

Robert Wagner, Milton Galamison and the challenge to New York liberalism **by Clarence Taylor**

During the mayoralty of one of New York City's most liberal mayors, Robert F. Wagner (1954-1965) the city faced a great deal of racial turmoil. Despite its reputation as a bastion of liberalism and the mayor's efforts at making New York a place where harmonious race relations existed, Wagner found himself under siege by numerous racial protests. In 1963 a coalition of civil rights groups, including the Brooklyn chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality, the NAACP, and the Urban League of Greater New York initiated a sit-in at Mayor Wagner's office demanding a halt to all construction sponsored by the city until all discriminatory hiring practices were "eliminated." CORE also began demonstrating at construction sites throughout the city demanding that the state and city governments and the Building and Construction Trade Council hire African Americans. In July of 1963, CORE forged an alliance with a group of Brooklyn ministers and led a huge protest at the construction site of the Downstate Medical Center where over 700 people were arrested becoming, "jailbirds for freedom" in an attempt to force the state to hire blacks and Puerto Ricans construction workers. (2)

The most dramatic civil rights protest in New York City took place on February 3, 1964 when civil rights groups launched a one-day boycott of the public school system over the issue of school integration. The school integration protest, led by the Rev. Milton A. Galamison, managed to keep close to a half million children out of the public schools in an attempt to force the New York City Board of Education to come up with a plan and timetable to integrate the school system. The event was so dramatic that it caught the attention of Dr. Martin Luther King who congratulated the demonstration leaders for their efforts for bringing New York City's racism to the attention of the nation. (3)

Without a doubt, Galamison and the movement for school integration directly challenged the image of New York City as a shining example of urban liberalism. They consistently argued that racial discrimination was not limited to the South; the largest school system in the country was also plagued by the problem of racial segregation. Black and Hispanic children were relegated to overcrowded schools, were provided fewer services than children attending schools that had a predominantly white student body, and children of color were given the least experienced teachers. The goal of the civil rights movement in New York City was similar to that of the southern wing of movement; the creation of a harmonious community where racial barriers were eliminated and all were provided the opportunity to reach their full potential. Wagner, despite his liberal sentiment, was unable to solve the city's most explosive issue, school integration.

WAGNER'S NEW DEAL LIBERALISM

Historian Joshua Freeman notes that during the mayoralty of Wagner New York City labor reached its zenith of power. "Capitalizing on its long history of struggle and institution-building, and the impressive display of worker militancy after World War II," Freeman contends, "organized labor wielded its influence in ways unrivaled in the city's history to make working-class life more pleasant and secure." (4)

The Wagner years were a period where labor was able to build an infrastructure of social security, housing, and health care. In addition, car and home ownership among the working class increased and vacations and college education became a reality for the working class men and women and their children. To be sure, labor was able to succeed in gaining political influence because it forged a coalition with liberal politicians that helped create a positive political atmosphere. It was labor's efforts that helped bring Robert F. Wagner, the son of the famous New York City liberal senator, to Gracie Mansion. Wagner represented the liberal wing of the Democratic Party that stressed political inclusion of ethnic and racial groups. (5)

The alliance between organized labor and politicians, according to Freeman, helped erect a "welfare state in New York far more robust than the national norm." In 1958, Wagner issued an executive order granting municipal unions the right to collectively bargaining. He also granted city workers lucrative contracts. The social contract in New York extended beyond worker and employer and encompassed the government providing affordable housing and health care and other services that went to the poor. (6)

To be sure, Wagner's liberalism was more than an attempt at creating a working class paradise; he also sought to make New York a place of racial and ethnic tolerance by taking direct action to eliminate racial, ethnic and other forms of discrimination. Wagner tried to keep his campaign pledge of improving race relations. In 1955 the Mayor, along with the city council, established a permanent Commission on Inter-Group Relations (COIR). COIR had the power to investigate complaints and to initiate investigations into racial, religious, and ethnic group discrimination. Its objective was to root out racial bigotry in New York City due to race, creed, national origins, and ancestry. In order to carry out its function, the group was granted the power to hold hearings, report its findings and make recommendations to the mayor. (7)

