

***“Taxation without Sanitation is Tyranny”*: Civil Rights struggles over
garbage collection in Brooklyn, New York during the fall of 1962
by Brian Purnell**

During the early 1960s, many residents of Bedford-Stuyvesant saw the neighborhood's filthy streets as a sign of their community's low status in New York City. The trash that accumulated on sidewalks and in streets crowded public space with its bulk and its stench. Children had to play around hulky abandoned cars. Pedestrians on their way home from work dodged rats and vermin that darted from the asphalt to alleyways where bags of uncollected household garbage sat festering, sometimes for days at a time. Over the years, residents periodically complained to elected officials and appointees to the city's Sanitation Department, but the problem only worsened. Bedford-Stuyvesant inhabitants even organized periodic neighborhood clean-ups through local block associations. (2) Their efforts brought temporary relief to certain areas, but failed to remedy completely the overall problem. At its root, the abundance of garbage was linked to the scarcity of resources in this overcrowded residential area. Bedford-Stuyvesant required increased garbage collection and the city was failing to provide it. That this was a neighborhood with one of the fastest growing Black populations in the entire city added a racial insult to an already odoriferous injury.

As historians Harold Connolly, Clarence Taylor, Craig Wilder and others have meticulously shown, Bedford-Stuyvesant was a community shaped by two different histories: the hope and optimism of its working class families, of which Blacks were at one point one group among many; and the racial ideologies and policies that slowly made the community an overcrowded, economically stagnant and racially segregated black

neighborhood. Over the course of the nineteenth century, transportation developments in the form of rail lines and trolley cars that crisscrossed Brooklyn's north-central thoroughfares transformed the area from a sleepy farmland hamlet to a bedroom community for working- and middle-class families. Irish, German, Scottish, Dutch, and a sizable community of people of African descent, who labored in King County's downtown business and commercial districts that centered on the waterfront, made their home in the towns of Bedford and Stuyvesant Heights. During the antebellum period, black people established two independent communities in Bedford--Carrville, founded in 1832, and Weeksville founded in 1838. Bedford's population continued to soar after the construction of the Brooklyn Bridge completed in 1883, and the nation's first elevated railroad stations stretched across Brooklyn in 1885. By 1920, Bedford and Stuyvesant Heights combined and became known as Bedford-Stuyvesant and throughout the 1940s the neighborhood was racially integrated (49 percent white and 51 percent black) and one of the few communities in New York City where African Americans and West Indians could purchase their own homes. (3)

All of that changed during 1950s and 60s. Economic and political policies that went into affect during the New Deal played on racial fears and prejudices and caused middle and working class whites to abandon the community. Discriminatory policies that "redlined" the neighborhood, which were sanctioned by banks and real estate agencies under the banner of New Deal home owners' development programs in the 1930s, made it impossible for Bedford-Stuyvesant residents to finance home improvement projects. Realtors practiced "blockbusting" tactics, which reaped for them handsome profits but

also contributed to the deterioration of the neighborhood's housing. Real estate agents played on racial fears and plummeting real estate prices to convince white homeowners to sell their property. The area's brownstone and limestone houses, became carved-up into three, sometimes four apartments. On top of that, bigots refused to rent apartments or sell homes to black families in other parts of Brooklyn, which would have relieved overcrowding in the neighborhood and placed less strain on its housing stock. From the 1950s through 1960, Bedford-Stuyvesant quickly became the largest black neighborhood in Brooklyn and, by 1970 it was one of the most populous urban areas in Black American. It also received some of the poorest levels of service from the city, especially in the area of garbage collection. (4)

Abandoned cars, rusted and stripped of their usable parts, were permanent fixtures on blocks. Empty iceboxes and refrigerators, death traps for youngsters, remained in vacant lots, even after residents made repeated calls to Department of Sanitation officials to have them removed. Bedford-Stuyvesant's garbage resulted in foul odors, attracted all kinds of vermin, and produced widespread filth, assaulting the senses and threatening health. When city government seemed reluctant to do anything about the situation, many residents in the community argued it was because the area's residents were overwhelmingly black and poor.

During the summer and fall of 1962, members of the Brooklyn chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), which was one of the most active civil rights organizations in the borough, chose to address this issue. After two years of leading dynamic campaigns

in Brooklyn against racial discrimination in housing and employment, Brooklyn CORE's interracial membership was ready to employ innovative nonviolent tactics to redress Bedford-Stuyvesant's "garbage problem." The chapter had already established its reputation as an activist organization through an aggressive campaign against landlords who discriminated against African Americans, which culminated in a lengthy assault against one of New York City's largest housing conglomerate, the Lefrak Corporation. Brooklyn CORE also made national headlines when it staged a dramatic sit-down during a campaign against employment discrimination at the Ebinger's Baking Company. (5) By addressing the garbage issues in Brooklyn's largest black neighborhood, Brooklyn CORE continued to make its mark as one of New York City's most recognizable grassroots activist organizations. The chapter already had a reputation for successfully turning everyday local political concerns into hot-button civil rights issues, and drawing attention to the problem of inadequate garbage collection in Bedford-Stuyvesant was a logical project for this small, audacious group of activists.

With its campaign against inadequate sanitation services in Bedford-Stuyvesant, Brooklyn CORE took its fight directly to the highest seat of political power in the city. Although there were local elected officials with seats on the city Council and in the State Assembly, the Mayor and his appointees in the Department of Sanitation controlled citywide garbage collection policies. Bedford-Stuyvesant had representatives on the City Council and in the State Assembly and State Senate, but only City Hall had the power to remedy problems with sanitation services. Still, the chapter also pressed borough-level politicians to advocate for better services in Bedford-Stuyvesant, which helped gain

publicity for the cause. Brooklyn CORE also hoped that everyday people in Bedford-Stuyvesant might become emboldened by a community-wide effort that fought City Hall for improvements in their quality of life. Chapter leaders imagined that mobilization around this issue would spark a wider movement against local forms of racial discrimination. Dubbed, Operation "Clean Sweep," the campaign was a test of Brooklyn CORE's ambitiousness and creativity.

Moreover, Operation "Clean Sweep" challenged the mettle of Brooklyn CORE's members. Would they have the resolve to continue using nonviolent direct action protest to fight against racial injustice even as they faced seemingly insurmountable obstacles? Operation "Clean Sweep" revealed how easily those in positions of power could use "culture of poverty" arguments to explain Bedford-Stuyvesant's poor sanitation conditions. These tactics absolved politicians of any responsibility for the neighborhood's inadequate services and deflected the onus back onto the very citizens who were forced to suffer the everyday effects of living in neighborhoods overrun by garbage. Blaming excess trash on poor people instead of poor policies also justified the continued practice of diverting resources away from communities that, over the years, had become the most in need of improved services and the most severely neglected by elected officials. In many ways, Operation "Clean Sweep" revealed one of the most imposing foes civil rights activists in New York City faced in many of their campaigns during the early 1960s: an entrenched government bureaucracy filled with powerbrokers who, instead of instituting policies that resulted in immediate and tangible changes, often blamed problems of racial discrimination on the behavior and culture of black and Puerto Rican citizens themselves.

