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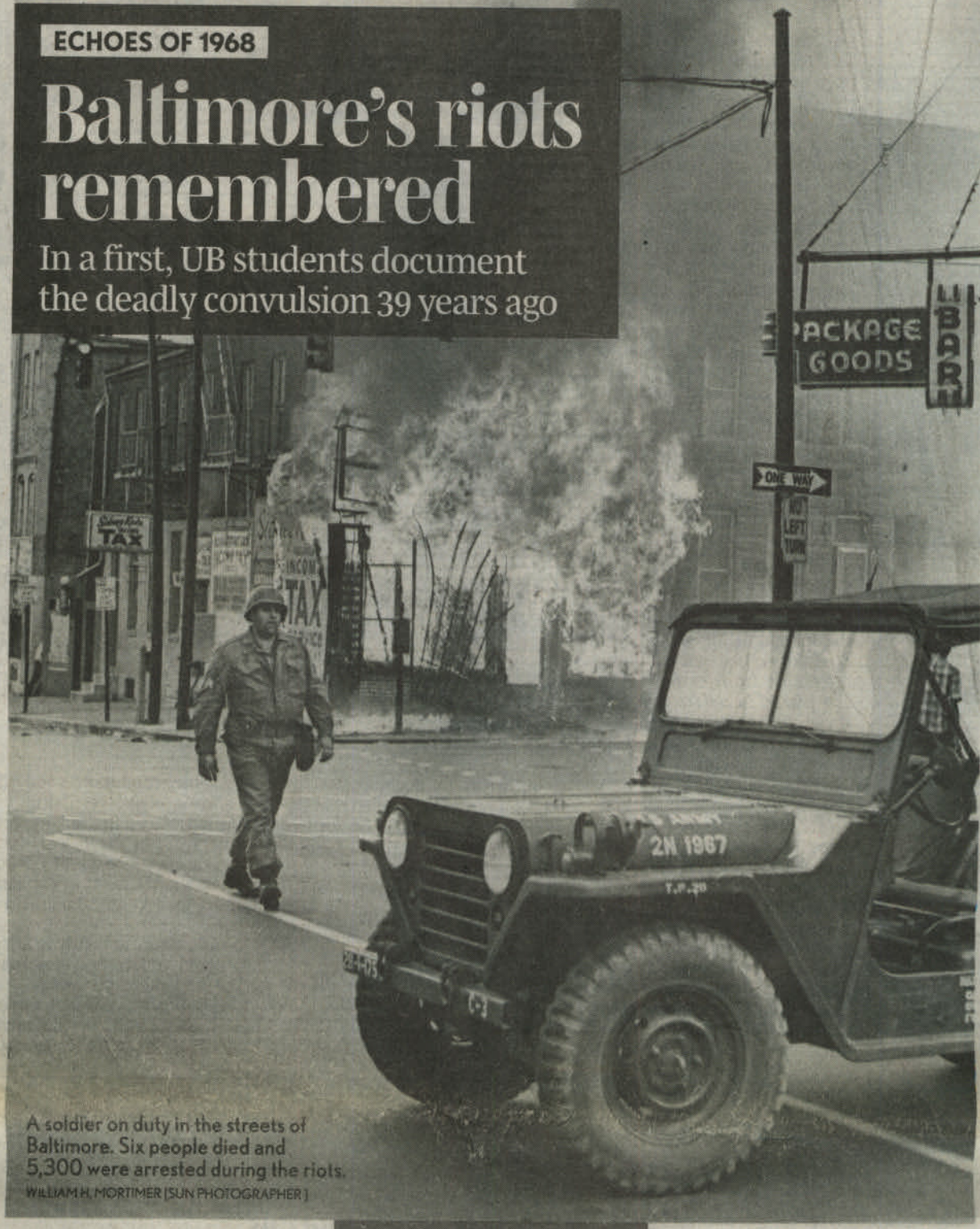
THE SUN

LIGHT FOR ALL

ECHOES OF 1968

Baltimore's riots remembered

In a first, UB students document the deadly convulsion 39 years ago



A soldier on duty in the streets of Baltimore. Six people died and 5,300 were arrested during the riots.
WILLIAM H. MORTIMER [SUN PHOTOGRAPHER]

BY GADI DECHTER
[SUN REPORTER]

A black sergeant major in the National Guard recalls with pride how his troops prevented even a single window in Mondawmin Mall from being smashed by would-be looters. A white Bolton Hill couple tell of drinking National Bohemian beer on their roof while watching Greenmount Avenue burn in the distance.

An African-American mother remembers a ransacked West Baltimore neighborhood occupied by white National Guardsmen who demanded proof of employment before letting her go to her job in Timonium.

"That was really humiliating," said Rosalind Terrell. "It reminded me of slavery. A pass for slavery."

These recollections of April 1968 are from an ambitious University of Baltimore effort to comprehensively document, for the first time, the four-day convulsion of grief and revenge that swept the city's poor, black neighborhoods after the assassination of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. in Memphis, Tenn., on this day 39 years ago.

> "ULTIMATELY, I THINK THE BIG QUESTION FOR EVERYONE IS, 'CAN IT HAPPEN AGAIN?'"
> PETER LEVY, HISTORIAN FOR UB DOCUMENTATION PROJECT

By the time the Baltimore riots died down, six people had been killed, about 5,300 arrested and more than 5,500 armed troops were on patrol throughout the city.

Despite the magnitude of the uprising and its catastrophic consequences for already-distressed communities, the riots have never been thoroughly documented or understood, said historian Peter Levy.

"Our riots are overlooked," said Levy, a York College professor who is the University of Baltimore's scholar-in-residence for the riots project. Notable neither for presaging future turmoil nor for being unusually deadly, like the 1967 Detroit and Newark riots, Bal-

[Please see RIOTS, 8A]

ONLINE // To see an archived video clip from the project, go to **baltimoresun.com/riots**

Baltimoreans share memories of deadly '68 riots

RIOTS [From Page 1A]

timore's days of civil disturbance were overshadowed by concurrent uprisings in nearby Washington, Levy said.

"We are like Nagasaki to Washington's Hiroshima," Levy said.

When university officials started planning a commemoration of the riots' 40th anniversary next year, they couldn't find many first-hand accounts from ordinary people who lived through them.

So UB historian Elizabeth Nix assigned students in her civil rights history course last semester to find witnesses and videotape their testimonials. The gathering of oral histories — about 20 have been collected so far — will continue through next April, when the university will convene a scholarly conference on the riots' lingering impact on the city 40 years later.

Meanwhile, university librarians are preparing artifacts for public display, such as converting to digital video the reel-to-reel tapes of WMAR-TV's coverage. They have created a self-guided driving tour of the city's east- and west-side commercial corridors that were devastated by looting.

Organizers are collaborating on exhibits with the Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History and Culture, the Jewish Museum of Maryland, and the Enoch Pratt Free Library.

For an urban public campus best known for professional schools that cater to working adults, the project is an opportunity to promote itself as a center of scholarship and civic engagement.

The diversity and hometown roots of much of its student body are an asset, said Jessica Elfenbein, a UB administrator and lead organizer of the riots project.

"A project like this might otherwise be seen as parochial," she said. "But we are a university of people from here. They bring with them contacts and credibility in the community that can then become very important" in persuading people to bear witness to a painful past.

Still, student historians found that for many eyewitnesses to the riots — particularly those who participated in the looting — the topic remains taboo.

"Some people thought it was too painful, some people just didn't want to be recorded," said recent UB graduate Bashi Rose, who participated in the oral history project. "Even though it happened decades ago, I guess it's still fresh in their minds."

And then there are those who have blocked out the experience completely.

Ida Pats, 82, doesn't talk about the destruction of her North Avenue pharmacy and upstairs home. She says she's wiped out all memory of seeing the building where she lived for 18 years and raised a family be looted, then burned.

"I don't want to remember," she said. "It's old history, and I don't want to know about it. It's like it never happened."

But her two daughters, who were teens at the time, recently brought her to UB anyway, so the video cameras could at least record her expressions as they spoke.

Elder daughter Sharon Singer said the full impact of the riots didn't hit home until several days after they began, when the white 16-year-old returned to her Western High School classroom. The recent violence fed a lively debate among 15 girls of varied racial and ethnic backgrounds.

"There was a black girl named Debbie and she was a leader-type of person … and she said, 'I want you to know they got exactly what they deserved,' " Singer recalled last week. "I started crying.

"If you had a riot now, with all of the meth and heroin addicts who live mostly in those riot areas, I don't think they would have the strength to run up and down the streets for 10 minutes," says Dr. Louis L. Randall, who lived in West Baltimore in 1968.
LLOYD FOX [SUN PHOTOGRAPHER]

I'm crying now. I had to leave the room. That one thing cut to me like nothing else could have cut to me. I thought, 'What is happening in this world?' "

She clasped her hands and tried, without success, to fight back tears. In the corner of the library meeting room, Rose checked the tripod-mounted video camera. Interviewer Valerie Wiggins, an undergraduate, waited for Singer to continue.

"These are not the people I thought I knew," Singer, now a housewife in Reisterstown, remembered thinking.

Once a bustling strip of mom-and-pop businesses, the 800 block of W. North Ave., which included Sidney and Ida Pats' Downes Brothers Pharmacy, has been cleared of retail outlets. A UB Web site shows before-and-after photos, some salvaged from the wreckage.

A 1959 snapshot depicts the couple posing happily in their store, stocked shelves all around. Post-riot photos show shelves stripped bare, and the family's upstairs living quarters ransacked and ruined.

Many of the urban commercial areas hit by the riots remain intact, if largely still struggling.

"When you take a tour of the riot areas, you may not see the specific damage but you can still see some of the social forces or causes that led to the riots in the first place," said Levy during a recent drive through them. "And then also the difficulty of rebirth afterward."

On Pennsylvania and Edmondson avenues, boarded-up homes sit next to small discount merchants. Men and women linger on desolate streets in the middle of the workday.

"Ultimately, I think the big question for everyone is, 'Can it happen again?' " said Levy, who wrote a book about the 1967 riots in Cambridge.

Some scholars argue that the absence of a unifying figure like King makes violent social upheaval less likely today.

Dr. Louis L. Randall, 75, who is black, lived in West Baltimore in 1968. He believes an epidemic of drug addiction has dampened the political spirit of impoverished Baltimoreans today.

"If you had a riot now, with all of the meth and heroin addicts who live mostly in those riot areas, I don't think they would have the strength to run up and down the streets for 10 minutes," the obstetrician said. "What would their goals be to riot? More drugs?"

Levy worries that the deployment of National Guard troops to Iraq, and that war's impact on the federal response to Hurricane Katrina, suggests that the country is unprepared for an internal crisis.

"We're preparing for all these disasters, terrorists, acts of God, etc.," said Levy. "What would happen if riots happened at the same time?"

University of Baltimore organizers expect that such questions will be debated next year, when the riots conference convenes.

David Taft Terry, executive director of the Lewis Museum, hopes the conference and related exhibits will provide a launching pad for extended dialogue about the lasting impact of the King assassination.

"I think many people from various perspectives point to the 1968 [riots] as a turning point of some significance," he said, both as a catalyst for increasing white flight to the suburbs and an impetus for major urban renewal projects that are luring suburbanites back to the city.

"We will be joining many tens of thousands of people across the country, recognizing in one shape or form the passing of Martin Luther King, which spearheaded the uprising," Terry said.

"If we just leave with a clearer understanding of what took place here, then I think we will have made a wonderful contribution."

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New film documents a bond of friendship

'Pip & Zastrow' tells story of mayor and friend calming Annapolis in 1968

by Nicole Fuller | Sun reporter

Neighborhoods in Baltimore, Washington and Cambridge were already burning after the assassination of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968. Annapolis Mayor Roger "Pip" Moyer feared it wouldn't be long before race rioting struck the state capital.

He looked for his oldest friend, a small-time thief named Joseph "Zastrow" Simms. Moyer was white and Simms was black, yet they had grown up together on the basketball courts in the segregated city.

Moyer sprung Simms from his cell in a Baltimore jail for a few hours, and together they walked the streets of the old 4th Ward in Annapolis, calming the people and sparing the city the destruction wrought in urban areas nationwide.

"Some of those cities are still building up after all those years," said Simms, who, like Moyer, is now 73. "Here was a white man who was able to come into the black community ... and they respected him. Don't think there weren't some tense moments, though."

Forty years later, their nearly lifelong bond paralleling the country's search for racial tolerance has been turned into a documentary. Pip & Zastrow: An American Friendship, by filmmakers Victoria Bruce and Karin Hayes, will get its first screening tonight in Annapolis.

"It's just really a beautiful narrative story of a friendship," Bruce said. "It's not a piece to try to put any issues on anyone. You just sort of fall in love with the characters and see how they conquered their own demons and political challenges."

With $100,000 in grants from the city and county, the film was shot in Annapolis over a four-year period, which produced more than 100 hours of interviews with everyone from the current mayor and Moyer's former wife, Ellen O. Moyer, to Carl O. Snowden, head of the state's civil rights office and a native of Annapolis.

Roger Moyer (left), former mayor of Annapolis, and Joseph Simms - otherwise known as Pip and Zastrow - visit at Moyer's home in Eastport. The men grew up together and have been nearly lifelong friends. (Sun photo by Glenn Fawcett / March 13, 2008)

"The relationship between the two is timeless," said Ellen Moyer. "Each of them had a different set of skills and talents that were key to avoiding a crisis. No man is an island. One really can't do anything alone. Those are the kinds of things that inspire us all."

