churches of Christ members were singing.⁵⁴

The Civil Rights Movement was a significant moral teacher for this generation of evangelicals. Many of the Shiloh workers in the 1970s went to Shiloh because they were aware of the Civil Rights Movement as it unfolded in the 1960s during their growing-up years. The Movement, as envisioned by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was intended to move the conscience of whites toward creating a more just society when they saw injustice.⁵⁵ Some young people in the churches of Christ at the time found that it did move their consciences, pointing them in a moral direction beyond the church walls and toward the Movement's message, forcing them to see the realities of an unjust American society, and those feelings would spur them to go to Shiloh when they were young adults. They saw Shiloh as a Christian version of activist behavior, in that they would be showing a group of people that society rejected that God loved them.⁵⁶ Craig Bogart remembered watching innocent protesters overcome with the force of water from fire hoses on television and that he

⁵⁴ Charlie Newman, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry October 16, 2012, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

⁵⁵ For example, see Martin Luther King, Jr., "Letter from Birmingham City Jail," in *The Eyes on the Prize Civil Rights Reader: Documents, Speeches, and Firsthand Accounts from the Black Freedom Struggle, 1954-1990*, general editors Claiborne Carson, David J. Garrow, Gerald Gill, Vincent Harding, and Darlene Clark Hine, (New York: Penguin Books, 1991), 154.

⁵⁶ Donna Roseberry, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, July 19, 2012, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

felt that what he was seeing was wrong.⁵⁷ As a teenager, Davy Hall played basketball with Black teenagers in his hometown of San Francisco, and those interactions helped him understand that the Black Panthers in nearby Oakland might have something to say.⁵⁸ Preston Pierce watched his Black friend, the first to attend all four years at Lipscomb College in Nashville, experience mistreatment from white classmates around the same time that there were riots in Nashville when Dr. King was murdered in 1968.⁵⁹ Jane Richardson quietly attended meetings of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and Congress for Racial Equality (CORE) because of a Black college friend who invited her.⁶⁰ Charlie Newman remembered using an empty space that had once been a preaching school for Black members of the churches of Christ, but the Black membership helped him see that David Lipscomb University administration had already unfairly shut down the Black preaching school for its own use, a mistreatment which they would take to court under a famous Black lawyer in the Movement. Newman moved his program to another space once they spoke to him

⁵⁷ Craig and Lynn Ann Bogart, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, March 24, 2013. Transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History, Waco, TX.

⁵⁸ Davy Hall, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry November 23, 2012, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

⁵⁹ Preston Pierce, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, July 28, 2012, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

⁶⁰ Jane Richardson, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, April 1, 2013, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

about it.⁶¹ The Movement in big and small ways had an impact on the society at large and on specific young people who witnessed it or who became more aware of its importance through relationships and encounters. As such, the Movement, and small moments of interaction with the Movement, can be seen as initial sparks in which these Southern and Western white Shiloh workers were exposed to the idea of oppressive conditions for Black Americans. As evangelicals, they viewed the spirituality of the Movement as very important. For some, like Craig Bogart, Dr. King seemed like a living expression of faith more than he had witnessed before.⁶² Though many white Christians did not act on behalf of justice in the 1960s as a result of the Movement, so much so that Dr. King wrote about his deep disappointment in them in his “Letter from a Birmingham Jail,”⁶³ and even though most white evangelicals, including the white churches of Christ, mostly ignored or rejected the Movement, still, the Movement under the leadership of Dr. King and many others should not be underestimated in how it shifted American culture and influenced the way a number of white Christians interpreted racial injustices.

Interestingly, college life, including in some churches of Christ colleges around the turn of the decade, also exposed some college students to a different viewpoint than their traditional churches of Christ upbringing. The Movement had impact on

⁶¹ Charlie Newman interview. The lawyer for Nashville Christian Institute, Fred Gray, had also represented Dr. King and Rosa Parks, and was a member of the churches of Christ.

⁶² Craig and Lynn Ann Bogart, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, March 24, 2013, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

⁶³ Martin Luther King, Jr., “Letter from Birmingham City Jail,” in *The Eyes on the Prize Civil Rights Reader*, 153-158.

society so much so that even schools like David Lipscomb College, in which the administration threatened to call out the National Guard if there was a Civil Rights protest on campus, nevertheless employed professors who helped students like John Hutcheson see beyond his provincial home life and recognize that the perspective he had grown up with was infused with the values of the American middle class more than “radical Christianity,” and, he said, that the teaching he heard from some professors at Lipscomb “totally changed my mind.”⁶⁴ But the social culture of change did not extend to every corner of university life, and many Shiloh year-round staff pointed to conflicts they witnessed at college. The same Lipscomb College that helped transform John Hutcheson’s views also expelled student Phillip Roseberry, for spurious reasons, in all actuality most likely for public statements he made about how Lipscomb integrated to get federal money that would allow them to build a new science building.⁶⁵ Karyn Blucker remembered that, at Harding College, when Dr. King was murdered, the university’s flag was put at half-mast and then when she got out of class that same day, the flag was again at full staff. The flag went up and down, and “apparently the university wasn’t putting their foot down either way.”⁶⁶ The late 1960s and early 1970s was a time of great national change, and, with the murder of Dr. King, the Civil Rights Movement shifted, even as problems of the

⁶⁴ John Hutcheson, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, September 6, 2012, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

⁶⁵ Donna Roseberry interview. Phillip and Donna Roseberry, both mentioned in this text, are the parents of this author.

⁶⁶ Karyn Blucker, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, January 16, 2013, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

urban poor persisted.⁶⁷ The concept of understanding poverty was a topic of much conversation in some subcultural evangelical circles at the time, among other social issues, and Ron Sider's influential book, *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger* was first published in the late 1970s.⁶⁸ Influenced as they were by the Movement growing up in the 1960s, and surrounded by a counterculture that seemed to demand something real from them, many of the year-round staff saw Shiloh as a natural next step. Some of them signed on to Shiloh as conscientious objectors to the Vietnam War and obtained ministerial status for the war with their upcoming work for Shiloh in the city.⁶⁹ Elaine Harris recognized the time period as one in which "our country was really recognizing human dignity." She recognized Shiloh as an enterprise that upheld human dignity. "So here we were," she said, "a bunch of white kids, interested in helping people that had been oppressed—Black citizens in the heart of the city—be dignified and support them in their desire to have dignity for themselves." Kay Buckley said that she and her fellow year-round staff wanted to communicate "that there was a lot of prejudice in the country and that not all white people hated Black people."⁷⁰ Charlie Newman, along with his best friend, Phillip Roseberry, had been involved with community service activities in Nashville and Chicago, had attended several Nashville Black churches in college, and had made political statements about racial injustice on and off Lipscomb's campus. Newman said that

⁶⁷ Carson, Clayborne; Emma J. Lapinsky-Werner; Gary B. Nash, *The Struggle for Freedom: A History of African Americans*, (New York: Pearson, 2007), 481-505.

⁶⁸ Charlie Newman interview.

⁶⁹ For example, see Preston Pierce interview, Donna Roseberry interview.

⁷⁰ Kay Buckley, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, June 21, 2012, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

Shiloh exemplified the spirit of young, religious activism of the times that he, someone who was interested in combating racism, wanted to be a part of more than anything. “I came as soon as I graduated in 1970. . . It was almost like there was nothing else I considered but Shiloh. . . Where else could I go? There was no place except that that seemed like there was life happening. Everything I cared about, it was at Shiloh.”⁷¹ For Newman and other Shiloh year-round staff, Shiloh’s year-round program was a natural extension of what they understood the Christian counterculture to be. Donna Roseberry and Phillip Roseberry, after they got married out of college, purposefully took their first apartment in a low-income part of Nashville and hung Shiloh materials on their walls before they ever even considered going to Shiloh, posters emblazoned with images of inner-city poverty contrasted with suburban wealth and captioned with the Bible verses from the book of Amos that condemned those who were casually comfortable in the face of poverty:

Woe to those. . .
Who recline on beds of ivory,
And sprawl on their couches,
And eat lambs from the flock,
And calves from the midst of the stall,
Who improvise to the sound of the harp,
And like David have songs composed for themselves,
Who drink wine from sacrificial bowls,
While they anoint themselves with the finest of oils,
Yet they have not grieved over the ruin of Joseph.”⁷²

The radicalism of the times created a Christian subculture influenced by the Jesus Movement out of California. The idealism in religious zeal could make for some heady, unrealistic beliefs that an otherworldly faith would overcome real-world

⁷¹ Charlie Newman interview.

⁷² Donna Roseberry interview.

problems, even ones as deeply entrenched as racial injustice. “When you believe that you and Jesus can do anything,” said Craig Bogart, “I mean, you’re kicking down the gates of Hell. We thought we were going to change all the ghettos in New York City. There’d never be another ghetto there.”⁷³

Yet that heady religious zeal was not always productive nor appropriate. Kimble Forrister acknowledged that Shiloh’s own propaganda about the difficulty of city life presented a distorted picture of how residents of the city lived to some white people who had little exposure to the city itself. He remembered a young potential staffer who came to orientation for the year-round program who was determined to buy washcloths and soap for each child and teach them how to use them, “assuming they had never bathed before. I mean it was just a lot of preconceptions about—that these kids had never known love before.”⁷⁴

Shiloh, as a whole, did its best to give new workers a taste of what they would be experiencing in the city and how their former worldviews might be challenged. The year-round program at Shiloh began with a lengthy orientation to help the new staff understand the city and the residents that the workers would be in contact with. That training also forced new Shiloh workers to think about church and faith and whether those concepts were relevant to the city neighborhoods in which Shiloh workers would be living. Training classes included a group role-play entitled, “Church of Christ and Christianity on Trial,” in which participants acted as lawyers and argued either for or against the charge, “The Church [Churches of Christ] and Christianity

⁷³ Craig and Lynn Ann Bogart interview.

⁷⁴ Kimble Forrister, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, June 27, 2013, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

[ethical perspectives identified as Christian] are currently deleterious to blacks and, as such, are invalid for them.” Participants were to argue for or against this charge and determine if the faith and the church needed condemnation or reform.⁷⁵ The Shiloh workers were attempting, in orientation, to stretch what they knew and learn new ways of seeing church, the world, and their faith. Don Haymes came to orientation and spoke in a very confrontational manner about the hubris of bringing love to the residents of city neighborhoods, and he was attempting to combat a racist perception that people who lived in the inner city didn’t have any love at all in their lives already.⁷⁶ The Shiloh workers read books like *Manchild in the Promised Land*, a biography about a young Black man in New York City; and *Invisible Man*, by Ralph Ellison, who also wrote this simple question in an essay, one that evangelicals might have needed to hear: “Why is it that so many of those who would tell us the meaning of Negro life never bother to learn how varied it really is?”⁷⁷

The orientation material was helpful, but it was limited information and it was abstract, and the Movement, though impactful, did not give Shiloh workers a full understanding of the city or its residents. When they got to the neighborhoods, they saw real conditions and the real humanity of a number of the many lives encompassed within Ellison’s entreaty. They experienced firsthand what their new neighbors lived and who they were. Their initial identification with the Movement values and

⁷⁵ Phillip Roseberry, “Church and Christianity on Trial,” undated, Shiloh Voices Digital Scans Collection, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

⁷⁶ Don Haymes, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, September 18, 2012, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

⁷⁷ Davy Hall interview; Ralph Ellison, “The World and the Jug,” in *Shadow and Act*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1953, Vantage edition, 1972), 108.

with evangelical concepts of relationship and love would now put them in positions where they would have to face some significant real-world issues living in the city. They experienced the conditions that had led to fires, riots, and play in city neighborhoods.

The Shiloh workers first moved into various neighborhoods across the city in the late 1960s, now physically witnessing the material conditions of life there. A number of the Shiloh workers who moved into tenement housing in East New York and Brownsville saw for themselves the conditions that existed for many underserved residents of the neighborhoods at that time. Preston Pierce remembered that when he lived in a tenement in Brownsville, the building's landlord turned off the heat in the frigid wintertime to save himself money, and as a result a little baby froze to death in the building that winter. Pierce tried multiple times to get the landlord to turn the heat back on, but the landlord always had excuses for not doing so. Pierce went to the landlord's office in downtown Brooklyn, where the landlord sat behind bullet-proof glass while he told Pierce he was doing everything he could. So, in desperation, Pierce and others he did not name took the matter of the heat in the building into their own hands:

That weekend we broke into the basement, broke into where the furnace was. And we figured out how to fire it up. It was toasty warm. We let it go for a couple of weeks. Then I called him to tell him it was not an oil-fired furnace; it was natural gas. "It is working nice." He was furious. He was going to have me in jail, in court. I said fine. Police didn't come into our neighborhood. They didn't come to help him, didn't come to help me. For the rest of that winter, we had heat.

Though he had won a small winter's battle with the building's landlord, the larger issues still persisted around him. Pierce said that he never quite worked out in his

own personal theology, why, if the people who lived in Brownsville were unique and loved by God, they were permitted to live in such difficult material circumstances.⁷⁸

Shiloh workers discovered other difficulties of living common to the area, too. Food and grocery services were often unhealthy in the most densely populated areas of New York like East New York and Brownsville where white flight had occurred. When Jo Ogle, who had been a home economics major in college, invited neighborhood girls in East New York over to teach them how to bake cookies, something that felt very natural to her way of communicating with others, the girls asked if they could also bring their mothers. Ogle realized that the girls' mothers did not bake cookies because they would have had to travel a significant distance on the train to get proper ingredients, and that they did not have plastic containers in their apartments to keep sugar and flour in, containers that would keep the roaches out, and that was a reason why the girls' mothers were not baking cookies in their homes. Ogle said that, even though she had brought lots of Tupperware to East New York, she herself found the roaches in her own apartment pervasive, awful, and troublesome, and other Shiloh workers noted the roaches, too, and also the lack of proper grocery supplies nearby.⁷⁹ The nearest grocery store to the Shiloh workers' living spaces, called the Royal Giant, was far away, did not have a good odor, carried poor produce, and charged high prices. Some Shiloh workers called it the Royal Rip-Off.⁸⁰ The Shiloh workers in East New York were finding their way in a food desert.

⁷⁸ Preston Pierce interview.

⁷⁹ Jo Ogle interview.

⁸⁰ John Harris, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, July 25, 2012, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

Jo Ogle was pregnant when she moved to East New York, and she could see the difficulties of pregnancy and young motherhood in such a living situation. She saw vermin and roaches in her apartment and “murdered” them regularly. When she went to take her newborn for a walk, she had to navigate glass on the sidewalk and a drunk man in a doorway. She became obsessed with safety issues in ways she had not before. To take her baby to the pediatrician, she had to get on the elevated train and maneuver a stroller up and down the stairs to the train. On top of all of that, someone broke into their house and stole their baby clothes and the food out of their refrigerator.⁸¹ Shiloh workers like Preston Pierce spoke about Welfare laws at the time that kept men from living with female Welfare recipients in New York, so that almost all of the people living around them were single women and children and not men.⁸² Shiloh workers recognized that this factor dramatically compounded for neighborhood residents whatever temporary problems that someone like Jo Ogle was experiencing as a new mother in the neighborhood. By 1969 nearly one quarter of Brooklyn’s Black families were on Welfare. In 1971 in Brownsville, it was 38 percent. They were not generous Welfare payments, according to Harold Connolly, author of *A Ghetto Grows in Brooklyn*. The payments scarcely provided more than minimum subsistence and operated to control the recipients. Housing, writes Connolly, was the most significant complaint in Bedford-Stuyvesant, northern neighbor of East New York and Brownsville. Black people paid approximately

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Preston Pierce interview. For more on “Man in the House” laws and the regulation of sexuality under Welfare at the time, see Alison Lefkowitz, “Men in the House: Race, Welfare, and the Regulation of Men’s Sexuality in the United States, 1961-1972,” *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, September 2011, Vol. 20, No. 3, Intersections of Race and Sexuality (September 2011), pp. 594-614.

equal rent in 1960 and in 1970 to borough whites, who were paying for superior quarters. Rent was often one quarter of the family income for Black families.

Whites were four times as likely to own air conditioning, twice as likely to have more than one bathroom. Relative to respective incomes, Black residents paid 1.41 greater rent than whites.⁸³

Other physical problems existed, too, in the landlord-neglected buildings. The bathroom in Donna and Phillip Roseberry's apartment was just below the bathroom in the apartment above, which had leaky pipes. Every time the people in the apartment above flushed the toilet, water came down into the Roseberrys' bathroom. So Phillip winkingly but pragmatically rigged an umbrella from the ceiling so that it would hover above and protect the person in their apartment during private moments in the bathroom.⁸⁴ Though the umbrella was a humorous solution, Donna Roseberry said, about the conditions in East New York overall:

I can remember looking at the neighborhood and just thinking that I had never seen anything like that. Phillip had described it, when he came back from that [first] visit, as a neighborhood that looked like what he thought Germany would have looked like when it was bombed out; that there were just buildings that were crumbling. And then a few would be standing and then there'd be more crumbling. That's a fairly good description of the neighborhood.⁸⁵

Fires affected Shiloh workers in East New York and Brownsville, too. Kay Buckley remembers that, at any point, she felt she might come home and her apartment would be burned. Even if it wasn't, she said, you could still be affected by a fire in the building where you lived. She remembers going out one night and returning home to realize that there had been a fire in the apartment above hers, so all the things in her

⁸³ Connolly, p. 195-198.

⁸⁴ Preston Pierce interview.

⁸⁵ Donna Roseberry interview.

apartment were water damaged and smoke damaged. “That’s the type of thing that could happen,” she said. “You might come back, and your apartment would be gone.”⁸⁶

There were other challenges that the city environment posed. What Shiloh staffers would experience in the 1970s was not simply interacting with people of a different skin color, but they were also interacting with new environments. Moving into a densely populated, underserved urban area could at first be a theological and cultural shock for the young white Southerners from the churches of Christ, especially for those who had few predecessors to guide them in how to view the transition. Marty Hooper was a young college-age white man, one of the first Shiloh volunteers to live in East New York for one year, in its first year of 1967. He authored an article for those back home in the Southern churches of Christ, and his words reveal the differences between his new home and the one he had left in the South, as well as the difficulties posed by that new environment. He lived at 436 Williams Avenue in project housing in Brooklyn near two other Shiloh volunteers, who lived in the same building that he did. He played in the gym with neighborhood kids after their school day until 9:00 at night, and then he had to ride the subway home. He was scared, he wrote, and the subway entrance was dark. There was gang activity around him. There was a garbage-worker strike, and the garbage was on fire. He tried to be inconspicuous, but he was so white that he felt like he always stood out. There were Black kids on the subway trying to argue with a cop about paying the fare, and the cop threatened them with a nightstick. Hooper wrote that he felt alone. He felt like praying. He knew he needed to trust God, and this need for trust was one of the

⁸⁶ Kay Buckley interview.

things that made his time in the city worthwhile so far.⁸⁷ Marty Hooper's fears reflect his displacement in an environment where his traditional markers of safety and consistency were gone, and he had to rely on perspectives of the sacred world that he had learned in his home in the South, perceptions that he would survive under God's protection while he was in Brooklyn, and they also point to issues that existed within the neighborhood for any of its residents.

The children themselves could stretch their ideas of what they had come to do. Jo Ogle, who came to Shiloh with her husband Bryan Hale in 1968 after they did missionary work in Canada, remembers that it was a challenge to figure out what to do with local children who were now signed up to be a part of the Shiloh program. Bryan Hale at first tried to help teenaged boys repair a motor, but he thought that it might not be a promising idea because there were some boys who might use the new knowledge to steal a car. He was challenged to think in new ways. Instead of the motor repair, he formed a basketball team and required the children attend a Bible study afterwards, and this proved to be a major success--the Shiloh basketball team and then multiple teams thereafter would be a mainstay of the Shiloh program for the rest of the decade. Jo Ogle also remembers encountering a boy who could not read at a basic level, and she said that a tutoring program then became part of the program's "new mission."⁸⁸

Their whiteness was also something they had to deal with in ways that they had not understood before. They learned in various ways how to question their own

⁸⁷ Marty Hooper, *Hope*, 1967, Shiloh Voices Digital Scans Collection, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

⁸⁸ Jo Ogle interview.

motives for being in the city, as well as how to behave now that they were there. In the Shiloh program that existed in Hempstead, New York, the entire group had an intentional dialogue with a group of mainly Black students in a class at Hofstra University in Hempstead. The class members asked them why they were in the neighborhood. The Shiloh workers asked how they could best fit in with the community. “Then a lot of the students there had things to say,” said Dennis Watson, the group leader at Hempstead, “some of them more hostile than others. Basically, we got some good ideas about fitting into the community—treating ourselves like visitors instead of owners.”⁸⁹ Living up to the concepts that they were advised to follow may have been more difficult than not in a country that inherently presented whiteness as superior and white people as owners instead of visitors.

Shiloh in the City: Relationships

Shiloh workers were experiencing neighborhood and housing inequity for the first time. Their first response was often to form relationships. When asked whether people in the community of East New York where she grew up knew about the Shiloh program, Elaine Williams Cruz responded that Camp Shiloh had a warm and positive reputation among the people she knew in the neighborhood as a child:

Oh, they were very much part of the community. Everyone knew them as Camp Shiloh. If you’ve seen one of them, the community would point them out. Even if they didn’t know them by name, they would point them out that there’s that Camp Shiloh people. They were a part of the community, and everyone knew them. If somebody wanted to participate, have their children participate in the program, they were just like family in the community.