The number of daily sanitation pick-ups in Bedford-Stuyvesant did not increase from the 1940s to the 1960s, a time in which its population exploded and became overwhelmingly African American. (6) Over ten years before Brooklyn CORE began Operation "Clean Sweep," citizens in Bedford-Stuyvesant complained to the Department of Sanitation and the Mayor about the infrequent garbage collection. While investigating the problem during the spring of 1962, Brooklyn CORE chairmen Oliver Leeds met with members of a block association in Bedford-Stuyvesant who showed him a community newsletter from World War II that reported the Sanitation Department's wartime cutbacks in service to the neighborhood from six to three days. The cuts were never restored after the war. (7)

The newsletter detailed how in November 1950 the Bedford-Stuyvesant Neighborhood Council's (BSNC) sanitation committee met with Commissioner Mulrain of the New York City Sanitation Department and requested daily garbage collections in Bedford-Stuyvesant along with a change in the Sanitation Department's classification of the neighborhood. The Sanitation Department classified Bedford-Stuyvesant as a neighborhood of one- and two-family houses. Representatives from the BSNC informed Commissioner Mulrain that three or more families occupied most of the homes in the area. The committee reported on the accumulation of "rubbish of all sorts" in the neighborhood's streets and argued that Bedford-Stuyvesant's garbage problem "requires attention not inherent in the physical size of the area." Commissioner Mulrain conceded that the group raised a valid issue with implications for other parts of Brooklyn too, but

he could not promise to increase garbage collection in Bedford-Stuyvesant. Both Commissioner Mulrain and the BSNC agreed that the neighborhood could expect, "a steady improvement which should result in a cleaner neighborhood," but recognized that there were factors at work beyond the Department's control, namely, "the human element that is inherent and must be considered in matters such as these." Mulrain and the BSNC members recognized they could never completely stop people from littering. Both parties conceded that the "human element" would always affect the environmental conditions of urban neighborhoods, no matter what the Sanitation Department did. (8)

Still, if people's behavior produced the trash, city government's policies did nothing to stop it from piling-up in Bedford-Stuyvesant's streets. By the 1960s the situation had worsened. Since about half of Brooklyn CORE's members lived in other parts of the borough and received different types of sanitation services, some blacks and whites within the chapter began to argue that Bedford-Stuyvesant's problems with garbage were brought on by discriminatory treatment. Arnold Goldwag, a part-time student at Brooklyn College who was in his early 20s when he joined Brooklyn CORE and became the chapter's Community Relations Director, had a basement apartment in the Marine Park section of Brooklyn. He remembered the stark contrasts in sanitation services between the two neighborhoods. Marine Park was predominantly white and composed of one- and two-family detached homes, each with small front lawns or back yard areas. In Marine Park, garbage was collected, "at like six o'clock in the evening every single day," Goldwag remembers, "unlike Bedford-Stuyvesant where it was twice a week," which did not meet the community's needs. "For the population in Bedford-Stuyvesant they should

pick it up maybe (every) three hours, 'round-the-clock compared to Marine Park," which had many fewer residents. Goldwag's memory slightly distorted the facts. Bedford-Stuyvesant received three-day garbage collection service and one of those days was supposed to be reserved for bulk trash, which included large items like refrigerators, scrap metal, and furniture. But since his work with Brooklyn CORE allowed him to travel around the borough, Goldwag knew that the neighborhood's garbage problem had less to do with residents' behavior and more to do with city policies: "Bedford-Stuyvesant, and some poor white areas, got [collection] twice a week if they were lucky, so the streets were always dirty, of course, because the garbage always overflowed." (9)

Following CORE's guidelines, Brooklyn CORE investigated the problem and scheduled negotiations with city officials. Goldwag, along with other chapter members such as Bob Law, a young African American college student, and Marjorie Leeds, a white woman who cut her political teeth in the Communist Party's "Popular Front" movements of the mid-1940s, compiled statistics on demographics and housing conditions in neighborhoods that received five- and three-day collection and contrasted those figures with conditions in Bedford-Stuyvesant. Their research indicated that Bedford-Stuyvesant had more people and poorer quality housing than other areas in their survey, even areas that received three-day garbage service.

Using data from the 1960 U.S. Census, Brooklyn CORE determined that areas with five-day collection were predominantly white and had lower housing densities. Besides Bedford-Stuyvesant, all other neighborhoods with three-day collection were largely

white, with a black population of only 4.1%, and considerably lower housing densities. Compared to these communities, almost double the amount of housing in Bedford-Stuyvesant, 19.1%, had over 1.01 persons per room compared with 10.0% in all other areas that received three-day collection services. The housing conditions in Bedford-Stuyvesant also contrasted sharply with other neighborhoods that received three-day service. Only 75% of Bedford-Stuyvesant's housing was classified as "sound," while 90% of housing was "sound" in all other neighborhoods with three-day service. In Bedford-Stuyvesant, 18.6% of housing was "deteriorating," and 5.6% was "dilapidated," versus 8.6% and 1.4% respectively in all other areas with three-day service. The data confirmed Brooklyn CORE's suspicion that there was a connection between Bedford-Stuyvesant's environmental conditions, namely its overcrowded housing and unsanitary conditions, its insufficient collection services from the Department of Sanitation, and its overwhelmingly black population. (10)

At the start of their campaign, Brooklyn CORE wanted to take on all of the beleaguered community's social struggles. Bedford-Stuyvesant's environmental problems, members of Brooklyn CORE argued, went beyond infrequent sanitation collection and poor housing. The neighborhood suffered from poor city services, crime, under-resourced public schools, joblessness, over crowding, drugs, serious housing deficiencies, and general neglect by landlords and residents. Residents of Bedford-Stuyvesant, such as Mrs. Rita Heinegg who grew-up on Nostrand Avenue near Fulton Street, experienced these issues as a part of their everyday lives.