As part of its investigatory duties, COIR was charged with studying the reasons for prejudice, intolerance, bigotry, discrimination and disorder among the various racial and ethnic groups of the city and to find avenues for developing an inter-group "dialogue." During Wagner's mayoralty, COIR's powers were extended (in 1958 (thanks to the Sharkey-Brown-Issacs Law) to investigate and hold hearings of allegations of housing discrimination. COIR became the first city agency of its kind in the nation to extend its powers beyond public housing and to include the private sector. In 1962 COIR was renamed the Commission on Human Rights and was granted the power to not only investigate discrimination based on race, creed, and color in employment, public accommodations and housing but was also granted powers of enforcement. (8)

Indeed, as historian Wendell Pritchett points out in his masterful work, *Brownsville, Brooklyn: Blacks, Jews and the Changing Face of the Ghetto*, eliminating housing discrimination became a major objective of the Wagner administration. In 1957 the mayor ordered the city Comptroller, Charles F. Preusse, to provide a study and make recommendations for reform in the New York City Housing Authority. Reflecting the liberal spirit of the city, the Comptroller called for an end to the concentrating of "troubled families" in housing projects and instead for "more balanced population economically. Whites received preference for predominantly black housing projects and blacks and Latinos for predominantly white housing projects. (9) While there were certainly problems with the Comptroller's housing integration plan, it nevertheless represented a scheme to de-racialized housing projects by ending the geographical concentration of the poor. Preusse's plan reflected the city's racial liberalism during a time when the demand for integration and racial equality was on the front burner of the nation's issues.

Wagner's racial liberalism extended beyond establishing institutions to rid the city of racial and other forms of discrimination; the mayor also placed close black political allies in politically powerful positions. The Reverend Gardner C. Taylor is a case in point. Taylor, who was pastor of the 10,000 members Concord Baptist Church in Brooklyn, was one of the few Democrats among Brooklyn's powerful black clergy. In his first year as mayor, Wagner named Taylor to an advisory group seeking ways to improve city services. Four years later the mayor appointed Taylor to the New York City Board of Education. The best indication of Wagner's liberalism of inclusiveness came in 1962 when he named Taylor as part of a group of three to replace Joseph T. Sharkey as Brooklyn's Democratic leader. (10)

Wagner also empowered several other black clergy by putting them in charge of anti-poverty programs. In 1964, with the help of federal funds, Wagner created the Youth in Action (YIA) program, granting the agency \$223,225 to examine discontent among the youth and to develop antipoverty programs. The Reverends William A. Jones of Bethany Baptist Church and Carl McCall became members of the board of directors of the agency while the Rev. Walter Offutt,

assistant pastor of Bethany, became the chairperson of the Board of Directors. YIA became Bedford- Stuyvesant's official antipoverty program offering job training for unwed mothers, remedial education, and adult on the job training. It also provided recreational services for teens. Indeed, several black churches received funds to house many of YIA's programs. (11)

Former Assistant New York City Budget Director Charles R. Morris notes that Wagner, a man of integrity, had always been concerned about the poor, blacks and Hispanics of New York. According to Morris, the mayor "tried valiantly to redirect city services. Federal juvenile delinquency money was tapped to provide summer jobs for young people from the slums. Money was found to pay for the Higher Horizons program for disadvantaged pupils--extra teachers, audio-visual aids, and bilingual or Spanish-language instruction." Morris points out that in 1964, Wagner created the city's Attack on Poverty, allocating fifteen million dollars "in flexible appropriation, its major task was to coordinate the city's welfare, housing, educational, and job programs for the benefit of the poor. "He [Wagner] was cut in the mold of the best of the 1950s mayors--committed to housing improvement and physical renewal." (12)