Both talented athletes in their youth, Moyer played forward and center at all-white Annapolis High, and Simms starred at all-black Wiley H. Bates High. In 1959, Moyer integrated an all-black semipro team, a scandal at the time.

Moyer went on to join the Army, graduated from the University of Baltimore and then ran for city council. In 1965, he was elected mayor. Simms became a petty thief and was in and out of jail.

But they remained friends, even as they were widely criticized. Moyer was refused admittance to the local yacht and Elks clubs, and Simms was called an "Uncle Tom."

"One of the main things we're trying to tell is a story of a friendship at a time when a friendship over racial lines was not the norm," Hayes said. "This is a story of a friendship that spans 60 years and how they come together at different times of their lives, and they have to deal with their own issues with their families and whatever, but the thread is they always come back to each other, and how friendship can be such a strong force."

Annapolis historian Janice Hayes-Williams was an associate producer, charged with ensuring the historic authenticity of the film.

"There's nobody in Annapolis that didn't know Pip and Zastrow," said Hayes-Williams.

Her uncle, George Phelps, the first African-American law enforcement officer in Anne Arundel County and a longtime Annapolis resident, narrates.

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A conversation whose time has come?

by C. Fraser Smith

Even before a charismatic black leader reached across the racial divide, Marylanders were setting out in search of deeper understanding.

Several ominous incidents - a case of arson and nooses of uncertain origin - lent urgency to the mission.

Then last week, Sen. Barack Obama daringly made a call for racial groups to explore attitudes and assumptions. He made his appeal a tenet of his presidential campaign - an unprecedented challenge. He felt obliged to address the controversial remarks of his former pastor, the Rev. Jeremiah Wright. But he put the matter in a broader context.

During a speech in Philadelphia, he said the complexities of race are an issue this nation "has never really worked through. ... And if we walk away now, if we simply retreat into our respective corners, we will never be able to come together to solve challenges like health care, or education, or the need to find good jobs for every American."

With similar concerns in mind, the Maryland Humanities Council had begun a series of community conversations on race last year.

The council found varying degrees of acceptance for its challenge. In some parts of the state, the conversations have been eagerly embraced as useful and necessary. In other areas, the idea of talking about race has been greeted with wariness, as if talk might revive more antagonism than understanding. Enduring racial sensitivities have been manifest in such things as the proposal to put a statue of former Maryland slave and abolitionist Frederick Douglass on the courthouse lawn in Easton.

In a sense, the national conversation about race - such as it was - ended after the riots of the 1960s, after the cities burned, after discrimination was ameliorated in the nation's laws. As difficult as it was to confront Jim Crow in practice and custom, dealing with the silent fears and discomforts of race has been even more challenging.

Howard Law School Dean Charles Hamilton Houston, who worked to sue Jim Crow out of Maryland in the 1930s and 1940s, observed that changing people's minds would be more difficult than changing laws.

Senator Obama's campaign shows the issue remains. And it's not just in the campaign for president: Across the nation, there have been displays, real and contrived, of nooses in a schoolyard and, in Baltimore, a firehouse.

Real, devastating fires were set in 2004 by vandals who may have wanted to frighten new black homeowners in Southern Maryland. Discriminatory drug laws have resulted in prison populations overrepresented by blacks. City schools have been resegregated, subjecting young black students to the same damaging isolation that led the U.S. Supreme Court to strike down the illusory doctrine of separate but equal in 1954.

Surely there is much to talk about. Some may wish to wait for change to evolve, but wouldn't it be better to accelerate change by fostering a dialogue that deepened understanding?

The Maryland Humanities Council's determination to promote conversations comes 40 years after the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination on April 4, 1968. That wrenching event provoked a national outpouring of anger and despair. There was lawlessness, to be sure, but the riots of 1968 were the expression of pent-up anger held in reserve for decades.

An exploration of that cataclysm, under way at the University of Baltimore for many months, will include a three-day symposium beginning April 3 and continuing through April 5. It's one of several attempts to get racial understanding on the public agenda.

In Baltimore, a standing-room-only audience listened last fall to a mock discussion between actors representing Malcolm X and Dr. King moderated by Marc Steiner, the former talk-show host at WYPR. That show, also sponsored by the Humanities Council, may be taken on the road.

The council's hope is that programs such as these will provide opportunities for people to express their fears and concerns. In Southern Maryland, hundreds of people, black and white, talked about the fires. Some other communities have considered these conversations with some trepidation, worrying about the revival of attitudes they think might be better left undisturbed.

Arson in a new Charles County housing development, however, removed the abstraction from these fears in that community. Some 300 people, black and white, turned out for one of the conversations last October at the Community College of Southern Maryland in La Plata, a suggestion that people were willing to face and explore the tensions.

Senator Obama and the Maryland Humanities Council are laying down the same challenge: Deal with anger and resentment before they become even more corrosive.

C. Fraser Smith is senior news analyst for WYPR-FM. His column appears Sundays. His e-mail address is fsmith@wypr.org.

"I heard this booming, melodic, gorgeous baritone voice, and he just sounded like a grandfather telling a story," Bruce said. "I looked at Karin and said, 'We have to have him.' We just felt like the stars aligned when we found George Phelps for this story."

Yesterday, Phelps recounted the aftermath of the April 4, 1968, assassination of King in Memphis, Tenn., and how Moyer hit the streets where tensions were high, before Simms could join him.

"There were pockets of people that were disgruntled or whatever," Phelps said. Moyer "went to every little cubbyhole, every little joint, every little place and that's how it was defused."

In the trailer for the film, available at www.pipandzastro.com , Phelps recalls how the next day the head of the state police called the young mayor.

Moyer says: "He said, 'Mayor, what in the hell are you doing different in Annapolis than we're doing in the rest of the state?' I said, 'Well, I got a guy that's in prison who writes me a little note every day telling me what to do, who to talk to.' So I got Zastrow out on a furlough. And he walked the streets with me every night, talking to different leaders."

Phelps adds, "So here it was a white mayor and a black convict, walking the streets together at a time when the world seemed ready to explode. And would you believe? Annapolis stayed calm."

Phelps, who at 81 is recovering from open-heart surgery, will not be able to attend tonight's premiere of the movie. The passage of time has been hard on its stars: Parkinson's disease has put Moyer in a wheelchair and has nearly robbed him of his ability to talk. Simms walks with a cane because of a bum hip. They still visit, but it is harder now.

In Moyer's Eastport home, the two men embraced. They spoke of friends who have passed and of current events.

"What do you think of the governor of New York?" Simms asked. "He had fun, didn't he?"

"He paid for it," Moyer said.

On presidential politics, Simms said, "I'm supporting Hillary all the way."

Moyer said, "I'm an Obama supporter. Obama all the way."

But when talk turned to their story, and the movie that is telling it, there was pride and tears.

"We're both going through it," Simms said. "But we're both here."

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When Baltimore Burned

Four decades after riots damaged lives, city's image, we're still picking up pieces

by Stephen Kiehl | Sun reporter

The former mayor climbed from the car and reached back 40 years. He remembered this corner, Broadway and Fayette Street, when it was on fire.

"It was completely engulfed," said Thomas J. D'Alesandro III, as he gestured to the site where a warehouse was torched by rioters. He had been mayor for barely four months when, on April 6, 1968, the city erupted in violence after the assassination of the Rev. Martin Luther King.

Now 78, D'Alesandro held in his mottled hands a photograph of this place, showing the young mayor looking grim as fire hoses doused the smoldering ruins. When the smoke cleared after four days of rioting, six people had been killed, 700 injured, 1,000 businesses looted or burned and 5,800 people arrested.

The physical toll was enormous. But in the years that followed, the psychological damage hurt the city even more. People, D'Alesandro said, "became scared about Baltimore."

Thomas D'Alesandro III was mayor as riots broke out in 1968.
(Sun photo by Jed Kirschbaum / March 18, 2008)

The riots created in the public imagination an urban wasteland of shattered storefronts and bombed-out buildings. Forces already in motion - middle-class flight, the departure of small businesses, the withdrawal of white families from city schools - accelerated.

"Imagine yourself as a merchant, saying, 'If this terrible thing happened, why won't it happen again?'" said M.J. "Jay" Brodie, the city's deputy housing commissioner in the 1970s. "For a lot of people, white and ultimately black, the suburbs looked pretty good."

The ripples would travel across decades: A family whose pharmacy was looted left for the suburbs, where their children made lives separate from the city. A community activist watched as the blight of vacant homes led to the scourge of drugs and crime. A man who went to an integrated high school in 1968 now sends his daughter to a nearly all-black school and wonders if the education is as good.

For civic leaders, the riots forced a sense of urgency to build a better city. Baltimore won federal money for a campaign to provide decent housing for the poor. Ground was broken on the Maryland Science Center to draw middle-class families back to the city, if only to visit. But the housing was still in deteriorating neighborhoods, and it was years before some middle-class families came back downtown.

Baltimore had begun losing residents in the 1950s, as the promise of bigger homes, greener lawns and safer streets - the American dream, available on the installment plan - drew thousands to the suburbs. But after the riots, the flight became a stampede. The city lost 13 percent of its population - 120,000 residents - in the decade between 1970 and 1980.

Those who left took with them their tax money and, in some cases, their jobs. Increasingly, they shopped and worked in the suburbs. From 1969 to 1980, the number of jobs in the city fell sharply, from 540,000 to 505,000.For the first time, Baltimore made the list of the nation's 10 poorest cities.

Those who stayed lived in hollowed-out neighborhoods where the drug trade took hold, replacing honest businesses. Washington at last took notice of the nation's shameful housing conditions, and Baltimore received millions in federal money to provide decent, affordable homes for the poor.

But jobs were still disappearing, and the schools were growing ever more segregated as white families moved away or sent their children to private or parochial schools. The system lost more than 50,000 students in the '70s, most of them white. Today, a black student in Baltimore has less chance of encountering a white student than in any other large system in the country.

"The riots punctuated and accelerated changes that may have taken place anyhow," said Howell Baum, a professor of urban studies at the University of Maryland. "They added their own unfortunate flavor to it, in that lots of folks felt beat up."

The riots alone cannot be blamed for the decline of the city, but they left a mark. Forty years later, Baltimore is still recovering.

'Just an inferno'

In the hours after the riots, a child of the city became a convert to the suburbs.

Sharon Singer grew up on North Avenue above her parents' pharmacy. She took ballet classes at the Peabody Institute and rode the bus to Orioles games at Memorial Stadium. She did her homework in the store and chatted with the customers.

She was 16 in 1968, a student in the Western High School "A program." The school's population was evenly split, black and white, but, Singer says, "We thought of ourselves as a family."

On Sunday morning, April 7, Singer and her mother went shopping and then picked up her sister at Baltimore Hebrew College. Singer had her learner's permit, and her mother let her drive the black Oldsmobile 98 home. They took the newly opened Jones Falls Expressway, getting off at North Avenue.

"There was just an inferno," Singer recalls. Riots that began on the east side had spread to the west. Buildings were on fire. Smoke filled the sky. The road was blocked. Singer maneuvered the Oldsmobile through side streets to reach the Esso gas station behind the pharmacy. Her father was standing there, waiting.

The family went to an aunt's house in Northwest Baltimore with only the clothes they were wearing. The next day, Monday, they returned to the store - to their home - and found it looted. Everything was taken, but they were hopeful.

"We thought maybe we could pick up the pieces," Singer said. But one day later, the building was burned. There was no going back. "We were there with them, and then all of a sudden, we weren't."

No study has determined the precise number of businesses that left the city after the riots, but experts estimate it was in the hundreds. They were the small businesses - bakeries, pharmacies, general stores - that sustained life in city neighborhoods.

Even at the time of the riots, some were aware of the long-term damage. On April 8, state Sen. Clarence M. Mitchell III drove through the riot-stricken area and told The Sun: "Where are they going to get food tomorrow? Where are they going to get medicine? There's nothing left."

Many who could leave the city, did. The suburbs promised better schools, modern kitchens and less crime. And if that wasn't enough, the federal government pushed families toward the suburbs by making it easier to get loans in Catonsville than in Cherry Hill.

The practice of redlining - the Federal Housing Administration's refusal to guarantee loans in black or mixed neighborhoods - struck at the heart of the city. Banks denied mortgages in many city neighborhoods, pointing families instead to the suburbs.

Brodie, the former deputy housing commissioner, said the city fought the FHA: "We did everything we could as a city government to persuade them to make loans in Bolton Hill. They didn't want to do it. They had just written off chunks of the city."

Singer's family moved to Northwest Baltimore. Her father got a job as a pharmacist at Korvette's. Her mother earned her associate's degree in accounting and went to work for insurance giant USF&G. And when Singer married, she and her husband settled in Reisterstown.

Sharon Singer's family owned and lived in a pharmacy on North Avenue. They moved after the riots, their business having been burned. (Sun photo by Andre F. Chung / March 19, 2008)

The neighborhood that Sharon Singer's family moved to was misstated when this article was published in the print edition. Singer's parents moved to Northwest Baltimore; Singer and her husband moved to Reisterstown.

The Sun regrets the error

"I never went back," she said. "I never went back to the city after that - never had the desire to. It wasn't a conscious decision: 'Oh, I'm never stepping back in the city.' But my childhood was on North Avenue, and after that, it was a different life."

'It sent a message'

Lucille Gorham came face-to-face with the riots in a coin-operated laundry on Gay Street. She was holding her young daughter when a man threw a gasoline bomb through the plate-glass window.