Cruz’s characterization of the community view of Shiloh included her own lived experience of the relationships she had with Shiloh year-round workers growing up as

⁸⁹ Connie and Dennis Watson interview.

participant in the Shiloh program. She described the relationships that she had with Shiloh workers as “pleasant,” “patient,” and “encouraging,” which would certainly be the way that Shiloh workers desired to approach their relationships with children in the Shiloh programs.⁹⁰ Danny Cruz, who would later become Elaine’s brother-in-law and who also participated in Shiloh programs as a young man, had an equally positive assessment of the Shiloh program. He referred to children’s instinctive knowledge of sincerity when he referred to the workers he knew: “You know when people like you,” he said.⁹¹ When Shiloh worker Beth Clark wrote a profile of one of the children she had come to know in the Shiloh program, Yolanda Melendez, she ended the writing with the same question about Melendez and then its answer, “Can you tell? I like her.”⁹²

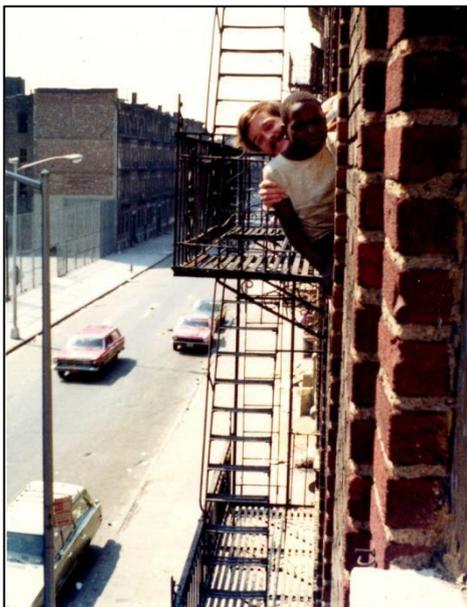
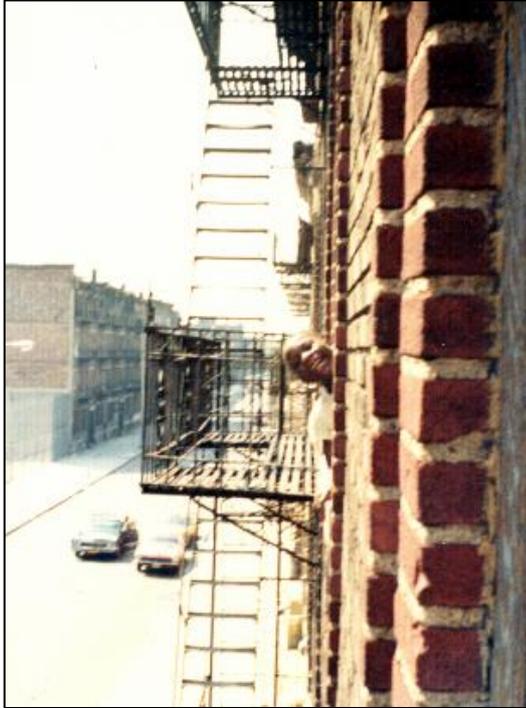
As they had always been at Shiloh, relationships were central purposes of the program and were the elemental methods of communication for the Shiloh groups scattered across the city. Relationships with Shiloh children included many elements of play with children in the program, both structured and unstructured, and through play and silliness the Shiloh workers entered relationships with the children in the language that children understood already. This may have been an unplanned bonus to workers in places like East New York and Brownsville, where children were so

⁹⁰ Elaine Williams Cruz, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, August 3, 2013, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

⁹¹ Danny Cruz, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, November 28, 2012, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

⁹² Beth Clark, “Yolanda Melendez,” *Hope*, 1975. Shiloh Voices Digital Scans Collection, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

prevalent and childcare was desperately needed. Shiloh workers were automatically meeting a significant material need of the community.



Figures 4.16 and 4.17 A Shiloh participant, Charlie Thomas, and a Shiloh worker, Tom Harris, lean playfully out of an apartment window in East New York in 1973, to pose for two consecutive photographs against the backdrop of a fire escape that leads to the street below. They are incorporating elements of their surroundings into their

play. Pht02118 and Pht02120. Shiloh Digital Photo Collection Baylor University Institute for Oral History.



Figure 4.18 A Shiloh worker and two children ride the subway together, incorporating a moment of playfulness into their journey, ca. 1975. Pht01562. Shiloh Voices Photo Collection. Baylor University Institute for Oral History, .



Figure 4.19 Shiloh workers have set up a “penny carnival” at the East New York community center in 1974, and a Shiloh participant gamely stands behind a door in order to be the target of the “sponge toss” while another boy looks on. Pht01554. Shiloh Voices Photo Collection. Baylor University Institute for Oral History,

Shiloh workers wanted to express the love of God to the children through their relationships and through their very presence in the neighborhood. They tried to communicate a combination of an evangelical understanding of God as an indweller of city life and as someone who takes joy in Black and Brown children's lives. The relationships they formed included play as a significant element, and religion as another. One of the best ways to see the ways that the theological perspectives of the Shiloh workers were affected by the neighborhood kids and then in turn to see the way that the neighborhood kids were affected by the theology of the Shiloh workers is in a small 1973 publication, also referenced above, that the Shiloh staffers and kids from East New York, Brownsville, and the East Village made together in their small group time called *The Gospel According to the Children of Shiloh*. This book was sold as a fundraiser for Shiloh at the time. The front of the book is covered with drawings of happy children in city neighborhoods: smiling while waiting in line for the subway, waving while leaning out of apartment windows, playing in the water of fire hydrants, shooting basketballs, swinging around light poles in joy. The city is portrayed as natural, as a place for play, as a place for enjoyment. The faces are shaded for a Black or Brown skin tone, and the scenes present happy communities and happy children. Sometimes a white Shiloh teacher is a part of the drawing, teaching a lesson or hanging out at the basketball court. The overall impression is that of childhood joy and naturalness.

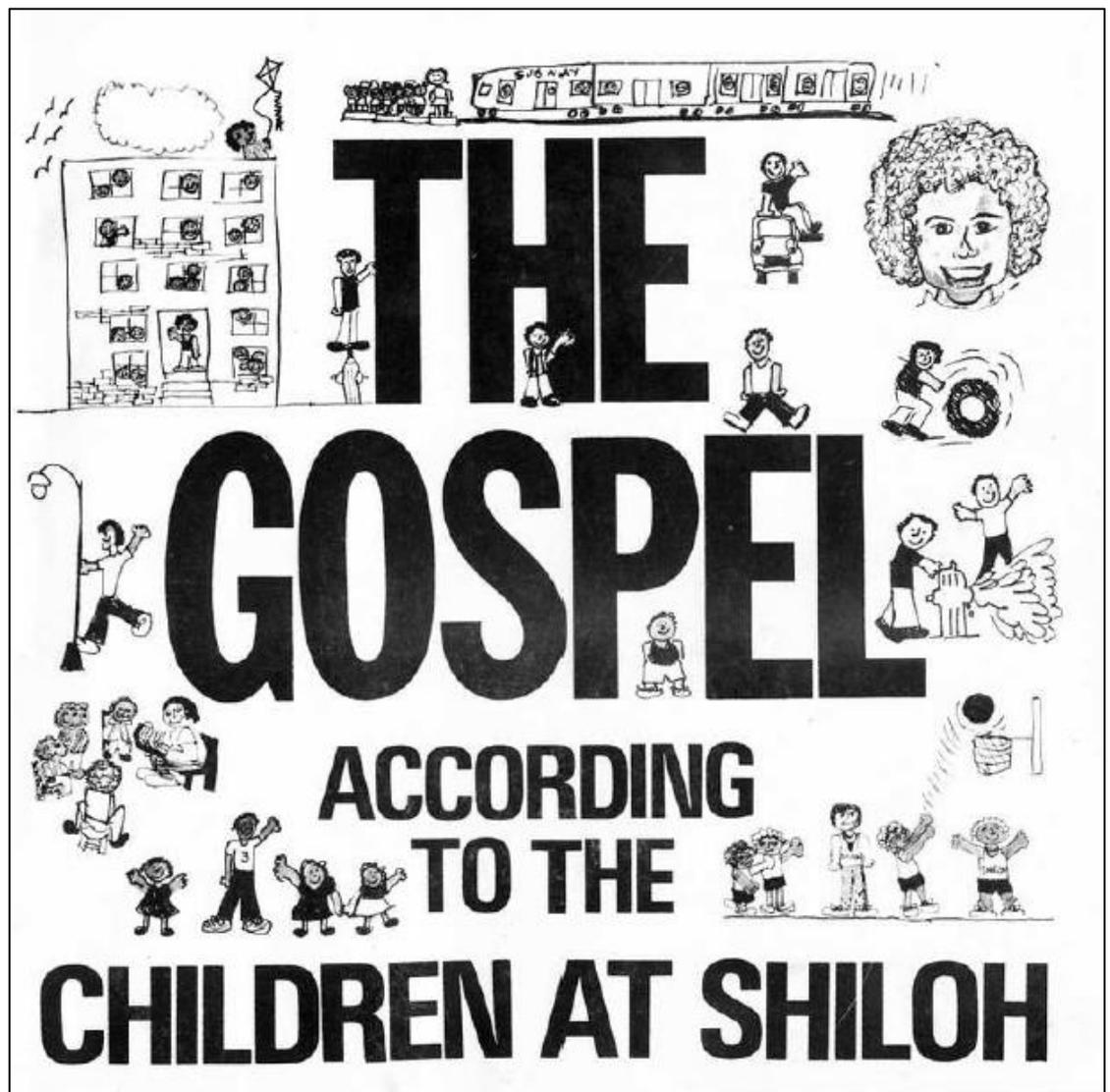


Figure 4.20 Front cover of the 1973 Shiloh-published book entitled, “The Gospel According to the Children at Shiloh.” Shiloh Voices Digital Scans Collection. Baylor University Institute for Oral History,

The pages inside the book are Bible stories, drawings, and personal reflections of the children in these Shiloh programs, also referenced in the section above. They reflect how Shiloh workers were forced to examine their own theology to communicate it to neighborhood children. Jesus’s birth, baptism, parables, life, and death, show up the as the first part of the work the children have done. Jesus’s birth story was written this way by one of the neighborhood children: “Jesus was born in a

garage. Mary had a baby. They went to the hotel and asked the man if he got some rooms for Mary. ‘We ain’t got no rooms. Might as well sleep in the garage.’ She had the baby in the garage—they made the name ‘Jesus’. When he grew up the bad man killed him and then He said he’d never die again. All of us lived happily ever after.” Much like the reflections the children had in the book, Jo Ogle and John Harris remembered trying to teach Bible lessons to the children in metaphors that hopefully made sense to their lives. John Harris recalls telling the story of the Good Samaritan and portraying the Samaritan as a Black Panther.⁹³ Ogle remembers that, for a reason she cannot recall, she once told a story that portrayed Jesus, metaphorically, as a lampshade.⁹⁴

In the book, the kids wrote stories and plays. One of the characters repeated a few times is the Good Samaritan, and in one example the Samaritan is a Black girl who goes out of her way to help a wounded Spanish girl when no one else would lend a hand. There also were reflections, like, “God can shake your world. God can put the pieces back together again,” from a girl named Annette Robinson. And another, by a twelve-year-old named Ernest Brown:

Lord, thank you for giving life and for taking life away. For now I understand that you give life, not merely to be lived, but for a reason. And I understand that you take life, not in anger, but for a purpose. Thank you for giving reason and purpose to those who serve your will.

The book also contained in-the-moment reflections from the children about their own lives, like Horace Smith’s:

⁹³ John Harris interview

⁹⁴ Jo Ogle interview

I work for the Jackson Five and I am sometimes as good as I am today. And I like girls. My name is Horace. I like to go to the movies. I watch basketball a lot and it's my favorite sport. I have a friend Douglas. And we are going to stay together forever and forever. And my teacher's name is John Harris. And he teach us about Jesus and God.

The white Shiloh workers were trying to communicate to the children, even as they were trying to understand themselves, that there was a larger sense of purpose to the world in which the children lived. Their own perceptions stretched because of the conditions within which their relationships existed, conditions of crowded city life that could feel inhospitable. But they learned to stretch into places in which the God that they knew actually found expression in city life. Donna Roseberry found herself working through the spiritual aspects of the neighborhood made of brick and concrete, a place where she had to find her identification with God anew. Ultimately, it was a relationship with a child in the Shiloh program who shifted Roseberry's focus to an understanding that God was not absent from East New York, but present, and that God's goodness existed in the humanity of the children and families around her. She said:

I always felt like the places where I felt in contact with God or saw God the most was in nature, that I felt like I was very aware of God and God's presence. So here I was in New York City. And where we lived, one apartment house had twenty-four apartments in it, and one apartment house was connected by the wall to the next apartment building with another twenty-four apartments. And it just went building by building by building, all connected to each other on that one side, and when you came out of that apartment building, you were right on the sidewalk. That went on. . . for block after block after block. And so, there was no sense of trees or yards. The children played in the street or in the parts of the buildings where other parts of the buildings had been torn down. There'd be an empty lot somewhere—that's where they played. We had to go six or seven subway stops to get to the closest park.

So, there was a sense of, "God, where in this place are you?" And I can remember walking down the block one time with my kids [in my Shiloh

group], and we had to look straight up to see birds. So that was an adjustment for me, a way of trying to look at my environment and try to figure out, Where do I communicate with God?

Also, a part of that was that I could look out of my apartment window, and I could remember at times looking out the window and seeing people hanging their arms out the windows and shooting heroin. . . And there was one little girl I had in my group whose mother was a heroin addict. I can remember going to visit her, and her mother would regularly be laying on the couch and not conscious. But that little girl, who was six, was one of the happiest little girls that I had. And I can remember one day that first summer that I was there, I was walking down the street. And she came running down the street towards me and jumped into my arms and put her arms around me and her legs around my waist, and just this biggest smile, and just laughed and really happy. And that little voice of God said, This is where I am, Donna. This is where I am. You're not going to find me in the trees, you're not going to find me where you're used to seeing me, but you'll find me in the people here. I'm here. I'm with the children. Which was a revelation to me, I think. But I think the more I listened to that voice inside of me and the more I learned about that community, my job was not necessarily to bring God, but it was to identify God. That God was already there. God was working in those neighborhoods, He was in and around those people. And my job was to identify Him. When I saw Him, I was to acknowledge Him and identify Him to the people of that community. And to myself, because it was a new way of seeing Him.⁹⁵

Donna Roseberry's revelation, provided through the happy embrace of child from a desperate home life, was that God already existed in this community. This surprised her and provided her a new way to be within the city itself, a new way to move through it with her personal view of God altered, richer, and intact.

Davy Hall also found that love and kindness existed in the city amid oppression, and it was a thrill for him to search that love and kindness out and find it. It was love and kindness that existed in both himself and the people in the city. He said:

I think we were able to open some doors to getting a different viewpoint of these neighborhoods that were so often portrayed as just crime-ridden, blah, blah, blah.

⁹⁵ Donna Roseberry interview.

Sure, they were crime-ridden, sure they were this and this and this. But there was another door that was to be opened in those places that was filled with love and kindness in those—in the worst conditions possible there was still love and kindness to be found. Every day was a search. Every day was a search to find a little bit of love and kindness in a place that it was not always to be found readily. It was always—God, it was just so exciting.⁹⁶

That sense of surprise also existed for Jane Richardson. Richardson said she learned to view the exchange of kindness and knowledge as mutual between her and the children and not simply one-sided, as proceeding from her to the children. Though she spent significant amounts of time in the city, the most meaningful example for her of a surprise spiritual lesson from a child from the city was in the summer camp portion of Shiloh one year. She was trying to calm the boys in a cabin down to sleep one night and asked them if there was a special song they would like to sing before they slept. A young Shiloh participant, Dexter Cheeks, suggested a popular Shiloh song called “Lord of the Dance,” in which Jesus is portrayed as so full of life and joy that even death cannot stop his dancing. As Dexter Cheeks sang the song, he got louder, and he hopped out of bed and began to dance. Soon ten other boys were up from their bunks and dancing, singing loudly, “It’s hard to dance with the devil on your back, they buried my body, and they thought I’d gone, but I am the dance, and I still go on.” Richardson looked back on the memory and said she carries it around with her decades later. She pictured herself as glum in the memory of the moment, at the time considering the evening a failure because she could not get the children to go to sleep. But her view of the larger lesson changed as she carried it with her. “Who had a lesson for whom about the joy of the Lord?” she asked. “I might know more scripture by chapter and verse than they do, but they might know a whole lot

⁹⁶ Davy Hall interview.

more about how the joy of the Lord really lives and breathes and carries you forward than I do. My conviction is that even when we don't consciously think about it and articulate it and name it that it may still be happening to us, that we are more taught than we talk about being." For Richardson, even in moments where she might not be able to name or understand it at the time, she was stretched to grow because of her relationship with children like Dexter Cheeks.⁹⁷

Conclusion

Like Don Haymes and other Faith Corps workers who lived in city neighborhoods before them, the year-round Shiloh workers developed a new interpretation of faith because of their life in underserved urban neighborhoods. They witnessed difficult housing and economic situations firsthand, and they experienced the possibility of danger and sorrow, but they also witnessed the abundance of life around them in the ways that children interacted with the world, with their environments, and with the Shiloh workers themselves. Far from bringing salvation to the city, it was the first the Movement and then the startling revelation of God among the children that truly opened up the theological perspectives for the Shiloh workers. Coming as they did at time in which children predominated in several of the neighborhoods in which they were working expressly with and for children, they were able to see friendships all around them and view God as a city dweller in spite of and in the middle of inhospitable conditions. In the chapter that follows, it will become clear that ongoing relationships within the city pushed them to do more and understand more about where they were and what the people around them were experiencing.

⁹⁷ Jane Richardson interview.

CHAPTER FIVE: SHILOH IN THE 1970S, PART II

We do not relate to the mission of the church. By that we mean we are attempting to be the church in mission. -Shiloh worker 1973.¹

White Shiloh workers in the 1970s lived in underserved neighborhoods and experienced a multiplicity of people and situations that challenged, opened, and redistributed the patterns of their existing worldviews. Living in the city itself exposed them to groups, spaces, and social and theological positions that they had not considered before. These neighborhoods taught lessons that Black and Brown residents had already learned from their own perspectives--about systems, about racialized boundaries, about issues of safety. White Shiloh workers would have to grapple with these issues as they made their way in neighborhoods, many of them staying there for years at a time and experiencing many things along the way, some of them experienced significant grief and significant victory, and they almost always expressed these in spiritual terms. Their evangelical faith opened up to provide room and language for daily life, plus life's highs and lows, as white evangelicals interacted across previously established racial boundaries. Whereas the previous

¹ Victor L. Hunter, "Sharing at Shiloh: An Interview with Shiloh Ministers," *Mission*, January, 1973, 20. This article presented a conversation between the interviewer, Victor Hunter of *Mission*, and several Shiloh workers, but identified the Shiloh workers who answer the questions only as "SHILOH," so no one Shiloh worker can be specifically quoted. Of the several Shiloh workers pictured in the article's images as being interviewed, I am able to identify two: Phillip Roseberry and Bryan Hale. The Shiloh workers also did state in the same article that they were not opposed to churches or evangelism, that their mission and the church's mission were identical missions of proclamation and demonstration, and that they currently had a positive relationship with the Northern churches that they were questioned about for the article. (20, 24).

chapter examined some of the most commonplace experiences of their lives in the neighborhoods, such as housing, interactions with children and neighborhoods, and the new perspectives they found in the contrast between the two, this chapter continues the themes begun in chapter 4 but takes them further into a variety of experiences. Sometimes those experiences were nuanced, like watching a film about enslavement with a Black family, and sometimes those experiences were dramatic, like the death of a coworker. Sometimes they encountered Black Power advocates and had to think about how to position Black Power in their worldviews. Often they found their expectations shifted and they found new ways of thinking beyond existing stereotypes and beyond what those in their church homes may have believed.

Because of their exposure to different lives and perspectives in the city, the white staffers in the Shiloh year-round program were able to see race and life in the city from a more nuanced perspective than they would have been able to see otherwise. They saw the difficulties and the joy, as discussed in the previous chapter, of children and mothers who lived in parts of New York City and New Jersey. They saw how humans, both adults and children, existed beyond stereotypes, even stereotypes they might have held themselves, of Black and Brown city residents. Living alongside real people required white evangelicals to push the boundaries of formulaic conceptions and to be pushed themselves. They learned to see even their own roles as white Christians in the city as subject to significant revision.

Expectations

Davy Hall remembered having to dismantle stereotypes for others during his time at Shiloh, in articulating what he knew about his neighbors in the city. He recalled

that, when he tried to raise funds for the program, white people asked him, “Are all the kids you work with juvenile delinquents? Are all the kids abandoned by their parents?” He replied that, in contrast, “Most of the children we work with have at least one parent that loves them very, very much”² Hall had moved beyond a view of the children that relied only on guesses. He now was able to speak as a witness to familial compassion in the city. The concept of parental love was also a defiance of the stereotype that poor, Black and Brown children’s city life was loveless, a thought that seems to have existed in the minds of some white evangelicals that Hall encountered.

In contrast to the stereotype, an important part of the year-round program was interaction with the children’s caregivers, and these relationships gave the Shiloh workers themselves new experiences with parents who loved their children and who were gracious to the Shiloh workers as well, even to the point of inviting them in lovingly to deal with difficult racial truths that the Shiloh workers were learning about. Karyn Blucker remembered a family, the Harts, to whom she and other Shiloh workers grew close. Mrs. Hart became close enough with Shiloh workers that she invited Blucker and several other Shiloh staffers over to watch the mini-series, *Roots*, in her home when the show first came on television. Although Blucker described the show about the struggles of an enslaved family as “intense,” she said that she found watching it with the Harts to be comfortable because Mrs. Hart went out of her way to make her Shiloh guests feel welcome and safe in her home during the

² Davy Hall, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, November 23, 2012, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

broadcast.³ Far from living the stereotype that children of the city were juvenile delinquents abandoned by their families, Blucker was a witness to the way that Mrs. Hart and her well-loved children embraced the white workers enough to learn more about a painful side of Black history and heritage alongside them.



Figure 5.1 The four boys in Karyn Blucker's Shiloh class, with their mothers, after the boys worked with Blucker to prepare a Mother's Day meal and give each mother a red rose. Kenny Hart and his mother, Barbara Hart, are on the far right of the picture. Ca. 1974. Pht18010. Baylor University Institute for Oral History. Shiloh Voices Digital Photo Collection.

Shiloh workers also began to realize that their contributions to the city would be different than their own preconceived notions. Far from transforming the city's ills with the power of their faith, the Shiloh workers found that much of what they had to offer the city residents was simply faithfulness itself. In 1975, Phillip Roseberry

³ Karyn Blucker interview.

wrote an article in a churches of Christ publication, *Mission*, that chronicled his five-year sojourn living in East New York in the Shiloh program. In the article, he described his spiritual view of himself in relationship to the city when he first arrived. For him initially, the term “inner city worker” had emotional neon lights around it, and he pictured neon lights around himself as well. The humorous drawing in *Mission* magazine showed him with a gleaming halo, a Bible, a cape, and the words “Super Shiloh” emblazoned across his chest as he strode through his day. Roseberry continued that he had initially thought of himself “cleaning up” Brooklyn in his first year, then Manhattan, then the Bronx by the third year he was in New York City. He also thought that he would have deep discussions with activists in the neighborhood, but he found instead that people were too busy just trying to get by day to day. After five years in East New York, he came to understand that, instead of blazing a spiritual path through New York City, he was instead supposed to give “a cup of cold water” to city residents, a reference to the Bible passage Matthew 10:42 in which Jesus tells his followers to help vulnerable people with simple, small acts of kindness.⁴

⁴ Phillip Roseberry, “A Skinny White Christian Moves to the Ghetto,” *Mission*, (June, 1975), 347-353.