Mrs. Heinegg's family was typical of the African Americans who came to Bedford-Stuyvesant in the post-war period. Shortly after Heinegg's birth in October 1944, her parents, who left school after the third grade, quit farming in Seaboard, North Carolina, a small town near the Virginia border, for work in New York City. Barred from the longshoremen's industry by discriminatory unions, Rita Heinegg's father found similar work loading and unloading cargo with the Pennsylvania Railroad. Work in the "steamer doors" as Rita Heinegg remembers, was reserved for blacks and "they did the same job" as longshoremen, "just for less money." Rita Heinegg's mother found work in Brooklyn as a domestic, in a local sweater factory, and as a babysitter. The family moved to Bedford-Stuyvesant in 1945, where they lived on the top floor of a three-floor walk-up for fourteen years. Excessive trash was only one of the things Rita Heinegg remembered about the neighborhood in the late 1950s and early 1960s. "It wasn't a very nice neighborhood," she recalled. "You would wake up in the morning and we were seeing needles in the stairwell." To avoid embarrassment about where the family lived and to enroll the children in a better public school, Rita Heinegg's mother lied about their address. "We used to use our aunt's address so that we didn't go to PS 3, which was only two blocks away. She lived right outside Gates Avenue. It wasn't much better. It was still only a few blocks away but my mother felt that there was a little bit better school." (11)

Arnold Goldwag echoed these observations. He spent a great deal of time in Bedford-Stuyvesant on investigations of housing discrimination and illegal evictions, and recalled how drug users and negligent landlords contributed to the problems caused by excessive

garbage in the streets. Goldwag remembers how residents avoided junkies and rats that lurked in alleys by way of the "airmail express:"

The landlord would not provide covers for the garbage cans. Now there were hot and cold running junkies, there were all kinds of things happening in the streets, and there were rats and cats in with the garbage. Well, why would you send your kids down five flights to put garbage next to an open can, and risk whatever? You open the window and it's the airmail express. It comes right down and splatters by where the garbage is. So one thing leads to the other. (12)

Indeed, garbage was just one of many environmental issues that affected everyday life in Bedford-Stuyvesant. Through investigating irregular garbage collection, Brooklyn CORE leaders began to recognize limitations in fighting against racial discrimination on a case-by-case basis. Oliver Leeds, the chairperson of Brooklyn CORE (who, like his wife, also had a radical political background) remembered when National CORE Director James Farmer attended a Brooklyn CORE meeting as a guest speaker and Marjorie had questioned him on the usefulness of individual protest campaigns. "Marge said to him, 'Look, where we are going with all these discrimination cases? The problems in Bedford-Stuyvesant are community-wide problems. They're not just the case of some landlord, or even an Ebinger store. The city is discriminating against this community.'"

Until then, National CORE and other CORE chapters throughout the country usually organized demonstrations with one clearly defined objective: desegregate a restaurant, or a pool; end race-based job discrimination at a local business; or, with the Freedom Rides, force state compliance with Federal laws. Brooklyn CORE argued that Bedford-Stuyvesant's problems with sanitation collection were endemic social ills that both the city and local residents were responsible for correcting. Brooklyn CORE would mobilize the community to demand equal treatment from the city and, in the process, organize residents to take charge of their neighborhood's improvement. Although such an approach was uncommon for CORE, Farmer did not protest. "James Farmer said he was tickled pink that we would take on the city," remembers Leeds. (13)

Taking on the city began with a letter writing campaign throughout the spring and summer of 1962. Marjorie and Oliver Leeds contacted the Mayor's Rent and Rehabilitation Administration in April 1962 and petitioned for a variety of improvements on Gates Avenue between Broadway and Bedford Avenues, which covered an entire residential section running across Bedford-Stuyvesant. "This area," they wrote, was "completely and physically run down." Electrical fires occurred frequently in the winter due to old, wiring in overcrowded buildings. They characterized garbage collection, and street and sidewalk cleaning as "BAD." Houses on the block were in "complete state of disrepair," and there was almost a "complete lack of recreational facilities in schools and neighborhood." Street lighting was poor on Gates Avenue, which also had old, rusted traffic signs and inadequate police protection around the local school, PS 129. Marjorie Leeds was PS 129's President of the Parent Teacher Association and knew the school's needs. Enrollment, they wrote, was "100% de facto segregated," which affected the caliber of its teachers. "Poor conditions of the neighborhood," Marjorie argued in the petition, "leads to difficulties in staffing the schools." (14)

At the end of the letter, Marjorie and Oliver offered a two-part solution. First, the city should declare the area a " 'Special Service Area' for emergency rehabilitation" and have "all city agencies concerned move in for an 'Operation Cleanup.'" Then, the city was to provide people on

Gates Avenue with "new housing in neighborhood" (sic). Residents should not be evicted during "Operation Cleanup." Instead, the Leeds suggested inhabitants have access to new housing regardless of income, marital, or welfare status. "We regard this as essential," they underscored, "if the city is not to merely transfer these people to another ghetto slum area." The petition concluded with requests for "consideration and action," and an "early response." City Hall gave neither, and the summer passed without officials taking any "action" to correct these problems.

By late August, Brooklyn CORE formed a delegation on sanitation conditions in the Bedford-Stuyvesant Area and scheduled an appointment with Mayor Wagner's Citizen Complaint Office for August 24, 1962. This group included Vincent Young, a middle-aged African American city bus driver, and three young black college students, Audrey Law, Audrey Steward, and James Steward. When administrators in the Mayor's Citizen Complaint Office tried to bury the issue by referring CORE's prepared statement to other departments, Audrey Steward demanded that the delegation be allowed to discuss the situation with someone in authority. The secretary for the Citizen Complaint Office called the Department of Sanitation's main office and made an immediate appointment for the group. Before leaving, the CORE representatives left a statement with the Mayor's office demanding action by September 8, 1962, otherwise they would move ahead with their plans for direct action protest. (15)

The delegation's statement differed from Oliver and Marjorie Leeds's earlier letter because it only concentrated on the problems of excess garbage and dilapidated sidewalks. Brooklyn CORE members realized they had to make their demands realistic and concentrate on one issue if they hoped to have any success petitioning city officials. Gates Avenue between Broadway and Bedford Avenues, they declared, had become "the most depressed street in the Bedford-Stuyvesant community ... a completely rundown and filthy thoroughfare." Sidewalks were in disrepair and streets were constantly littered. Moreover, Brooklyn CORE charged that, "the collection of garbage by the Sanitation Department is disgracefully inadequate." Sanitation inspectors did not enforce minimal standards, which allowed landlords to neglect their buildings' upkeep, and garbage collectors left lots, alleys, and stairwells filled with "discarded furniture and other refuse." PTAs and Block associations had previously brought this issue to the attention of City authorities to no avail. Brooklyn CORE exclaimed that "this disgraceful situation" was "something that can only happen in a ghetto," and was caused by discriminatory treatment. The petition concluded with a request for "emergency measures," like daily collection of garbage, enforcement of sanitary regulations, and immediate repair of sidewalks "no later than September 8, 1962." (16)

At the Commissioner of Sanitation's Office, the delegation met with Mr. Henry Lieberman and Mr. Marty O'Connell of the Community Relations Department, who assured them that Sanitation had requested funds for increased pick-up service in Bedford-Stuyvesant. He also confirmed what Brooklyn CORE already knew from its investigation: that because of difficulties maintaining trucks during World War II, the city instituted an "austerity" program and cutback from six-day pick-up services to five-day in some parts of the city and three-day in others depending on the area's population.