Lucille Gorham said she and her child barely avoided a bomb thrown into a Gay Street laundry. (Sun photo by Jed Kirschbaum / March 27, 2008)

Gorham said she and her child narrowly escaped the spreading flames, but in the following days, her neighborhood would bear the brunt of years of bottled-up anger and inequity.

Gorham - a mother of eight from North Carolina who had come to Baltimore poor, and remained poor - could understand the rioters' anger. But she could never condone their destruction.

"It sent a message that a lot of things needed to be better," said Gorham, now 77. "But so many people didn't need to get hurt. So many homes didn't need to be burned."

In that laundry on Gay Street, Gorham would not have guessed that the job of rebuilding her neighborhood would fall in part to her. She was a single mother, divorced and later widowed, living with her children in a two-bedroom house off Caroline Street where the heat only worked in the living room.

But through her community activism, Gorham earned a job with Citizens for Fair Housing, eventually becoming director. She moved to a larger rowhouse on East Chase Street. And while she would never describe herself as anything but poor, her life took on a modicum of stability.

Representing her community, Gorham worked with city leaders who were harnessing federal housing money for Baltimore. In the 1970s, the city built 748 low-income units in the Gay Street corridor, part of a decade-long boom in which 3,900 new homes for the poor went up. The Gay Street housing was townhouses and garden-style apartments - decent, affordable rental homes that people could feel good about.

But in other aspects, good feelings were in short supply. As the city's economy changed, well-paying union jobs disappeared. Indeed, the city has never returned to its pre-riots employment level, hitting a low of 405,000 jobs in 2005, the last year for which data are available.

Drugs and crime ravaged many neighborhoods. Even amid the new housing, blight remained. Gorham said she was afraid to go out at night, fearful of the young men on her block.

"You lived with vacant houses. You lived with trash and debris," she said. "It opened the door to drug dealing. It made it convenient for drug dealers to come in the neighborhood, set up shop in schoolyards, alleys, vacant houses. The city didn't do anything."

The residents couldn't afford to keep up the houses, she says, and the city didn't take care of them, either. Streets weren't cleaned. Trash wasn't removed. Flowers and trees weren't planted.

Gorham watched as the homes she fought for - such as the 63-unit Harry Mills Terrace - were razed. "It hurt. It hurt," she said recently. "Harry Mills was, to the people who moved in there, it was like a gift from the Lord." More than 800 of the 3,900 units built in the '70s have been torn down.

Today Gorham's old neighborhood is still pockmarked with vacant houses. But for the first time since the '70s, major investment holds the potential for transformation. East Baltimore Development Inc. is spending $1.8 billion to build offices, research space and residences on an 88-acre site just north of Johns Hopkins Hospital.

Gorham herself was forced out of her home on Chase Street several years ago to make way for the EBDI project. Her old block is now completely boarded up, waiting for a promised revival.

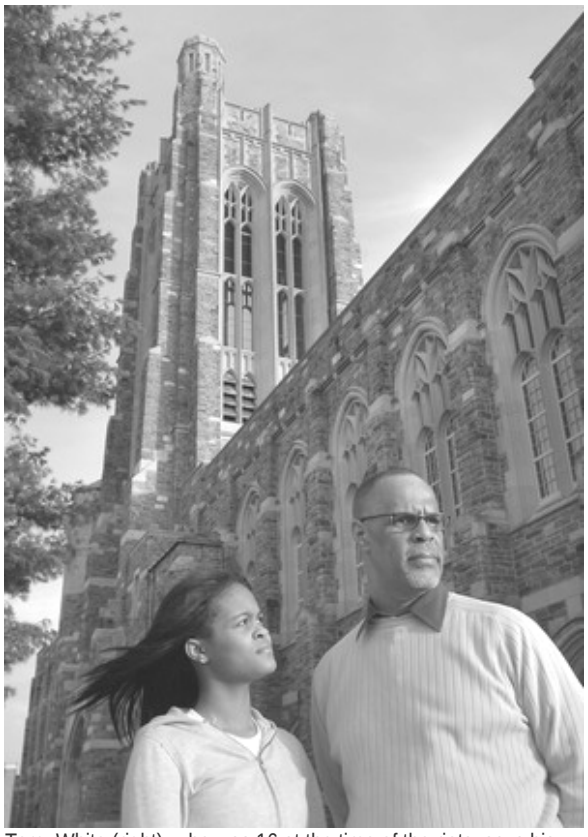
With the help of EBDI, she bought a house in the Belair-Edison neighborhood in Northeast Baltimore, and three of her sons moved in with her. Her children's lives illustrate the challenges faced in overcoming persistent poverty. One son cuts grass and fixes cars. Another works in the grounds department of the city school system. A daughter is a seamstress.

Another, Gorham says proudly, has a white-collar job. Her employer? East Baltimore Development Inc.

Armed soldiers

Late one night during the riots, 16-year-old Terry White was walking across the Mondawmin Mall parking lot, returning home from his job at the Baltimore Country Club. The National Guard was using the mall lot as a staging area, but White didn't know that.

Three or four armed National Guard troops approached White and a friend, both African-Americans. The guardsmen asked them questions: Who are you? What are you doing? Where are you going? White was drinking a pint of milk, and a soldier took it and sniffed it.



Terry White (right), who was 16 at the time of the riots, says his high school, Forest Park, was evenly split between blacks and whites. His daugther Jamila's school, City College, is now 89 percent black. (Sun photo by Jed Kirschbaum / March 26, 2008)

White was allowed to return home, but he hasn't forgotten the resentment he felt that night. His neighborhood, now known as Coppin Heights, was largely untouched by the riots, but "there were armed soldiers on my street, and it felt like they were trying to confine me."

At the time, he was a junior at Forest Park High School, a school that he says was evenly split between white and black students. King's death and even the riots brought people together and made him realize that every white person was not against him, he said. Many, he learned, wanted change as he did.

After high school came four years in the Marines, followed by community college in Baltimore and a job at the Federal Reserve Bank. Now White is executive secretary to the Maryland Board of Architects. He still lives in the city - in Waverly, where he goes to the farmers' market on Saturdays and enjoys life in an integrated neighborhood.

"Baltimore is surviving," said White, now 56. But in one way, he thinks the city has regressed. His daughter Jamila, 17, is a senior at City College High School, and White is dismayed that it is not nearly as integrated as the school he attended 40 years ago.

City College is 89 percent black, mirroring the ratio in the city system as a whole. The system became majority black in 1960, but in 1968 the high schools were still fairly integrated. The slow slide toward the resegregation of city schools is a stain of the riots that has not faded.

"The fact of the matter is that the more culturally rich situations one is exposed to, one has to become more culturally rich himself," White said. "If schools today were integrated at the rate when I was in school, I think the quality of education would be better."

'We kept on moving'

Conventional wisdom holds that Mayor D'Alesandro was despondent after the riots, and that's why he decided to leave politics after serving only one term. Nonsense, says D'Alesandro, who paints a more nuanced picture of his political and personal calculations.

The young mayor had planned to run for governor in 1970. But the riots changed the political landscape. Republican Gov. Spiro Agnew, who called out the National Guard and earned a reputation for law and order, was picked to be Richard Nixon's running mate in the presidential election. In Maryland, that meant that House of Delegates Speaker Marvin Mandel - a Democrat - became acting governor. And D'Alesandro could not run against another Democrat.

Nor could he remain as mayor, he says, for simple financial reasons. He had five children who were entering their high school and college years, and his take-home pay as mayor was $696 every two weeks. "I had to make a living," he said. He went into private practice as a lawyer.

But he stayed in Baltimore. Over the last four decades, he has watched the city's fitful progress and painful setbacks. And he believes - despite the torments of drugs, crime and poverty - that the city is stronger.

"There's no city of comparable size in the nation that has done as much revitalization as we have," he said. "The riots pushed us to the one-yard line, but we held. We kept on moving."

The corner where D'Alesandro saw the warehouse burn is now a hive of activity. Construction workers are busy building a new $10 million facility that will house the families and children who come to the Johns Hopkins Hospital Kimmel Cancer Center seeking treatment.

It is not the only place you can find hope in Baltimore, said D'Alesandro, who emerged from the darkest of nights with faith in a city's ability to heal.

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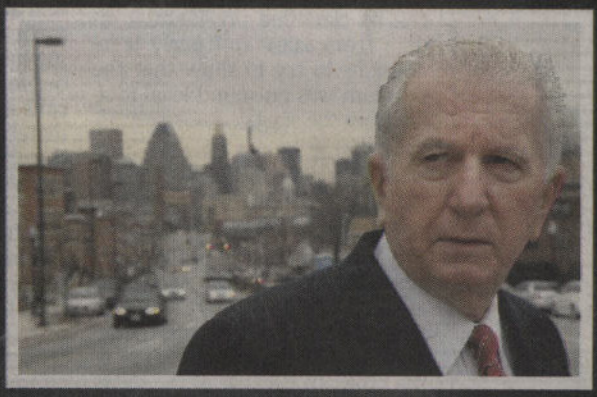
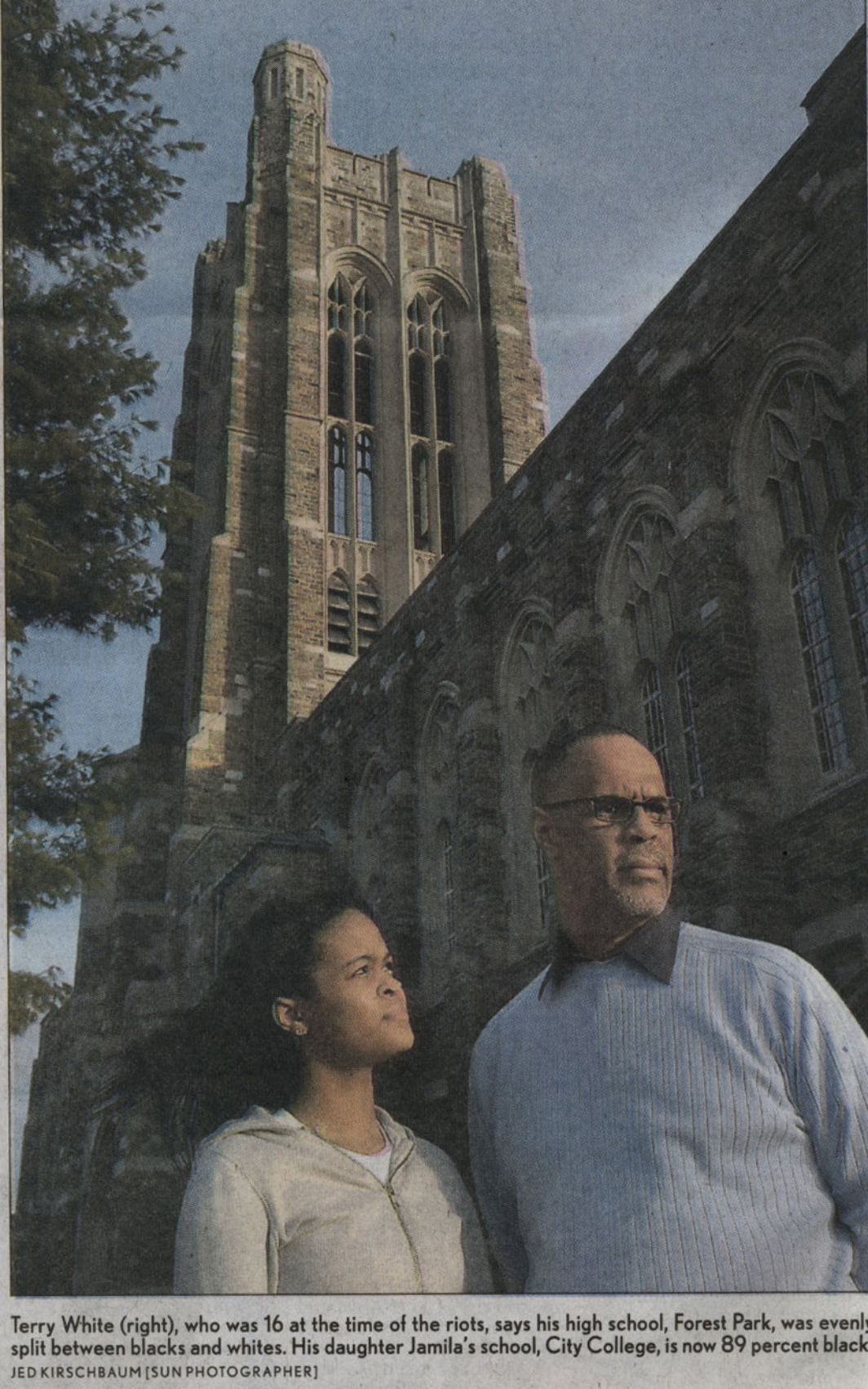
Sun researcher Paul McCardell contributed to this article

When Baltimore burned



Firefighters battle a Harford Road blaze April 7, 1968, the riots' second day.
[SUN FILE PHOTO]

Thomas D'Alesandro III (at top) was mayor as riots broke out in 1968. Lucille Gorham (above) said she and her child barely avoided a bomb thrown into a Gay Street laundry.
PHOTOS BY JED KIRSCHBAUM [SUN PHOTOGRAPHER]