Figure 5.2 A drawing from Phillip Roseberry's 1975 article in Mission, in which he refers to his initial conception of his spiritual superpowers as an inner city worker. Mission, (June, 1975).

Preston Pierce also wrote about the self-aggrandizing spirituality in which white Christians, including Shiloh workers like himself, presumed to understand and dictate the moral choices of people who lived in poverty in the city. Pierce's writing here suggested the necessity for a level of self examination and an intense movement forward if evangelicals were to make changes that mattered. In a 1977 paper he entitled "Paternalism," he wrote:

Often, full-time Shiloh staff members come with many misconceptions. We are very presumptuous to assume that middle class young people can take a year out of college and move to the ghetto and tell these mothers what is best for their children or their community. . .

A reality we face is that the majority of the adults and the children growing up in East New York and Brownsville will continue to live in these communities or similar communities. I hope to God that there can be drastic changes made in American society and that no one will have to live in these kinds of situations. I am interested in being involved in this kind of

change. . . . Until changes can be made on a larger scale to eliminate these problems, Christians must be outspoken against the forms of dehumanization and be willing to make this statement part of our lifestyles.⁵

Pierce's writing here articulated a series of changes, first from the misconceptions and presumptions of white Christians who think they know best, then second, to someone who has reached an understanding that there are significant forces at work that push Black and Brown people into living conditions that defy simple spiritual solutions. Finally, Pierce then called on Christians, especially white Christians like himself, to embody and to bring about with their very lives a kind of societal change that rebuked systemic injustice and did not allow such injustice to exist. In these paragraphs, Pierce chronicled three phases of a dramatic spiritual transformation he believed to be necessary for white Christians in American society. Pierce was articulating his own transformation as well as attempting to push himself and others in the church further into the process of transformation in order to change systemic evils. Pierce's writing shows the level of introspection necessary as a white evangelical who lived in the city. For his colleague at Shiloh, Jane Richardson, Shiloh could have done even more to continue a self-examination process and make further attempts not to push white values onto non-white people.⁶

Shiloh workers in the 1970s experienced the graciousness of people in the neighborhoods, against the stereotype of an uncaring criminal population. When the plumbing was not working in the program in Newark, one Shiloh worker asked the

⁵ "Paternalism," document prepared by Preston Pierce, January 21, 1977. Pub24003-Pub24010. Shiloh Voices Digital Scans Collection, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

⁶ Jane Richardson, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, April 1, 2013, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

mother of one of the children in her Shiloh group if she could shower at their home, and the mother said she could.⁷ Jo Ogle Hale remembered that when her husband, Bryan Hale, was traveling often to oversee various aspects of the Shiloh programs around the area, the teenaged boys on his Shiloh basketball team came to her apartment in East New York to look in on her and her newborn daughter and ask if they were all right. They did not come into her home, a rule that they set for themselves, but they often went to the store to pick up items that she needed. Other young people in the area were also fond of her daughter, Heather Lee, called her “Heatherly Featherly,” and doted on Heather.⁸ Donna Roseberry remembered that when the mothers of Shiloh in the East New York neighborhood realized that she and her husband did not have a television, they arranged a Bingo game to raise money to purchase the Roseberrys a television set.⁹ Several of the Shiloh workers, after their time at Shiloh ended, lived with a family in East New York for a time when the workers needed a place to live in the neighborhood.¹⁰

But the situation was, of course, complex, and there were many difficulties to interact with. John Reynolds remembered that, although the children in the neighborhood were exuberant, as children are, many teenagers and adults had a hopeless aspect to them in a manner that he had never witnessed before. People in

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Jo Ogle, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, September 14, 2012, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

⁹ Donna Roseberry, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, July 19, 2013, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History..

¹⁰ Davy Hall interview.

East New York contradicted the stereotype that poor people did not want to work, but they taught him that there was just nothing available to them. Reynolds relayed that over and over again people asked him if he could get them a job, even though he had no jobs to offer anyone. One summer, there were a few hundred jobs that were opening up for people in the neighborhood, and Reynolds recalled that thousands. “not a thousand, *thousands*,” of teenagers waited in line to have a chance to get one of the positions. Reynolds felt that people wanted a way out of their situation of poverty, but they did not know how to accomplish that in a world stacked against them, and many people he encountered simply blamed themselves. He also remembered a boy he tutored in the Shiloh program who needed to pass an arithmetic test to pass to the next grade level. The boy worked so hard in order to get ready to pass the test, but that year the school decided they did not have the money to administer the test anymore. It was simply another part of the community where “nothing works,” according to Reynolds.

None of the institutions that sustain life, that we take for granted—that the air we breathe—they don’t work. You go to the library, and it’s got when it’s open and when it’s not open there. It might be open; it might not be open. You’re going through school; you work hard; you’re trying to get ahead. They just say, Oh, we’re not going to give you the test. The hell with you. We don’t care. You’re not worth it. You’re not worth the expense of even just administering the test.

Shiloh workers’ position as white newcomers in the neighborhoods did put them in direct contact with groups who advocated for forms of resistance against systemic white oppression, and these interactions would again push the Shiloh workers to evaluate where their spiritual and social boundaries were. Donna Roseberry remembered one summer that she lived across the hall from a man who was a member of the Black Panther party. This man invited Donna and her husband, Phillip, over

for dinner one evening, which she recalls as a fairly pleasant evening, despite her initial fears and misgivings. She had always been taught back home that the Panthers were trying to overthrow the government, never that they had organized to feed neighborhoods and poor children free breakfasts, and here her expectations were turned upside down. Another time the same Black Panther protected her space and her belongings. He sat in front of the couple's doorway to guard their things when a fire erupted in their building while they were away: the fire department had broken down their door to check for issues inside the apartment, and the Black Panther didn't want junkies to steal from the Roseberrys while they were away and the door was down, so he guarded their apartment doorway until their return.¹¹

Panthers were often a source of a reversal of the Shiloh workers' conceptions: Preston Pierce remembers that a group of Brownsville Black Panthers forcibly took him to an abandoned building one evening. They told him they were going to throw him out of the window of the building and kill him. While they were confronting him, Pierce let them know what he and the other Shiloh workers were doing in their neighborhood. In the end, after he convinced them that what he was doing was good for the neighborhood, they told Pierce, "It's okay for you guys to be here." Pierce recalled that he ultimately respected Black Panthers. He recalled his own impressions that he believed the Panthers and the Black Muslims in the neighborhoods were positive influences, people who wanted the neighborhoods to be better. Pierce also remembered that Black Panthers wanted to keep absentee landlords accountable for the buildings they were supposed to govern, something that he, too, found important. He remembered that Panthers put up signs in the buildings

¹¹ Donna Roseberry interview.

with pictures of the landlords and their home and office numbers and addresses. “We are sick and tired of being taken advantage of,” was the attitude he imputed to the Panthers. In this way he regarded their goals for the neighborhoods as very similar to his own. He in fact would explain to people in the neighborhood who wondered about Shiloh that Shiloh workers were in the neighborhood for neighbors to take advantage of.¹²

Douglas Shafer recalled the Black nationalist religious group the Five Percent Nation, who believed that Black people were Gods and knew the truth whereas white people were not and did not, chanted antagonistically at him while he waited for the elevator in his building that white people were the devil. Shafer saw this as their right as disenfranchised people, and said he felt comfortable in his own skin enough for the animosity to be all right with him. After living in the neighborhood for several years, he did not go out of his way to avoid people who were part of the Five Percent Nation.¹³

Other stories from Shiloh workers reveal their memories of groups and individuals that continued to push and pull at common stereotypes and expectations, or to defy categories that Shiloh workers already had in their minds. The Shiloh group in Newark were overseen by and regularly attended a Black church of Christ that was more socially and spiritually conservative and less politically concerned than the Shiloh workers were, defying their hopes and expectations of connecting with a

¹² Preston Pierce, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, July 28, 2012, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

¹³ Douglas Shafer, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, November 26, 2012, first interview, transcript .of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History

socially activist, liberal Black congregation.¹⁴ One of the boys in Kimble Forrister's Shiloh group became a Black Muslim, which was not difficult for Forrister to accept or understand, excepting only that he and his colleagues were intentional about trying to shed religious rules and legalism, and he found legalism more abundant in the Black Muslim faith than in his own. In this way, the boy in Forrister's group defied some of Forrister's most precious expectations for him: religious ones, and to Forrister the boy became more "bound" by rules than Forrister believed God wanted, even as Forrister himself tried to push against legalism from his own white churches of Christ upbringing.¹⁵ Another boy in the Shiloh program grew up to believe that Shiloh provided his initial religious foundation, but he continued in his faith to delve into research about a Black historical Jesus from Africa.¹⁶ Though many Shiloh workers might have supported his search and even his conclusions about a Black Jesus later in life, he is still an example of how religion itself did not always take the form that white evangelicals expected or thought to teach.

For people like Jo Ogle, the experience of seeing people in aspects of their nuance and difference, within the context of an obviously racialized space like East New York, provided a radical change in the way she saw people in general. She saw them as doing their best. Instead of thinking that residents should simply clean up their neighborhood from the trash that was around them or try to move away, she

¹⁴ Jane Richardson interview.

¹⁵ Kimble Forrister, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, June 27, 2013, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History..

¹⁶ Danny Cruz, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, November 28, 2012, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

realized there were systemic and emotional reasons that people were in the places where they were. She also realized that differences did not equal a lack of morality or human dignity. Her time in East New York moved her away from a kind of thinking that relied only on a white suburban ideal of how people lived or ought to live. The experience of living in East New York, she said:

... opened my eyes to things are just not black and white. They are not. And I don't mean race. I mean people who think that people can just clean up the ghetto or stop living that way or whatever. It's just not that simple. Ever. And so that builds tolerance and acceptance of people being different than me, and it's okay that they are.¹⁷

Douglas Shafer, who stayed in East New York for fifteen years, even beyond his Shiloh experience, expressed a similar sentiment. Shafer said that, after he had lived in East New York for a year, he began to realize that there was a difference between the quality of life that existed on one side of the street and another, and that a set of decisions created those circumstances. He said:

Here's the woman that's doing the best she can in the situation she's got. Here's the man that really cares about his kids. Here's Mr. Hopkins who really gives a damn about the neighborhood and is like a watchdog for everything that goes on in and out of 380 Williams Avenue. Pretty soon I really began to realize that a lot of the mythology about people on welfare and such was not true at all, not in the case of any single family that I ever met.¹⁸

¹⁷ Jo Ogle, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, September 14, 2012, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

¹⁸ Douglas Shafer, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, November 26, 2012, second interview, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

In addition to moving beyond stereotypes of people who lived in the city, Shiloh workers recognized racialized space, just as Douglas Shafer had done in realizing that one side of the street was qualitatively different than another in East New York. Shiloh workers, as white, privileged people pushed boundaries of racialized space as they worked. Both Shiloh workers and children moved in and out of these boundaries under the auspices of Shiloh. Not only did Shiloh workers play with and spend time with people, especially children, of different skin colors than their own, but they also entered into spaces that were typically viewed as spaces that were not for them, and they brought children into spaces that were typically viewed as spaces that were not for people who were Black or Brown. White Shiloh workers played basketball on outdoor neighborhood courts and in local community centers that were typically seen as spaces where Black and Brown people lived and played, and each Saturday they brought Shiloh children on field trips around the city. They often participated in church together with the children in their apartments on Sundays. Some Sundays the field trips were to the nearest church of Christ, and sometimes the children would spend time in the homes of the white churches of Christ attendees. Children might go on field trips with the Shiloh worker to the South to stay with a Shiloh worker's parents or to play basketball against a churches of Christ college team, although crossing into the South could be a scary moment for the children as they rode in Shiloh vans across the Macon-Dixon line. One teenager in the Shiloh program thought that their field trip to the white suburbs was nice, but he was disappointed that there were so few people in the suburbs who were hanging around outside, and as a result he was sad that suburban dwellers seemed to have no one to

talk to.¹⁹ Some of the children went to Washington, DC, and met Brooklyn-native Shirley Chisholm, arranged by Shiloh workers, and one woman who was a child in the program remembers that in the trip to DC as a child, all the people she saw there were white, and they stared at her, even while she stared back at them.²⁰ One man who was in the Shiloh program as a boy remembered the field trips as very important to him: he said that seeing places beyond his neighborhood where there were never white people except for police officers helped him to realize that there was more of the world to see and experience.²¹

These experiences transformed many of the Shiloh workers' life trajectories, even as it changed their worldviews. Right after her Shiloh experience, Jane Richardson moved to metropolitan New York to work with the New York City Housing Authority, and she stayed in the area for the rest of her career, advocating for proper housing for elderly people in the city. Like the boy in the Shiloh program who saw new things in the world, Richardson, too, said that her world was broadened because of her Shiloh experience because she was able to see things that she didn't know existed before.²² Craig and Lynn Ann Bogart remained in Red Bank, New Jersey, after the Shiloh program closed there, and started a program patterned exactly after Shiloh, a

¹⁹ Phillip Roseberry, "A Skinny White Christian," 350.

²⁰ Kenneth Hart, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, March 30, 2013, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History; Elaine Williams Cruz, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, August 3, 2013, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

²¹ Kenneth Hart interview.

²² Jane Richardson, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, April 1, 2013, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

program to work with underserved children in the area, called Aslan, that still exists as of this writing.²³ Kimble Forrister started a nonprofit in Alabama to politically advocate for the voices of poor Alabamians, and his younger brother, Dirk, worked in the environmental field because he learned that environmental issues more adversely affect underserved people.²⁴ Other Shiloh year-round workers of the 1970s worked in Title I schools or other organizations to help underserved populations, or became journalists who wrote about corruption that adversely affected poor people.²⁵ Karyn Blucker, who became a teacher who worked with underserved children, said that she had stayed in East New York so long because of her close relationship with the boys in her group.²⁶ Phillip Roseberry, too, wrote about the ways that the relationships with people in East New York had benefited him:

I sometimes ask myself, “Why have I stayed here for five years?” The answer is, simply, I have enjoyed it. I have enjoyed my East New York neighbors. I have developed a respect for their warmth and openness to me and their struggle for dignity. I have enjoyed my fellow ministers and our common work. And I have appreciated the challenge to my faith.²⁷

²³ Craig and Lynn Ann Bogart, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, March 21, 2013, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History..

²⁴ Kimble Forrister interview; Dirk Forrister, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, July 11, 2013, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History..

²⁵ Douglas Shafer, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, November 26, 2012, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

²⁶ Karyn Blucker, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, January 16, 2013, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History..

²⁷ Phillip Roseberry, “A Skinny White Christian,” 353.



Figure 5.3 One of the Shiloh basketball teams looks on while Bryan Hale shakes the hand of a representative of Lipscomb College, where the team is about to play a game with the Lipscomb Bisons in Nashville, Tennessee. Robert “Buzzy” Neil, a Lipscomb graduate and summer camp director at Shiloh in the 1960s, stands near the two men shaking hands, ca. 1973. The team has entered into a space traditionally set apart as being only for white people. Pht07015. Shiloh Voices Digital Photo Collection. Baylor University Institute for Oral History,



Figure 5.4 Karyn Blucker and four boys in her Shiloh group hold hands as they walk down the street in the East New York neighborhood, ca. 1974. The space has been designated by society as a Black and Brown space. Pht18013. Shiloh Voices Digital Photo Collection. Baylor University Institute for Oral History,

Safety

Though Shiloh workers developed meaningful relationships with children and adults in the neighborhoods in which they resided, those neighborhoods were not always free from social difficulty and strife, or even from violence. This led to white Shiloh workers specifically examining their own safety and concepts of social trust in ways that they had not had to do before in the comfort of their home neighborhoods and churches. Some Shiloh workers viewed their own safety as a matter of God's protection, some came to the realization that believing in God does not automatically mean protection. They again crossed traditional boundaries in which they had to trust neighborhood residents or think through what it meant to be safe. As previously discussed in Chapter 2, concepts of safety were part of worldviews of white evangelicals like the Shiloh workers in their views of the city. Perhaps they believed God would keep them safe in times of need, or perhaps they believed that the city was a place of great danger. But often their initial perspectives were not suited to completely understand the ways that danger and difficulty could be inherent in Black life.

Some violence was specifically directed at Shiloh workers because some local residents distrusted them as white interlopers. Charlie Newman was taking pictures of children in the Shiloh program in Hempstead, children that he already knew, and a neighborhood resident thought that Newman, a white man who was unknown to him, was taking advantage of the children by photographing them. The man was very upset that this white man would be taking pictures of Black children in the neighborhood, and he demanded the camera from Newman. Newman offered to give the man the film and not the camera, but the man insisted on the camera, and he hit Newman so hard that Newman lost consciousness and has no further recollection

of the incident.²⁸ Phillip Roseberry was playing basketball on an outdoor court in East New York, a space that had been viewed by society as a Black and Brown space, with young men in the Shiloh program when gang members stormed the court and began to beat him, leaving the Black basketball players alone. The young Black men in the Shiloh program who were on the court pleaded with the gang members that, no, Roseberry was all right, he was a friend, but the gang members beat him anyway, breaking his jaw and severely damaging his eye.²⁹ John Harris remembered Phillip Roseberry's perspective on the incident, even from the bed of the hospital after the incident, impacted his own view of faith and what it meant to be a person of faith during hard times. Roseberry said that, "“Being a Christian is not like having a rabbit's foot.”" Harris interpreted this to mean that Christianity is not some kind of special magic that keeps someone from getting hurt.³⁰

Other Shiloh workers experienced violence, not because of anger toward white people, but because violence simply existed. Shiloh children themselves recalled experiencing fear of violence in their neighborhoods, and one father of Shiloh children, a friendly, tough man who was well known and well liked in the neighborhood, recalled exactly what he was doing when he witnessed a murder.³¹

²⁸ Charlie Newman, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, October 16, 2012, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History..

²⁹ Phillip Roseberry, "A Skinny White Christian,"

³⁰ John Harris, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, July 25, 2012, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History..

³¹ Yolanda Melendez-Bentley, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, June 24, 2012, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History; Alfredo Cruz, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, November 21, 2012, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History..

Like local residents, Shiloh workers might be on the receiving end of an incident of violence or a disturbance. Elaine Harris, a Shiloh worker, recalled being threatened at knifepoint alongside a Shiloh student she was tutoring, and she said sometimes she would travel to nearby Canarsie to a white part of town where she blended in more and felt more comfortable, when she needed a release.³² Jo Ogle remembered that when she first moved into the East New York neighborhood, a police officer stopped her when she was walking down the street and asked her what she was doing in neighborhood. When Jo replied, “I live here,” the officer said, “You are crazy. I cannot protect you here.” Jo answered back that she did not need the officer’s protection, that she had bigger help than the police: she had God’s protection.³³

Douglas Shafer, who lived in East New York for fifteen years, even past the time that he spent working in the Shiloh program, said he learned to distrust the police while living in the neighborhood, viewing them not as protection but as an “occupying force.” Shafer lived in the neighborhood into the 1980s when it was well known, he recalled, that the police could get someone illegal guns and drugs.³⁴ Kimble Forrister remembered a shootout between police and a gang that occurred in the building where he lived.³⁵ Preston Pierce remembered walking down the street

³² Elaine Harris, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, July 26, 2012, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

³³ Jo Ogle, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, September 14, 2012, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History..

³⁴ Douglas Shafer interview, first interview. The documentary film, *The Seven Five*, chronicles police corruption specifically in East New York in the 1980s, when Shafer was still living there.

³⁵ Kimble Forrister interview.

in East New York holding the hand of a five-year-old boy in his Shiloh group. The boy instructed Pierce to cross the street as they were walking, and Pierce inquired why. The boy said, ““Oh, because there was a junkie coming the other way,”” and his mother had told him to cross the street when he saw a junkie. Pierce commented not only on his own naivete in relationship to the young boy’s knowledge of the situation, but also on the stark divide between the drug-using part of the community and the non-drug-using part of the community. Pierce knew that if he were to remain credible in the eyes of the mothers in the neighborhood, he should never associate with those who used heroin, because they were seen as choosing “to commit suicide.” He also recognized drug use in the neighborhood as being in dramatic contrast with the perceived sophistication of drug use in middle-class white America.³⁶

Shiloh workers tried to promote the idea of getting along and not fighting among the children in their Shiloh group, to help the children in the program have tools to choose other paths besides violence. This was at times a useful prescription, and at times it was simply not enough. One woman who was a child in the 1970s East New York Shiloh program remembered that she wanted to get into a fight with another girl after school, but then she decided not to carry on with the fight because she felt Shiloh workers would not like it.³⁷ But sometimes the situations were more complex than simply choosing fighting or not fighting. Another woman who had been a child in the program felt safe and happy at Shiloh, but she also was scared and conflicted at

³⁶ Preston Pierce ,interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, July 28, 2012, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

³⁷ Elaine Williams Cruz, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, August 2, 2013, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

home because her grandmother had a visceral and violent dislike of white people that she never explained her reasons for. The Shiloh participant's relationship with her grandmother was continually tested when she went to Camp Shiloh during the summers.³⁸ Shiloh worker John Hutcheson faced another situation in which the prescriptions of getting along and not fighting were not enough for the situation at hand. A young man in his Shiloh group, whom he had great affection for, could turn quickly violent and then resume normal social behavior. The young man had several bad situations in his life, and he ultimately died in prison. Hutcheson realized that he himself was not equipped in that situation to offer spiritual or practical solutions for the intense things that were happening in the life and mind of the boy he cared about.³⁹

Sometimes a sense of safety existed because the neighbors were there to care for the Shiloh workers. The caregivers of Shiloh children who lived in the neighborhoods allowed the children in their care to be in the program, and almost all of them were supportive of the Shiloh workers who looked after them, and even supported Shiloh taking the children across the country on field trips. In one of her first field trips across the city, Shiloh worker Karyn Blucker missed a subway stop, and she and the boys in her group got disconnected from the larger Shiloh group. Blucker had no idea what had happened or how to get to her destination, but young Terrance in her group had ridden the subway all over New York and knew how to get

³⁸ Cindy Stewart Midiwo, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, July 23, 2012, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History..