In a condescending manner, Lieberman suggested Brooklyn CORE "form a committee to make the area 'cooperative' with the Sanitation Department" because the districts had orders to pick-up any trash they saw on the street. He asked the delegates to "survey the district and report any filled lots." The city would clean them right away and issue summonses to owners of private lots who neglected the upkeep of their property. Lieberman rejected the idea that trash baskets on each corner would lessen the amount of garbage in streets and on sidewalks because, as he put it, "people misuse them." (17) Exactly how they would misuse the trash baskets, Lieberman did not say. Most likely, he feared a spike in reported cases of people using the bins to start fires for warmth in the winter, or juveniles kicking them over for fun. In a neighborhood with such poor housing and so few recreation facilities, some residents misappropriated garbage baskets in these ways, which exacerbated environmental problems. Still, those issues did not cause

Bedford-Stuyvesant's garbage problem, and Brooklyn CORE's sanitation delegation resented Lieberman's attempt to blame the people in the community for his department's negligence.

Marjorie Leeds could not contain her anger. She exploded in the middle of Lieberman's explanations with complaints about the horrendous sanitation service on her block. Oliver and Marjorie Leeds lived in Bedford-Stuyvesant at the time. They rented a small apartment in a brownstone at 272 Van Buren Street, which belonged to Oliver's mother. The Leeds lived at the corner of Lewis Avenue, which was directly in the middle of Bedford and Broadway and four blocks north of Gates Avenue. Conditions on their street reflected the problems in the rest of the neighborhood. The Sanitation officials, hoping they could distract the delegation from demanding widespread service changes, tried to redirect the rest of the conversation to Mrs. Leeds's situation, but she remained steadfast. "That was not what the delegation had come for," she reminded the officials. "We came about the dirty conditions throughout Bedford-Stuyvesant." James Steward then showed photographs of the conditions in the neighborhood--empty refrigerators, broken down cars, heaps of rusty metal and splintered debris, children playing near caved-in sidewalks--and demanded action before September 8th. The delegation left and went to Borough Hall in Brooklyn to try and see the Borough President, Abe Stark. They were denied a meeting. They left a copy of their petition and requested an appointment before the deadline passed. (18)

September 8, 1962 was the scheduled date for Operation "Clean Sweep." If there were no improvements in services by ten in the morning that day, Brooklyn CORE would mobilize citizens in Bedford-Stuyvesant to take matters into their own hands. Brooklyn CORE prepared for Operation "Clean Sweep" the week of September 1st by distributing leaflets in the neighborhood that summarized CORE's stalled talks with the city and announced the chapter's plans to stage a community demonstration the following week. They were purposefully vague in their descriptions of Operation "Clean Sweep's" details. Publicizing Brooklyn CORE's plans would have attracted unwanted attention from the police, who might have tried to thwart the action by arresting key members of Brooklyn CORE's leadership for planning an unsanctioned demonstration or illegal dumping. Also, according to Robert Law, some members of Brooklyn CORE suspected there were police informants in their ranks. To ensure there were no problems, organizers of Operation "Clean Sweep" kept secret the specific details of the action. They did not discuss where they planned to dump the trash at general meetings, so even some chapter veterans remained in the dark. (19)

Brooklyn Borough President Abe Stark called for a meeting with chapter representatives on September 7, 1962, the day before CORE planned to implement Operation "Clean Sweep." Members of Brooklyn CORE's Public Relations Committee met to speak with him about the unsanitary conditions of the Bedford-Stuyvesant Community, which they argued reflected "the woeful neglect of this area" by City and Borough leaders. The committee reiterated the main arguments about infrequent garbage collection and emphasized how "this situation is a menace to the health and welfare of the residents ... as well as degrading to them." At the same time, they again argued that infrequent garbage collection was part of larger community wide problems, brought on by "years of neglect."

Using Gates Avenue as an example, they complained to Stark that the area suffered from slum housing, inadequate transportation, segregated and overcrowded schools, a lack of nurseries, playgrounds, and libraries, unemployment, and inadequate traffic lights, and of course, poor sanitation. The representatives assured Stark that Brooklyn CORE would remain interested and involved in the area's rehabilitation "until the Bedford-Stuyvesant community becomes a neighborhood to be very proud of instead of the eyesore that it is now." (20)

Stark promised to intercede with the Department of Sanitation on Brooklyn CORE's behalf and bring about a speedy resolution to this situation, but his timing for meeting with Brooklyn CORE was suspect. Most likely, Stark wanted to stall Operation "Clean Sweep" more than he wanted to improve conditions in Bedford-Stuyvesant. Residents in Bedford-Stuyvesant had practically no

political clout. The neighborhood was not a tourist district that generated large revenues. Its citizens were not wealthy or well organized into political patronage clubs. Instead, this was one of the poorest areas with some of the highest crime rates in the city. In the eyes of politicians up for reelection or reappointment, monies that could have been put toward rehabilitating Bedford-Stuyvesant were probably better spent in districts that had more political and economic power.

Still, the delay in action did not last long. Brooklyn CORE moved quickly after it received the Department of Sanitation's response to the chapter's leafleting drive. Henry Lieberman wrote a letter to the Brooklyn chapter explaining that Bedford-Stuyvesant was in the "alternate parking program," which meant that streets received machine cleaning service three-days-a-week and garbage collection the other three-days-a-week, so technically, the area received six-day Sanitation service. Lieberman noted that he would pass Brooklyn CORE's complaints along to area supervisors who would ensure that "corrective measures be taken wherever necessary to maintain street cleanliness."

Lieberman continued to note that nothing significant would change in the near future, because Bedford-Stuyvesant's housing stock did not require additional garbage collection. "Refuse collection pick-ups," he explained, "are generally made in accordance with neighborhood requirements." Neighborhoods with tenements received five-day service, which according to Lieberman was "the maximum that can be provided by our Department." All other areas received service three-days-a-week. Unless the Sanitation Department received "budgetary authorization for additional equipment and personnel," Bedford-Stuyvesant would not receive additional service. "Please be assured," Lieberman stated, "that the matter will be given careful consideration and study." (21)

In the minds of Brooklyn CORE members, more was at stake than garbage in the street. Dirty streets in an all-black neighborhood and politicians' reluctance to correct the situation revealed, at least to black members of CORE, patterns of racial discrimination in City services. Gilbert Banks, a black World War II veteran and skilled construction laborer, joined Brooklyn CORE during the Ebinger campaign after he experienced tremendous difficulties getting work on unionized construction jobs. Banks remembered that Brooklyn CORE justifiably took action with Operation Cleansweep because the Sanitation Department's negligence and politicians' noncommittal attitude was a reflection of how the city discriminated against poor people of color. "We were dissatisfied with the way the Sanitation Department was viewing the community," Banks recalled. "The sanitation department comes to pick the garbage up, but they have more garbage out in the street than they have in the damn truck. So we complained to City Hall, but they weren't hearing us."