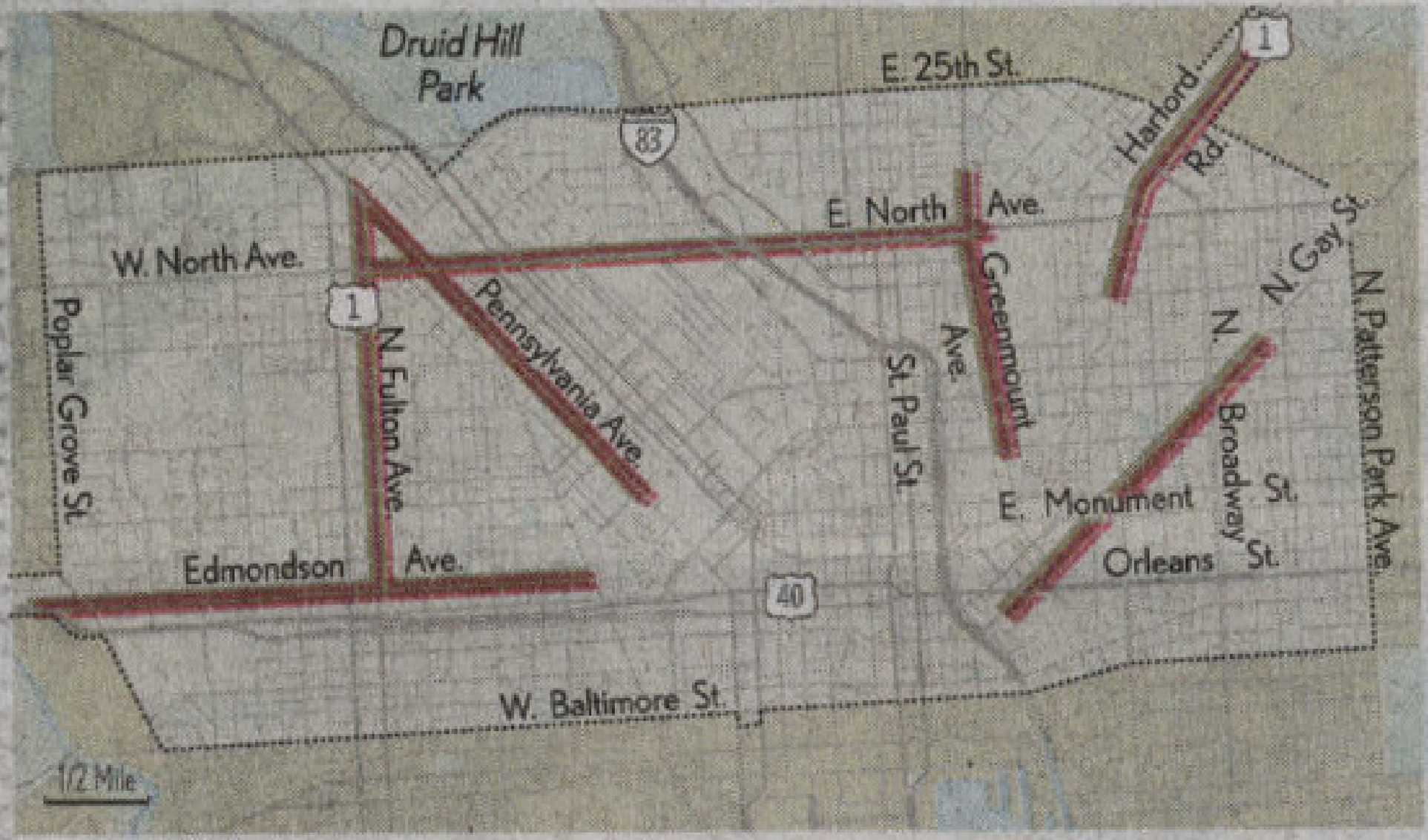


Terry White (right), who was 16 at the time of the riots, says his high school, Forest Park, was evenly split between blacks and whites. His daughter Jamila's school, City College, is now 89 percent black.

JED KIRSCHBAUM [SUN PHOTOGRAPHER]

PATH OF UNREST

From April 6 to April 9, 1968, there was scattered rioting in the area of Baltimore shown below, especially along the highlighted corridors.



Source: The University of Baltimore

CHRISTINE FELLENZ [SUN CARTOGRAPHER]

Sharon Singer's family owned and lived in a pharmacy on North Avenue. They moved after the riots, their business having been burned.
ANDRÉ F. CHUNG [SUN PHOTOGRAPHER]

THE BALTIMORE SUN

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Sun special report: 40 years later

Living through unrest

UB project examines Baltimore riots of '68

BY JULIE SCHARPER
[SUN REPORTER]

For nearly four decades, people rarely spoke about the days when dark columns of smoke rose from Baltimore's poorest neighborhoods and mobs seethed in the streets.

But now ministers and schoolteachers, store owners and police officers, politicians and housewives are finally telling their stories about the city's riots as part of a groundbreaking urban history project spearheaded by the University of Baltimore.

"Ignoring the issues that came to a head in April 1968 doesn't make them go away," says Jessica Elfenbein, an associate provost at the university and the project's director. "We want to be part of moving the city ahead and healing wounds."

The stories told by people who lived through the unrest after the assassination of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. form the heart of a three-day conference at the university that begins tomorrow evening. The idea is to examine unresolved questions about how the riots began and how the events of four days, al-

[Please see HISTORY, 12A]

MORE ON THE RIOTS

ANDRÉ F. CHUNG [SUN PHOTOGRAPHER]

Inside: Some who lived through the unrest after the assassination of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., including Ruth Stewart (above), tell their stories. **PGS 12-13A**

Online: Listen to audio clips of the oral histories, and find an interactive map, photos, video and a discussion board at **baltimoresun.com/riots.**

Soldiers march in the 1900 block of Greenmount Ave. as part of an effort to quell four days of rioting after the assassination of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.
WILLIAM L. LAFORCE [SUN PHOTOGRAPHER]

STORIES OF UNREST

HISTORY [From Page 1A]

most exactly 40 years ago, continue to affect the city.

"We're trying to open up a dialogue and a discussion of not just the riots, but race and social progress," says historian Peter Levy, the university's scholar-in-residence for the project.

Researchers will talk about the legacy of racism and explore the social, political and economic causes of the riots. High school students will present a play based on the oral histories. Dancers will perform a piece called "None of Us Are Free."

The conference marks the first comprehensive study of this turbulent time in the city's history, university officials say. For many who shared their stories with researchers, it was the first time that they had revisited these painful memories in 40 years. And for some of the older participants, it may be a last chance to document their experiences.

Work on the oral history project began in the fall of 2006 when students in a civil rights class taught by Elizabeth Nix interviewed people whose lives were affected by the riots. They spoke with a minister who walked out in protest after Gov. Spiro T. Agnew insulted black leaders, a young white lawyer who was injured in the melee but spent nearly a week getting rioters out of jail, and a retired teacher's aide who says she took part in the looting so she could feed her children.

To date, nearly 100 interviews have been conducted, and researchers plan to continue compiling oral histories after the conference concludes. Many participants say that they had seldom spoken of their experiences before, Elfenbein says.

"These stories aren't rehearsed. They're fresh," she says. "People are really grateful to have a chance to talk."

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RUTH STEWART

A frightening time to be a young mother

Surrounded by potted plants and photographs of grandchildren in her sunny living room, Ruth Stewart seems an unlikely participant in the looting that took place 40 years ago.

Now 62, the retired teacher's aide says that the riots were wrought by the anguish and anger people felt after the King assassination on April 4, 1968. As the mother of two young children, Stewart made survival her first priority.

"When they killed Martin Luther King, that did it," she says. "The peace just went. He was for nonviolence, but they brought out the violence in us."

All through her West Baltimore neighborhood, people smashed store windows and passed boxes of food, cigarettes and even pantyhose onto the street. Men hooked heavy chains from a truck onto a metal window grate, pulled forward until the grate snapped and then rushed into the store. People carried armfuls of clothing from a pawn shop and hung them on lampposts.

Stewart, then 22, was staying at her sister's home on Edmondson Avenue with her toddler son and infant daughter. Her husband, whom she had married in her senior year at Douglass High School, was deployed in Vietnam.

It was a frightening time to be a young mother.

"Look one way and you see smoke. Look the other way and you see smoke. And I was right in the middle of it," says Stewart, perched on a chair in her tidy apartment in a high-rise for seniors overlooking Lafayette Square, not far from her old neighborhood.

Men lugged sofas and TVs down the street "like it was an everyday thing," she says. Children raced along with cases of sodas. Drug addicts wrestled over gallon jugs of medicated syrup from a pharmacy.

Soldiers set up camp in a nearby park, and police patrolled the blocks, arresting anyone out after the curfew. Ministers roamed the streets, pleading into bullhorns for people to calm themselves.

Along with some relatives, Stewart scooped up big silver-label hams from the basement of a nearby store but dropped them when National Guardsmen sprayed tear gas. She says she picked up cartons of Newports and liquor, which she sold or gave away. And she took cases of Carnation Milk and Pablum cereal for her babies.

At the time, she says, it seemed as if she didn't have a choice.

"I didn't know how long this would go on for. … I had to think about survival for me and my children. It could have gone on for weeks or months, or it could have been the end," she says.

Every business in the neighborhood — except for one bar where the owners stayed with shotguns and attack dogs — was looted. It didn't matter whether the owners had been stingy or kind. People wanted to send a message.

"They were doing this for what was done to Martin," Stewart says. "It was like 'We're hurting you to show you some of the hurt we're feeling.' People wanted an eye for an eye. Hatred of all kinds came out of people at that time."

Stewart had felt the sting of racism all her life. When she was in seventh grade at the newly integrated Garrison Junior High, white students stuffed excrement in her lunch bag. Later, while living on a military base in Kentucky, she watched white children steal her 2-year-old son's toys and call him "blackie."

Taking part in the University of Baltimore project has made her think about how she has seen race relations change — and stay the same — over the years.

"I just wonder if it will ever end," she says. "Will we all ever be in peace and live together?"

[JULIE SCHARPER]

Ruth Stewart took cases of Carnation Milk and Pablum cereal for her babies. "I had to think about survival for me and my children. It could have gone on for weeks or months, or it could have been the end," she says.
ANDRÉ F. CHUNG [SUN PHOTOGRAPHER]

THE REV. MARION C. BASCOM

Faces marked by fear and sorrow

The Rev. Marion C. Bascom is careful to use the term *disturbances* to describe the events of April 1968.

"When they talk of riots, they don't mean riots. They mean despair," says Bascom, 83, his brown eyes warm behind thick glasses as he sits in his Reservoir Hill home.

On the coffee table, preserved in a clear plastic block, is the badge he wore as the first black member of Baltimore's Board of Fire Commissioners.

As a fire commissioner, he drove freely past roadblocks during the days of chaos, observing the men, women and children who thronged the streets, their faces marked by fear and sorrow. As pastor of Douglas Memorial Community Church, he cared for the spiritual needs of the anguished.

"This was the time when all hell broke loose," he says. "This was the time when you could smell smoke anywhere in Baltimore, when clouds [of smoke] could be seen anywhere you looked. This was the time when black people who had been led to believe that discrimination had come to an end came to realize that their leader had been killed."

As Bascom traveled through the city, he would stop to speak to people whose behavior worried him. "I would say I wished they would go home and get out of the streets because I didn't want things to happen to them," he recalls.

By 1968, Bascom had lived in Baltimore for about two decades and had witnessed the rights of blacks improve considerably, although gaping inequalities remained.

When Bascom, a Florida native, first arrived, most city hospitals would not treat black patients. Black women were not allowed to try on clothes at downtown department stores. And when Bascom served as a member of the city's grand jury in 1958, he had to find a bench in the courthouse to eat lunch because blacks were not allowed to sit down at nearby restaurants.

Like many other religious leaders from the era, Bascom considered crusading for civil rights to be his duty as a Christian. He led a group of Morgan State College students in a sit-in to desegregate the Northwood Shopping Center near campus and participated in a protest to open the Gwynns Falls Park to blacks — the first of many times he was arrested for civil disobedience.

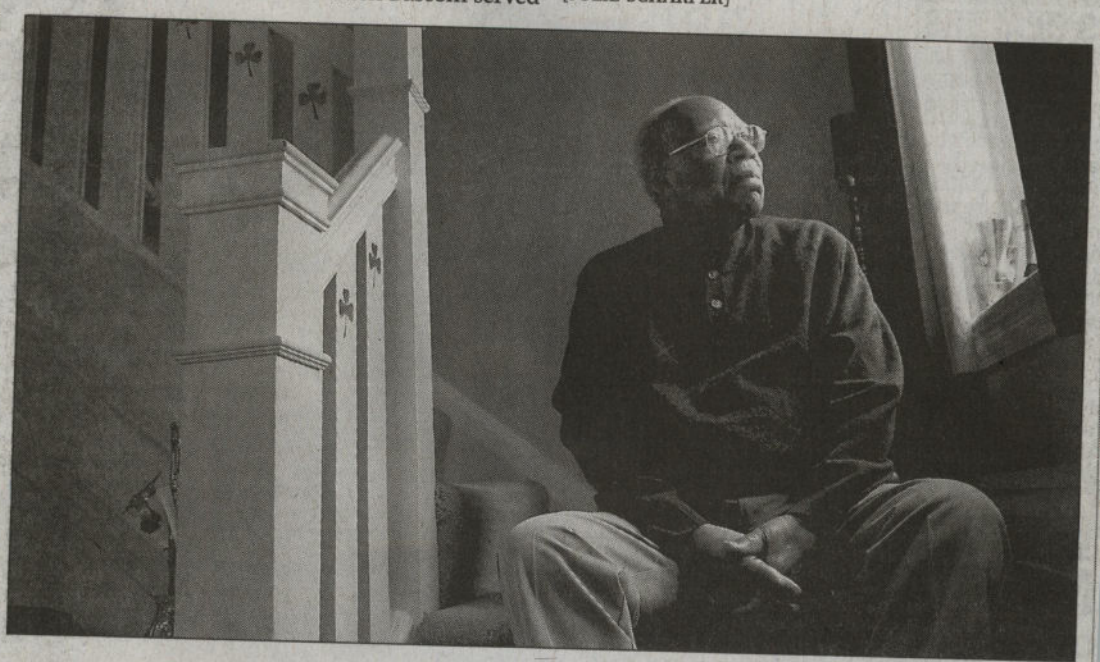
Bascom met Martin Luther King on several occasions. He stood in the audience as King delivered the "I Have a Dream" speech and joined him in Alabama on the march from Selma to Montgomery in 1965. He describes King as a "quiet and reserved" man who did not seek fame but was "created and made … to speak to America and make Americans listen at a time when they were not prepared to listen."