³⁹ John Hutcheson interview.

the group to safety.⁴⁰ Some Shiloh workers of the era reported that they felt the residents of the neighborhood were looking out for them, even as they were obviously visible in the neighborhood: their skin color made them stand out “like milk in a glass,” according to one East New York resident.⁴¹ One Shiloh family trusted them so much so that, when their family had to move due to a fire that burned out their apartment, the father moved the family nearer the Shiloh workers’ apartments so that his family could be more intentionally close to Shiloh.⁴²



Figure 5.5 Children in the Shiloh program on a field trip to the Statue of Liberty. The group has climbed to the crown of the statue. The symbolic promise held by the statue was open to all, but the United States had a complicated legacy in keeping that promise for many underserved groups. Pht26039. Shiloh Voices Digital Photo Collection. Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

⁴⁰ Karyn Blucker interview.

⁴¹ Preston Pierce interview; Alfredo Cruz interview.

⁴² Yolanda Melendez-Bentley interview.



Figure 5.6 Two boys in the Shiloh program have made it to the top of Pike's Peak in the Rocky Mountains of Colorado, on one group's field trip. One of the boys wears a fedora. Though this space was open to all people, it was perhaps not one traditionally associated with young Black men from Brooklyn, and was more often viewed as a space traversed by white people. Pht01526. Shiloh Voices Digital Photo Collection. Baylor University Institute for Oral History,

The Shiloh workers tried to ward off potential danger that might befall them in the city by establishing a rule that they had to walk together in pairs, with women always accompanied by a male Shiloh worker. Karyn Blucker said she felt satisfied with the rule, and Kay Buckley said she felt a sense of security in East New York that came from being with like-minded people in the Shiloh program.⁴³ But one of the very few Black Shiloh workers at the time, a woman named Kim Holland, who lived in East New York while working with the Shiloh program, had grown up in a military family and lived in many locations and situations, and she said she felt no greater sense of danger in East New York than anywhere else she had lived. She also felt

⁴³ Karyn Blucker interview; Kay Buckley interview.

that the rule in which she was not allowed to walk by herself hindered her work at Shiloh. Walking with skinny white men as her supposed bodyguards was not going to protect her from danger, it was only going to make her stand out more. Not only did the rule reinforce stereotypes of Black men as violent criminals, she said, but it also undermined her authority among the young women in her Shiloh group. When she wanted something to drink from the corner store, she had to throw money down to the teenage girls in her Shiloh group and ask them to get the drink for her. This kept her from being a credible and capable figure in their eyes.⁴⁴ Since supporting Black representation and leadership was (at times) a hoped-for goal of the Shiloh workers in East New York at the time,⁴⁵ Holland's suggestions should have been important perspectives on the matter of safety and credibility, yet the rule remained in place.

Although a number of Shiloh workers were the recipients of robbery and violence, two situations in particular arose that challenged the program workers more than most. One, a sexual assault on a woman in the program, will not be discussed in detail here because of the sensitive nature of the story. The other, the shooting death of one of the program leaders in East New York, had a wide impact on the theological perspectives of 1970s Shiloh workers. Douglas Shafer articulated a significant change in his spiritual worldview because of the death of his friend. Shafer was a man who, in college, had gone to a church that his parents picked out and who had been driven there by someone else. Growing up, his view of the world beyond his

⁴⁴ Kim Holland, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, May 5, 2013, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

⁴⁵ "Paternalism," document prepared by Preston Pierce, January 21, 1977. Pub24003-Pub24010. Shiloh Voices Digital Scans Collection, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

hometown was a map on the wall with pins in it where missionaries lived. Now he expressed a view of the world in which he wanted to live in solidarity with the poor, no matter if there was danger or difficulty involved. His being a Christian, he said, was not guaranteed to keep danger and difficulty from his life or the life of his children. He said:

I guess I've said to different people a number of times about how Phil's death impacted my view of the world and my view of Christianity and how I had thought before being a Christian was a little bit like having an umbrella follow you around and keeping the rain and the bad stuff from happening to you. Then that clearly wasn't the case. . . . That being a Christian is not some sort of automatic divine protection from the troubles and trials and disasters of the world. That our faith has more to do with how we deal with that suffering, even our willingness to participate in it as opposed to flee from it. I guess I would say now that it's not my Christian duty to protect myself from all possible harm and danger. Eventually it even impacted my decision about buying a house in the neighborhood and having my kids go to the worst school in the neighborhood—not because I wanted my kids to have a bad education, but I didn't feel like I had a duty only to my kids or immediate family to do the best I possibly could to protect them from everything in the world. That being a presence in and around injustice—including the injustice of a bad school—called for action and not just flight. If I had the means to get away from that bad school, well, that was not necessarily my obligation, is how I—is one way I guess that impacted me.⁴⁶

Conclusion

White Shiloh workers in the 1970s had many avenues from which the concept of race and racial justice might inform their faith: the children they worked with and the adults who cared for those children, the experience of racially exclusionary spaces, the moments of victory and sadness in the neighborhoods, the reconstruction of their views of themselves as white people in the world and people of faith in the world. The neighborhood around them was an endless teacher. Though at times they felt

⁴⁶ Douglas Shafer, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, November 26, 2012, first interview.

they were not doing enough or reaching far enough, they were witnesses to neighborhood realities that opened their eyes in many ways beyond the faith of their home churches.

However, as the 1970s drew to a close and the year-round program faded away, Shiloh in the 1980s would have little opportunity to draw from its own past and the understanding that the 1970s Shiloh workers had gained while living in the city. The way that Shiloh moved into the 1980s would drive home the differences that Shiloh workers had with their home churches and with the churches of Christ in the Northeast, even those who supported them. As the next chapter will show, that difference between church and nonprofit was an ongoing and sometimes troubling part of Shiloh's story.

CHAPTER SIX: CHURCHES AND SHILOH

*Our approach this year for a relationship with the Church is somewhat more free than what it has been in the past. The programs are all geographically some distance from the associated Churches. We have noticed that this year we have really had better relationships with the Churches than before. We feel that the looser connection with the Church makes the Church feel less responsible for the progress of the program and more simply to be a part of what it is. This prevents crossed lines of responsibility and disagreements which might result from that situation.*¹ --Bryan Hale, Shiloh Executive Director, in the 1973 Manual for the Shiloh Year-Round Program

The year-round Shiloh workers in the 1970s underwent transformative experiences through their work in urban neighborhoods. They worked with children and lived in neighborhood housing, learning as witnesses about the joys and difficulties of urban life. Doing so gave them new faith perspectives and new worldviews that pushed them beyond their previous experiences in their church homes. Churches, however, were still very much a part of Shiloh's story, since Shiloh workers depended on churches and church members in the South for donations and support, and since Northern churches of Christ were part of the connective network of churches of Christ Christians that Shiloh hoped to maintain for spiritual and institutional support. Shiloh's year-round program had always been envisioned as functionally connected to these churches. The churches, however, both in the North and the South, although they supported Shiloh's work, were often at odds with that work in various ways. Northern churches, when they were supposed to spiritually oversee the neighborhood programs, seemed to be antagonists to Shiloh until the relationships with Shiloh workers were intentionally less formalized.

¹ Bryan A. Hale, *Operational Manual and Explanation of Shiloh's Year Round Program*, unpublished, 1973, 24. In author's possession.

Southern churches were distrustful of Shiloh's work helping meet material needs of city residents.

Those who had not been a part of Shiloh's work, especially as represented by the board of Shiloh, continued to push for baptisms and an emphasis on traditional churches of Christ over and above what Shiloh workers were doing in neighborhoods, a concentration that ultimately destroyed the year-round program. Shiloh's next phase after the end of the year-round program was to connect more formally to local churches, but this caused the program to fade in the 1980s, as many churches had other work to do besides reach out to the city neighborhoods. None of these churches in any of these configurations in the 1970s or 1980s seemed able to functionally support a robust outreach to the city, whether the churches were to operate as oversight, in follow-up, or as support for that outreach. Even as all of this occurred, the conceptions of the churches can be contrasted with the viewpoints and actions of Shiloh workers themselves as they underwent spiritual transformations beyond the traditional understandings of church and what churches did in the world. While Shiloh moved outward into urban neighborhoods, churches did not. When Shiloh workers took activist theological and sometimes political stances, churches did not. Churches often faulted Shiloh for reaching out to these New York City neighborhoods in ways that did not comply with their view of the church's work in the world, which these churches saw as not to solve social problems but instead to evangelize and grow the church. Black churches of Christ, who were at times activist or who supported Shiloh in various ways, found the task of reaching out to city children on a regular basis simply overtaxed their own work.

Oversight: The Northern Churches and Shiloh Programs in the 1970s

Throughout its entire history, Shiloh's reputation had never been completely stable in the mainstream church of Christ in the South. At times, there was a tone in the mainstream churches of Christ that revealed an underlying racial bias, or a bias against the city or even against the white Christians who would go into the city full time. Kimble Forrister, a 1970s year-round volunteer, remembered speaking with the president of Lipscomb College in Nashville, Tennessee, during that time period to ask for support for Shiloh. College president Athens Pullius lectured Forrister about how Shiloh should change its name because the word *Shiloh* had negative overtones to Southerners from their losses in the Civil War.² William Kooi, the assistant director of summer camp for several years in the 1980s, remembered trying to recruit counselors in Southern church of Christ colleges and hearing, "Is [Shiloh] still hoods in the woods?" Kooi said that he heard this phrase multiple times from a number of people, and that, "You start to hear that [phrase] several times, and you realize, okay, there's a theme here, right?" He said that the phrase apparently referred not to the children of Shiloh but to the liberal workers that Shiloh had once employed, likely the year-round workers of the 1970s.³ Still, that remark and the remark by President Pullius reveal that negative views of spiritual liberality could be conflated and intertwined with racial bias and with negative racial views. Simply by using the word "hoods," these Southerners were bringing a freight of negative stereotypes about their views of non-normative behavior and about the kinds of people of whom they

² Kimble Forrister, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, June 27, 2013, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History..

³ William and Melinda Kooi interview May 9, 2013., transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History

disapproved. Kooi said that whenever anyone used the phrase “hoods in the woods,” he told them that he did not know what they were talking about ““but here’s what we do, and no, we’re not hoods in the woods.””

And yet not all of the lack of support for Shiloh from churches came in the form of comments with racist overtones. Shiloh set up its year-round program in the 1970s so that neighborhood workers could and were expected to connect with local churches. Several, although not all, of the area programs at this time were, by design, located geographically somewhat near a church of Christ. According to a 1973 manual for the year-round program written by Bryan Hale, the year-round program’s executive director at the time, one of the three major goals of the year-round program was to “develop and maintain as close a relationship as possible with the Churches of Christ in the four states New York Metropolitan area.”⁴ Hale’s lengthy manual contained one section called “Church Relations,” in which he outlined the expectations that the program had for Shiloh workers to attend and become involved in their local church of Christ, although those programs that were far away from a local church, such as the East New York program, which was connected to the West Islip Church of Christ on Long Island, had looser guidelines for church attendance and involvement. In the manual, it was clear that these churches were ostensibly the overseers of each geographical area program, although this role was never defined. Hale envisioned that, if the Shiloh workers maintained positive relationships with the local church, “there is no reason why within a few years time the Church could not totally take over the program without any assistance from the Shiloh workers.”⁵

⁴ Bryan A. Hale, *Operational Manual and Explanation of Shiloh’s Year Round Program*, 1.

⁵ Hale, *Operational Manual*, 1973, 20.

Hale continued to be hopeful about the Shiloh vision of church as the primary spiritual outreach to the local community.

Hale also wrote that it was vital that Shiloh workers be able to understand that there was a specific structure to church and church life, and to respect that structure as part of what a worker should expect upon joining the Shiloh year-round program:

We have also learned of the necessity to recruit workers who are aware of Church relationship to Shiloh and who are willing to work within church structure. Another type of program for a Christian outreach would certainly be valid, but since this is the approach which Shiloh uses, it is well advised that workers who can fit into that structure be recruited.⁶

Although he was hopeful about church relations with Shiloh, Hale acknowledged past difficulties between local churches and Shiloh area programs, with the latter seen at times as making too many requests of the church members and leadership. It was possible, Hale warned, for the Shiloh group to become a separate social group within the church that found itself at odds with the larger church itself. Though he did not elaborate on any specific past difficulties in his manual, he did allude to them as having occurred, and he made reference to possible solutions. Hale suggested the possibility that there be a designated liaison between the church and the Shiloh group, a person who might be able to go on field trips or be involved in some of the program activities, and he urged Shiloh workers to do church work such as teach Sunday school classes and attend business meetings and functions for their local church of Christ. He suggested that Shiloh workers meet regularly with elders and church leadership to communicate with them about the Shiloh program. He clearly thought that, if the two groups had different functions, perhaps sharing some of that functionality would ease any difficulties that might arise.

⁶ Hale, 23.

In the year in which he wrote, five years after the year-round program began, Hale felt that the relationships with the churches had become healthy ones. But according to the manual, this was not as a result of increased effort or new intensified liaisons on the part of both Shiloh and the churches. It appeared to be as a result of the two groups letting each other operate within their own spheres. The freer, less formal relationship with churches that removed churches from more formal oversight of Shiloh programs, while still requiring attendance and involvement from Shiloh workers, seemed to be working. Hale wrote:

The situation which we now have is that we are of one mind with the congregations and we are simply not at strife with any of them. There is no warfare, nor is any anticipated. To some, it would seem paradoxical that *a less structured tie with the local congregation* [emphasis mine] produced greater spiritual association. Nonetheless, that has been the case in our experience.⁷

A less structured tie with local congregations suggests that less church oversight was the solution to the problem that the year-round workers might have with a local church. If they understood what roles each one played, with Shiloh playing the role of outreach to neighborhoods on a daily basis and not churches performing this role, then overlap and conflict would not occur. Churches did not take on such outreach roles, and conflict had occurred when they tried to oversee this work, but they did serve as places where Shiloh workers could sometimes socialize and connect with others.

Southern Churches and the Social Gospel

As the 1970s progressed, Shiloh closed most of its year-round programs, leaving only the East New York and Brownsville programs to last past the first few years of

⁷ Hale, 62.

the year-round program and throughout the decade. As noted above, there were fewer ties with local churches in East New York and Brownsville because there were fewer local churches nearby, and these two programs were the most intensely urban and had the least connection to any local church of Christ. However, when they were fully functional, all of the area programs, as part of the larger Shiloh program itself, relied upon Southern churches for support. However, Shiloh's work could conflict with the Southern churches' concept of an appropriate Gospel presence in the world, and this perspective even influenced several of Shiloh's leaders during the 1970s and 1980s. The discrepancy between what Shiloh was doing to meet material needs and what many churchgoers thought they should be doing could cause significant problems for the Shiloh program workers.

While Shiloh workers were experiencing new things in the city that challenged their stereotypes and expectations of city life, they found that the same experiences often challenged their faith. The theology they wanted to enact involved a social ethic of help as well as a spiritual ethos that emphasized God's love for every human person. Shiloh's major concerns, especially during the year-round program of the 1970s, combined the social and the theological, with worship services, Bible studies, and lessons about Jesus blending into daily life alongside tutoring, co-ops, field trips, bookmobiles, and involvement in community centers, even participation in rent strikes and clandestinely turning on heat in tenement buildings. Shiloh workers tutored parents and children and worked with teachers.⁸ The Southern churches who supported Shiloh heard about the realities of the city but at times reacted in different ways to those realities than Shiloh workers. Because Shiloh workers were

⁸ Preston Pierce, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, July 28, 2012, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

attempting to meet what they perceived to be material needs of city residents alongside perceived spiritual needs, many people from Southern churches of Christ backgrounds viewed the Shiloh workers of the era as espousing a dangerous theological perspective known as the “social gospel.” The conflicts over the social gospel are the most theological articulation of the conflicts within this chapter and directly address an answer to the question, what should Christians *do* in the world? Should they save souls or meet the material needs of others? Though this dissertation shows that debates over the social gospel were not the only reasons that churches viewed Shiloh’s actions as going beyond their structured boundaries, the well-trod conflicts over the social gospel are certainly significant factors that have played a role in Shiloh’s history as well as the larger history of American religion.

The concept of the social gospel, seen from a church’s perspective, might mean that the church would cease its financial support of the Shiloh year-round program. Shiloh worker from the 1970s Karen Davis remembers going home to the South to ask for support from a church of Christ where she had spent a great deal of time in her growing-up years. For her fundraising effort, she gave a presentation on what she did each day in the Westfield, New Jersey area program: helping children with homework after school, cooking with them, swimming with them at the YMCA, talking to young women in her group about changes in their bodies as they got older, going to see movies together. But though the church members in the South were receptive and offered to give money to help her, a problem arose because the church’s preacher had not been present at her fundraising talk. When the preacher later heard how she had explained the program, he went to her house and told her that Shiloh’s efforts sounded too much like the social gospel. He had been reading about this *social gospel*, he said. He felt that money was not going to helping people become

baptized into the churches of Christ. As a result, the offer of money from their church was withdrawn. Davis said that exchanges like this “pushed me away from the traditional church. I just saw that as a very short-sighted way of spreading the gospel. Very short-sighted way to do it. Teaching Bible verses, I don’t think that’s the way to do it.” The contrast between the churches of Christ’s view and Davis’s view of what outreach should look like caused her to embrace a more secular perspective of the world.⁹ It also threw her views of Christian social identity and action into sharp contrast with the views of the preacher with whom she interacted. She found that he was so set against a Christian working to meet the material and even emotional needs of others that he could not allow his congregation to support a mission that professed to do so.

The social gospel, to Christians like the preacher that Davis encountered, existed to many as an unacceptable contrast with the main point of Christian work in the world, saving souls. This contrast between working to meet the social needs of poor people and working to baptize them had become part of an ongoing conflict in the lives of Shiloh workers of the 1970s. Not only did many potential supporters in the churches of Christ demand an accounting of how many baptisms Shiloh workers were able to obtain, but there were also conflicts with some of the Shiloh leadership at the highest levels over beliefs about the social gospel. DL Reneau became Shiloh’s executive director in the mid-1970s. He had been part of the West Islip Church of Christ exodus to Long Island, and he believed deeply in West Islip’s mission of evangelism and saving souls.

⁹ Karen Davis, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, August 29, 2012, digital audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

Reneau had a negative view of the social gospel, although he did not feel that Shiloh itself operated in this way. He said he respected Shiloh workers, especially because he felt they were delivering the true Gospel message. He wanted to emphasize that Shiloh workers under his supervision were *not* involved in the social gospel that the churches of Christ distrusted. As he talked about the work Shiloh staffers did, he drew a boundary around what he believed Christians should do, based on the expectations of the traditional churches of Christ:

But these young people [the children in the Shiloh program] became real Bible students. They really did. And that's what our counselors did. They had a faith they shared, and they didn't share it on social basis. They shared it on Jesus and the love of Jesus. And if that wasn't what was happening, I'm sorry, I did not know about that. I'm sure there were other things that went on as far as everyday function that had maybe it was social or whatever.

Though his concept of the social gospel is not clearly defined, Reneau needed, and found, an emphasis on the Bible from the Shiloh workers. He says he respected the workers and their belief in the Bible. He even seemed to suggest an apology if the organization Shiloh practiced anything social under his leadership. Still, there was mutual frustration when he and the staff discussed points of religion and relationship, like the importance of the churches of Christ's specific interpretation of the Bible. Reneau also articulated that some of the goals of Shiloh were to free cities from promiscuous sex and the use of drugs through the power of biblical teaching.¹⁰ While this may have been a part of Shiloh staff's theological beliefs and preferences, they would likely not have articulated or emphasized this in the same way as Reneau

¹⁰ D.L. Reneau, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, January 19, 2013, digital audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

did.¹¹ Shiloh workers' understanding of the material needs of the city influenced their spiritual understanding differently than Reneau's view of church influenced his.

Enforcing Denomination: The End of the Year-Round Program

At this time period in the late 1970s, most of the Shiloh board did not spend time with Shiloh staffers or go into the city programs, and they, too, can be seen as representing a Southern churches of Christ perspective. Preston Pierce, a Shiloh assistant director in the 1970s who reported regularly to the board, felt that most of the board members of the era were too afraid to go into the city.¹² They operated from outside the city without having experienced the city itself or having fully comprehended the theological perspectives that the Shiloh staffers were wrestling with. They did not try to closely view what Shiloh workers did. Most also espoused the traditional perspectives of the white churches of Christ that existed across the denomination.

From this vantage point that represented a church view of the city as opposed to one from Shiloh workers' perspectives, the Shiloh board instituted a rule in late 1976 that only members of the churches of Christ would be recruited to work in the program in the future. They felt that Preston Pierce, then the assistant director, was being too lax with hiring non-churches of Christ members to live and work in the cities as staffers, and several members of the board wanted him fired for this reason. Yet for Pierce's part, and in the views of many of the Shiloh year-round staffers, denomination simply no longer mattered in their work or their theology. Far from their origins as churches of Christ exclusivists, the Shiloh year-round staff members

¹¹ See, for example, Kim Holland, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, May 5, 2013, digital audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

¹² Preston Pierce interview.

embraced other denominations who wanted to come to the city to help them and to help meet the spiritual and material needs that seemed so pressing in the city neighborhoods. Christian faith should blend with a desire to help meet needs, and it was these qualities that Pierce looked for in recruits. New staff members of the era, like Davy Hall, came from evangelical backgrounds outside of the churches of Christ.

The Shiloh staff were distraught that the board should view their work as so closely aligned with churches of Christ values as to reject workers who genuinely wanted to work in the city. They felt the 1976 rule was a drastic misrepresentation of what they were trying to do in neighborhoods. Staff member Douglas Shafer, who belonged to the Disciples of Christ denomination, wrote a letter to the Shiloh board and informed them that the entire staff intended to resign because they disagreed so strongly with the 1976 policy. They felt the policy reflected a very narrow theology that didn't connect with all of the issues they encountered in the city. His writing shows quite clearly the division between the church perspective and the Shiloh workers' perspective. The exclusivist policy, Shafer wrote to board members, emphasized denomination over a recruit's spiritual maturity and ability to act in the city; it catered to an exclusive donor base instead of to a real need in urban areas; and it promoted a sense of division instead of a sense of God's own spiritual boundaries as he understood them. The staffers had been too deeply involved with what they saw as a spiritual ministry of social good to accept the boundaries that the churches of Christ thought they should be and do, and they chafed at the notion that they should try to push those boundaries onto the people they were working with. The implication was clear: the people in the city had material needs that the churches of Christ as a sole identifier could not meet alone. Shafer continued his letter, saying

that the board did not seem to have a sense of what staff members were doing in the city:

Are you aware that the general feeling among the staff is that the board members do not share their concern for ministry? If you do, you must give some evidence of it. I am not speaking of distrustful, young rebels. We are people committed to a spiritual ministry who are begging you to provide spiritual leadership. We trust that God will raise up spiritual leaders for this ministry. Is He calling you?¹³

There was clearly a deep divide here about what Shiloh workers should be doing.