New York City's liberal efforts at challenging racial discrimination had the potential of making the city a model for other large urban centers. As historians Gerald Markowitz and David Rosner contend New York, in particular, appeared well-positioned to become a model for a northern effort to address de facto segregation." Its "traditions of liberalism, its strong labor movement, and the political importance of Harlem "in the new Democratic coalition," placed the city in a strong position to address segregated schools and other forms of institutional racism. Indeed, Mayor Wagner even addressed the school integration situation by publicly supporting it. "Greater integration of our school children," the mayor declared in February 1955, "leading to a more wholesome integration of our citizenry, is worth the cost of providing safe guard crossings, overcoming traffic difficulties and a proper adjustment of school time." (13)

WAGNER'S RESPONSE TO THE CIVIL RIGHTS COMMUNITY

Despite New York City's liberal traditions, Wagner appointing black elites to powerful positions, and the mayor's efforts to create a city where racial discrimination would be a thing of the past by establishing anti-discriminating agencies and publicly supporting school integration, these efforts could not overcome the decades of customs and practices that maintained a system of structural inequality based on race. Despite the passage of anti-discrimination laws in employment and education in New York, racial discrimination was a reality for blacks and Hispanics. Although New York's State Commission Against Discrimination (SCAD) had the power of enforcement, it decided to act more as a mediation agency instead of insisting on complete compliance of anti-discrimination laws. Historian Martha Biondi claims that SCAD did nothing to stop trade unions from using seniority and apprenticeships systems to deny blacks employment. Moreover, the American Jewish Congress reported in a 1947 survey that it conducted that eighty percent of employers it surveyed were willing to racially discriminate and avoid hiring people of color. (14)

Blockbusting by realtors that led to segregated communities, redlining (banks and mortgage companies refusing blacks loans to purchase homes and businesses), and industries that refused to hire blacks or relegated them to the lowest menial position were realities in New York City. Brooklyn's largest black community, Bedford Stuyvesant had become the poorest community in that borough ... By 1957, the community's 9,825 welfare cases accounted for 23 percent of Brooklyn's public assistance cases. The infant mortality rate in 1957 was 38.3 per 1,000 compared to the borough's rate of 25.2 per 1,000. Bedford-Stuyvesant's venereal disease and tuberculosis rates were the highest in the borough. Little was done by the city to reverse these trends. The city, according to Morris, needed better schools and hospitals, standard housing, libraries, and solutions to the growing problem of traffic congestion." Despite its attempt to provide public housing, the Wagner administration could not provide units fast enough to deal with the growing housing need. (15)

One issue that received a great deal of attention in New York was education. As the black and Latino population increased in the city, school segregation became a reality. Moreover, black and Latino children received inferior educational resources and services. In Harlem, the city's largest black community, there was only one high school in the area and by 1940 no school building had been built since the First World War. Schools also operated on a double-schedule in order to relieve overcrowding and the schools lacked libraries and gymnasiums. (16)

New York City College Professor, Dr. Kenneth Clark directly challenged the image of New York City as a bed of liberalism when he accused the school system of not only being racially segregated but also the New York City school system of carrying out policies that assured that the system would remain segregated. In 1954 Clark claimed that the Board of Education was aware that educational facilities, academic standards and the curriculum in Harlem were inferior to those in predominantly white schools because no white students had been assigned to the only vocational high school in the area despite the fact that it was the only school in the city that offered a particular vocational course of study. Moreover, Harlem schools had a disproportional number of substitute teachers compared to predominantly white schools, proving that the board assigned the least experienced teachers to the community. Harlem schools had 103 classes for the mentally retarded and only 3 classes for the intellectually gifted. (17)