The fury that engulfed the city after King's assassination was an expression of grief, he says. "It was like coming home and finding your mother and father brutally killed."

In the height of the uproar, Gov. Spiro T. Agnew invited Bascom and about 100 other black leaders to a meeting, where he began to berate them for being "part of the problem," the minister recalls.

About half of those assembled — both black and white — quietly got up and left while the governor continued to speak. The group walked to Bascom's church and discussed plans to bring the city peace.

[JULIE SCHARPER]



As a Baltimore fire commissioner, the Rev. Marion C. Bascom drove freely past the roadblocks and saw the despair on the faces of the men, women and children who thronged the streets.
LLOYD FOX [SUN PHOTOGRAPHER]

ARTHUR COHEN

A blow to head reminds friend he's an outsider

Since the Thursday evening he learned of King's assassination, Arthur Cohen had felt a certain tension growing in the city.

"There was a calm, but it was the calm before a storm," says Cohen, who was then a 31-year-old lawyer working for Legal Aid. "Something was brewing."

Cohen was returning from a memorial service for the slain civil rights leader Saturday afternoon when he saw smoke rising above East Baltimore. As he drove closer, he noticed a group of young people watching a building burn.

An amateur photographer, Cohen picked up his camera and started snapping pictures through the open car window. The group turned and rushed toward him. A man yelled for him to put his camera away.

"But I'm a friend," Cohen recalls saying. "I work at Legal Aid."

In a flash, he was struck. A broken golf club flew in the open window, slicing the skin above his left eye.

He drove to Johns Hopkins Hospital, where doctors sewed the gash shut with five stitches. Others injured in the first waves of violence filled the emergency room.

Cohen, a graduate of Yale Law School, had moved to Baltimore less than a year before to work for Legal Aid. A white man, he served mostly black clients and lived in a predominantly black neighborhood, on Broadway just south of North Avenue. On Thursday nights, he ferried a group of local kids to movies and bowling alleys.

He didn't consider the effect that his appearance — with a camera, no less — might have on the group watching the blaze.

"It was my fault. I was where I shouldn't have been," says Cohen, sitting in his Mount Washington dining room, a faint scar still visible beneath his white eyebrow. "It took that blow to remind me that I was an outsider."

The next day, his head still throbbing, Cohen was at work early. Even though it was Sunday, there were hundreds of people at District Court who needed to be represented.

For five days, along with about 40 other young lawyers, Cohen worked nearly around the clock trying to get people out of jail and back home as quickly as possible.

Some had been arrested for arson or looting, but most had been picked up by the police simply for violating the curfew that had been imposed as part of martial law. "People were being herded around and arrested basically because they were black," he says.

After the fires burned out, Cohen found that his life had changed. He never moved back to his old house because he felt uncomfortable in the neighborhood. He stayed with a friend for a month and then moved to predominantly white Charles Village. He no longer saw the kids who used to ask him for rides to the movies. He felt that his black friends and co-workers were staying away.

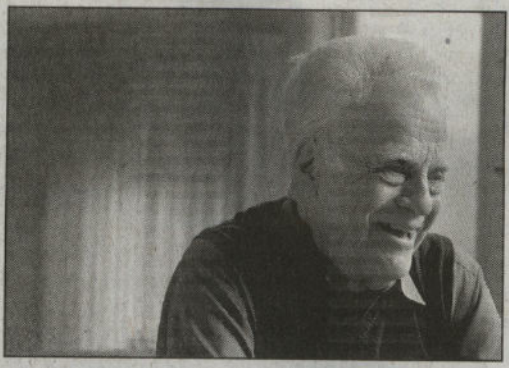
Cohen tried to educate other whites about the harsh realities of black urban life. He tried to explain why the riots happened. "As fearsome as it was, people needed to express their feelings of anger and frustration and grief," he says.

Cohen, who went on to work in public health until his retirement in 2004, has often gone over his memories of 1968. In addition to giving an oral history, he wrote a story based on his experiences for *Passager*, a literary journal published by the University of Baltimore.

"I'm not a person who likes to look back," says Cohen, 71. "But we are the sum of everything we experience, and this was a profound experience."

He still has a print of the photo he snapped just before he was struck. It shows a group of young people — many of them with the soft, open faces of children — walking toward the camera, smoke flaring in the distance. A man at the front of the group steps forward, eyes blazing, mouth open as he shouts his urgent message.

[JULIE SCHARPER]



LLOYD FOX [SUN PHOTOGRAPHER]

"PEOPLE WERE BEING HERDED AROUND AND ARRESTED BASICALLY BECAUSE THEY WERE BLACK."
ARTHUR COHEN, WHO WORKED FOR LEGAL AID

TO ATTEND

To learn more about attending the "Baltimore '68 Riots and Rebirth" conference at the University of Baltimore, go to www.ubalt.edu/baltimore68 or call 410-837-4079. If you are interested in providing an oral history of your experiences from April 1968, call 410-837-5296.

JEWELL CHAMBERS

Surreal scenes played out on the city streets

On Palm Sunday, the second day of rioting, Jewell Chambers drove through West Baltimore looking for smoke.

The 25-year-old had worked as a reporter for *The Afro-American* for just a few months. Her assignment on this day was to document the fires and looting that raged in the city.

She pulled over near the intersection of Thomas Avenue and Baker Street and walked into a ransacked grocery store, her feet crunching over crackers and cereal that had been scattered across the floor.

Inside the store was one other person — an elderly woman gathering groceries amid the shattered glass and broken shelves.

"She was only picking out what she needed. You could tell she had a list in her mind," Chambers says. "And there was no other place to get food in the neighborhood."

On the opposite corner, a man stood in the doorway of a looted liquor store, pleading with a mob not to set it on fire because he lived upstairs.

The neighborhood was familiar to Chambers, who grew up in West Baltimore, but the scenes playing out on the streets were surreal. She watched people heave sides of beef from a basement freezer into a waiting Cadillac.

At one point, a National Guardsman — also in his early 20s — stopped her blue 1964 Mustang and demanded to see her press pass. As she reached to get it from her back pocket, he stuck a bayonet through the car window.

"I said, 'Get that damn blade out of my face,' " Chambers recalls with a laugh as she sits at the kitchen table of her West Baltimore home.

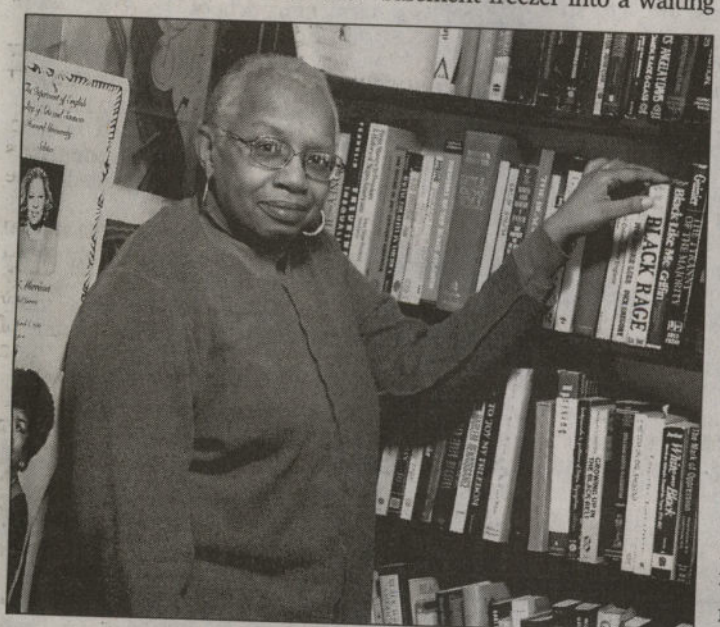
The next evening, Chambers rode in a Jeep with several paratroopers, passing block after block of rowhouses that had lights on only in the third story. As they traveled through the dark streets, the soldiers confided to her that they didn't want to be in Baltimore but would rather be here than in Vietnam. Chambers remembers a voice calling to her from a window: "Sister, are you all right?"

When she answered that she was just showing the soldiers where to go, the voice replied, "Well, if I told them where to go, I'd tell them to go to hell."

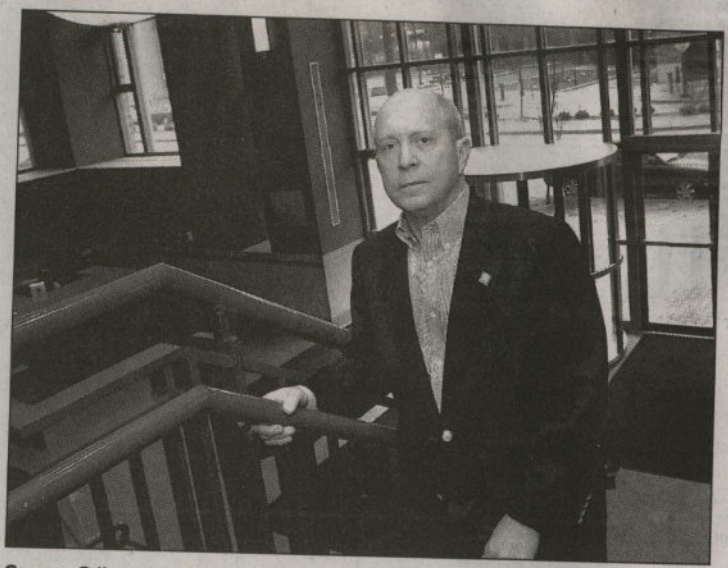
About a month later, Chambers left journalism to take a job with the U.S. Department of Education. She says her experiences covering the city left her with an awareness of the power of a mob.

"I couldn't figure out for the longest time how much of it was pure anger and how much of it was take advantage of the moment," she says. "I think a whole lot of it was take advantage of the moment."

[JULIE SCHARPER]



As a young reporter for The Afro-American, Jewell Chambers documented the fires and looting that raged in Baltimore.
LLOYD FOX [SUN PHOTOGRAPHER]



Stuart Silberg says his father, whose East Baltimore drugstore was ransacked, grew argumentative and angry, routinely using racial slurs.
JED KIRSCHBAUM [SUN PHOTOGRAPHER]

STUART SILBERG

A drugstore owner's feelings of betrayal

Years before the first panes of glass were shattered, Stuart Silberg could sense a change in the neighborhood.

His father's shop, Manhattan Drugstore, had been a fixture in East Baltimore since the mid-1950s. And yet, Silberg felt that customers were becoming less friendly.

The shop at Rutland Avenue and Monument Street had become the target of burglaries. During one, someone even shot the family's two German shepherds.

So when news of the Rev. Martin Luther King's assassination reached the family, the younger Silberg feared that tensions would boil over. Concerned for his father's safety, Silberg, then 22, accompanied him to work Saturday. But they closed the shop within an hour.

"It just seemed like there was a tremendous amount of uneasiness," Silberg says.

The next day, father and son found the store ransacked: windows shattered, money missing, prescription containers and their contents in disarray. The elder Silberg packed up what he could. Soon after, he closed the store for good.

"He always felt he was a buddy of the community," Silberg says. "He felt betrayed. Our family was raised to be colorblind."

In the mostly black neighborhood, most pharmacies were run by Jewish families. Silberg remembers that his father's shop employed both whites and blacks. In the early days, customers called his father "Doc Harvey," and the elder Silberg offered them "Jewish penicillin," or chicken soup.

After the riots, Harvey Silberg became a different man, his son says. He grew argumentative and angry, routinely using racial slurs. The native Baltimorean felt as though his city had been lost. He grew so afraid of crime that he retreated to his Upper Park Heights neighborhood and never set foot downtown again.

"He got so mean," Silberg says. "I hated it because, while I empathized and felt for what happened to him, I couldn't understand why he became so distant."

The younger Silberg tried to reason with his father and offered context behind the riots. While Stuart Silberg was himself frightened and troubled by the violence, over time, he came to understand the frustration that sparked it.

"Many were kids in the neighborhood seizing the moment. I don't believe they understood the gravity of things," he says. "But in general, things were escalating. From the March on Washington to the assassination, the community became very uncomfortable with their lot in life, and I don't blame them. They had a right to be angry. We had forgot all about poor people."

Father-son relations were strained for decades. But four months before Harvey Silberg died of emphysema in 1990, the pair agreed to disagree and made amends.

"We already knew what was said and knew each other's opinions of things," says Silberg, now entrepreneur-in-residence at the University of Baltimore's business school. "We were able to come to grips with who we were and what we meant to each other."