In this case, as articulated by Shafer, it was as if the board and the staff were espousing two different worldviews, one shaped by the traditional churches of Christ, which theologically translated into exclusivism and the need for conversion to the churches of Christ, and one shaped not only by a youth counterculture but by a social gospel emphasis on meeting the daily needs of neighborhoods and attempting to re-establish broken societal relationships across large systemic racial inequalities. If the Shiloh board were to impose a strictly churches of Christ theological perspective on the program, Shiloh staff like Douglas Shafer felt it would undo the program itself, because those who worked at Shiloh did not espouse ministry in the same way the church did. Their perspective, they felt, included a deeper connection with the people of the city and with its actual needs than the traditional churches of Christ could provide, and the board's decision reflected what they saw as a narrow vision.

In protest to this rule instituted by the board, many of the year-round Shiloh workers quit the program. Karyn Blucker says that when she and other year-round staff chose to quit because of this new policy, they had no idea that they would be

¹³ Douglas Shafer to Shiloh Board of Trustee members. February 14, 1977. Shiloh Voices Digital Scans Collection, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

effectively shutting down the year-round program altogether.¹⁴ Though the board continued to try to staff the program, it was difficult to find recruits at this point in time.¹⁵ This perspective can be contrasted with earlier visions of Shiloh in which the churches of Christ themselves worked to enact follow-up work with campers who came to Shiloh only in the summertime.

***Former Shiloh Workers Operate without Shiloh or the Churches of Christ:
Nehemiah Houses***

After the break with Shiloh and the board, some Shiloh workers of the 1970s went further into the work of the East New York and Brownsville neighborhoods, attempting to address the bigger systemic issues of the ill health of neighborhood housing. Again, they saw this work in spiritual terms. After the year-round program effectively ended, several of the Shiloh workers who had been in the program stayed in the area, although now they were living and working outside of the umbrella of Shiloh. John Reynolds said that, throughout his time at Shiloh, he had at first been eager to baptize people, more than any of his colleagues. He felt that that had been his main purpose in East New York when he first arrived. But then as he moved forward, he thought that all he would be doing through conversion would be to draw people away from whatever local churches they might plug into, and he didn't see much purpose in doing that with the people that he met. Competition between churches would not be meeting the truer needs of neighborhood residents. In addition, he been trying to understand the answer to a question that a young man on

¹⁴ Karyn Blucker, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, January 17, 2013, digital audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

¹⁵ DL Reneau, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, January 19, 2012, digital audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

his basketball team asked him: ““My mom prays all the time. . . If God is a god of love, why do we live like this and what can we do about it?”” Reynolds didn’t have an answer for the teenager, but he prayed and thought about the question constantly. He searched through the Bible and his concordance and found that there were more passages about justice in the text than any other topic, more than same-sex marriage, more than heaven or hell, more than any other thing, and he found that the word meant making sure that everybody had enough of what they needed to live. It changed his perspective of the world. He began to see the spiritual freedom discussed in the Bible as completely tied to the notion of political freedom, of being in possession of the hope to be able to move forward. He did not see that hope, that political freedom, as a component of the neighborhood around him. Reynolds enrolled in graduate school to try to think of ways to transform the neighborhood. Even there, everything he read and learned seemed too abstract to the crisis he saw on a daily basis.¹⁶

After the break with Shiloh, though they had very little funding support, former Shiloh workers continued in East New York. Along with East New York residents Carmelia Goffe and Alfredo “Chino” Cruz, several of the former Shiloh workers, including John Reynolds, formed a new congregation they called East New York Christian Fellowship. It was a tiny church congregation beyond the racial boundaries of what any of the Shiloh workers had encountered before. That small congregation became involved in a nascent effort under the hired leadership of community organizers Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) to organize the community

¹⁶ John Reynolds, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, November 20, 2012., transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

residents and local churches in order to reform East New York, Brownsville, and New Lots housing into sustainable, livable communities. John Reynolds, Davy Hall, and Douglas Shafer were especially involved in the effort, alongside neighborhood resident Carmelia Goffe. In 1978, East New York Christian Fellowship, along with six other congregations formed a sponsoring committee, held countless meetings, and in 1979 signed a contract with IAF and formed a new group together, East Brooklyn Churches.¹⁷ That group had both activist and spiritual aims. Working with other churches in the neighborhood opened the eyes of the Shiloh workers, who realized for the first time that there were other groups doing serious, activist ministry in the same neighborhoods where they themselves had been working. The congregations joined the movement would ultimately include a diverse range of churches, both Black and white, Protestant of many denominations, and Catholic parishes.¹⁸ Though the churches of Christ board of Shiloh had advocated for a spiritual exclusivism, the Industrial Areas Foundation saw churches as places where people gathered, and in gathering multiple churches together, there was political power to change things for the better.¹⁹

The support and the organizational power for the effort grew over time, and the group began to enact changes. They publicly demanded that neighborhood grocery stores enact changes in food quality, and they acquired new street signs where needed

¹⁷ Pub25001-Pub25017, Baylor University Institute for Oral History, Shiloh Voices Photo Collection.

¹⁸ Davy Hall, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, November 23, 2012, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

¹⁹ Ed Chambers, *Roots for Radicals: Organizing for Power, Action, and Justice*. (New York: Continuum, 2005), 129.

for safety in the neighborhoods.²⁰ Over time, once their political power grew, they negotiated with the city for the land and would build thousands of single-family, affordable houses across Brownsville, East New York, and New Lots neighborhoods.²¹

Industrial Areas Foundation's representative in the East Brooklyn Churches project, Ed Chambers, articulated a specific kind of faith and practice in community organizing that used the tension between what is (he called this "the world") and what could be (he called this "faith") as tools for achieving goals for a true citizen-led democracy. Chambers decried mere politeness and otherworldliness and instead advocated the view that power (possessing the ability to act), and love (mutual respect for your interest and the interest of the other person) are key elements of an appropriate society.²² John Reynolds especially, of all the former Shiloh workers, found the IAF training invigorating, and the transactional and practical nature of the concepts to be exactly what he had hoped for in any effort he would make. It was not abstract, and he knew that Chambers, IAF, and this new definition of love and power would work in the city and in the neighborhoods.²³

²⁰ Carmelia Goffe, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, November 15, 2012, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

²¹ Chambers, *Roots for Radicals*, 75

²² Chambers, 15-75.

²³ John Reynolds, interview.ed by Jessica Roseberry, November 20, 2012, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

LETTER OF AGREEMENT: EBC AND FOOD STORES

The following store or chain --*Key Food 2115 Pitkin*-- agrees to allow representatives of East Brooklyn Churches to inspect our store. We recognize that the EBC representatives are acting in the interests of the shoppers of East Brooklyn. These inspections will focus on these essential elements:

FOOD PRICING AND CODE DATES

Prices will be clearly marked
Marked prices will be consistent
Code dates will be clearly marked
No food will be displayed beyond its code date

SANITATION AND CLEANLINESS

No split and congealed milk in dairy case
No grime on shelves and atop dairy and refrigeration units
No pests and insects
Reasonable cleanliness of aisles, etc

QUALITY OF PACKAGING AND CANS

No broken or leaking or overstuffed packages
No bent or rusted cans (except in specially marked sale bins)

MEATS AND PRODUCE

No brown rust on lettuce
No soft-to-rotten tomatoes
No rotten meats or fish
Sanitary meatcases and produce bins

SAFETY

Emergency exits will be passable
Aisles will be reasonably passable

REFRIGERATION

Temperatures in coolers and freezers will be at appropriate levels
Coolers and freezers will be serviced and maintained

ATTITUDE OF MANAGEMENT AND EMPLOYEES

All will be cooperative and courteous

SIGNED:

S. Murphy
MANAGER,

FOODS

Henry G. Brathwaite
LEADER, EAST BROOKLYN CHURCHES

APR 29, 1981
DATE

Figure 6.1 Contract with Key Foods, signed in 1981, in which the store manager agreed to allow members of East Brooklyn Churches to inspect the store on Pitkin Avenue for food and environmental quality. Pub250127 Shiloh Voices Digital Scans Collection. Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

Slowly, IAF's methods did work, and the former Shiloh workers and community members were overjoyed as community members were able to assertively demand, not beg or ask, for good things to happen in their own neighborhoods. As the positive changes escalated in the neighborhoods over a period of years into decades, each of the former Shiloh workers articulated their time after Shiloh and the victories for the neighborhood residents in spiritual terms. Douglas Shafer felt that his faith was intricately tied with his choice to live in East New York for a decade and a half and his choice to truly identify with the people there as his neighbors. He wanted to become a stakeholder in the neighborhood buildings, politics, and schools, and he said that living there *was* his faith in practice for him.²⁴ Relationships, an anchor of evangelical thought and practice, could even be more than previously expected. Davy Hall said his deep connection with a Puerto Rican family who opened their home to several of the Shiloh workers was both an honor and a spiritually teaching aspect of his life. For a young white man from California to have a connection with this Puerto Rican family from Brooklyn, he said, was, "a miracle. I never take that [relationship] lightly. . . It [their opening their home to him] was a great lesson for me to learn—keep your arms open. Keep your arms open always. Sometimes it won't always work out, but always open your arms."²⁵ In addition, watching the thousands of houses built, according to Hall, was incredibly spiritually transformative. "This is how it [building the houses] felt," Hall said, "it was miraculous. . . ." The houses, given the name *Nehemiah* after the biblical prophet who did what God required and

²⁴ Douglas Shafer interview, both interviews. For contrast to Shafer's conception of living in East New York, see Kim Holland's interview.

²⁵ Davy Hall interview.

rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem up out of existing rubble, felt to Hall like a literal expression of the ancient biblical text. Hall said that seeing the houses being built out of Brooklyn's rubble, like the passage in the Bible, was spiritual in an ongoing way:

... transcending just a social movement. We wanted to—just as the walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt, we felt like this was God guiding us to rebuild the walls of Brooklyn. Gosh, by golly. These rubbles where walls had stood, and now bricks were just down, in these horrible piles of it.²⁶

For former Shiloh workers like John Reynolds, Davy Hall, and Douglas Shafer, the concepts of church and spirituality took on completely different meanings. Church could be a space of political power on behalf of the poor, and spirituality could be the miracle of watching houses being built from rubble. In contrast with the members of the board who saw the Shiloh neighborhoods as being in need of a specific kind of church, these former Shiloh workers now saw church itself as something to be utilized for neighborhood purposes.

Connection with Black churches of Christ: Shiloh in the 1980s

After the break with the year-round workers in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and because of the difficulty of recruiting new year-round staff beginning at that point, Shiloh abandoned its year-round model in the 1980s. The decade of the 1980s and half the 1990s was financially difficult for the nonprofit, and there is also less historical information that exists from this timeframe than any other. Therefore, it is a bit difficult to characterize Shiloh during this time. One Shiloh staff member who began in the later 1990s called this era an “intertestamental period,” meaning that little was known about it, as it existed between major eras of growth for Shiloh, like the time period that existed between the Old Testament and the New Testament of the

²⁶ Ibid.

Bible.²⁷ However, it appears that though there were people who worked at Shiloh for multiple years in the 1980s, there were fewer staff and volunteers who were committed long term to the nonprofit, and there were fewer long-term relationships that existed as networks of white evangelical workers to discuss and pass on information, or to form long-term relationships with campers, than in previous years. Though several campers from the era described Shiloh as a valuable resource for them during this time, and though it did make an impact on white staff and volunteers, it was not as spiritually transformative for the white evangelicals who worked at Shiloh as the 1970s with its long-term relationships and immersion into city life. Shiloh existed as a summer camp only, and long-term relationship with the campers, at times delegated to Black churches in and around the area, was important to, but not a sole priority of, these churches. Also, because of official Shiloh's break with the year-round generation over the issue of using only members of the churches of Christ to teach children, much of the wisdom that the 1970s workers had gleaned from living in the city among the people they were serving was no longer available to Shiloh. These losses did not leave Shiloh without any spiritual resources at all for white evangelicals to examine or interact with racial issues, but the existing evidence suggests that, due to these many factors, there was a lack of deep ongoing relationship between white Shiloh workers and Shiloh campers. It was not a time in which many white Shiloh workers entered the city, and therefore this was not a time period in which whites examined their spirituality through a lens of race with as much frequency and depth as the generations before or after this one.

²⁷ Jason Isbell ,interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, March 22, 2013, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History..

After many of the 1970s staff members left the year-round program, it was difficult for Shiloh leadership to recruit new people to come and take their places in the year-round program in the city.²⁸ Preston Pierce and others of his 1970s generation attributed the inability to draw new recruits to the year-round program to the shift in national focus during the 1980s in which Black Americans and the racialized nature of the nation's cities were no longer as important in the mainstream perspective as they had been during and right after the Classic Civil Rights Movement.²⁹ If the government focus is any indication, indeed, under President Ronald Reagan, the American nation shifted its resources away from social welfare programs even as new crises like crack cocaine and AIDS spread and existing problems like domestic violence and homelessness grew. Those in the social work field had to rely more and more on private-sector funds while poverty rates rose ever higher in the 1980s, especially in the lives of children, young families, and people of color. The overall number of people who officially qualified as poor increased in this decade and the early part of the next to 36 million.³⁰ By this period in New York City, several decades of urban renewal that bypassed the needs of the poorest residents, immigration from Third World areas, and consistent white flight had worked to produce massive rates of poverty, especially in Brooklyn and the Bronx, where a third and half of whites, respectively, left the boroughs.³¹ It was during the

²⁸ D.L. Reneau interview.

²⁹ Preston Pierce interview.

³⁰ Tannenbaum, Nili and Michael Reisch, "From Charitable Volunteers to Architects of Social Welfare: A Brief History of Social Work," Michigan School of Social Work, University of Michigan. <https://ssw.umich.edu/about/history/brief-history-of-social-work> Accessed March 18, 2022.

³¹ Chang, Jeff, *Can't Stop, Won't Stop*, 145.

1980s, in which Americans were struggling to figure out why things like racial inequality were still persisting, that two theorists developed the “broken windows” theory, in which simple visible signs of social disorder, such as broken windows, were said to encourage further disruption and crime. This theory became widespread in the mainstream thinking about urban poverty. Most conservatives and some liberals of the era now opposed societal efforts to mend racial inequities, and one historian described the new way of thinking in this way: “In short, enforcing normative America was good criminology.”³²

In addition to larger societal changes that impacted social efforts in the 1980s, faith communities also changed during this period. Mitchell Greer, who was Shiloh’s president from 1987 to 1994, says that donors from the churches of Christ from whom he tried to raise funds were simply more interested in funding missions to Africa than in supporting work for the residents of the cities of the United States. He also described himself, a former missionary in Africa, as a poor fundraiser, and admitted a decline in funding under his own leadership.³³ Perhaps in addition to Greer’s experience with donors who wanted to support African missions more than Shiloh’s work in the city, the small financial numbers at Shiloh also reflected an internal turmoil among the churches of Christ itself during that era, which was experiencing an identity crisis after the 1960s. That identity crisis, one that continued for decades, forced the churches of Christ to think about the literal

³² Andrew Hartman *A War for the Soul of America: A History of the Culture Wars*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 103, 124-126.

³³ Mitchell Greer, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, January 15, 2013, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

movement of historical time within the context of their spiritual-historical worldview that did not closely examine the movements of history. The dramatic changes in the United States in the 1960s forced the churches of Christ to think about whether they were a group that existed for a literal restoration of the biblical church in Acts or whether they existed to form relationships with the world around them. In the decades of the 1970s and 1980s in which white evangelicalism flourished and made national headlines and in which fundamentalism was ascendant, the churches of Christ remained stagnant because of its own internal issues over the nature of the Bible and how Christians should interpret it, and also overall indecision about the nature of how to view the world, the church, and its history.³⁴ These internecine conflicts may have affected Shiloh's ability to thrive in the decade of the 1980s.

In addition, Shiloh began to diversify its geographical outreach during the 1980s. The director just after D.L. Reneau, Tony Lupinacci, had contacts in the churches of Christ through Northeastern Christian Junior College in Villanova, Pennsylvania, and Shiloh brought in children from inner-city Philadelphia to camp alongside children from inner city neighborhoods in New York City.³⁵ Tony Lupinacci apparently felt comfortable in the Black churches of Christ, and a number of the children at camp did come from these churches, especially in the Philadelphia area under Lupinacci's leadership, and Lupinacci would occasionally preach in some of these churches.³⁶

After Lupinacci's efforts to geographically spread Shiloh's work, the program returned again to a model that emphasized church follow up. Executive director

³⁴ Hughes, Richard T. *Reviving the Ancient Faith*, 252-253.

³⁵ David Fritz, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, June 17, 2012, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

Mitchell Greer wanted to emphasize the local churches of Christ's relationship to Shiloh children, and during his leadership, Camp Shiloh re-emphasized a model not unlike that of Shiloh during the 1950s in which Shiloh provided spiritual emphasis for children during the summer, but local churches--this time often Black churches of Christ--were hoped to be the spiritual mentors of children during the rest of the year. Greer says he did not support the year-round model from which Shiloh had recently departed.³⁷ This shift may also have contributed to Shiloh's declining numbers in this time period as well. Longtime camp cook Nina Hayes recalled that there were a few people, like herself and a few others, who were consistent at Shiloh throughout her time in the 1980s, but that in general the camp counselors were not consistent figures at camp.³⁸

Though it may have been necessary because of available resources and the cultural situation, the philosophical inference behind Greer's stated preference for working with campers during the summer and bringing children to camp two weeks at a time and then allowing local churches to follow up can equally be viewed as a spiritual, otherworldly one. If believing in and following God was the emphasis of both Shiloh and the local church, then a relationship with God would be the sustaining factor of a child's life and would supersede an ongoing relationship with fellow humans. Church would play a primary role in this model. Like Camp Shiloh of the 1950s, this Camp Shiloh was structured to emphasize faith as something to be presented at camp, grasped and accepted, then nurtured in the other months through

³⁷ Mitchell Greer interview.

³⁸ Nina Hayes, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, January 13, 2013, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

local church life. Though Greer believed that the helping nature of the social gospel was important, he also believed that salvation through accepting Jesus was the highest and best purpose of life and the most important thing that any Christian should offer another person. He said:

I am one that believes that the church does have a lot of social responsibility and that Christians have a lot of social responsibility. I am of the belief that if all that we do for others around is to feed them, clothe them when they need that, or give them a camp experience when that could be something helpful for them, and all that we touch is just the social aspects, then we're neglecting the thing that's most important. Because I think the church is here and Christians are here to live for eternity and to try to influence others for eternity and not just for the short haul, not just for things now. If you could make a situation for a person that lifts him up from, say, the ghetto to the highest echelons, and he's just in great situation and you've had a lot to do with it, but you haven't influenced him with the gospel message, I think you've not done him much of a favor . . .

That's a large part of the reason that I wanted to work through the churches in the areas that the kids were going back to. I wanted those churches to take over and work with the kids and do things for them that we were not going to have any opportunity to do. And to see to it that there were some long-range spiritual benefits as well as other benefits that came to them.³⁹

As a result of the numerous influences that changed Shiloh in the 1980s, Shiloh workers did not have a significant presence in the city. David Fritz was a counselor at camp 1982-1984, and he remembered that camp director Tony Lupinacci had worked in an inner-city ministry previously in Philadelphia and knew how to make things fun for the kids at camp and could handle difficult situations. Fritz connected with children and counselors during this time whose names he still recalls. Fritz found that he was able to develop a relationship with one of the more difficult campers, a boy named Tony whom everyone called "Yoda." Yoda came to camp all summer long for both of the years that Fritz was there, and he would fight and curse and ask challenging questions about why the "all-powerful Jesus" did not come down

³⁹ Mitchell Greer interview.

from the cross. ““Could he have come down from the cross?”” Yoda would ask again and again. ““Yeah, I guess so,”” Fritz would reply, unsure of the correct way to handle the situation. Fritz found himself very fond of Yoda throughout camp but also unaware of Yoda’s daily life. He knew that Yoda lived in 80th Avenue in the Bronx and became familiar with all of Yoda’s siblings who came to camp, too. But Fritz did not know what Yoda did beyond camp. “I have no idea what their home life was like,” he said. “I can just imagine.” Fritz’s relationship with Yoda was important to him but also limited to Yoda’s specific interactions with theological questions that constituted a key topic for Fritz, and with the rules and fun activities at Camp Shiloh.⁴⁰ The way that Yoda functioned on a day-to-day basis and his environment in the Bronx were things that Fritz could wonder about, but as a white privileged person, and one who never had a chance to see and interact with Yoda’s home, he could never fully understand Yoda’s full situation.

Camp Shiloh was still transformational to counselors like David Fritz, who did not enter into the city but who worked for several years with Shiloh children at camp. Fritz, one of the few longtime counselors at camp during the 1980s, found Shiloh changed his perspective in the three years he was there (his wife, Maureen, was at camp for five years). He moved to Long Island after his time with Shiloh. But first he returned to Malibu, California, as a student at the churches of Christ college, Pepperdine University. Going directly from Camp Shiloh to Pepperdine was a culture shock for him. He wondered how he could come back to the world of Pepperdine after what he had seen at Shiloh. He thought, “There’s other worlds out there. There’s other people out there. There are social issues we need to be

⁴⁰ David Fritz interview.

concerned about after all, people. Christianity isn't just a personal thing, it's a collective thing. It's a social thing." This dissonance between "worlds" led Fritz to enter the field of social work. In this path, he would argue for a more collectivist perspective of Christianity, even to his fellow parishioners at West Islip Church of Christ.⁴¹ Even though Shiloh's emphasis at the time was on church and church life, it still impacted some counselors to think about larger issues.