Clark's statements embarrassed the Board of Education and a city that saw itself as a fortress of racial tolerance and racial liberalism. The Public Education Association reported that segregation was widespread in the school system and that the Board did little to correct the situation. Even before the release of the PEA's report, Wagner appointed a committee to survey the utilization of school buildings to relieve overcrowding. Despite his efforts he became a target of civil rights groups who accused him of doing little to integrate the schools. Civil rights activist Ella Baker, then chair of the Education Committee of the New York branch of the NAACP met with Wagner and criticize him for his "hands off" policy when it came to the Board. Baker also organized a grassroots organization called Parents in Action Against Educational Discrimination. The group consisted of black and Puerto Rican parents who demanded school integration and greater parent participation in school policy. Baker claimed that Parents in Action had a number of meetings with the mayor and in September 1957 led a picket line of 500 parents in front of Wagner's office declaring that the city had not addressed the concerns of black and Puerto Rican parents. (18)

Without a doubt, Milton Galamison became the city's most visible and vocal critic when it came to the issue of school integration. Born in Philadelphia in 1923, educated in the Philadelphia school system, Milton received his bachelors of arts from Lincoln University and his Masters in Theology from Princeton University. In 1948, at the age of 25, he became the pastor of Siloam Presbyterian Church, one of the most prestigious black churches in Brooklyn. (19)

Despite Siloam's middle class orientation, Galamison's weekly sermons to the mostly black bourgeois congregation criticized American culture for what he labeled as social sins, racism, militarism, and class exploitation. He was especially critical of Christianity for not paying a greater role in challenging these social sins. Historian Lisa Waller correctly notes that Galamison represented the left wing of Presbyterianism. According to Waller:

 this domination had moved away from an earlier focus on private morality and its emphasis on abstaining from drink, card playing, improper family life, and disrespect for the Sabbath. The "new agenda" for American Presbyterianism presented a highly politicized, leftist stance. This agenda articulated four primary goals for American Presbyterianism: they were the curtailment of militarism, the elimination of the disparity between both the wealthy and the poor in the United States and the wealthy West and the rest of the world, the abolition of racism, and the reformation of the family and gender roles." (20)

Galamison interpreted the life of Jesus and other biblical figures as revolutionaries challenging social injustice and that Christians had a duty to emulate Jesus and also take on the social sins of the world. Galamison contended that it was the duty of Christians to eradicate racism, poverty, and militarism. (21)

Education became a key concern for Galamison because of his own personal experience of racial discrimination. As a child in elementary school, Galamison faced racial discrimination from a classroom teacher and as a high school student he was relegated to a vocational training program denying him a rigorous academic training despite his protest to school officials. He also recalled the harsh reality of racism when as a child he, along with other black children were consigned to a Jim Crow section of the movie theater in Philadelphia and denied the privilege of competing for a door prize because he was black. These episodes in his life were important factors in motivating him to take on the fight against racial bigotry in the New York City school system. (22)

The pastor of Siloam Presbyterian Church consistently argued that the board's policies did irreversible harm to children of color. "We contend that within the framework of segregated education," Galamison once declared, "both white and Negro children are crippled emotionally and mentally irreparably and for life." Segregation reinforced the notion that black and Hispanic children were inferior and at the same time instilling the feeling of superiority in white children. Besides its psychological cost on children, Galamison also argued that there was a political cost to segregation. According to the militant pastor, the practice was anti-democratic because it denied people their humanity and political freedom. Democracy meant equal opportunity to all no matter their race, religion, or ethnicity. Segregated schools was robbing children of color access to educational resources, thus denying them equal opportunity. (23)

In 1955, Galamison was approached by Annie Stein, a left leaning member of the Brooklyn branch of the NAACP, appealing for his help to integrate the public schools. The activist pastor ran and was elected the chair of the NAACP Schools Workshop. Unlike many civic organizations that were racially, class and ethnically segregated, the Workshop claimed over 400 members and consisted of mostly women from various racial, ethnic and class backgrounds. Many members of local PTA's came together to work for school integration. The Workshop claimed responsibility for persuading principals to establish intellectually gifted children's classes in segregated schools, forced schools to open libraries and were responsible for children receiving homework for the first time. But its main goals were to desegregate all schools in Bedford-Stuyvesant and Brownsville, Brooklyn's largest black communities, to improve both math and reading scores among black and Hispanic children and improve teaching standards. (24)