In fact, the city made the garbage problem in Bedford-Stuyvesant worse. According to Brooklyn Core member Maurice Fredericks, when "the garbage men would come by, supposedly to collect the garbage, but when they left the place would be very filthy." Mary Ellen Phifer, an African American migrant to Bedford-Stuyvesant from Kannapolis, North Carolina, who became an active member of Brooklyn CORE during the fall of 1962, felt this practice was a clear case of racial discrimination. If garbage collectors spilled trash on the streets, "they didn't clean it up. They left it there. And that's what was so disturbing about them taking up garbage in black neighborhoods.... In other neighborhoods, if they spilled some garbage on the sidewalk or in the street, because they have brooms and shovels on the side of the truck, I'm sure they put that garbage in the truck. They didn't leave it lying in the street." (22)

If Brooklyn CORE strictly followed CORE's "Rules for Action," it would have continued its letter writing campaign and leafleting. Stark and Lieberman conceded that the city would act on some of Brooklyn CORE's demands, but such actions would take time. Winning the hearts and minds of racially prejudiced people through education and mobilization was "the CORE way," and it seemed Brooklyn CORE was succeeding. (23) Brooklyn CORE members' anger, frustration and impatience, however, replaced their adherence to CORE's beliefs in strict practices of

compassion, discipline, and patience. Brooklyn CORE saw an opportunity to rally the Bedford-Stuyvesant community and instill residents with a sense of political empowerment.

The day before it planned to implement Operation "Clean Sweep," Brooklyn CORE leaked some details about the demonstration to the press. On the morning of Saturday, September 15, 1962, readers from all over the city learned that "a city official is in for a surprise today" because "a load of garbage from Bedford-Stuyvesant is to be dumped on his doorstep." Arnold Goldwag, the chapter's public relations chair, did not reveal to the press where demonstrators would dump the garbage "for fear the police and sanitation people would show up first and send their truck away." He did, however, reveal that after Brooklyn CORE collected garbage that sanitation workers passed-up in Bedford-Stuyvesant, the demonstrators would take it by truck and "dump it at the office of one of the city officials who they say promised better garbage collection but did not keep his word." Demonstrators would then leave before police arrived. In his anonymous press release, Goldwag stressed that this action was necessary because City officials refused to provide Bedford-Stuyvesant with proper services. "The area is being discriminated against because it is a neighborhood in which mostly Negroes and Puerto Ricans live," and after a year of negotiations, CORE received only empty promises from Mayor Wagner, Borough President Stark, and officials at the Sanitation Department. (24)

Brooklyn CORE launched Operation "Clean Sweep" on Saturday morning, which was when the Sanitation Department collected bulk trash in Bedford-Stuyvesant. The demonstration created quite a scene. An interracial group of about twenty CORE members waited until the garbage trucks finished collecting on Gates Avenue. Then, with their own U-Haul trailers attached to several cars, Brooklyn CORE collected trash that Sanitation workers left in the street. Maurice Fredericks, a black WWII veteran who joined Brooklyn CORE when it first formed in early 1960, remembered that, "We went after the truck, and the garbage we picked up was the garbage that they should have picked up but for whatever reason they didn't. We collected what they failed to collect." Women and men swept Gates Avenue with brooms and used shovels to load dirt and debris into the trailers. Men carted off large boxes, old mattresses, broken refrigerators, and hunks of metal. Marjorie Leeds and Barbara Weeks, an African American member of Brooklyn CORE, even wore aprons that featured Brooklyn CORE logos. Bob Law captured the festive atmosphere of the demonstration. After the participants collected the garbage that the Sanitation Department left behind, Law remembered that, "we marched down the street with the garbage in a parade." (25)

Residents came out and some stared with interest, others with amusement. Between twenty-five and thirty joined the group from CORE. One newspaper reported that close to fifty people, including children, participated in the demonstration. For the most part, Law believed the community supported Brooklyn CORE for its action because, "when we did things like that it said to the community for the first time, you don't have to accept this. You can actually do something about your condition." In his mind, Brooklyn CORE's Operation "Clean Sweep" as a turning point for many black Brooklynites who had grown up accepting second-class status and double standards. Before, they had never believed that, "if you go down to the Department of Sanitation and say pick-up the garbage and they won't do it, that we would have dramatized this with a demonstration." (26) Indeed, Operation "Clean Sweep" may have represented a brief moment in which residents of Bedford-Stuyvesant witnessed a new way of using direct action protest to make their political voices heard and force negligent politicians to listen to their demands.

The city anticipated CORE would dump the garbage at the mayor's office in City Hall. According to Oliver Leeds, police closed off the Brooklyn Bridge, which denied easy access to that area. Instead, after Brooklyn CORE members filled the trailers, they made their way to Borough Hall, the political and judicial center of Brooklyn and location of the Borough President's office. With no police or sanitation officials to stop them, demonstrators unloaded the broken mattresses, refrigerators, old rugs, splintered orange crates, and other garbage, and placed it on the steps of Borough Hall nearest the corner of Court and Remsen Streets. Shortly before noon, they formed a picket line and marched with placards that stated, "Taxation Without Sanitation is Tyranny,"

"Operation Clean Sweep," "Give Us a First-Class Bedford Stuyvesant Community," and "Show Us Integration With Better Sanitation."

Crowds formed to watch the demonstration and a few police officers arrived just as Oliver Leeds and others were unloading the last of the garbage. One police officer ordered the demonstrators to stop, but Leeds and others ignored him and continued the dumping. No one was arrested, but the police issued a summons to appear in criminal court for "violation of littering sidewalk." Marjorie Leeds accepted the ticket because among CORE's leadership, she was available to go to court that Monday, September 17th. The crowds dissipated and demonstrators made their way home. Aside from the court summons, the only other penalty was a ticket police officers gave to Oliver Leeds for illegally parking his station wagon and U-Haul trailer. (27)

Operation "Clean Sweep" had a strong impact on demonstration participants and local politicians. Brooklyn CORE's October 1962 newsletter had Operation "Clean Sweep" as its lead article. "Borough President, Abe Stark, has felt the wrath of Brooklyn CORE and the entire Negro community," the piece began. "The action prompted Mr. Stark and City officials to tour Bedford-Stuyvesant where he found what he termed 'shocking conditions of poverty.'" Some participants, like Robert Law, were empowered by the demonstration. "Throwing that garbage was emotionally gratifying. It was like, here take this garbage back! You got the sense of fighting back." When Marjorie went to court that Monday, the judge found her guilty of littering and issued her a fine of \$10. When Leeds refused to pay and said she preferred jail, the judge summarily dismissed the case. Successfully evading fines and prison motivated Brooklyn CORE members and affirmed that Operation "Clean Sweep" was a just action. David Snitkin, a white garment worker and member of Brooklyn CORE, wrote to the editor of his union's paper and argued that Operation "Clean Sweep" should be mimicked by other neglected neighborhoods in the city. After summarizing the campaign and the demonstration, Snitkin declared, "Now the powers that be know what poor people have had to live with for many years." City officials probably wanted to avoid more demonstrations, but Brooklyn CORE members were prepared to continue Operation "Clean Sweep" if politicians ignored their requests. "We will come back again next week until you pick-up this garbage," Law exclaimed. "Until you pick up this garbage, we will bring it back out here again and again." After Operation "Clean Sweep," Brooklyn CORE leaders said the chapter would wait two weeks and see if the city took any action. If nothing was done, they promised to carry out another "dramatic action." (28)

Officially, Stark expressed more concern over the health and housing conditions in Bedford-Stuyvesant than the threat of more Brooklyn CORE-led demonstrations like Operation "Clean Sweep." Repudiating the dramatic demonstration, a defensive Stark told reporters that, "there was no need of any action of this kind. Although I have no jurisdiction over garbage and refuse collection, I assured [Brooklyn CORE] that I would make every effort to obtain for this neighborhood the services it needs--and I am living up to my word." Operation "Clean Sweep" led the Borough President to make some strong statements that he was politically unable to match with strong action. Stark agreed there was "an urgent need for daily collection of garbage," on Gates Avenue between Bedford and Broadway. "The condition is a bad one and I feel that action should be taken ... at an early date."