Campers in the 1980s

A philosophical emphasis on otherworldly gain did reap the kind of rewards that Mitchell Greer hoped for in at least one camper. Vivian Cappas, who grew up in East New York, first attended camp in 1980 or 1981, before Greer's leadership began at Shiloh. Cappas continued to go to camp for another five years thereafter, longer than any of her siblings who attended that first summer with her or her friends whom she convinced to go with her for the next several years. Cappas's mother was single at the time, and she wanted a place to send her children for a few weeks in the summer to take care of them. Cappas remembered that, although her mother had sent her and her siblings to another camp before Shiloh, and that the other camp was a nice experience, it was Camp Shiloh that caught Cappas's imagination. Cappas said that she loved the camp director, Tony Luppinaci, and that she loved being able to escape her tough neighborhood to a fun, safe environment in order to be with like-minded kids for two weeks during the summer. She also said that, "I've got to

⁴¹ David Fritz interview.

tell you--and I say this without hesitation: the years that I spent with Camp Shiloh, those summers were the best summers of my whole life.”⁴²

It was a time that was spiritually transformative for her, too. Cappas said that her family faith at that time was what she called a *CAPE* Catholic, meaning that they attended church on Christmas, Ash Wednesday, Palm Sunday, and Easter. But Cappas saw something in the kindness of the people at Shiloh that she wanted to have. Still, Catholicism was important enough to Cappas’s mother that, when Cappas wanted to be baptized at camp and called her mother to express her desire, Cappas’s mother did not want her to be baptized in the churches of Christ. When Cappas arrived home, her mother baptized Cappas in the Catholic Church to appease her. She began to take the family to Catholic mass on a more regular basis and to become more involved in her children’s religious journeys. Cappas said that her family remained devoutly Catholic from that point on until she, Cappas, chose to re-ignite the spark to be “born again”--an oft-used evangelical term--something that Camp Shiloh had first kindled in her. She contrasted the nature of the faith that she found at Shiloh, where they gave her a Bible to read, with the Catholicism that her family embraced. Evangelicalism was a faith that she found different than the “rehearsed” nature of the Catholic faith. “Whereas in the Christian [Protestant, evangelical] faith we praise him out loud, and we don’t go by some book that they make up. We go by the actual Bible. We open up a Bible and read from a Bible--what it is, not man’s interpretation of the Bible,” she explained. Though her mother did not like it, as an

⁴² Vivian Cappas, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, October 2, 2013, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

adult she chose to move away from Catholicism and toward evangelical Protestantism. She was practicing this kind of faith at the time she was interviewed.⁴³

Cappas's experience can be contrasted somewhat with another camper, Yolanda Melendez (she later married and became Yolanda Melendez-Bentley), who attended camp at roughly the same time as Cappas as a young counselor-in-training. Even though they both were from the same Brooklyn neighborhoods, Cappas said she did not remember Melendez. Melendez was part of the Shiloh year-round program from a young age and described her activities in the year-round program in the following conversation:

MELENDEZ-BENTLEY: It didn't seem like it to us—well, not to me anyway—that it was all about religion at the time. It was just—they say it's time for Bible study. And I'm, "Okay." You know, and we learned about the different parables and stuff. I never heard of that word *parable* before. And they would explain to us what it is—the stories and stuff. And I remember that Kimble made a recording. Kimble—no, it was Artice. Artice made a recording of me. She asked me what was my favorite—yes. She asked me what was my favorite parable—my favorite story. And I told her it was the one about the Good Samaritan. . . (*laughs*)

ROSEBERRY: Do you remember what you liked about it?

MELENDEZ-BENTLEY: Because you stopped, and you helped somebody that was hurt.

ROSEBERRY: Yeah.

MELENDEZ-BENTLEY: Camp Shiloh instilled a lot of stuff in me, not just the camp itself but the people, all the family that we made along the way. And it was always about helping each other. I turned out to be a medic in the military. Good Samaritan, huh?⁴⁴

Though Cappas remembered Tony Lupinaci and had friends and siblings from her neighborhood at camp, she did not remember any of the counselor's names and was not able to keep track of most of the other campers she met there. On the other hand, for Melendez-Bentley, there was less a sense of formal religion and more of a

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Yolanda Melendez-Bentley, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, June 24, 2012, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

sense of family about the Shiloh experience, and the religious stories she heard as a child, like the one about the Good Samaritan, were lessons that she felt she entered into and embodied later on in life because of the people she knew and the way that Shiloh workers interacted with her and her family. Ultimately, she saved her own military partner's life during wartime, something she refers back to as an incredibly concrete example of the Good Samaritan, of helping someone who was hurt.⁴⁵ This is not to say that Cappas's faith was not a real faith or that Melendez-Bentley modeled hers only on the work of Shiloh year-round staff whom she knew in her neighborhood. But the contrast in these two stories raises the point that Melendez-Bentley's experience through the Shiloh year-round program gave her what Mitchell Greer and others would say that they wanted for children in the city, but through a more focused, longer-term, and more deeply relational experience than through camp and church alone.

Melendez-Bentley also attended Shiloh in the early 1980s as a young woman coming of age who was missing the year-round program in her neighborhood. Camp Shiloh for her was a way to hang on to the meaningful experiences and the memories of the relationships and the safety she had felt in her childhood during the year-round program. Shiloh had crossed racial and spiritual boundaries for her. She, like Cappas's teenage Catholicism, continued to find meaning in symbols and acts that were not evangelical. For example, Melendez's father lit a candle at home for his children when the Shiloh worker Phillip Roseberry died in 1975, and the children in the family all gathered around him and cried while their father comforted them. Melendez-Bentley said that lighting a white candle in this way was a Hispanic

⁴⁵ Ibid.

tradition, representing purity, and that they lit a candle when they heard about anyone at Shiloh who passed away. She continued to light the candle for loved ones throughout her life. The gesture blended family, heritage, spirituality, and friendship across racial lines, whereas Cappas's attendance of a new kind of church, however true and sincere, did not reach that level of racial and spiritual bridge building, and was not completely helpful within her family relationships. The two perspectives are contrasted here for the different emphases each place on church versus heritage values. Cappas embraced a version of Christianity and church she that experienced at a summer camp that never entered into her home life and that contrasted with that home life. Melendez-Bentley embraced a version of Christianity she experienced in her neighborhood that allowed her to embrace both her church heritage and the teachings and relationships at Shiloh. Cappas's story emphasizes church, while Melendez-Bentley's story emphasizes the spirituality of lived relationships.

Another counselor-in-training whose life was impacted at Shiloh was David Wilson who attended camp in the early 1980s, the same decade in which Cappas attended Camp Shiloh. In 1996 Wilson became the pastor of Flatlands Church of Christ in Brooklyn, New York, now called Kings Church of Christ after Kings County, the County that encompasses Brooklyn.⁴⁶ This Black congregation of the churches of Christ opened its second location of the church in Brownsville, Brooklyn, in 2019.⁴⁷ In the interim, he attended Southwestern Christian College, the only

⁴⁶ David Fritz interview. "Our History," Kings Church of Christ, <https://www.kingschurchofchrist.org/ourhistory> Accessed March 22, 2022.

⁴⁷ "Second Location," Kings Church of Christ, https://www.gofundme.com/f/support-vulnerable-black-people-in-ukraine?fbclid=IwAR2EBmPQMRZY574uYDyaDFcRNgt3EbwzEncHEvsSOqEY_7cAH_pxfJi8IXw accessed March 22, 2022.

Black-owned churches of Christ College in the United States, located in Texas, and Oklahoma Christian College, a churches of Christ school, and Amridge University, a churches of Christ University in Montgomery, Alabama.⁴⁸ As such, his training and spiritual life perfectly reflects the desire that many white, traditional churches of Christ leadership at Shiloh desired for campers, following the churches of Christ educational path and returning to lead a churches of Christ in Black neighborhoods like Brownsville and Flatlands. It is quite possible that, at other times in Shiloh history, a camper who converted to the churches of Christ became a minister of a local church, but David Wilson's presence at Shiloh during this time period seems to be of particular note. This was a Black camper following a traditional churches of Christ path, even in the neighborhood of Brownsville, during the time in which churches and the path of church life were highly emphasized at Shiloh.

Follow-Up Work and Conservative Emphasis at Shiloh

Chip Kooi remembered that during his time as camp co-director with his wife, Melinda, in 1985 and 1990-1991, local churches would advertise through local schools to recruit campers, and Welfare would pay for campers to come to camp.⁴⁹ One of the New York churches that partnered with Shiloh during the 1980s was the Roosevelt-Freeport Church of Christ on Long Island. Walter Maxwell led this church after his conversion experience at West Islip Church of Christ (see chapter 3) in the 1960s, and it grew from a small house church to a thriving congregation of the Black churches of Christ. In 1988 he became its full-time minister after serving as

⁴⁸ "David Eugene Wilson, Senior Minister," Kings Church of Christ.

<https://www.kingschurchofchrist.org/david-wilson>, accessed March 22, 2022.

⁴⁹ William and Mendy Kooi ,interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, May 9, 2013, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History..

minister part time for nearly twenty years. Maxwell served on Shiloh's board for a number of years and under a number of Shiloh directors. He said that there were and are very few Black churches of Christ in the Northeast area, with Roosevelt-Freeport being one of the oldest and largest, with the implication that, therefore, it was difficult for the other Black churches to support an enterprise like Shiloh in a large-scale way.⁵⁰ However, the longtime chairman of the board, Wallace Murray, of Harlem Church of Christ, gave continual service to Shiloh and recruited community members to offer labor at Camp Shiloh.⁵¹ But Maxwell implied that service to Shiloh required a special kind of effort from churches. Youth at Maxwell's church had a hard time raising the financial support they need to become camp counselors.

Roosevelt-Freeport had long been located in an area viewed as economically difficult, and Maxwell had no plans to move the church building. The church itself reached out to its neighborhood and the poor, collecting goods for disaster relief, conducting free funerals for people who were not members, and providing physical labor at the camp during the off season. Maxwell remembered teaching a lesson on the Good Samaritan during a session at camp one year. But he said it was difficult for a church to reach out to others if the church itself was not financially stable. It was also difficult, he said, for the Black and white churches of Christ to find common ground on practical matters of worship, such as whether it is acceptable to clap or to say "amen" during a service.⁵² He did not mention the historical fact of the split

⁵⁰ Walter Maxwell, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, April 2, 2013, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

⁵¹ "In Loving Memory of Brother Wallace Murray," Shiloh, NYC, <https://www.shilohnyc.org/brother-murray>, accessed June 7, 2022.

⁵² Walter Maxwell interview.

between the Black and white churches of Christ came about because the Southern white churches of Christ had long exploited the Black church, and then refused to support or acknowledge the validity of its efforts during the Civil Rights era.⁵³ Though Maxwell did not articulate it, it was likely that all of this made it more difficult for the local (New York) Black churches of Christ, also caring for the needs of their own parishioners, to fend for the spiritual and relational needs of campers and underserved children throughout the year. Most of the campers when Shiloh was under Greer's direction came from the Roosevelt-Freeport Church of Christ. As for the other churches Greer connected with, Greer said, "Not everybody that you hope will take an interest in follow-up work is going to take an interest in follow-up work. But where they did, we felt like it was a good situation for the kids."⁵⁴

⁵³ Hughes, *Reviving the Ancient Faith*, 270-306.

⁵⁴ Mitchell Greer, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, January 15, 2013, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History..



Figure 6.2 Brother Walter Maxwell and his wife Sister Pauline Maxwell in an undated photograph, featured on the Roosevelt-Freeport Church of Christ Website.⁵⁵

Counselor-in-training David Wilson’s movement along the churches of Christ path also demonstrates the strong strain of churches of Christ conservatism that continued at Shiloh during this time that intermixed with the evangelical desire for relationships. Mitchell Greer said that he agreed with the board’s previous decision to keep Shiloh counselors firmly within the churches of Christ, since other denominational influence would only confuse campers, and William Kooi remembered a Lutheran counselor at camp who was not utilized at because he was not a member of the churches of Christ.⁵⁶ Kooi also remembered that a member of the

⁵⁵ “Who We Are,” Roosevelt-Freeport Church of Christ, <https://www.rfcoc.org/who-we-are.html> accessed March 20, 2022.

⁵⁶ Mitchell Greer interview, William and Melinda Kooi interview.

camp leadership told the current counselors that they were not to say the Lord's prayer with the campers, since the Kingdom of God had already come in the form of the churches of Christ, and the Lord's prayer held the line "Thy Kingdom come."⁵⁷ This latter theological issue reflected the churches of Christ's struggles at the time with how to view the Bible: as containing the template by which the church should exist, or as a tool to help guide relationships.⁵⁸ Kooi believed that God was constantly at work at Shiloh, but that the struggles between conservative interpretation and his view own of relationships hindered Shiloh's forward movement at times.⁵⁹

Conclusion

Shiloh continued to have an impact in the 1980s and the early 1990s, but there were a number of factors that prevented most of the white evangelicals from developing long-term relationships with campers or from living in the city. Though there were several white evangelicals who described Shiloh as transformational to their lives, proving that evangelical faith could be moved within the course of several summers through exposure to people whose lives were different than their own, the transformation overall would not shift spiritual worldviews as startlingly as in previous generations of Shiloh where relationships were longer or more immersive.

In fact, the influence of churches and the larger denomination of the churches of Christ was the undoing of the year-round program itself, and, throughout both the 1970s and the 1980s, church perspective continued to conflict with or at least contrast with Shiloh's most intensive inner city work. Churches proved not to be apt

⁵⁷ William and Melinda Kooi interview.

⁵⁸ Hughes, 353.

⁵⁹ William and Melinda Kooi interview.

overseers for Shiloh's city mission because they had a different function to enact or because they were too concerned with other matters, and other sponsoring churches often perceived that Shiloh was doing the wrong thing in the world.

In the next generation of Shiloh, the 1990s, new leadership would take the program in different directions, yet they were still hoping to restore some of the old relational impact that Shiloh had once had with residents of the inner city of New York. The generation of Shiloh that began in the mid-1990s tried to restructure the organization to be more like a nonprofit and less like an outgrowth of church, and, in doing so, they re-emphasized the value of interacting with neighborhood residents on a daily basis. It was only by letting go of the concept of church and denominational control that they were able to achieve this goal.

CHAPTER SEVEN: SHILOH IN THE MID-1990S AND BEYOND

Everybody was still learning back then. It's like everybody wanted to tackle New York City, but they didn't know how to do it outside of a church. We were a parachurch. We were a not-for-profit. We were a ministry that did things in a different way. -Lori Bumpas, Shiloh executive director beginning mid-1990s.

Throughout the generational history of Shiloh, the organization had continuously struggled with its long-term mission in and around the city and its identity as a missionary, outreach extension of a denomination. Shiloh's history had reflected that, on one hand, a mission enterprise of a church should follow the principles and functions of what church does: one of which being to convert others and to replicate the church itself in a local setting. On the other hand, the power differentials within the American dynamics of racial inequity, especially as expressed in the city, compelled many of those who wanted to help city residents to go beyond the church model and to get involved in the daily life of young people and their families in the city. The two impulses pushed and pulled at Shiloh continuously over time, confusing its long-term organizational mission and its self-definition. Because of the breaks within its own past over time, Shiloh was not fully aware of its own history as it began this most current phase. However, Shiloh nevertheless worked to resolve these same issues in the mid-1990s, and began a phase that still continues as of this writing, a phase of restructuring itself to operate not as a church or denominational enterprise but as a religious nonprofit. Although still deeply evangelical and relational, Shiloh's influences, structure, and enterprises during this most recent phase bypassed its previous difficulties by reflecting the values of a religious, evangelical nonprofit and not those of an outgrowth of church.

A religious nonprofit, according to Christopher P. Scheitle's book, entitled--quite appropriately for the argument of this chapter--*Beyond the Congregation: The World of Christian Nonprofits*, is an entity with a more specific activity focus than a church. Scheitle defines church activity as more generalist in nature than a nonprofit's, and he says that churches focus on a "marketplace" concept of attracting new congregants to church life as one of church's major concerns and activities. Religious nonprofits, however, differ from churches in some important ways. They may resemble businesses more than churches in their structure, and they are more broadly non-denominational than linked to a specific denomination or church. Because they interface with the world in these ways, they often have a specific *cultural* activity as their main purpose for existence.¹

Shiloh fits this model at this time period in its history. Beginning in the mid-1990s, Shiloh began to pay more attention to its debt and its financial situation from a business standpoint than it had in the 1980s; it operated with new partners across denominational lines and even networked with non-religious partners, donors, and influences. It also pulled away from sole dependency on the churches of Christ as a denomination, both through financial support and board oversight. In these ways, Shiloh was successfully able to move away from the influence of a church-like conceptualization of the city, in which many saw residents as potential converts, churchgoers and church builders, and to focus instead on in-depth, day-to-day relationships that sought to meet both the long-term spiritual and practical needs of children and youth in New York City. While Shiloh was always technically

¹ Christopher P. Scheitle, *Beyond the Congregation: The World of Christian Nonprofits* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 4-9, 31-43.

classified as a nonprofit, its previous functional dependency on the churches of Christ as a denomination made it operate in many ways like a mission outgrowth of that denomination. So now beginning in the mid-1990s, it moved more structurally into a nonprofit configuration so as to meet the religious goals that a church mission enterprise could not fulfill in the long term. As a nonprofit, Shiloh could focus on and learn from long-term relationships built upon daily-life interactions with underserved youth in the city, achievable only through a nonprofit structure.

Restructuring Shiloh to Become a Religious Nonprofit

At the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, Shiloh was in financial difficulty, to the point that some saw the possibility of the camp closing for good. There were only a few counselors per summer session, not much funding, not many campers, and few programmed activities. The kids at camp were sometimes those who came from the local Black churches of Christ like Harlem Church of Christ, Flatlands Church of Christ, and Roosevelt-Freeport Church of Christ, wide geographical distances apart, and sometimes the campers were not connected to a local church at all. The camp had moved to a new site in the 1970s, and now that site had significant issues, especially since the main building containing the kitchen burned down. Several Black churches of Christ board members recognized that Shiloh was having difficulty staying afloat and ultimately hired a white interim director, Steve Hassman, who attended Manhattan Church of Christ. Though he had little experience in directing a camp, Hassman was a businessman who felt called to help Shiloh and to move it into a direction where it could stay afloat. Along with the rest of the membership of Manhattan Church of Christ, Hassman had been reading about social justice issues, and he was compelled to get involved and cobble together

resources that he felt would keep Shiloh going in the short term and perhaps help move it in a positive direction for the longer term. For Hassman, like it had been so many times before with so many others, it was the concept of becoming involved in the lives of the campers that made the biggest impact on him and on the few other evangelicals he recruited from Southern churches of Christ colleges. They shared much the same passion for Shiloh that he did. About this vision for Shiloh's direction, he said:

It was so great to be around these kids [campers] who came from such challenging circumstances and inspiring in many ways that it had become obvious that they were going back to something and that we were going back to something [in reliving some of Shiloh's perceived glory days from the 1970s]. So it immediately, I mean it's hard to walk away from a conversation about vision, and so Jason and Jennifer and myself and Alfonso, we were sort of like, "What is this journey God has got us on, what are we supposed to be about here and how do we let these kids--we can do a little bit in this little window that we have in the summer, but what happens the rest of the year for these kids?" So I think over the next few years that vision built up, "Boy, it's obvious we need to be in their lives around the year, we need to be not just dipping in for a couple weeks for a roller coaster ride emotionally and otherwise with them, we're being introduced for a reason and maybe that reason is, we need to be with these guys year round, neighborhood, and that's how God is really going to change us and sort of transform their lives."²

As director, Hassman reinvigorated some relationships with Southern white churches of Christ and recruited more southern white counselors from churches of Christ schools. He was not forming Shiloh into a nonprofit structure at the time, but he recalled the differences in opinion he had with the more religiously conservative, Black churches of Christ members of the board who wanted to operate on the existing model of baptizing children and youth at camp and sending campers to their own churches during the year. In the end, the board members supported Hassman's vision of working towards a more constant, daily interaction with city kids. The

² Steve Hassman, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry January 11, 2013, transcript of audio recording, Baylor University Institute for Oral History, Waco, TX.

program began to recruit more children from a specific geographical area. Hassman used his personal and business finances (with the consent of his business partner) to help with the costs of running the camp. He worked for Shiloh for three years and felt that one of the most significant aspects of his contribution during that time was recasting the vision of working with kids year-round through Shiloh.³

After Steve Hassman's directorship, Shiloh recruited Lori Bumpas, a white churches of Christ member from Murfreesboro, Tennessee, who had moved up to Stamford, Connecticut to work in business but who found her career path very unfulfilling. When Bumpas left her job in finance in her twenties, she was a young business prodigy who had been making six figures a year, but she was seeking a new direction. Initially her work with Shiloh was simply to assess its financial situation and create documentation that would give a business-style portrait of how Shiloh was doing financially.⁴ Once she had completed that short-term task, however, she found the board members offering her the job of executive director, a position she ultimately accepted. Bumpas formed a quick bond with Jason Isbell and a few other counselors who had become invested in Shiloh as a camp, and several of these young white evangelicals ultimately moved to New York City to support the vision of Shiloh as a

³ Ibid.

⁴ This is not to say that Shiloh completely ignored any emphasis on financial viability throughout its previous existence. D.L. Reneau was business manager for Shiloh in the 1970s, and Clinton Davidson presided over its financial health throughout the 1950s and into the 1960s. As stated in the previous chapter, the 1980s were particularly difficult for Shiloh financially, and so it seems relevant to the argument here that Lori Bumpas would first bring technical business tools to bear as she oversaw Shiloh's move towards a religious nonprofit.

year-round enterprise, and they hoped that they themselves could connect with Shiloh campers throughout the year.

Throughout Bumpas's directorship, she moved Shiloh toward a sustainable nonprofit model with connections in the North and the South. Bumpas said her first task was to get Shiloh on a stable financial footing.⁵ Later, in continuing to follow a business model that stretched beyond a church mission model, Shiloh would recruit not just anyone who was interested in working with kids in the city and had a passion for doing so, but instead people who were good at what they did and who had "earned the right to speak into kids' lives" by being excellent at their work.⁶

Shiloh held yearly fundraisers in both regions. The North proved to be an important regional partner. Funders in the North tended to be less interested in the religious aspects of Shiloh than those in the South. Bumpas also pulled away from a reliance on majority churches of Christ funding. Bumpas said that, in the early years of her directorship, she was often asked how many people were being baptized in her program. She believed baptism to be important, but she never wanted to rush the process or to baptize someone at camp as a quick, impulsive decision on their part. Those are not the metrics she believes in, she said. "Kingdom metrics," meaning the metrics that she believed are important in God's kingdom, take time and an investment in relationships. As a constant advocate for Shiloh, she spoke about it often in a variety of places, and even accepted a check after discussing Shiloh with

⁵ Lori Bumpas, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, October 7, 2013, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History, Waco, TX.

⁶ Jason Isbell, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, March 22, 2013, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

someone in a bar. Shiloh still maintained its connections with the churches of Christ in fundraising and recruitment, but not as the sole or the most significant partner.