One of Galamison's greatest contributions to the struggle for school integration was his successful attempt at making many New Yorkers aware of the duplicity of New York City's established liberal elite. Although the board claimed that neighborhood determined the racial makeup of student bodies at public schools, Galamison and the activists parents pointed out at public hearings and in various publications that the Board of Education deliberately zoned children to schools based on race. They noted that in many cases that although black and White children lived in close enough for them to be zoned to the same school, black children were assigned to predominantly black schools outside of their districts. In one report, Galamison noted that predominantly black and Puerto Rican schools were overcrowded and in some cases were a "few blocks away from half-empty white schools on the other side of Broadway and also at Fulton Street." While focus was on segregated schools in the south, Galamison maintained that the board kept "20,000 children in the Bedford-Stuyvesant and nearby areas" in segregated conditions. Although the 1954 Supreme Court Brown decision had outlawed segregation and that the board had committed itself to end segregation in New York City schools, according to Galamison, the board refused to act. (25)

After one term as president of the Brooklyn branch of the NAACP, Galamison resigned because he wanted to dedicate himself to addressing school segregation and not conduct fund raisers and

fight with the national leadership of the civil rights group over his political activity. Soon after leaving the NAACP, Galamison formed a grassroots parents' organization named the Parents Workshop for Equality in New York City Schools. This group offered ordinary people the opportunity to radically challenge school board policies. The group held rallies, demonstrations, and directly confronted Board of Education officials. In one case, two-hundred parents showed up to a meeting with the Superintendent of schools on April 21, 1960, surprising the school head who only expected Galamison and a few people. (26)

By 1963, national civil rights groups had joined with grassroots organizations to form the New York City-Wide Committee for Integrated Schools and by the end of the summer of that year, the committee decided to launch a boycott to force the board to come up with a timetable and plan for integrating the public school system. In spite of the threat, Wagner refused to directly get involved in the school contest. The refusal of Wagner to intervene led to many black leaders of New York City's civil rights movement to accuse the mayor of doing nothing to stop the demonstration.

A puzzling question that scholars have addressed is why the liberal mayor didn't intervene in the struggle to avoid a citywide boycott and why didn't Wagner's liberalism embrace a plan and timetable for citywide school integration? Historian Diane Ravitch contends that Wagner did not believe in interfering in school affairs. According to Ravitch Wagner agreed that the schools should be above politics. "He was a man who by temperament sought conciliation and shunned controversy. He fought to provide the schools with the funds they needed, but he studiously avoided being drawn into policy disputes." (27)

Former Assistant New York City Budget Director, Charles R. Morris claims that Wagner was not at fault for the racial tension in the city; instead he asserts that it was just impossible for the mayor's "good intentions" to keep "pace with the temper of the new generation of black spokesmen." The "new black leaders" were in no mood for compromise or "gradual transition. They wanted control over their own programs, and they wanted to it right away." No matter what Wagner would have tried to appease the "new black leadership" it would have ended in disaster. (28)

In his biography of Mayor John Lindsay, historian Vincent Cannato rejects the hands-off argument made by Ravitch and the mayor who could not control the changing political tide of black leadership and instead argues that Wagner was inept when it came to addressing the race issue. For Cannato aggressive black leaders and their followers who took to the streets and rioted were responsible for the racial climate in the city. "Though Wagner had always been sympathetic to blacks and Puerto Ricans," Cannato contends, "the aggressive style of the civil rights movement clashed with Wagner's personality. Blaming blacks for wanting fair treatment, Cannato claims the civil rights movement posited a form of black exceptionalism that put the problems of blacks in a special category. The Irish, Germans, Italians, and Jews never demanded that their children attend the same schools as more well-to-do 'Americans,' nor did they try to force their way into restrictive trade unions. Not only did the demands of blacks create resentment among whites, but traditional politicians like Wagner simply did not know how to handle such demands. Wagner knew how to build schools and deal with teachers' union but he was at a loss as to how to integrate the city schools." According to Cannato, white ethnics, who displayed a strong work ethic and moral values, fled from black crime and attempts by black parents to send their children to schools in white ethnic communities. (29)