[KELLY BREWINGTON]

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Letters to the Editor

Rioters torched their own city

In the name of people like me who experienced the terror of the 1968 race riots and were attacked for no good reason other than the color of our skin, the headline on Sunday's article "When Baltimore burned" (March 30) should have read "When Baltimore was burned" or "When Baltimore was torched."

Charles Herr
Baltimore

Police saved city from devastation

I read with interest the article about the riots in Baltimore in 1968 ("When Baltimore burned," March 30). I read it because I was there.

I was a police sergeant. serving with the tactical unit of the Baltimore police. Previously I had been part of a small unit known as the Riot Squad. We had served at the demonstrations in Patterson Park and Riverside Park during the mid-1960s. But April 1968 was the first time we served in a real riot.

And once the real action began, for the next week we remained on alert, working long hours trying to stop the looting and burning.

Many of us sustained non-life-threatening injuries. And the situation was like being in a war zone -- given the burning, the shots being fired and the general disorder. But not once did I hear my fellow officers complain about the long hours and the conditions under which we served.

We just did it. That was our job, and if anyone believes that the Baltimore Police Department did not save the city that week, that person should have his or her head examined.

It was my honor to serve with such a group of gallant men, and my respect for them grows by the day.

So when the powers that be and the experts look over the facts of the riots of 1968, the men and women of the Baltimore Police Department should be well-remembered, because we saved the city from total destruction.

Edward C. Mattson
Baltimore

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4 Loyola teens found identities

After assassination and riots, 'light bulb went off' for students

by Kelly Brewington | Sun reporter

The Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. was dead, Baltimore was ablaze and four teens at Loyola Blakefield High School responded with their version of rebellion. They began asserting their racial identity, challenging authority and reading militant authors. They grew Afros.

In the days and months after King's murder 40 years ago today, consciousness spread nationwide as the word black replaced Negro and clenched fists were raised with pride. But the elite Jesuit school in Towson was caught off guard by the assault on its dress code. The Afros nearly got them expelled.

Christopher H. Foreman Jr., Ralph E. Moore Jr., Erich W. March and Victor Thomas - sophomores in high school when King was killed - were undergoing a rapid transformation. They were approaching manhood, grappling with what it meant to be black while straddling two vastly different worlds.

A year earlier they had left working- and middle-class city neighborhoods for Loyola's country-club campus, a complex of stately stone buildings, tennis courts and lush grounds. As members of the Loyola class with the largest number of black students - the four of them, out of 140 - their admission was a symbol of racial progress. For the boys themselves, however, the transition between worlds was intimidating.

Would they be accepted at Loyola? How would their old friends view their new private school status? And what if they didn't belong in either world?

On April 4, 1968, they stopped asking such questions.

"After King, a light bulb went off," said Moore, 55, now the director of the St. Frances Academy Community Center, which links low-income people to jobs and training. "The transformation was pretty radical in us. We went from apologizing for our blackness to being more confident and assertive."

A photo copied from a 1970 Loyola High School yearbook shows the four African American seniors. Left to right are Victor Thomas (deceased), Ralph E. Moore Jr., Christopher H. Foreman, and Erich W. March. (Special to The Sun / March 18, 2008)

'Strong psyches'

Upon arriving at Loyola, Moore was the comedian, using a self-deprecating sense of humor as a shield from the unknown. In West Baltimore, he had attended a school run by the Oblate Sisters of Providence, a black order of nuns who instilled the need to work twice as hard as whites to be considered equal. The consciousness awakened by King's death would shape a lifelong dedication to fighting poverty.

Foreman was the pragmatist, the eldest of four reared by a single mother in a dilapidated Walbrook apartment. The confidence he gained in 1968 helped earn him the distinction of becoming Loyola's first black student body president. He would go on to pursue an academic life, earning a bachelor's degree, master's and doctorate from Harvard University.

March was the self-described square, the child of a solidly middle-class family whose funeral enterprise has been a fixture in East Baltimore for half a century. He would draw on the discoveries of his high school years when he launched a community development corporation devoted to improving the struggling neighborhood around the business.

The three describe Thomas as the most politically aggressive of the bunch, a vibrant personality who was dedicated to a career in theater before he died of AIDS in 1987.

On the surface, the boys arrived at Loyola composed and confident.

"These were strong kids, with strong psyches," said Frank Fischer, 81, then a Jesuit priest who helped recruit black students. "They didn't have any special program to help them. They were all very bright, capable and

psychologically equipped to deal with this."

But the boys certainly didn't feel that way. They arrived at an academy that was out of their comfort zone both emotionally and geographically.

Moore's journey to the suburban campus began at 6:30 a.m., required three buses and the occasional indignity. He met March at a coffee shop at the corner of Charles Street and North Avenue for the second leg of the trip, surrounded by black domestics traveling out to the county to jobs in the homes of white people.

A white bus driver routinely ignored Moore's request for change. Then, just before Moore would exit the bus, the driver would hurl coins at him.

Moore felt white passengers were affronted to see a black boy traveling out to the county. "I remember sitting there and feeling that people just didn't approve," he said.

In his own neighborhood, Moore stood out as well. Peers took one look at his tidy necktie and duffel bearing the bright yellow Loyola insignia and assumed he was uppity.

"Somebody, I never saw who, yelled at me down the street 'White boy,'" said Moore, who said he hopes one day to write a book about the psychological effects of integration. "I never wore that bag again."

Moore rarely discussed these feelings. It wasn't the type of conversation his parents had time for in a household of eight children. Besides, civil rights and integration weren't topics of discussion in the hard-working, fairly conservative family.

In Moore's household, King was no hero. Moore remembers his father, a Republican - a rare choice for a black man, even then - watching television of King leading the march for voting rights in Selma, Ala. King, Moore's father shouted, ought to be thrown in jail.

"King scared some people," said Moore. "He was upsetting the social order. Change makes people nervous, even when it's good for them."

But the day of the assassination, the man who had distrusted King's assault on the status quo suddenly turned remorseful. Watching his father's reaction, Moore was struck by the seriousness of the event. He spent days absorbing broadcasts about King's death.

King was revered at the March home, but March himself didn't realize the impact of the man until the rights leader's death. He began to understand the fight for civil rights in completely new terms. If this legend could fall to an assassin's bullet, all black people and their hopes for justice might also be in danger, he reasoned.

"It changed my perspective in terms of how vulnerable we really were in America," said March, 56, vice president of his family's funeral chain. "If that was his outcome, that meant that no one had any chance at living in America and being black and asking for your rights."

As March watched looters storm a corner convenience store, he became terrified of the riots and worried that the violence would never end. Afterward, however, he began to understand the rage, resentment and disillusionment born of decades of inequality.

But he wasn't prepared to have to explain the complexity of such frustration to white classmates. Some seemed to expect him to be the interpreter of all black experience. Why were blacks so angry? Why were they destroying their own communities?

The burden was on him to explain the enormity of the riots, an event all of America has been struggling to comprehend since those turbulent days four decades ago.

"At the same time you're trying to go to school and be a student, you had to justify and defend the black race," March said. "Here I was in Towson and people were asking me, 'What were y'all doing down in the ghetto?' It was tense. Even the ones who were your friends, they were questioning all that was going on."

Foreman learned of King's murder while translating Julius Caesar's Gallic Wars for his Latin homework. In front of the television in his mother's bedroom, he sat fixated, numb.

Grief and fear

At school, many of the Jesuits were grief-stricken at King's death and empathetic to the black students. But from some of his white classmates, Foreman feared a backlash.

"You got a sense ... that there was anger in their white households over the rioting," he said. "I had a certain amount of anxiety after the riots broke out. You wondered how you would be treated by your fellow students at Loyola."

Foreman, always inquisitive, approached King's death as a budding scholar.

"I just tried to process it as best I could; I just needed to read as much as possible," said Foreman, 56, a program director at the University of Maryland's School of Public Policy. "I needed the larger context. I wanted to understand why this had happened."

Foreman was well schooled in civil rights, but yearned to learn more. Spending afternoons in Baltimore's Ashburton neighborhood, where a caretaker watched him and his siblings in the afternoons while his mother worked, he met the Rev. Vernon Dobson, a civil rights leader who lived nearby. The efforts of Dobson and others to integrate the Gwynn Oak amusement park were seared in Foreman's memory.

His need for answers led him to the "holy trinity" of books on black consciousness: The Autobiography of Malcolm X, Black Rage by psychiatrists William H. Grier and Price M. Cobbs, and Eldridge Cleaver's Soul on Ice. Where some folks simply carried them around in an effort to look cool, Foreman devoured them.

"I remember trying to come to terms with it all; it really was a struggle for identity," Foreman said.

By the fall of junior year, the teens came back to school with a new insight, style and swagger. Not only had they grown Afros, they stopped shaving their upper lips - both direct violations of the school dress code.

Afros were also strictly forbidden in the March household. "My father said, 'Either cut it, or get out of my house,'" March said.

He spent a few nights at Thomas' house. In the meantime, his father called the parish priest to mediate. March stated his case: It was not wrong to be black. This was not a fad, but a true expression of the man he was becoming.

"They realized it was no good trying to stop me," he said. "I think the whole black community eventually came to the realization that there was nothing wrong with being who you are."

Hair vs. Jesuits

Next, the politics of hair came face to face with strict Jesuit discipline. When Loyola threatened to expel the students if they did not shave and cut their hair, March called in reinforcements - family friends and civil rights activists Parren J. Mitchell, Walter P. Carter and March's uncle, Judge John R. Hargrove Sr.

The students won.

Some white students found their black classmates hip, admiring their disobedience as well as their dog-eared copies of black literature and the flashy dashiki that Thomas draped over his suit and tie. Others were perplexed. What exactly were they reading? Why the big hair and the colorful clothes? What were they trying to prove?

What they couldn't have realized was that this was only the beginning. Thomas and Moore began dabbling in Black Panther meetings and took their new status as conscious black men so seriously they began carrying briefcases to school.

Amid nights cramming for math tests, Moore, March and Thomas plotted to start a black student union at Loyola, demanding black faculty and black studies courses. The school responded by agreeing to their requests. By senior year, Foreman had become so popular - a bridge between the black and white students - he was elected president of the student government association.

The four students' awakening was not unique. In Baltimore and nationwide, some called the movement black power, a new, louder brand of black militancy. But for these students and many others, it was simply a time of discovery.

"It wasn't like the whole city of Baltimore exploded with it, but consciousness took place in subtle ways," said Paul Coates, a former Black Panther who founded Black Classic Press, a Baltimore publishing company. "There was a community of people who were looking for ways to latch onto and identify with what it meant to be black."

Their coming-of-age discoveries at Loyola influenced their life decisions.

March, as head of his family's funeral home, chose not to move the headquarters of the business to Baltimore County, as so many city companies and residents had done. He felt the only way to help sustain East North Avenue was to stay.

This choice has meant facing the grim reality of burying black victims of the violence that permeates some city neighborhoods. King would be heartbroken.

Moore, after graduating from the Johns Hopkins University, returned to Loyola for two years as a rule-bending teacher. Later, he battled poverty through various agencies, ultimately settling into his post at St. Frances Academy in East Baltimore. Every year on the King holiday, he holds a job fair dedicated to the civil rights leader's anti-poverty legacy.

Foreman left Baltimore. In academia, he avoided studying race and urban issues, fearful of being pigeonholed.

He became an expert on government policy and environmental justice, only recently returning in part to the topics that riveted him 40 years ago.

Every so often he descends to his basement and pulls from a shelf his high school yearbook. Leafing beyond the formal portraits of earnest young men in bow ties, he focuses on a single image: the foursome, clad in jeans and T-shirts and proud Afros, striking bold poses before a burned-out East Baltimore rowhouse.

For March, the photograph was a statement: This is my life.

Moore says he was declaring a commitment to fighting injustice. For Foreman, the photo was a way to show his connection to those less fortunate. Even today, he realizes how privileged his Loyola days were. Without them, his life could have taken a bleak turn.

Grounded in their rebel stance, the teens were asserting a new conviction about their identity as black men. At that moment, they weren't sure where it would take them.

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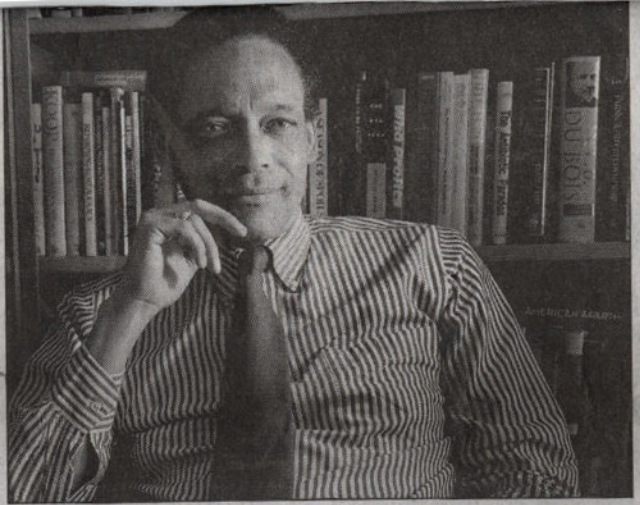
Erich March, vice president of March Funeral Homes, was a sophomore at Loyola Blakefield when the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated 40 years ago.