Funding came primarily from individuals, then from churches and foundations, and then from in-kind donations.⁷ Shiloh's self-identifying motto became "Equipping Youth with the Tools that Build Hope," a blend of evangelical otherworldliness and biblicism with the real-world concept that young people live real lives and need real tools to help them in the city.⁸

Shiloh also pulled back from the outer boroughs and concentrated its efforts primarily in the South Bronx in order to develop more relationships from one geographical area.⁹ The Bronx is the poorest urban county in the United States, with 28 percent of residents living below the poverty level in 2010. Also in 2010, the U.S. Census determined that almost 90 percent of the Bronx was made up of non-whites, and almost 31 percent of residents did not have a full high school education. The 16th Congressional District in the South Bronx was found to have the highest proportion of children living in poverty in the United States.¹⁰ Bumpas said Shiloh

⁷ Lori Bumpas, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, October 7, 2013, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History, Waco, TX.

⁸ Jason Isbell interview March 22, 2013, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History, Waco, TX.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Andrew R. Maroko, Rachael Weiss Riley, Megan Reed, and Mallesha Malcolm, "Direct Observation of Neighborhood Stressors and Environmental Justice in the South Bronx, New York City," *Popul Environ* (2014) 35: 479.

was intentional in its discussions with other nonprofits in the area, so that it might offer services that were not already being offered in the area.¹¹

Shiloh's work in the South Bronx has had a diverse social footprint. Over time, Shiloh took input from social workers, parents and family members, other nonprofits, and public and private schools as they learned how to interact with children from the South Bronx, including those children with difficult backgrounds and those with behavioral issues. Shiloh hired Nicole Valentine, a Black evangelical with roots in Nashville, Tennessee, to work as a Shiloh employee developing after-school educational enrichment programs in several public schools in the South Bronx. Valentine developed short- and long-term programs that taught schoolchildren entrepreneurship, gave one-on-one homework help, gave donated books to each student and to a school library, mentored young girls, taught sports activities, gave shoes to children, and offered assistance to teachers when they needed help from Shiloh workers. Valentine also helped organize a step [a rhythmic stomp dance] class and a program that taught piano education. The principals in the schools where Valentine worked valued and trusted her and the Shiloh program, and a number of children from the program attended camp in the summer or Shiloh's Wednesday night gathering during the year. Perhaps most importantly for relationship building in Shiloh's view, families who had children at the school learned to trust Shiloh through daily interactions at the schools, and they felt more comfortable sending their children to Shiloh's other programs.¹² Shiloh also developed a Wednesday night meal and discussion group for teens, and they taught life skills (budgeting, interviewing for jobs,

¹¹ Lori Bumpas interview October 7, 2013.

¹² Nicole Valentine, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, March 28, 2013, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History, Waco, TX.

writing a résumé) and gave small college scholarships.¹³ Valentine supervised teenage counselors-in-training when it was time for teenagers in the program to become leaders at camp.¹⁴ Camp became not just a place where kids learned stories about God, but also about emotional regulation and talking about their feelings.¹⁵ While Shiloh saw the discussion of feelings as part of a larger spiritual mission of interacting with children and youth, perhaps this concept would have been difficult for the Southern churches of Christ who distrusted the social gospel during Shiloh's year-round program in the 1970s.

At one point during this era, Shiloh hired a woman to live in the neighborhood where many Shiloh kids lived. That person found it difficult and left after one year. But there have been a number of camp counselors who moved to New York City to work unrelated jobs as their full-time positions and to spend time with Shiloh kids as part of the Shiloh program throughout the week. Shiloh also hopes to move ever closer to building year-round relationships and existing in the spaces where Shiloh kids live. Currently their offices are in Manhattan, housed for free in the Manhattan Church of Christ, and not in the Bronx.¹⁶

The reader may infer at this point that there was less of an evangelical emphasis at Shiloh with new secular partnerships, enterprises, and donors, and with a withdrawal from the churches of Christ's majority influence. However, this was not so; Shiloh still maintained a distinctly evangelical identity. Board member Ashley

¹³ Lori Bumpas interview, October 7, 2013.

¹⁴ Nicole Valentine interview.

¹⁵ Lori Bumpas interview, October 7, 2013.

¹⁶ Lori Bumpas interview October 7, 2013.

French said that the spiritual component continued and continues to be part of what Shiloh wanted to offer the children and youth in its orbit, blended along with meeting the physical and material needs of children and youth as much as possible:

I think spirituality is what we can send them home with. I think giving them something to cling on to that is—I mean, because there’s always the concern anytime, like, doing this kind of work. People have physical needs. Is there not enough food in their house? Is there not enough money to do school activities? Do they have underwear to wear? Where do they have physical needs? . . . I can’t send a bed home to every apartment for the kids. We can’t just go in and wholesale take over their financial lives. We can’t do those kind of things. But we can send them home with something that will comfort them throughout—. . . I think, for all of us, the takeaway is there’s got to be something more to life than just your house that can be washed away. Whether you have one or not, whether you’re safe or not, if there’s something you can anchor yourself to. . . You know, these things, they stick with you. And sometimes I hear the kids come back and say that years later they’ll be like, Oh I remember that song! That was a good one. I think that’s the take-away. That’s what they keep from it. That’s what they remember, because it’s compelling, because it’s real.¹⁷

In addition, Lori Bumpas said that what makes Shiloh unique from other nonprofits in the area, according to feedback from the Shiloh children and families who have other nonprofit services to choose from, is Shiloh’s emphasis on personal relationships and also what families sometimes refer to as “the God thing.”¹⁸

Rather than jettisoning its evangelical core to become secular, Shiloh simply became more inclusively nondenominational, just as the workers in the 1970s were attempting within their version of Shiloh. Current camp director Ryan French said he recruited counselors from many different colleges and universities, not just schools with churches of Christ heritage. As a result, he recalled camp counselors who were, for example, Baptist, Presbyterian, and Catholic. As a recruiter, he interviewed

¹⁷ Ashley French, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, November 15, 2012, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History, Waco, TX.

¹⁸ Lori Bumpas interview October 7, 2013.

prospective counselors about their faith journey to see if he felt that it was sincere and that it aligned with Shiloh's purposes.¹⁹ Adrienne Ewing, a white evangelical with a multi-year investment in Shiloh, recalled going to a nondenominational church in New York City during her involvement at Shiloh instead of attending the Manhattan Church of Christ, because it seemed to fit her faith journey more than the churches of Christ did.²⁰ Her story was an indication that involvement in Shiloh did not require attendance at a church of Christ from the administration, even if a church like Manhattan Church of Christ was geographically nearby or had a connection to the program.

Shiloh's board, too, was no longer only from the churches of Christ. Although Shiloh maintained relationships with Southern and Northern churches of Christ and Southern church of Christ colleges, and both Black and white churches of Christ pastors and lay members continued to be called upon to serve on the board, board membership varied across denominations and race in this past era of Shiloh. Board member Ray Newton, whose adoption story (see chapter 1) intimately connected him with Shiloh, said that his iteration of the board found the previous rule to be short-sighted that only churches of Christ members would be in Shiloh.²¹

¹⁹ Ryan French, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, March 22, 2013, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History, Waco, TX.

²⁰ Adrienne Ewing, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, November 20, 2012, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History, Waco, TX.

²¹ Ray Newton, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, September 14, 2012, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

In Evangelicalism--and in Eliminating Racial Bias--Relationships Matter

From the mid-1990s forward, Shiloh's leadership structured the organization to formally and informally emphasize ways that staff and volunteers could maintain long-term friendships with young people from New York City, young people especially but not exclusively from the South Bronx area of New York. Because they were free to work outside of a church structure and within a nonprofit structure, they were able to commit to the relational emphasis that both evangelical orthodoxy (outside of church) and movement toward conceptualizing racial equity demanded.

During the mid-1990s, several white evangelical camp counselors moved to New York City for the specific purpose of maintaining relationships with children and youth beyond the time limits of summer camp, although these evangelicals maintained full-time professional jobs in other fields during the workday. Ashley French remembered the joy of moving to New York and being a part of the group who was able to be invested in campers' lives on a regular basis through continuous volunteering with Shiloh. She said, "I remember that summer, to be able to tell kids [campers], 'I'll see you this fall!'" There was something really fun about that, and exciting. . . It was definitely an exciting thing to be a part of."²² Adrienne Ewing, who also moved to New York City in the 1990s and volunteered on a weekly basis to mentor a small group of young teenage girls who had been at Camp Shiloh, remembered that the time spent together with the girls in her group was initially awkward and that conversations were about surface things like television programs and movies. The goal for the small group was just to be together and get to know

²² Ashley French, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, November 15, 2012, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History, Waco, TX.

each other, and after a long period, the awkward moments together did metamorphize into meaningful friendships. At the time of her interview in 2012, Ewing had become friends with the girls in that small group and known them for nine years, entered into meaningful and important conversations with them about life, and still continued to spend time with them. In 2012, she said, “I don’t even know if I could leave New York City, because it would be leaving them, and it’s become that very kind of close relationship.”²³

Other close and long-term relationships attest to Shiloh’s continuous, evangelical emphasis on this kind of small-scale, close interaction. Relationships criss-crossed into families and across race and background: Ryan French and the Elem family; Jason Isbell and Sadé Grant; Lori Bumpas and Sam Acavedo, who grew up in foster care and became close enough to Bumpas that she called him “son.” Jason Isbell remembered being initially compelled by the kind of honesty and “lack of BS” that he found with kids in the South Bronx, the same kind of BS that he had been growing weary of in his white, suburban, evangelical world before he came to Shiloh. When he would make a scriptural point that resonated with a young person in the Shiloh program, and they responded with “damn!” at the profundity of that point in the moment, he was moved. It was this kind of honesty that made him want to relocate to New York City and continue getting to know kids involved in Shiloh.²⁴

Some of those important, profound spiritual stories that made some kids say, “damn” in appreciation may have themselves be about the concepts of relational

²³ Adrienne Ewing interview.

²⁴ Jason Isbell interview.

spirituality that Shiloh continued to emphasize. A number of Shiloh evangelicals told a particular story that they found moving as an example of a profound moment of evangelical teaching between a mentor and one of the teens in the program. During a teen program, one teen excitedly pointed out that God must really love humans even more than other creatures, because when God made people, it was through using God's hands, and in every other case of creation it was through words and breath. This was a spiritual point that Shiloh counselors had not considered before.²⁵

Once again, even beyond spiritual lessons taught by honest children, those relationships alerted the white evangelicals to the larger structures of inequity that the kids lived within and gave the evangelicals cause to widen their spiritual understanding of the world. Isbell reflected on how interactions with the kids impacted many white evangelicals to change their priorities when viewing inner city life and culture in comparison with their own white, middle-class culture and worldviews. He said, "I liked seeing that revelation in others, too—people being like, 'Oh, my gosh. Are you serious? This is amazing. I thought this whole part of the world should just fall into the ocean, but actually, my part of the world should fall into the ocean.'"²⁶ The binary world that racial inequity had created over centuries shifted and changed in priority with cross-cultural contact. Ashley French articulated her admiration for Sadé Grant, a Black New Yorker whom she had known since Grant was a camper at age nine and French herself was a young camp counselor just entering adulthood, a relationship that had been ongoing for fifteen years as of 2012 when French was interviewed. French, too, had a similar revelation to Isbell's

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

in comparing her own world in which she thought of herself as a giver and a mentor, to Grant's world, in which Grant gave up an incredible amount of her own personal identity and future in order to care for her own family. Over the time that French was able to interact with Grant, French grew to admire traits of caretaking and influence in Grant that she as an evangelical valued. She observed that Grant had a profound influence on her immediate community, more so than French felt she herself ever had. French said:

The way [Sadé Grant] takes care of her family, her mom, her cousins, her nieces and nephews—everyone in her life. You think, “We can do so much by helping people. Oh, we’re going to be a mentor. We’re going to do this.” We do, it’s fine, it’s good, there’s an influence there. I’m sure that’s helpful. But it’s nothing compared to the way she takes care of her family. At such a young age, the way she took care of her family on a daily basis. Like, her mom had to go to work and there was no one to watch the little kids, so she didn’t go to high school. I mean, you don’t have a strong GPA, you can’t excel in high school if you’re always having to stay in and watch the kids. But no one’s going to get to go to work if she didn’t do it, and no one else was willing to do it, but she was. Just the way she literally put her life on hold to take care of other people.²⁷

Shiloh evangelicals were able to see and to appreciate young people like Grant and to allow the understanding of other lives to expand and redirect their own thinking and their own spiritual worldviews. But there were nevertheless times that Shiloh evangelicals still operated from flawed, white worldviews that could not see the full picture, or that their own limitations were obvious to the children and youth in the program. Racialized inequity still persisted in Shiloh and around it, no matter how hard Shiloh workers tried to ameliorate it or believed that they had. For instance, Grant spoke about her experiences in the Shiloh program, and she expressed the both the hope and the contradictions of white evangelicals as she experienced their attentions. When asked whether or not Shiloh presented her and the other Shiloh

²⁷ Ashley French interview.

children with a “white people’s Jesus,” or a “white Jesus,” she replied, laughingly, in the affirmative, and expressed that she felt comfortable sharing with Shiloh workers what she felt. “I told them about this,” she said. A “white people’s Jesus,” to her, came through to the children and youth first in the way that Shiloh workers and staff were almost all completely white. But Grant nevertheless appreciated how Jason Isbell, although he was a white evangelical from the South, seemed to be able to understand the music she was listening to and the foods she was eating and to know about “Black people’s problems.” Because he took the time to understand, she said, Isbell was not only her friend, but he had a certain credibility as her “white and Black, he was both of it put together.” But a second way she experienced the whiteness of Shiloh was through the form that the material culture of Shiloh was distributed among the Shiloh children and youth when she was a child going to summer camp. She said a nice bus came and picked up the children from Bridgeport, Connecticut to take them to camp, and two more “yellow, broken-down, hot” buses came to pick up the kids from Brooklyn and the Bronx. “I think Shiloh didn’t mean to be cut down into sections, like you know, to put people in certain categories, but it did. And I think because we were so young, we didn’t realize it,” she said. The material discrimination between one bus and another that counselors didn’t even recognize as existing, translated into much more distinct messages for campers who had to live with inequity on a daily basis. The question put to Grant had been about Jesus and spirituality, and she saw the material inequity as having a direct correlation. Even though everyone mingled together at camp, they all knew they would have to get back on their bus at the end of the camp session. That distinction gave her a perspective of a “white Jesus” or a “white people’s Jesus” instead of a Jesus that was more like her. Still, overall, Grant was deeply appreciative of the Shiloh program in her life,

especially the long-term relationships she has had with Isbell and others. She said the binary of working with white people and living with Black people has shaped her into a better person, someone who is able to get along with both Black people and white people and not be scared. She expressed how Shiloh operates within a larger system of racial inequity that Shiloh alone cannot solve. She said it is difficult sometimes to express to her community from the Bronx some of the things that she learned at Shiloh. She said:

But it's good. It's good to have both sides. It's good to have the roughness and the hardship but it's also good to have the light and the support. And some people can't. Like I said I have cousins and stuff like that and they used to get kicked out of Shiloh [for fighting] and their life is still rough, you know what I mean.²⁸

Shiloh hired Angela Elem, a Black resident of the South Bronx, to work in the Wednesday-night teen program. Elem also worked as a camp cook during summer camp. Though not born white, evangelical, churches of Christ, or Southern, as many of the Shiloh staff had been, Elem's faith and skill set matched the needs of the nonprofit especially because she was able to communicate with teens in a way that offered a direct representation of where many of them came from. But Elem also remembered a moment in which her family's self-conception taught the Shiloh workers something new. In her family, she said, her father always taught his children never to say they were sorry, but to instead say they apologized. Saying you were sorry carried a baggage for him; it meant you were saying you were pitiful, and the word choice mattered. So when the Elem children were at camp and had difficulties with other children, white camp counselors told the kids to say they were

²⁸ Sade Grant, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, November 14, 2012, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History, Waco, Texas.

sorry. The Elems refused. They would say, "I apologize," but never "I'm sorry." Angela Elem said it was very difficult for the counselors to understand the values of self-respect that the Elem children were trying to communicate.²⁹

Similarly, Jason Isbell said that he learned a value from some Shiloh kids that contradicted a central value he learned as a white evangelical. When he tried to teach the biblical lesson of "turning the other cheek," or nonviolent response to violent actions, to some kids, he said he learned that it was not one that translated well to the situation of some city kids. If they turned the other cheek, he learned, they might get beat up in their neighborhood, and they sometimes needed to stand their ground. He said this was a valuable lesson in his own spiritual development.³⁰

Because they were in the lives of Shiloh kids, learning these kinds of lessons, investing long term, Shiloh workers were also able to be in the lives of young people during some of their most difficult, vulnerable moments, because many Shiloh children and parents trusted them. White evangelical Thomas Businelle connected with Sam Acavedo at camp because both of them had been in foster care, and Acavedo realized that Businelle knew his troubles and it was okay not to express his anger through fighting. That powerful experience at camp moved Acavedo, and then, throughout his life, Lori Bumpas continued to communicate with him and they became close friends. She ultimately helped him move out of the foster-care system

²⁹ Angela Elem, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, November 17, 2012, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

³⁰ Jason Isbell interview.

when he was a young adult and to care for himself, and helped him gain new skills for his life in the adult world.³¹

Nakeisha and Nicole Vanterpool, too, felt a long-term connection with Shiloh because Shiloh was involved in their lives over time and earned the family's trust. Their mother learned to trust Shiloh and feel comfortable allowing her children to spend time with neighborhood kids that had long-time connections with Shiloh as well as Shiloh workers. Leslie Bibilari-Vanterpool became deeply invested in Shiloh, through recruiting, volunteering, advising, and advocacy.³² Nicole said, "[Our mother] felt a sense of safety and comfort knowing that, 'Well, okay, my girls have been around people for years now. I know that no harm is going to be done, or they're always going to learn something and come back with something that they can use for the rest of their lives and grow from it.'" Nicole's twin sister, Nakeisha, appreciated the constancy of Shiloh workers in a world that was in flux. She said, "I've had so many people taken away from me, you know, violence and natural diseases, and so it's nice to know that, no matter what, some of these people are always going to be there."³³ That sense of constancy earned Shiloh the right to be involved in the lives of the twins in difficult and profound times. When Nakeisha was a victim of random gun violence, the family allowed Lori Bumpas and Ryan

³¹ Sam Acavedo, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, November 17, 2012, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

³²"Leslie Bibilari-Vanterpool Memorial Fund," Shiloh, NYC, <https://www.shilohnyc.org/memorial>, accessed April 22, 2022.

³³ Nakiesha and Nicole Vanterpool, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, November 16, 2012, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History, Waco, TX.

French to be there after the incident to express love and care for the twins. Bumpas said:

Because we knew that—Ryan and I both had close relationships with that family, so I couldn't think of anything else other than being right there with them—somebody that I had known for twelve years. They were in college and had been a part of our Hi Def program, had been a part of camp, had been a part of our after-school elementary program, had been a part of our teen Hi Def program, were on college scholarships that Shiloh had given them. They had been through a college prep program. Just in every intimate, woven detail, these kids are a part of our lives.³⁴

Not only were the Shiloh programs and personnel there to support the family, but Nicole and Nakeisha's mother was able to significantly impact Shiloh in its role as a nonprofit, volunteering endless speaking hours, donating financially to the program, and also advocating for the college scholarships that her twins and many others would obtain through Shiloh to attain post-high school education.³⁵ Shiloh's structure as a small nonprofit allowed Leslie Bibilari-Vanterpool to influence and shape the direction of her children's futures and to co-create a community of donors, city residents, white evangelicals, and others who supported her daughters in ways that white evangelical churches could not structurally achieve.

Former Shiloh participant Jennifer Hernandez spoke about the nonprofit aspect of Shiloh, especially concerning education, something she felt very strongly about.

She said:

They don't want you to, like, like I said, just do nothing with your life—just become—like, live that street life. They want you to do something with your life and they want you to be proud of it at the end of the day. Like, this is—like, we may have told you, like, what you need to do or we have may have given you a

³⁴ Lori Bumpas interview, October 7, 2013.

³⁵ “Leslie Bibilari-Vanterpool Memorial Fund,” Shiloh, NYC, <https://www.shilohnyc.org/memorial>, accessed April 22, 2022.

few tips, but you did this by yourself at the end of the day. And that's important.³⁶

Shiloh and Church

It had long been concern of many white evangelicals involved in the Shiloh program that kids involved in the program should be connected to a church.

Throughout most of Shiloh's history, this was a churches of Christ concern, born out of the desire to convert city residents to the churches of Christ as the true faith. But in Shiloh's current iteration, church remained a concern, not out of churches of Christ exclusivism, but from the broader evangelical perspective that any church served an essential function in life. In the most recent iteration of Shiloh, problems remained with this perspective that were still unresolved in the minds of Shiloh workers.

First, Shiloh operated its offices out of free space given by Manhattan Church of Christ. Many Shiloh kids came to Manhattan from the Bronx during Shiloh programming but not for church on Sundays. Cynthia Reyes, a former Shiloh kid who volunteered on Wednesday nights to work with teens in the Shiloh program, said she often took the train an extra distance with Shiloh kids so that they would not have to ride the subway alone back to their homes.³⁷ Lori Bumpas said that kids often reported feeling uncomfortable in Manhattan, like people were looking at them when they came into the borough.³⁸ Racialized space is an incredibly powerful force in

³⁶ Jennifer Hernandez, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, November 14, 2012, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History, Waco, TX.

³⁷ Cynthia Reyes, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, November 14, 2012, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History.

³⁸ Lori Bumpas interview, October 7, 2012.

America, and in the New York geography the disparity of American spaces could not be more starkly visible. While the South Bronx contains the poorest congressional district in the United States, just .75 miles separate that poorest congressional district from the wealthiest congressional district in the U.S., mostly made up of the Upper East Side of Manhattan. The wealthiest district is overwhelmingly white, while the poorest is overwhelmingly Black and Brown.³⁹ Shiloh would like to move its offices to a space, perhaps in the Bronx, where the kids feel more comfortable, they certainly cannot require kids to go to church in Manhattan on Sunday.⁴⁰ Interestingly, in 2011, the poorest congressional district in South Bronx had fifty churches, whereas the wealthiest in the Upper East Side had only thirty.⁴¹ Jason Isbell said he would still love for Shiloh kids to attend Manhattan Church of Christ and become personally connected with some wealthy Shiloh donors who attend the church who could help them regularly and be part of their network, but that Shiloh workers themselves often do not attend Manhattan Church of Christ and thereby do not attract the kids to attend the church on Sunday mornings.⁴²

³⁹ “The Wealth Gap is .75 Miles Wide,” *New York Magazine*, July 1, 2011, <https://nymag.com/news/features/wealth-gap-2011-7/> accessed April 23, 2022. The wealthy Upper East Side is where Eddie Grindley and Eastside Church of Christ used to reach out to impoverished people, highlighting the dramatic economic change in the parts of that area over a period of a few decades.