The problem with Ravitch's view that Wagner was a person above reproach when it came to the New York City school system, Morris' no win situation when it came to black militants, and Cannato's construction of an inept mayor when it came to handling an overly aggressive black leadership demands for integration is that all their analyses do not take into account that the mayor had various constituencies that he had to address. Wagner's liberalism attempted to embrace a broader audience but not at the expense of alienating other loyal supporters.

It is important to note that Mayor Wagner had to face the fact that not everyone in New York City adhered to most forms liberalism. Despite the liberalism of New York's political elite, this political ideology did not filter down to many white ethnic communities and others outside of those communities who by 1960s saw a civil rights agenda as opposed to their interest. They instead embraced more traditional ideas of personal responsibility and self-support. Scholar Gareth Davies has labeled these ideas as part of the "individualist tradition" in America. This creed helped shape many people's perception that governmental aid to the poor, especially the black poor, was simply their money being spent on the undeserving. For many, African Americans were depicted as a privileged minority receiving the largess of governmental resources at the expense of white working and middle class. This popular view led many to oppose the efforts of the civil rights movement and by politicians. Wagner was not only facing protest from the civil rights community and its allies, but also from whites who saw the board's policy as detrimental to their interest. (Thus what seemed to be inaction on Wagner's part, most likely was an attempt not to inflame the situation any more than it had been in the city. (30)

It is just as important to note that Wagner did not only face opposition from civil rights groups and those who did not embrace liberalism, but he also faced the problem of the divide within the liberal community. New Deal Liberalism was broad enough to forge a coalition of groups that participated in the coalition for their own particular interests. At times one group's interest coincided with others. However, at other times, the goals of various groups in the coalition clashed with those of other groups. The New York City Teachers Guild and the civil rights community is a case in point. While the Guild, later to become the United Federation of Teachers, had a long history of supporting liberal causes, including civil rights, it opposed an involuntary transfer plan, recommended by the Board of Education's Commission on Integration in 1956. The Guild did not deny that black and Latino children were not receiving fewer services than white children. However, it contended that the best way to promote integration was to improve the quality of the schools. Involuntary transfer of the teaching staff, the Guild claimed, would only lead to the mass exodus of teachers from the system thereby exacerbating the problem.

Despite the Guilds view on involuntary transfers, Civil rights and community groups interpreted the teachers union group's response as insensitive and that it cared little about the needs of black and Hispanic children. Its major objective, according to critics of the Guild was to protect the interest and privilege of white teachers. Edward Lewis, executive director of the Urban League of Greater New York was shocked at the teachers' position. The Intergroup Committee of New York Public Schools, a group of twenty-six community, civil rights, civic and union groups whose purpose was to put pressure on the Board of Education to integrate Harlem schools, opposed the Guild's and the High School Teachers Association's position on the transfer plan. In a letter to Charles Silver, president of the Board of Education, the Intergroup Committee urged the Board to implement the teacher transfer plan without delay. The Guild, which was part of the group refused to sign the letter to Silver. One member of the Commission on Integration said that the teachers lacked courage. (31)

In a fierce attack on the Guild, the president of the National Urban League, speaking to 400 people attending a conference of the United Neighborhood Houses, claimed that New York City teachers were involved in an organized campaign to avoid serving black and Hispanic children. In what the New York Times reporter Murray Illson described as a "bitterly worded keynote speech," Lester Granger claimed "one of the most disturbing symptoms that have recently appeared" among teachers, is their "organized and sanctioned effort" to avoid serving in predominantly black and Hispanic schools. Granger argued that it was more than a coincidence "that these difficult schools are almost invariably those with heavy concentrations of mainland and territorial children of dark complexion. Call them Negroes, or call them Puerto Rican, the schools that these children attend are those which too many school teachers seek to avoid--and their avoidance in far too many cases is viewed by their superintendents and principals with a tolerant eye. (32)