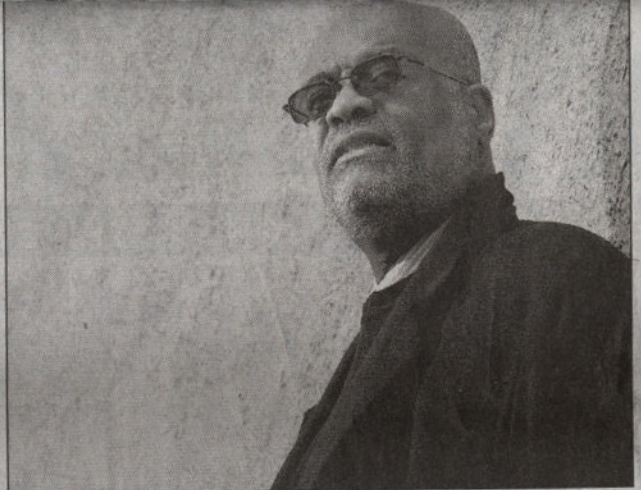
ANDRÉ F. CHUNG [SUN PHOTOGRAPHER]

A 1970 Loyola Blakefield yearbook photo shows (from left) Victor Thomas, who died in 1987, Ralph E. Moore Jr., Christopher H. Foreman Jr. and Erich W. March in front of a burned-out Baltimore rowhouse.



Christopher H. Foreman Jr. earned three degrees from Harvard University and became a professor at the School of Public Policy at the University of Maryland.

ANDRÉ F. CHUNG [SUN PHOTOGRAPHER]



Ralph E. Moore Jr. taught two years at Loyola and is now director of the St. Frances Academy Community Center, which links low-income people to jobs and training.

ANDRÉ F. CHUNG [SUN PHOTOGRAPHER]

COMMENTARY

IN KING'S WAKE

Forty years later, assessing a legacy of goals achieved and promises left unfulfilled

The Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. is greeted by supporters in Baltimore in 1964 after receiving the Nobel Peace Prize.
LEONARD FREED [MAGNUM PHOTOS INC.]

Racism less pervasive, more complex

BY MICHAEL HIGGINBOTHAM

Forty years ago today, the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. was murdered. The night before he died, the Nobel Peace Prize winner delivered a speech predicting the nation's future and his own demise. Dr. King prophesied that, while he likely would not live to see the day, he had no doubts that all Americans, including blacks, would some day "get to the promised land" of racial equality.

Four decades after Dr. King's death, Barack Obama, the U.S. Senate's only black member, may become America's first black president. This stirs powerful emotions. In a country with a long history of slavery and segregation, what a monumental moment in the American story.

That is why the cover of many major magazines feature variations on the question, "Does Barack Obama's Rise Mean the End of Racism?" The answer is not a short yes or no, but rather a long maybe. Whether racism ends in America depends upon what Americans do with this latest opportunity.

Many say Mr. Obama's success is insignificant. Some even suggest that his popularity with whites is a cynical ploy on their part to end, once and forever, any discussion of current racism. They are wrong. Mr. Obama's multiracial coalition demonstrates an eagerness for dialogue, a desire for change, and a sense of the possibilities of this moment.

Progress and setbacks in racial equality have occurred in a cyclical nature in American history. Three major opportunities for change presented themselves: the founding, Reconstruction, and the civil rights movement. In each, racial progress was made, but setbacks followed due to continuing notions of white superiority. Mr. Obama's achievement, whether or not he wins the presidency in 2008, signifies a fourth era of opportunity.

This is not to suggest that Mr. Obama's success indicates the end of racism. Those who believe that are as wrong as those who say racism today is as bad as it was under Jim Crow. It does, however, indicate an opportunity to take the final step in a long journey. As Mr. Obama recognized in his momentous speech last month on America's racial divide, now is the time for the real conversation to begin.

No doubt, for many Americans the conversation will be uncomfortable. It must, however, take place if we are ever to realize those "self-evident truths" of equality identified more than 200 years ago by the Founding Fathers and reiterated in 1963 in Dr. King's "I Have a Dream" speech.

Racial inequality today is much more complex than it was when Dr. King led protests against Jim Crow. Forty years ago, laws enshrined discrimination, and violence was used to maintain the divide. Today, what I call the ghosts of Jim Crow are caused by choices that result in housing isolation, inequitable school funding, criminal justice stereotyping, and health care service inadequacy that maintain inequality.

One ghost of Jim Crow is exemplified in the story of Tim Carter and Richard Thomas, arrested in 2004 in separate incidents three months apart in nearly the same location in St. Petersburg, Fla. Police found one rock of cocaine on Mr. Carter, who is white, and a crack pipe with cocaine residue on Mr. Thomas, who is black.

Both men claimed drug addictions, neither had any prior felony arrests or convictions, and both men potentially faced five years in prison. Mr. Carter had his prosecution withheld, and the judge sent him to drug rehabilitation. Mr. Thomas was prosecuted, convicted and went to prison. Their only apparent difference was race.

Harsher punishment for blacks is common, even today. Statistics indicate that nationally blacks are prosecuted and imprisoned at a rate more than five times that of whites.

Equally reflective of current racial disparities is the pattern of property ownership, and the fact that whites continue to embrace the "tipping point" notion in housing integration.

"Tipping point" bigotry inspired Jeremy Parady, who pleaded guilty in 2005 to conspiracy to commit arson in a series of fires in a new housing development in Southern Maryland. Mr. Parady admitted that he set fire to this development because many of the buyers were blacks and the surrounding neighborhood was mostly white.

Much progress toward equality has been made; official government discrimination is rare, and blatant bigotry has been substantially reduced.

But racial disparities continue to haunt us decades after Dr. King's assassination, and racist choices continue to influence those disparities. These ghosts of Jim Crow must be eradicated if Dr. King's "Promised Land" prediction is ever to come true.

Michael Higginbotham, a professor of law at the University of Baltimore and New York University, is the author of "Race Law" and the forthcoming "Ghosts of Jim Crow."

When Baltimore erupted in rage

by Larry Carson

Walking up Gay Street - past burning storefronts, past looters carrying suitcases through the broken display window of a pawn shop, and past Baltimore police cars racing by on their way from one riot call to another - I could hardly take it all in.

That Monday after the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s murder was chaos in East Baltimore, where I struggled as a raw, 23-year-old police reporter for the News American to gather information. Strangely, none of the looters gave me a second glance, and I was calm and unafraid. Young, white, with short hair and wearing a sportcoat and tie, I probably looked like a police officer. I overheard several actual officers lamenting that since the new emphasis on civil rights, they had to arrest suspects instead of taking them around a corner and beating them.

One black man who passed me shook his head and said it was a "shame" what was happening all around us.

And it was. Nobody deserved to have his business ruined, his home burned, his possessions stolen. It was tragic, but then so were the years of injustices to Baltimore's African-Americans - confined to "their" schools and neighborhoods by racial prejudice, unable to find the kinds of jobs and opportunities whites had, yet spurred by the hopes that Dr. King aroused in all of us.

His death by sniper aroused a rage that I knew very little about. Over the years, I'd had a few hints, though.

Just months earlier, I'd encountered a small group of black teens working at a gas station as part of a job training program in East Baltimore. I had just emerged from covering a Saturday night liquor store robbery across the street, and one youth called me over.

"You should write about how it feels to be treated like you're nobody in this city," he said quietly.

On another occasion, I saw a small African-American boy, about 10 years old, in the back seat of a police car. The fear and hatred were clear in his eyes as a heavy, white police officer screamed at him from the sidewalk, the officer's face florid with anger.

I had grown up in Baltimore and stayed, but not in the same Baltimore the city's African-Americans knew.

Our family had moved when I was 3 from a cramped rowhouse in Pimlico to Braddish Avenue, part of a four-street development of new brick rowhouses off Gwynns Falls Parkway near what is now Mondawmin. It was 1948, and all the houses were inhabited by white people.

Progress against poverty stalled

by Benjamin Todd Jealous

To mark the 40th anniversary of the assassination of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., many will reflect on the fires that erupted across America. Gone are the red embers of urban rage, replaced by the smoldering ashes of perpetually bombed-out neighborhoods.

Hard-hit Baltimore provides a window on the legacy of Dr. King's assassination. When the riot was over, six people would be dead, 700 injured and 4,500 arrested. Total property damage was estimated in millions of dollars.

But no one has calculated the cost of the effects of Dr. King's assassination in diminished opportunities to the successive generations of Baltimoreans (of all races) still trapped in poverty.

The "Promised Land" - the destination of the "revolution" that Dr. King talked about in the days before he was slain - was defined in economic terms. "The dispossessed of this nation - the poor, both white and Negro," Dr. King said, "live in a cruelly unjust society. They must organize a revolution against that injustice, not against the lives of the persons who are their fellow citizens, but against the structures through which the society is refusing to take means which have been called for, and which are at hand, to lift the load of poverty."

Dr. King's last transformative vision for our nation was not an idealistic dream. It was an urgent prescription for ending poverty and making the blessings of American citizenship meaningful to all in this country.

The need to fill Dr. King's prescription is as great as ever. Millions of Americans are scourged by an economic downturn fueled by the mortgage crisis and skyrocketing food and gas prices. Joblessness is increasing, and the opportunity-killing burden of racism is matched by the strain of an economy that fails to produce enough good jobs for all workers seeking them, regardless of race.

As summarized in a new report commissioned by the Rosenberg Foundation, worker productivity has risen while wages have failed to keep pace with the cost of living. The report proposes a counteroffensive on poverty, based on the philosophy embraced by Dr. King: In addition to creating jobs for skilled and unskilled workers, society must enforce strong anti-discrimination laws, eliminate barriers to unionization, and pay a living wage.

Dr. King's prescription for poverty was a striking success. By utilizing these strategies, between 1964 and 1969 the United States achieved the largest decline in poverty since World War II, reducing the number of black children living in poverty by almost half. In the decades since, these key policy levers have been neglected - and progress has stalled.

Five years later, I overheard my parents talking to neighbors about trying to prevent anyone on the block from selling to a black family, lest a mass exodus of whites begin. After one family did sell to blacks, the white flight took over. Within two years, the entire development changed from all white to nearly all black. Our house was purchased by a black woman whose son was killed in the Korean War.

We ended up near what is now Reisterstown Plaza in Northwest Baltimore. My new school, Fallstaff Elementary, was all white, as was the new neighborhood.

At age 16, desperate for a scarce summer job, I answered a newspaper ad seeking teens for magazine "survey" crews. I went downtown and waited for hours with dozens of others, black and white, until a white man whispered in my ear that the job was mine if I waited until all the black kids gave up and left.

Race defined the lives of Baltimoreans in myriad ways for many years. The 1968 riot hurt the city, the neighborhoods where it occurred, and the people who lived in them, but the violence and upheaval also accelerated long-overdue changes. White people had to learn to see blacks as equals - people entitled to the same jobs, schools, homes and expectations.

For all their destructiveness, riots across the nation that year also contained the message that things had to change for blacks, and at a quicker pace.

Larry Carson *covers Howard County government and politics for The Sun. His e-mail is larry.carson@baltsun.com.*

When adjusting for inflation, the minimum wage is lower today than it was in 1968. The Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Department of Justice is a shadow of its former self, and most state attorneys general are timid enforcers of workers' rights. Moreover, workers wishing to unionize can typically expect little protection from public agencies like the National Labor Relations Board.

I have personally benefited from Dr. King's approach to ending poverty. My mother, among the first class of black girls to integrate Western High School, spent her early childhood living in McCullough Homes, a West Baltimore public housing development. Her parents were able to emerge from poverty because of hard work and a focus on education - but also because the economy was expanding, unions were growing, and the government created and enforced anti-discrimination laws.

Today, such opportunity is virtually an abstraction for most African-Americans with low incomes.

Personal responsibility is insufficient when the economy is structured to produce poverty. To recapture the momentum against poverty we have lost since Dr. King's death, we must have the courage to rebuild our economy.

Benjamin Todd Jealous *is president of the Rosenberg Foundation, which this week released the report "Beyond the Mountaintop: King's Prescription for Poverty."*

MARYLAND & BUSINESS

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B

On at least one point, Agnew was correct

GREGORY KANE

I'LL PROBABLY HATE MYSELF TOMORROW morning for doing this — I guess the rest of you can start right now — but somebody has to say something good about the late Gov. Spiro Agnew. The man certainly wasn't getting much love at the University of Baltimore yesterday.

On Thursday, the University of Baltimore — Agnew's alma mater, ironically enough — began a three-day symposium called "Baltimore '68: Riots and Rebirth." On April 4, 1968, civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated in Memphis, Tenn. Riots broke out nationwide. Rioters in some cities — including Washington — got the jump on the rest of the country and started their civil disorder soon after the news broke. Rioting in Baltimore started April 6.

On April 11, Agnew called a group of Baltimore's civil rights leaders and black elected officials to a news conference. What he said to them has become the stuff of near legend. Most of the black

[Please see KANE, 4B]

Amid rioting April 7, 1968, Gov. Spiro Agnew (right), with Baltimore Mayor Thomas J. D'Alesandro III, announces a curfew for the city. [SUN FILE]

ONLINE

For more stories, photos, video, audio and an interactive map on the 1968 riots, go to **baltimoresun.com/riots**

Forum eyes '68 riots, beyond

At UB, clergy, historians reflect, seek solutions to city's problems

BY STEPHEN KIEHL
[SUN REPORTER]

A veteran of Baltimore's civil rights movement called yesterday for the city's churches and other institutions to come together to defeat poverty, homelessness and drugs, telling a conference at the University of Baltimore that the poor cannot do it on their own.

Recalling how the faith community worked together during the 1968 riots to provide bread and milk in the stricken areas and to calm angry residents, the Rev. Marion C. Bascom said that that sense of cooperation is not as evident in the city today.