⁴⁰ Lori Bumpas interview, October 7, 2012.

⁴¹ “The Wealth Gap is .75 Miles Wide,” *New York Magazine*, July 1, 2011, <https://nymag.com/news/features/wealth-gap-2011-7/> accessed April 23, 2022.

⁴² Jason Isbell interview.

A second issue in the minds of Shiloh evangelicals is that, while Shiloh often operates as a specific, alternate religious space and a nonprofit service to help Shiloh kids, once they reach a certain age, those kids are not technically part of the Shiloh program for children and youth. Shiloh believes themselves to be planting religious seeds in the lives of children and youth, and hopes that they connect to religion for the rest of their lives. While Shiloh welcomes back anyone who has ever been part of the Shiloh program, Ryan French said he would love for those who “age out” of the Shiloh program to continue their religious connections and religious education in church settings when they are at college or other places as young adults. But, he said, those young adults often report not feeling comfortable in churches. He said that kids report God being present at Shiloh, ““God is good here,”” they tell him, referring to Shiloh, ““but I haven’t seen it be applied in my personal life.”” Therefore many of them do not connect with a campus religious group once they have gone to school on a Shiloh scholarship. French said he would like to connect with college campus ministers and meet with kids during their campus years to intentionally get them to connect with a campus church or religious group. But French himself loved Shiloh for how it pushed him beyond the basic, unending symbols of church life.⁴³ French found himself experiencing Shiloh’s age-old conundrum: in a relational, joy-centered camp and nonprofit it is easy to see that God exists and cares for Shiloh kids and Shiloh workers alike; in the world beyond those intentional relationships, it often is harder. In a racialized America, it seems that it may be more difficult to see God in the world itself.

⁴³ Ryan French interview.

Perhaps the structure of church versus nonprofit is more obvious to Shiloh kids after having been in Shiloh. Raquel Vargas, who had been in the Shiloh program and then worked for Shiloh in the program's administrative offices as office supervisor, said that it was easy to see God at camp and when working at Shiloh and also to see God at church, but it was harder to see God in the larger city sometimes because it was such a busy place, so it had been easy for her to sometimes slip away from church attendance until she reconnected with Shiloh professionally. But even at Manhattan Church of Christ, where she felt comfortable and lucky to attend a church that viewed women in progressive ways, she noticed that there were differences in the ways that congregants' pasts informed the way that they saw God. She saw God as having no color, no gender, an infinite being whom she learned about at Shiloh, but that even at racially and gender-inclusive Manhattan Church of Christ she found that female congregants were discussing how they were wrestling with gendered views of God that they had learned from the churches of Christ in other states. Vargas said their experiences did not resonate with her own. She said, "And I just remember, I was like, 'That has no relevance to me,' and I feel like I got a certain look as if that doesn't make me a Christian woman if the rules that are in the Bible holds no relevance to me. . . ." Even Shiloh friends discussed their previous understandings of God differently than her own. She said, "But I've had friends that work for Shiloh and told me, 'In my church, my mom can't even sign checks.' And I'm just like, 'That just makes no sense to me,' you know. Why are men so afraid of women?"⁴⁴ Views of God and the world, even in Shiloh, even at Manhattan Church

⁴⁴ Raquel Vargas, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, November 16, 2012, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History, Waco, TX.

of Christ where her friends like Jason Isbell attended, were informed by past and present experiences of race and gender and made an impact on how a young person connected to others. It also propelled Vargas into a new kind of spirituality that was not the same as that of her peers, her friends at church, or her Shiloh friends.

Shiloh continued to send notes and gift packages to college students who were part of the program. Cynthia Reyes attended Trinity College in Connecticut, near Stamford Church of Christ, where Lori Bumpas attended and where Shiloh board member Dale Pauls was the minister. She found that the church's history with Shiloh enriched her life, and connected her to the church. Stamford Church of Christ has been involved in Reyes's educational life, giving her monetary gifts for books, advocating for her with the admissions office, asking about her experiences in school. It made her feel good, even when she was far enough away from home that her biological family could not afford to visit her in school. She attended Stamford Church of Christ, and said that felt she had multiple mothers and many families who cared for her.⁴⁵ Throughout Shiloh's past, from the 1950s until the present, participants and staff alike described it as a special place, and many describe it as a place where God is present. Perhaps that specialness, that sense of God, has been about the relational aspect that was fostered in multiple ways at Shiloh, a place free of the cares of the world, free of the mundane, yes, but also free of the concerns of church life, and also free of the racialized space and inequality that pervades the American landscape.

⁴⁵ Cynthia Reyes, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, November 14, 2012, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History, Waco, TX.

Conclusion

Shiloh's progression from church mission to nonprofit kept the program well within the evangelical perspective but also moved white evangelicals toward more meaningful understandings of the world outside of their own white, suburban landscapes. By moving away from denominational control and connecting with partners and influences of the city, Shiloh was able to facilitate an emphasis on ongoing, daily relationships with youth that a church outreach-nonprofit could not sustain in the long term, and this process changed them as evangelicals. However, operating within the American racialized space as well as the larger landscape of church as an ongoing aspect of American racialization, Shiloh could not solve problems on a large scale, nor could they operate free of their own biases, but they could meaningfully work toward intimate, deeply personal relationships, and could attempt to change themselves. As they had been for other Shiloh workers in the past, the problems of the city and of relationships across racial lines within a larger racialized society were complex and did not have easy solutions or answers. Still, it was of the utmost importance to them that they enter into the highest level of ongoing relationships that they could by organizing themselves as a nonprofit rather than allowing a church organizational structure to dictate how their mission should operate.

CONCLUSION

The racially important cultural tools in the white evangelical tool kit are . . . “relationism” (attaching central importance to interpersonal relationships), and antistructuralism (inability to perceive or unwillingness to accept social structural influences). -Emerson and Smith

The success of Shiloh varied over time and also varied with the definition of the concept of what success entailed and with its perception of its own mission. When connected to a local church and viewed as a soul-winning enterprise, Shiloh felt it succeeded in its mission, although at this time, in the 1950s, it did not necessarily embrace the full lessons of racial injustice that exposure to the surrounding city might teach. But when its mission changed and its staff attempted to understand racial injustice, the larger churches of Christ could not embrace that mission. This suggests an interplay between church and parachurch that can be meaningful for understanding American racial injustice.

Shiloh’s relationship to the mainstream churches of Christ was often difficult. Over time, the churches of Christ in the South were concerned with whether Shiloh staffers, organizers, and volunteers were involved in a belief called premillennialism; whether or not they believed in the Holy Spirit as an active entity in the world; whether or not they, in connection with beliefs about the Holy Spirit, were speaking in tongues; whether they were associated with the church leader Oral Roberts; that women should not be speaking in church pulpits on behalf of Shiloh; whether Shiloh staffers were members of the churches of Christ only; and there were controversies on

camp premises about Shiloh counselors saying the Lord's Prayer.¹ That none of these theological positions or concerns reflected or sufficiently engaged with the changing spiritual worldviews of Shiloh workers as they encountered racial inequity for the first time is yet another indication that the home churches' worldviews were deeply locked within the walls of church itself. As such, these churches positioned Shiloh as an outreach of church, and tasked both Shiloh and the Northern churches of Christ with specific forms and specific functions that had been birthed in nineteenth century America and that carried invisibly forward into the twenty-first.

The Northern churches of Christ, though at times more liberal in their views than those in the South, were only able to act as year-round outreach structures for urban dwellers on a limited basis. They were often limited through many interlocking issues such as time, geography, purpose, and function in the ways in which they truly reached out to the underserved city residents with children at Shiloh. A racially integrated church like Manhattan Church of Christ has been in the twenty-first century is not fully a center for outreach to the underserved areas of the city because of the emotional and geographical boundaries of racialized space that has unfolded over

¹ Barbara Bass Evans, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, January 3, 2013, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History, Waco, TX; Preston Pierce, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, July 28, 2012, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History, Waco, TX; John Allen Chalk correspondence with HR Summerville, July 4, 1970 and July 14, 1970. Harding University Archives; Lori Bumpas, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, October 7, 2013, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History, Waco, TX; Douglas Shafer, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry November 28, 2012, second interview, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History; William and Mendy Kooi, interviewed by Jessica Roseberry, May 9, 2013, transcript of audio, Baylor University Institute for Oral History, Waco, TX.

time between Manhattan and New York's other boroughs. East Side Church of Christ was integrated on some levels but not in others, and its outreach was handled by a small number of people, many of whom felt overwhelmed by the task. Black churches like Roosevelt-Freeport Church of Christ or Kings Church of Christ were not properly equipped to operate a full-scale outreach to underserved neighborhoods, either, especially when they were structured to be the predominant year-round outreach entities for Shiloh. Predominantly white churches of Christ, such as Stamford Church of Christ in Connecticut, West Islip Church of Christ on Long Island, and several others that were started by Shiloh workers, connected with Shiloh on some levels but relied almost exclusively on Shiloh or similar parachurch entities to reach out to underserved neighborhoods. As the Shiloh case study shows, whether they are large or small, "the characteristics of local congregations that make them the ideal organizational structures for worship," as writes Christopher P. Schetle, "often make them less than ideal for outreach."² This has indeed been the case throughout Shiloh's entire history.

Because they moved from the South to the North, young white people who came to Shiloh moved out of the churches of Christ milieu and entered into a world in which they would have to grapple without the guidance of an abundance of nearby churches of Christ congregations to meet the ongoing needs of the city. Often these Southerners tried to build more churches to combat this, though at times these built churches were in white neighborhoods and the sites of white flight, such as several on Long Island. At other times, in order to meet the needs of city dwellers, Shiloh

² Christopher P. Scheitle, *Beyond the Congregation: The World of Christian Nonprofits*, (New York: Oxford, 2010), 42.

workers created their own particular versions of what they thought church could be, working to include Black and Brown children and families as in-group members and entering into urban residents' daily lives when they glimpsed the depths of urban racial inequity. They often tried to meet physical and material needs. But this latter conception of what church and theological expression could be was incomprehensible to many Southern church leaders and donors to Shiloh, because their own views of church in the world did not extend as far as conceptualizing ongoing daily relationships outside of the world of a church. Therefore, in part because of the churches of Christ's views of churchbuilding, and in part to connect more with the world around it, ultimately Shiloh released itself of much of the previous control by the churches of Christ in order to become a religious nonprofit that could more easily operate within the world of New York City and that could build long-term relationships with underserved children and youth.

As the divide between American white evangelicals and their non-evangelical counterparts in the rest of the country seems to be ever increasing with the passage of time, it may be useful to consider that the boundaries of church members are deeply defined by the self-reinforcing boundaries of church itself. One professor of theology has suggested that the church has become an impotent actor in evangelical life because of evangelical emphasis on the individual and individuals' salvation, with little real thought to ecclesiology, and this places all of the true activity away from the church and pushes it into the parachurch.³ Other authors who study white

³ Telford Work, "Reordering Salvation: Church as the Proper Context for an Evangelical *Ordo Salutis*," *Eccumenical Theology in Worship, Doctrine, and Life: Essays Presented to Geoffrey*

supremacy in evangelicalism cite the same emphasis on individual salvation with no self-held accountability for the church as a larger group as a reason for which the white church has ignored systemic racism.⁴ Whatever the internal theological reasons, the structure of the church as a functional unit has been a container for its impotence and has acted as a racialized entity in itself for much of religion's ongoing racialized system. In other words, the white American church as a whole has become one of the systems for the perpetuation of systemic racism. In his book, *White too Long, the Legacy of White Supremacy in American Christianity*, Robert P. Jones cites churches as places wherein active white supremacists have been able to function, enact violence, and spread their dogma.⁵ Jamar Tisby's *Color of Compromise: The Truth about the American' Church's Complicity in Racism* defines the white church as passive in the face of racial injustice. Church as a site for identity creation is, at its worst, a place that perpetuates a white-centric identity culture and cannot allow any "other" in its physical walls or its theological worldview. At its worst it is actively violent, exclusionary, and repressive. As this text shows, the worst case may not always be the case in churches, but even people with integrationist values may find themselves inside a system that never considered functional ways to undo systemic racism as that racism unfolded in the American story.

Wainright on his Sixtieth Birthday. Edited by David S. Cunningham, Ralph Del Colle, and Lucas Lamadrid. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 182-195.

⁴ Robert P. Jones, *White Too Long" The Legacy of White Supremacy in American Christianity*, (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2020), 61-83 online version.

⁵ Ibid.

This study has shown that the evangelical parachurch can be a site of action and also of relational connection that lessens the distance between groups. But simply existing as a parachurch organization does not automatically engender the kind of engagement with culture that always bridges social divides. Kristen DuMez's book, *Jesus and John Wayne: How White Evangelicals Corrupted a Faith and Fractured a Nation* addresses how white male evangelical leaders have used parachurch organizational structures of publishing, radio, and nonprofits like Focus on the Family to promote patriarchal concepts of manliness and male dominance as the appropriately biblical standards for American culture. Religious nonprofits and parachurch organizations have become increasingly dominant, though understudied, structures by which American religious adherents choose to interact with American and global culture, and in whatever form they choose. They are the specialist actors when the church is a generalist, and they have existed alongside churches and denominations in an ongoing dialogue since early American religious expressions centuries ago.⁶

Still, churches and denominations exist as the dominant and age-old structures by which evangelicals continue to conceptualize and to operate. The boundaries of the theology that evangelicals subscribe to have *always* been capable of accommodating equality in race, gender, and other social relationships, as shown by Christine Leigh Heyman's view of the earliest evangelicals in *Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt*. But early evangelicals acquiesced to the overall system of Southern slavery. After this, the American evangelical landscape as it has unfolded since the

⁶ Scheitle, *Beyond the Congregation* 4. 20-21.

Civil War has barely sought to address any significant cultural issues in real time, from industrialization to civil rights to the intersections of science and culture.⁷

In terms of civil rights, this study suggests that Protestant churches as a whole have been shackled in part by their need for churches as structures for identity and in-group relationship within the church itself and not as centers of true outreach and action. And yet, other studies of the parachurch suggest that nonprofits as a whole have by their nature been less relational and more business-oriented than the church, especially large nonprofits. Scheitle contrasts the church with many nonprofits in terms of relational emphasis:

Indeed, few churches would want this “McDonaldized” [businesslike] model. But the organic nature of churches also handicaps them. Unlike parachurch organizations, churches cannot simply fire members or recruit highly trained professional managers. They must work with what they have to accomplish what they can. The purely voluntary nature of a church, with all its ensuing struggles, compromises, and fellowship, is what many would argue is the beauty of churches. An Amish barnraising would be less inspiring if it were done by subcommittee. Nonetheless, when it comes to many of the overlapping activities, the bureaucratic model allows the parachurch model to produce more goods and services faster, more efficiently, and more predictably.⁸

Small entities like Shiloh, which strive to emphasize relationships, notwithstanding, the extremes of this spectrum leaves many Protestants shackled twice when it comes to exposure to racial inequity through deep relationships. If the church is generally a center for in-group identity creation and religious identity sustenance and not for action, and if the parachurch centers of action are not always centers of relationship, there is an even smaller subset of evangelicals experiencing

⁷ Mark Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), 100-107.

⁸ Scheitle, 56.

cross-racial relationships that are significant and meaningful methods toward which minds and theologies are changed. It seems entirely appropriate that sociologists Emerson and Smith call for deep religious thinking about race and religion in America that includes many factors, which might include an attention to restructuring “the very *organization* [emphasis mine] of American religion.”⁹

Shiloh functionally became a parachurch organization that cooperated with churches like Manhattan Church of Christ and Stamford Church of Christ and with churches in the South. Since the 1990s, both the churches and the nonprofits in that cooperative relationship served different functions but had similar goals of reaching out to the underserved city, and the relationship has been working positively without interruption for several decades as of this writing. Perhaps this is one part of the restructuring solution for American evangelicalism. But Scheitle also notes the prevalence of discord and competition between the two entities, church and parachurch, as they attempt similar but different functions in what sociologists call “the religious marketplace.” That competition can be especially pronounced when both church and parachurch emphasize relationships, since that may mean that adherents cease going to church and instead obtain fellowship within the nonprofit.¹⁰

America’s racial inequity is an ongoing, pervasive problem that does not have easy solutions. Underserved neighborhoods like East New York, Brownsville, and the South Bronx are only a few of the innumerable expressions of racial inequity

⁹ Emerson and Smith, *Divided by Faith*: (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 170-172.

¹⁰ Scheitle, 55.

throughout the United States. If, as Mark Noll suggests, evangelicals should have the *most* to say about how to operate mercifully and justly in God's world, then their own lack of engagement on racial injustices is an indictment.¹¹ Perhaps that indictment against them extends to their institutions if those institutions have not functionally addressed these crises in a large-scale fashion. Emerson and Smith point out that the religious marketplace in which people flock to gather with other people who are like them in congregations is another strong aspect, among many aspects, of the racialization of the American church.¹² Numerous scholars have rightly pointed out theological and historical white supremacy in white American faith, including evangelicalism. This study attempts to continue to point out the weakness of some of the structures that make up structural racism. Those structures may not be in and of themselves racist, but they need not be in order to perpetuate a system of racism. This text posits churches as a whole are entities that act as identity-creating collectives. They operate beyond the individual salvation mentioned above, which may obfuscate some of the larger picture even for them. James Cone writes that as a group, white Christians are not passive and blind, but are selfish:

Although White Christians and other religious communities acknowledge their sinful condition, and that their inordinate power as a group makes them more prone toward injustice in relation to other minority groups, they find it nearly impossible to do anything to relinquish their advantage. Individuals are often self-critical but groups are inevitably selfish and proud. No theologian has been more insightful on this point than Reinhold Niebuhr: 'The group is more arrogant, hypocritical, self-centered and more ruthless in the pursuit of its ends

¹¹ Noll, *Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, 4.

¹² Emerson and Smith, 135-151.

than the individual... If we did for ourselves what we do for our country, what rascals we would be'.¹³

Whether blind or selfish or both, the implications of an American system that must attend to itself before it can attend to one of the most pressing problems in American society is of the utmost significance.

White evangelicalism has been and continues to be another system among many systems of American systemic oppression and white supremacy. Evangelicals began their journey as such during American enslavement, when Methodist and Baptist missionaries gave full sanction to the peculiar institution as long as they could convert enslaved souls to Christianity.¹⁴ With their preoccupation with the spiritual afterlife at the expense of the material condition of human suffering firmly established, evangelicals continued in this vein through Reconstruction, Jim Crow, and steadily onward into current events. Evangelical scholar Mark Noll begins his book, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, by saying that the scandal he references is that there isn't much of an evangelical mind at all.¹⁵ What Noll means by this is that, throughout American history, evangelicals' preoccupations and withdrawals have led to the consequence that they have not met any real-world challenges or social

¹³ James Cone, "Theology's Great Sin: Silence in the Face of White Supremacy," *Black Theology: An International Journal*. (Jul2004, Vol. 2 Issue 2), 149-150. Reinhold Niebuhr, *Nature and Destiny of Man*, I, ((New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1941), 208-209.

¹⁴ Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The Invisible Institution in the Antebellum South*, (New York: Oxford Press, 2004), 96.

¹⁵ Mark Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), 1

problems with any truly viable solutions but have instead wasted their time on a number of otherworldly distractions that have meant nothing in the here-and-now situations that actually face our world. In the meantime, racial inequities have piled atop one another across America. Although Noll only briefly references race in his book, other works already referenced in this dissertation prove that evangelicals have not solved nor have they barely attempted to solve issues of racial discrepancy and injustice and have, if anything, leaned toward either ignorance or active oppression. Overall, their attempts to solve issues of racial injustice, if they have attempted it at all, may be about conversion or facile platitudes and less-than-helpful outreaches.

The text here is both hopeful and not hopeful. The fact that Shiloh evangelicals had to live in poor neighborhoods for extended periods of time and develop networks of relationships among Black and Brown citizens for a number of years simply to glimpse the Black and Brown citizens' humanity and citizenry shows just how far behind true equality white people, and in this case specifically evangelicals, truly are, even while they proclaim a value and dignity within all human life and see themselves as bearer of good news. An earlier claim of this text was that Shiloh's relationships are part of its strength, and this is so. Relationships are one of the only cultural tools evangelicals possess to put them into contact with oppressed groups and to perhaps lead them into activist positions, but relationships may not be enough on their own. Other texts show that the evangelical phenomenon called Promise Keepers emphasized racial reconciliation through cross-racial relationships but eschewed white repentance and reparation, and thereby ultimately founded the true efficacy of that aspect of the movement. Contact and relationships alone does not grant immediate understanding; instead, it is the depth and type of contact that

makes the difference to the evangelical toolkit.¹⁶ Within this dissertation, white evangelicals, in various degrees, learned to see Black and Brown people as human beings and allowed their theology to reflect this vision. But it was because the longer the relationships, the more the evangelicals were in the city, and the more relationships they developed, including with adults, the less likely these evangelicals were, as discussed in the introduction of this text, to see disparity as an aspect of personal and moral failure on the part of Black and Brown people, something that many evangelicals, even in Shiloh, were not pushed to understand. To what degree and how often evangelicals allowed their reflections to turn into activism, attempts at equality, and also, in their parlance, repentance, is another part of the evangelical question, and the Shiloh story illustrates that the answer to these questions is “sometimes”. That the theological apparatus of evangelicals can contain Black and Brown humanity and can recognize their moral dignity is important, but evangelicals as a subset of Southern whites still appear far behind where they need to be, and the phenomenology of how they begin to understand Black and Brown lives is only a first step for them as a whole, and one that not certainly not all of them even begin to undertake. Further, while swimming in a sea of white supremacy, North, South, and beyond, white evangelicals along with so many other white Americans, seem to be unclear as to how to offer help in ways that move their own values of white supremacy, individualism, colonialism, and conversion as an answer to poverty into directions that create true equality and long-term, systemic change in America. The Shiloh story may be hopeful in some ways, but there is still a long way to go.

¹⁶ Emerson and Smith, 65-68, 127-130, 168.

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