The president of the Teachers Guild, Charlie Cogan, reacted to Granger's charges by accusing the Urban League President of confusing dark skin children with difficult children. He claimed that

the problems of integration and difficult schools are two separate issues. Despite its defense, the Guild could not eradicate the perception that it cared more about the concerns of its teachers than it did about black and Hispanic children. Its sole focus on the "deficiencies" of black and Hispanic children lacked a critical analysis of the board's policies. To make matters worse, years of stressing professionalism that left little or no room for parents to become partners with teachers in their children's education and the unwillingness on the part of the union to established community networks and other structures that could reach out to the black and Hispanic communities only alienated it from those communities. (33)

The clash between the Guild and civil rights groups demonstrated the divide within the liberal community. Clearly they had different interpretations of American liberalism. The Teachers Guild and later the UFT advocated a liberalism of equal opportunity allowing people to compete on a fair playing field. Its defense of the "merit system" was to assure that people would not be victims of discrimination based on race, religion or ethnicity. On the other hand, civil rights activists believed that merit, when it came to the school system was a myth. What was needed was an effort on the part of government and institutions to provide black children with equal resources. Wagner had relied on the support from labor and African Americans. For him to have supported one group over the other during the school integration crisis would have been costly.

Another weakness in particular with Cannato's critique of Wagner is the fact that he pays no attention to the conditions that blacks and Latinos faced in the city. It is ahistorical to compare the experience of white immigrants in urban New York to those of blacks and Latinos without taking into consideration the transformation of the urban economy beginning in the Post World War II period. Sociologists and historians have pointed out that the process of deindustrialization led to the disappearance of many highly paid industrial jobs that immigrants and the children of immigrants were able to obtain, and instead were replaced by low paying service work.

The one important point that this chapter raises is that liberalism is not monolithic. Without a doubt, Wagner's brand of liberalism should be distinguished from others. Critics of liberalism make a mistake and lump liberals together. This approach adds little clarity to the city's history. Wagner's liberalism helped provide services to organized labor but did little for those outside of the institutions of the working class. The failure of city elites to address the concerns of the poor helped fuel a grass roots civil rights movement that became less concerned with compromising with New York's liberal establishment and more preoccupied with tactics to force it to capitulate to its demands. At times, these more militant voices overreached and had an exaggerated view of their ability to change the system. But the very existence of more militant leaders like Milton Galamison and grassroots organizations was a strong indication that the city had failed to deal with serious problems in the black and Latino communities.

Wagner's "hands off" policy when it came to the school integration crisis should be seen as a failed political strategy. The Mayor worked well with an established black leadership much more willing to sit and bargain. However, politically he could not acquiesce to grassroots demands and protests without alienating others who were opposed to those demands. Thus, he walked a neutral ground, attempting to be above the fray.

But the reality was that Wagner's brand of liberalism and the United Federation of Teachers' racially blind liberal agenda were inadequate to address the concerns of all New Yorkers, especially, the reality of urban black America. Racial tolerance, even outlawing discrimination did not go far enough as long as structural barriers were realities in the lives of black New Yorkers. Despite Wagner's efforts to deal with the school crisis, the drop out rate in New York City's high schools led to thousands of young people roaming the streets and thousands of other children of color were being forced to attend substandard and overcrowded schools. (34)

Indeed, Galamison challenged New York City liberal elite by arguing that outlawing discrimination and using the rhetoric of opportunity liberalism did not go far enough. What was needed was a full frontal assault on discrimination. Small steps such as "permissive zoning, pairing and "Open

Enrollment," programs that gradually changed the status quo were insufficient. To eradicate inequality, government agencies needed to take dramatic steps and implement a full-scale program that would eliminate racial disparity in the school system. Wholesale change of the entire system was needed. Galamison's radical vision thus, clashed with a modest liberal agenda that was not willing to challenge supporters and at times its detractors.