He also pressed Harold Birns, the city Building Commissioner, to tour parts of Bedford-Stuyvesant and Brownsville and witness the "appalling" living conditions of those predominantly black neighborhoods. Stark said he had been "concerned for some time with the terrible conditions under which some of our residents have to live," and described some of the houses in those neighborhoods as "unfit for human habitation." For all his supportive words, however, Stark was largely powerless in matters of public policy. At that time, the Borough President's only formal political authority at the municipal level consisted of his vote on the Board of Estimate, which determined the city's annual budget. Stark declared that he would support any appeal for funds to increase garbage collection in congested Brooklyn neighborhoods, and he urged the Department of Sanitation to expedite those requests. Making suggestions and showing support

with his one vote on the Board of Estimate, however, represented the extent of Stark's power and could not bring about the type of changes Brooklyn CORE demanded. (29)

Sanitation Commissioner Frank J. Lucia stated outright that Bedford-Stuyvesant would not receive five-day pick-up service without changes in the Department's budget. Lucia claimed he needed funds to hire thirty-nine extra workers and until the city approved his new budget, Bedford-Stuyvesant had to make-do with three-day service. He did, however, have a two-part plan that he argued would decrease the amount of garbage in the neighborhood. First, Lucia planned to send more officers into Bedford-Stuyvesant to enforce the city's health code and issue summonses and fines to negligent landlords. Second, he planned to work with Bedford-Stuyvesant civic groups to implement an education program that discouraged people from littering on the street and instead encouraged them to deposit trash in garbage cans.

The Sanitation Commissioner also refuted Brooklyn CORE's allegation that the city racially discriminated against Bedford-Stuyvesant. Harlem and Brownsville, Lucia pointed out, were also predominantly black and Puerto Rican neighborhoods and those areas received five-day garbage collection service. Population density determined the frequency of a neighborhood's garbage collection, according to Lucia, not the residents' class or race. Bedford-Stuyvesant's garbage problem, he argued, resulted from its inhabitants' behavior, not racism or the city's negligence. (30)

Lucia's two-part plan and colorblind arguments disregarded Brooklyn CORE's empirical evidence of Bedford-Stuyvesant's large population density and poor housing conditions, which warranted emergency attention. The Sanitation Commissioner seemed content, however, to characterize people in Bedford-Stuyvesant as participants in a "culture of poverty" and he implicitly blamed the residents for problems that reflected over a decade of political neglect. (31) Mayor Wagner was silent on the issue, which made the city appear unwilling to admit any responsibility for Bedford-Stuyvesant's complex problems. Lucia's solutions, while proactive, were insufficient and somewhat condescending.

Summonses and fines were rarely an effective means of influencing slumlords' actions; and Lucia's proposed "education program" ignored the garbage already amassed around buildings, in empty lots and alleys, and on sidewalks. No matter how many behavior modification programs Lucia would implement, Bedford-Stuyvesant's population required extra Sanitation services, which the city seemed unable or unwilling to provide.

Somehow, Brooklyn CORE misinterpreted Lucia's intentions and ran the headline, "Five Day Pick-up Achieved," on the cover of the October 1962 edition of *The North Star*. Later in the month, Oliver Leeds and others met with the Sanitation Commissioner and Lucia reiterated the Department's position: there was not enough money or manpower to switch from three-day to five-day collection. Lucia stressed that he already made a request for more funds and expressed regret that the Budget Director had not taken action. He was hopeful, however, that despite "budgetary stringencies" it would be possible to obtain the necessary money for expanding services in Bedford-Stuyvesant. Indeed, Lucia recognized the area had a serious problem, but he refused to admit publicly that the city was responsible both for exacerbating the situation with inadequate services and correcting it with emergency increases in garbage collection. (32)

Brooklyn CORE ignored Lucia's explanations and continued to complain that there was no change in services on Gates Avenue. Apparently, the chapter misunderstood his promises, and thought at least Gates Avenue would immediately begin receiving five-day service. Befuddled and annoyed, Lucia responded in early December that he was "at a loss to understand (Brooklyn CORE's) complaint.... The schedule of services on this street was not changed nor was five-day service instituted." In the six weeks since the October meeting, however, the Sanitation Department initiated some measures to alleviate the garbage situation in Bedford-Stuyvesant. Sanitation workers placed 237 additional litter bins on corners throughout the neighborhood and posted 75 "No Dumping signs" at vacant lots "to help curtail the illegal disposal of refuse." Lucia

sent "additional supervision" into the neighborhood, which he claimed would "make possible increased control over the general situation."

In November, sanitation patrolmen issued 1,124 summonses, "for various infractions of the Health Code." These steps--inadequate as they were--gave the impression that the city was not ignoring the predominantly black community. Lucia assured Brooklyn CORE that he would continue to advocate for increased collection in Bedford-Stuyvesant and that the Department would service the community "to the fullest extent of our capabilities." (33)

The Sanitation Department did make one change in Bedford-Stuyvesant's pick-up services: it increased collection of bulk-garbage from one to two days per week. Lucia explained that the Department added the extra day as a way to discourage residents from littering. The neighborhood's people, Lucia implied, were solely responsible for such high levels of trash, not the Sanitation Department or the city. Brooklyn CORE grew dissatisfied with superficial solutions that placed all the blame for the problem on the residents. The chapter remained committed to five-day collection as the only solution to Bedford-Stuyvesant's problem and took their complaints above Lucia to Mayor Wagner. "It is our view," Oliver Leeds and Robert Law wrote the Mayor, "that a community as overcrowded as ours should get preferential treatment from the agencies of the city and not prejudicial treatment." They insisted that the Sanitation Department deliberately discriminated against Bedford-Stuyvesant by providing inadequate remedies to the neighborhood's garbage situation. Leeds and Law also admonished the mayor for his silence on the issue, which they found "quite shocking" since Wagner ran as "an independent fighting mayor" in the last election. Enclosed with the letter was a copy of a 1950 article in the *Stuyford Leader*, which highlighted Bedford-Stuyvesant's fight for five-day collection service. Nothing had been done to help the neighborhood, Leeds and Law argued, for over a decade. Instead, all they received was:

Twelve years of neglect! That's the story of Bedford-Stuyvesant. Years of allowing a good community go to pot. Houses, schools sanitation, bus service--even the local park—Tompkins Park is in shambles. If something isn't done about the sanitation--and quick-- Brooklyn CORE and a few prominent ministers will circulate the (article) to every organization in this area. (34)

Similar correspondence continued throughout 1963. Brooklyn CORE members tried to recruit local participants to stage more direct action protests, but had difficulties gaining support. The chapter lacked the personnel to initiate a door-to-door community organizing campaign and a one-time dramatic action like Operation "Clean Sweep" did not necessarily inspire everyday people to dedicate their time, energy, or resources to a social movement. The one group directly in touch with the black masses was the black church leaders, but most black ministers in Brooklyn (except for the Rev. Milton Galamison, activist pastor of Bedford-Stuyvesant's Siolam Presbyterian Church) were much more politically cautious and tended to avoid direct action protest. The Brooklyn chapters of the NAACP and Urban League did not have memberships large enough to mobilize for future "Clean Sweeps." Support from elected officials was also not forthcoming. State Assemblyman Thomas Russell Jones, a staunch supporter of local civil rights activism in New York City, was the only elected official who wrote a letter to Mayor Wagner encouraging him to meet with community leaders in Bedford-Stuyvesant and stating that he supported Brooklyn CORE in any conference, community-wide demonstration, or picket line that it may organize to bring about the desired changes. This statement notwithstanding, Lucia made no attempt to provide the community with emergency services and remained steadfast in his claim that the Department needed to wait for increased funds. (35)

Despite the campaign's frustrating end, Operation "Clean Sweep," successfully revealed the ways government bureaucracy and intransigent politicians maintained structures of inequality that socially disadvantaged people of color throughout the city. The Sanitation Commissioner and the Mayor found it politically expedient to ignore this issue and present arguments that "blamed the victim" rather than allocate the necessary funds to improve garbage collection services in

overpopulated neighborhoods. That most of the residents in neighborhoods that suffered from such political neglect were poor African Americans and Puerto Ricans only exacerbated the palpable tensions that existed between them and the city's powerbrokers, which were predominantly white. If these problems were not addressed with tangible changes in services, they threatened to explode in the face of politicians left to deal with the "years of neglect" caused by their predecessors' inaction and indifference.

Indeed, this is exactly what seemed likely to happen when, in the summer of 1969, Puerto Rican revolutionary activists in East Harlem performed their own "Garbage Offensive," by depositing their neighborhood's uncollected trash in the middle of busy intersections and setting it on fire. Similar actions followed several months later when in early 1970, residents of Brownsville did the same type of action, which newspapers dubbed the Brownsville "garbage riots." At that time, the Lindsay administration handled the situation with an immediate call for sanitation workers to volunteer for overtime shifts and work around-the-clock to clean up the garbage problems in these neighborhoods. The city could have dealt with this issue years earlier when Brooklyn CORE had, quite literally, brought their complaints to the steps of Borough Hall, but instead it chose to ignore those non-violent protests and only responded when people resorted to using tactics that were much more antagonistic and destructive. (36)

Thus, the history of Brooklyn CORE's Operation "Clean Sweep" offers a snapshot into the ways political bureaucracy and politicians' indifference contributed to poor quality-of-life conditions in Bedford-Stuyvesant brought on by years of overcrowding and little if any improvements in housing conditions. The dramatic, non-violent activism that Brooklyn CORE initiated made the problems of excess trash and poor services visible for all in the city to see. This tactic was essential when citizens and politicians summarily dismissed Brooklyn CORE's charges of neglect and discrimination with arguments that the citizens themselves were to blame for the excess trash.

Still, these ideas and the policies they influenced were difficult, if not impossible to defeat with this one protest. Lucia's proposal to initiate education campaigns that would teach residents of Bedford-Stuyvesant how to properly dispose of their trash and correctly use garbage cans embodied the belief that dirty people, not poor policies and inadequate budgets, created the neighborhood's trash. Operation "Clean Sweep" represented one of the last ditch efforts on the part of activists to demonstrate peacefully the ways that the borough's largest black community suffered from conditions that were created by specific governmental policies and practices. Garbage remained a problem in the city's most densely populated neighborhoods.

In the future, instead of using nonviolent tactics to express their grievances, people of color in Brooklyn and cities across the country, protested in ways that mirrored the Biblical prophecy which beleaguered African American slaves had recreated in song; and the slaves who sang these words were people who, similar to many residents of Bedford-Stuyvesant, knew a thing or two about disrespectful treatment at the hands of indifferent powerbrokers: "God gave Noah the rainbow sign. No more water. The fire, next time." (37)

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this essay, not least of which took the form of him generously sharing primary sources, helped me to bring this little-known piece of history to light.

(2) On early efforts to address trash problems in Bedford-Stuyvesant through neighborhood clean-ups, see "Our Job," in *The Amsterdam News*, January 9, 1960, p 8.

(3) The Community Council of Greater New York, *Brooklyn Communities Population Characteristics and Neighborhood Social Resources*, 2 Volumes (Bureau of Community Statistical Services: Research Department, September 1959), ix-xliv; Craig Steven Wilder, *A Covenant with Color: Race and Social Power in Brooklyn* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000); Harold X. Connolly, "The Future? Look Over your City and Weep for it is Dying," in *Brooklyn USA: The Fourth Largest City in America*, ed. Rita Miller (New York: Brooklyn College Press, 1979), 349-362; and also in *Brooklyn USA*, Rita Miller (ed.), "Bedford-Stuyvesant: A Brief Note," 227. See also, "Bed-Stuy History: An Overview," December 5, 2003 <<http://www.bedstuyonline.com>>

(4) Craig Steven Wilder, *A Covenant with Color*, 181-197

(5) Brian Purnell, "A Movement Grows in Brooklyn: The Brooklyn Chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and the Northern Civil Rights Movement During the Early 1960s," (New York University, PhD diss., 2006).

(6) Harold X. Connolly, "Blacks in Brooklyn from 1900-1960," (New York University, PhD diss, 1973), 145-180. See also, Craig Steven Wilder, *A Covenant with Color*, passim.

(7) Oliver Leeds interview with Dianne Esses (December 15, 1988). This interview is part of the Leeds Family Personal Collection, located in Berkeley California, a copy of which is in the author's possession.

(8) *The Stuyford Leader* Vol. 1, No. 5 (December 1950) copy of article in State Historical Society of Wisconsin: Box 1, Folder 5. (Hereafter cited as SHSW: Box number, Folder number.)

(9) Arnold Goldwag interview with author (October 13, 2000), located in the Brooklyn Collection at the Brooklyn Public Library, Grand Army Plaza Branch. (Hereafter cited as Brooklyn Collection.)