(1) Clarence Taylor is Professor of History at Baruch College and the Graduate Center, CUNY.

(2) Clarence Taylor, *The Black Churches of Brooklyn* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), pp.142-163.

(3) Clarence Taylor, *Knocking at Our Own Door: Milton A. Galamison and the Struggle to Integrate New York City Schools* (Lanham, Maryland Lexington Books, 2001), pp. xxviii-xxix.

(4) Joshua Freeman, *Working Class New York: Life and Labor Since World War II* (New York: The New Press, 2000), p. 99.

(5) *Ibid.* p. 101; Jerald Podiar, *The Strike that Changed New York: Blacks, Whites and the Ocean Hill-Brownsville Crisis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002), p. 13.

(6) Joshua Freeman, *Working Class New York*, pp. 101-103.

(7) New York City Commission on Human Rights, www.NYC.gov/html/cuhr/html/history.html

(8) *Ibid.*

(9) Wendell Prichett, *Brownsville, Brooklyn: Blacks, Jews and the Changing Face of the Ghetto* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), pp. 159-60.

(10) Clarence Taylor, *The Black Churches of Brooklyn*, p. 118.

(11) *Ibid.*, p. 158.

(12) Charles R. Morris, *The Cost of Good Intentions: New York City and the Liberal Experiment, 1960-1975* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1980,) pp.20-23.

(13) Gerald Markowitz and David Rosner, *Children, Race, and Power: Kenneth and Mami Clark's Northside Center* (New York: Routledge, 2000), p. 92; Taylor, *Knocking at Our Own Door*, p. 54.

(14) Martha Biondi, *To Stand and Fight: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Postwar New York City* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), pp. 100-01.

(15) Clarence Taylor, *The Black Churches of Brooklyn*. 105-06, Morris, *The Cost of Good Intentions*, p. 23.

(16) Markowitz and Rosner, *Children, Race, and Power*, p. 93.

(17) *Ibid.*, pp. 95-96; Clarence Taylor, *Knocking at Our Own Door: Milton A. Galamison and the Struggle to Integrate New York City Schools* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), pp. 52-53.

(18) Clarence Taylor, *Knocking at Our Own Door*, p. 76; Barbara Ransby, *Ella Baker & the Black Freedom Movement: A Radical Democratic Vision* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2003), pp.153-54.

(19) Clarence Taylor, *Knocking at Our Own Door*, pp. 9-31.

(20) Lisa Yvette Waller "Holding Back the Dawn: Milton A. Galamison and the Fight for School Integration in New York City, A Northern Civil Rights Struggle, 1948-1968" Ph.D. Dissertation, Duke University, 1998, pp.42-43.

(21) Clarence Taylor, Knocking at Our Own Door, pp. 28-29.

(22) Clarence Taylor, Knocking at Our Own Door, pp. 18-19.

(23) Clarence Taylor, Knocking at Our Own Door, p. 60.

(24) Ibid., pp. 64-65.

(25) Ibid, pp. 65-66.

(26) Ibid., pp. 98-99.

(27) Diane Ravitch, The Great School Wars: New York City, 1800-1973 (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1974), p. 256.

(28) Charles R. Morris, The Cost of Good Intentions, p. 20.

(29) Vincent J. Cannato, The Ungovernable City: John Lindsay and His Struggle to Save New York (New York: Basic Books, 2001), p. 33.

(30) Gareth Davies, From Opportunity to Entitlement: The Transformation and Decline of Great Society Liberalism (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1996), pp. 13-16.

(31), Markowitz and Rosner, Children, Race and Power, p. 95; New York Times, January 1, 1957, January 29, 1957.

(32) New York Times, November 11, 1957.

(33) New York Times, November 18, 1957.

(34) Charles R. Morris, The Cost of Good Intentions, p.21.
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