(10) "Brooklyn Sanitation Problem," in SHSW: Box 1, Folder 5.

(11) Paul and Rita Heinegg interview with author (January 5, 2004), Brooklyn Collection. Rita met her future husband, Paul Heinegg, when they both joined Brooklyn CORE in 1963.

(12) Arnold Goldwag interview with author (October 13, 2000), Brooklyn Collection

(13) Oliver Leeds interview with Dianne Esses (December 15, 1988)

(14) Memo to Miss Hortense Gable, Assistant to the Mayor, Rent and Rehabilitation Administration, in SHSW: Box 1, Folder 5.

(15) Marjorie Leeds's handwritten notes, August 24, 1962 in SHSW: Box 1, Folder 5.

(16) "Memo to Kings County and New York City Authorities Regarding the unsanitary and dilapidated condition of the sidewalks, building, and garbage collection on Gates Avenue, between Broadway and Bedford Avenues in the borough of Brooklyn," in SHSW: Box 1, Folders 2 and 5.

(17) Marjorie Leeds's handwritten notes, August 24, 1962 in SHSW: Box 1, Folder 5.

(18) Ibid.

(19) Arnold Goldwag Papers: The North Star Vol. 1, No. 1 (nd) (in author's possession) On fear of informants see author's Robert Law interview (April 14, 2004), Brooklyn Collection. Hereafter materials in Arnold Goldwag Papers abbreviated as AGP

(20) Oliver Leeds's letter to Abe Stark, September 7, 1962, in SHSW: Box, 1, Folder, 2

(21) Henry Liebman's letter to Brooklyn CORE, September 13, 1962, in SHSW: Box, 1, Folder, 2

(22) Gilbert Banks interview with author (April 1-2, 2000), Mary Ellen Phifer Kirton interview with author (February 23, 2004), Msemaji and Nandi Weusi (Maurice and Winnie Fredericks) interview with author (March 9, 2001) in Brooklyn Collection.

(23) On "the CORE Way," see On "the CORE way," see Martin Oppenheimer, A Manual for Direct Action (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1965)

(24) Rioghan Kirchner papers, file clippings: "Plan Garbage Dump at Official's Door" (newspaper, unknown), September 15, 1962

(25) Author's interview with Msemaji and Nandi Weusi (Maurice and Winnie Fredericks), March 9, 2001; Dianne Esses interview with Oliver Leeds (December 15, 1988); Author's interview with Robert Law, April 14, 2004.

(26) Msemaji and Nandi Weusi (Maurice and Winnie Fredericks) interview with author (March 9, 2001); Robert Law interview (April 14, 2004) with author in Brooklyn Collection; "Brooklyn Group Flaunts Debris," New York Times, Sunday, September 16, 1962.

(27) Oliver Leeds interview with Dianne Esses interview (December 15, 1988); Rioghan Kirchner papers, file clippings: "B'klyn Rebels Slop Boro Hall With Garbage" (newspaper, unknown), September 16, 1962; Leeds family personal papers, Summons #K295101.

(28) AGP, The North Star Vol. 1, No. 2 (October 1962), p.1; Robert Law interview with author (April 14, 2004); Oliver Leeds interview with Dianne Esses interview (December 15, 1988); Rioghan Kirchner papers, file clippings: "Neighborhood Action Report;" "Stark to Seek End to Garbage Mess" (In author's possession) National CORE seemed to have no problem with Brooklyn CORE's antagonistic demonstration or its seeming impatience with negotiation and leafleting. Assistant Community Relations Director for National CORE, Robert Brookins Gore expressed strong support for Operation Cleansweep. In a letter to Mr. William Fetherston, of Brooklyn, New York, Gore wrote, "A great deal of work needs to be done in order to make all of us more aware of our responsibility to society as well as the responsibility society has for us.... Programs such as 'Operation Clean Sweep' do provide this very function. It causes the city to be more concerned and it awakens members of the community to the fact that there are many ways to alleviate problems; through personal action and through governmental action." SHSW: Box 1, Folder 5

(29) Rioghan Kirchner papers, file clippings: "Stark to Seek End to Garbage Mess;" "Stark Asks Dail Garbage Pickup;" "Stark to take Birns on Tour of Housing;" In subsequent weeks, Stark took shots at the court system, which only issued fines to landlords for slum conditions. Since housing conditions worsened and negligent landlords did not seem to mind paying summonses, Stark thought imprisonment would be a more suitable punishment. See in Kirchner file clippings, "Jail all Slumlords; They don't mind Paying \$\$': Abe Stark appeals to Courts."

(30) Rioghan Kirchner papers, file clippings: "CORE Gets 2 Promises on Garbage: Summonses Sure; 5 day Pick-up Depends on Budget"

(31) For historical analysis of the urban "underclass," and the "culture of poverty," see Michael B. Katz (ed.), *The "Underclass" Debate: Views from History*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), especially, Joe William Trotter, Jr. "Blacks in the Urban North: The 'Underclass Question,' in *Historical Perspective*," 55-81.

(32) AGP, *The North Star* Vol. 1, No. 2 (October 1962), p.1; Letter from Frank J. Lucia to Oliver Leeds, December 3, 1962 in SHSW: Box 1, Folder 5.

(33) Letter from Frank J. Lucia to Oliver Leeds, December 3, 1962 in SHSW: Box 1, Folder 5.

(34) Letter from Frank J. Lucia to Oliver Leeds, December 3, 1962; Letters from Oliver Leeds and Robert Law to Mayor Wagner and Frank J. Lucia in SHSW: Box 1, Folder 5.

(35) Letter from Thomas Jones to Oliver Leeds, January 22, 1963; letter from Frank Lucia to Oliver Leeds, January 24, 1963; letter from Henry Liebman to Oliver Leeds, February 1, 1963, in SHSW: Box 1, Folder 5. On black ministers in Brooklyn, see Clarence Taylor, *Black Churches of Brooklyn and Knocking at Our Own Door*. On Thomas Russell Jones, see Jeffrey Gerson, "Building the Brooklyn Machine,"

(36) Mickey Melendez, *We Took the Streets*, 101-111; Johanna Fernandez, "Between Social Service Reform and Revolutionary Politics: The Young Lords, Late Sixties Radicalism, and Community Organizing in New York City," in Jeanne Theoharis and Komozi Woodard (eds.), *Freedom North: Black Freedom Struggles Outside the South, 1940-1980* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003), 264-269; On Brownsville, see Wendell Pritchett, *Brownsville, Brooklyn: Blacks, Jews, and the Changing Face of the Ghetto* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 239-240.

(37) James Baldwin famously used this lyric as the title of his 1963 book. In it, Baldwin made an eloquent and prescient argument that racial conflagration would certainly follow if citizens and leaders did not amend the racial strife that had characterized US politics and culture since the country's inception. See James Baldwin, *The Fire Next Time* (New York: Dial Press, 1963).

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