"It has to be something much larger than conferences," said Bascom, pastor emeritus of Douglas Memorial Community Church. "There must be some response from the institutions of power to deal with the poverty that runs rampant. It can't come about from helpless people."

His comments came during a panel discussion at the University of Baltimore's three-day conference on the riots that shook the city after the assassination of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. 40 years ago. More than 350 people attended the conference, which concludes today and brought together academics, historians and Baltimoreans who lived through the uprising.

[Please see RIOTS, 5B]

Discussing '68 riots, beyond

RIOTS [From Page 1B]

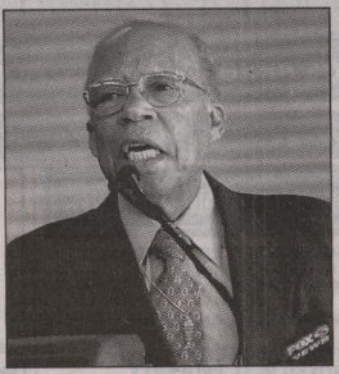
Bascom's call was echoed by the Rev. John G. Harfmann and Rabbi Martin Weiner, who both led congregations in the city at the time of the riots. They said that while clergymen often differed on issues of ideology and strategy, they had a common focus.

"The need of the African-American community in those days was the thing that bound us together," said Harfmann, who was a priest at St. Thomas Claver Church in 1968. "Working together across ecumenical lines is so important in cities that now have new problems."

The University of Baltimore has spent more than a year preparing for the conference. Students collected oral histories from well-known city residents such as then-mayor Thomas J. D'Alesandro III, shopkeepers, National Guardsmen and those who lived in the neighborhoods where fires, looting and sniper fire broke out. Faculty members researched and wrote about the social, economic and racial factors that led to the riots and stemmed from them.

"This is a major historical analysis, which is forward-looking from a university that's in the center of the city," said UB President Robert L. Bogomolny, who hopes the conference will also raise the profile of the school. "This is a much more substantive and solid university than people often realize," he said.

The university's scholar-in-residence for the riots project, Peter Levy, argued in a plenary address yesterday that many of the social ills that people saw as outcomes of the riots — such as white flight and economic shifts that led to the loss of manufacturing jobs — were in fact well entrenched before the riots.



The Rev. Marion C. Bascom was part of a panel discussion with other clergy yesterday.
ANDRÉ F. CHUNG [SUN PHOTO]

The unemployment rate was nearly 30 percent in the inner city before the riots, and nearly half of the homes in inner city neighborhoods were rated as "very poor" by the federal government, Levy said. Thousands of black families were forced from their homes for urban renewal projects or highway construction.

"Many of the city's black residents felt trapped in a long and desolate corridor with no exit signs," said Levy, a professor of history at York College in Pennsylvania and author of *Civil War on Race Street: The Civil Rights Movement in Cambridge, Maryland.*

The King assassination triggered the riots, but Levy said decades of inequality may have led to riots even without the death of the civil rights movement's most public face. "If King hadn't been assassinated, the social conditions in Baltimore may have produced a riot the next summer anyway," Levy said.

The faith leaders said the first stores targeted in the riots were those perceived to be unfair to blacks, but soon enough, the anger spread to other merchants. Many of them were Jewish, and some were owned by survivors of the Holocaust and the anti-Jewish pogroms in Russia, said Weiner, who at the time was co-rabbi at Oheb Shalom on Park Heights Avenue.

"The chaos of the riots, the burnings, called up some terrible memories," Weiner said. "This is in no way to diminish the anguish of the black community, but people saw their life's work, in terms of business, being destroyed."

After the riots, he tried to help his congregation understand what had happened, and why. He said his message today is the same as it was then. "Our job as Americans, as human beings, is to work to make the dream of Martin Luther King and that sense of hopefulness part of our future."

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On at least one point, Agnew was correct

KANE [From Page 1B]

leaders walked out of the news conference and excoriated Agnew for his remarks.

Yesterday was no different.

Agnew was the topic of a panel discussion that focused mainly on those remarks and the reaction to them.

"Look around you," Agnew said near the beginning of his speech, "and you may notice that every one here is a leader. ... If you'll observe, the ready-mix, instantaneous type of leader is not present. The circuit-riding, Hanoi-visiting type of leader is missing from this assembly. The caterwauling, riot-inciting, burn-America-down type of leader is conspicuous by his absence. That is no accident, ladies and gentlemen. It is just good planning. All in the vernacular of today — 'That's what it's all about, baby.' "

That may have been Agnew's first mistake: Trying to get in touch with his inner Negro while addressing a group of blacks. Before he was done, he would make others.

First, he praised those leaders who condemned activist Robert Moore for saying that the Baltimore police were "enemies of the black man." Then he condemned the leaders for, he claimed, meeting secretly with Moore and cutting a deal not to criticize him publicly.

"You ran," Agnew told the leaders, who had caught some heat for condemning Moore. "You were beguiled by the rationalizations of unity; you were intimidated by veiled threats; you were stung by insinuations that you were Mr. Charlie's boy, by epithets like 'Uncle Tom.' "

Later in his speech, Agnew called on those leaders to rebuke black "extremists" — he mentioned Stokely Carmichael and H. Rap Brown by name — much as whites condemned members of the American Nazi Party and the John Birch Society.

Edward C. Papenfuse Jr., who works at the Maryland State Archives, was the panel moderator. He said there is television footage of a woman running up to Agnew to challenge him about his remarks.

"She comes up, and she's waving her finger at Agnew and she's rubbing her hat back and forth," Papenfuse said. That woman was the late, great Juanita Jackson Mitchell of the Baltimore chapter of the NAACP. She was probably going to tell Agnew that the NAACP had indeed been condemning black extremists and racists long before he became governor.

I asked Peter Levy, a history professor at York College of Pennsylvania who gave the symposium's plenary address, what was wrong with Agnew's exhorting black leaders to condemn the extremists among them.

"Some of them already had," Levy answered. "The NAACP had never been a big fan of the Black Power slogan." In Cambridge, Levy added, the NAACP tried to push a black woman named Daisy Bates as the moderate alternative to Gloria Richardson Dandridge, who could hardly be classified as an extremist.

Papenfuse said there exists in the Maryland State Archives a letter that Henry Offer wrote to Agnew, telling the governor line by line where he was wrong in his speech. Papenfuse asked if any in attendance remembered the name Henry Offer.

Indeed I did. I remember him as Father Henry Offer, a white Catholic priest and ardent civil rights supporter. Offer pointed out in his letter that Agnew criticized the very black leaders who put their lives on the line by taking to the streets to discourage rioters from looting and burning.

On the facts, Agnew was very wrong. But on principle, he was very right. The principles he espoused were summed up in perhaps the only parts of his speech that can't be condemned.

"I cannot believe," Agnew said, "that the only alternative to white racism is black racism. ... I publicly repudiate, condemn and reject all white racists. I call upon you to publicly repudiate, condemn and reject all black racists."

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Lunch counter at Belair Market offered great food and a big serving of history

by Jacques Kelly

Istood in my grandmother's room that April 1968 night. Its window looked directly east and southeast. It was two days after the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination and Baltimore's riot spread out before our eyes. She and some of my brothers and sisters watched in horror as the distant buildings burned. My grandmother could identify the landmarks and called out when the old Stieff piano factory near Aiken Street erupted in violently shooting flames.

My family regularly patronized the Belair Market on Saturdays on Gay Street. We often heard street accounts - never officially confirmed - that the rioting began at the Read's drugstore adjacent to the market. There was so much action that night, the precise address where the riot began seemed a detail lost in a far bigger story.

I recently heard from Jennie Cocoros Kegel, whose grandfather Nicholas and uncle James Cocoros emigrated from Greece in the 1920s and opened a lunch counter at Belair Market. They passed on the business to their sons and many hooked customers said their hot dogs, onions and chili sauce were among Baltimore's best. And they were a great bargain, too.

That chili sauce, a secret Cocoros family recipe was so hot "it would kill a fly upon contact," Jennie wrote. "We had the best of locations, right as soon as you came into the market.

"I will never forget that we were at the Belair Market when we received word that Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated. Many people came to my father and told him to send the children home because there was going to be trouble.

"As a teenager, all of the children were expected to work at the market. I worked mostly the soda fountain area, and my father claims I ate more than I sold.

"We heard a gunshot outside the market, and my Dad put us on the No. 19 bus and sent us home. It was a very frightening ride home and we did not see my Dad for quite a while. He finally came home but he was determined to stay at the market to make sure that our stalls were not damaged during the Baltimore riots.

"The police instructed him to close up and they promised nothing would happen to our business and when we returned, the Market was untouched.

"The market was my father, Steve Cocoros', life. He developed lung cancer in 1995 and our cousin Archie took over the major operations of the business, although Dad would still insist upon coming to the market even when he was very weak from receiving chemo and radiation.

"My father passed away in September 1996 and the Market was demolished later. The Market was an institution and we made many friends throughout the years," she wrote.

My family stuck by the market, too, and delighted that the Cocoros family never gave up and continued to serve those delicious Coney Island-style lunches. Their counter was the kind of institution that was worthy of a televised segment on the Food Network. But back then, it was a much respected part of Baltimore that was just one more part of the city.

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Sun Editorial:

The dream, the promise

Our view: Investment in the city should ease pain

The pull-down map in the president's conference room at Davidge Hall shows the University of Maryland, Baltimore's sprawling downtown campus. The school's movement west across Martin Luther King Boulevard opens a door to the past and a window on the future. It recalls how the landscape has changed, from the riots and ruin that scarred Baltimore in 1968 to the potential and promise reflected in the university's new biotech center in Poppleton. And while the city has struggled in the intervening years, Baltimore has emerged a changed - but stronger - city.

In churches and classrooms and conversations this past week, people remembered a pivotal man and a devastating moment in America's civil rights history. The assassination of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. took place in Memphis 40 years ago, but it radiated throughout the country and unleashed great public sorrow and outrage. Riots in more than 100 cities followed the murder at the Lorraine Hotel and burned through blocks and storefronts in parts of east and west Baltimore.

The aftermath ushered in a decade or more of rebuilding, while the city's population became smaller, poorer and less diverse. The city's tax rate climbed as its schools became more segregated. Drug use and crime tore families apart and devastated residential neighborhoods and commercial centers, while redevelopment dollars financed the revitalization of the city's waterfront and the surrounding communities.

At the same time, a new class of political leaders emerged from the African-American community and began to assume the reins of power. A decade after Milton B. Allen made history as the city's first African-American state's attorney, Kurt L. Schmoke became Baltimore's first elected black mayor and the city took another turn. During those years, a former school teacher, Sheila Dixon, was among the minority in the City Council, and it took a redistricting plan to have a majority of the council reflect the majority population.

Jim Crow just the way it was

by C. Fraser Smith

While researching my civil rights book, I gave a brief work-in-progress talk at a woman's club in Baltimore. A member of the audience came up to me afterward to make this observation about the task I was beginning to confront: "You'll never get the ambience of those days."

I thought I knew what she meant. Jim Crow discrimination was sustained by a level of passion that might be difficult to convey. And there was the fact that while I had grown up at the end of the Jim Crow era in North Carolina, I had not grown up black.

Would I be able to portray the Jim Crow experience with fidelity?

In the beginning, I occasionally asked people how they lived through those days of second-class citizenship. How did you feel about your life then? I asked, somewhat naively. Didn't you hate what was happening to you?

Yes, people would often say - but that's just the way it was.

"The way it was." "Nothing you could do." "Get over it."

The way it was amounted to ambient humiliation - not always in your face but always present, like background noise. You tried to ignore it. Sometimes you playfully defied it. You learned where the real trouble spots were, and you avoided them. It wasn't easy.

Discrimination was imbedded in the language: Final sale. Whites only. Separate but equal. All deliberate speed. Law and order. Jim Crow.

If you were a black mother, you tried to shield your children from the humiliation that seemed to lurk around every corner.

If you were a black family making a road trip, you had to "to drive straight through." Or you needed a special book that circulated around that time, kind of a black people's Frommer's or Michelin Guide - a Jim Crow guide to the world for travelers.

There were Jim Crow Bibles in some courts so whites wouldn't have to touch a book held by black hands. Lord Nickens, a Frederick NAACP leader, remembered being kicked by a train station attendant because he had wandered into a whites-only restroom at age 6. He told the story at 95 - as if had happened the day before.

Patients were segregated in hospitals. A genius lab technician at the Johns Hopkins Hospital - the man who perfected the "blue baby" operation - couldn't attend his physician partner's birthday party at a local hotel.

Through the Schmoke years, other changes occurred. Housing projects along Martin Luther King Boulevard and elsewhere in the city that had symbolized the ills of urban life were torn down and residential, mixed-income developments replaced them. Many African-Americans had the chance to purchase their first home. Redeveloping the shabby west side of downtown began then too. Now, new condominiums, renovated office buildings and the restored Hippodrome Theatre typify the area.

Today, UM's biotech center is changing the contours of the west side as the Johns Hopkins University's expansion of its campus is changing the east side.

Dr. King died while waging a battle for economic opportunity for the poor - black and white. Today, Baltimore, with its 21st-century focus on education, health care and high-tech research, is pointing the way to a future that should offer more jobs and a better life for its poorest citizens. Dr. King would savor the promise of this diverse and vibrant city that is still emerging from the turmoil that followed his death.

Gwynn Oak Amusement Park, ironically, was all white on its "All Nations Day" every July 4. It had to be, its owner insisted, or whites wouldn't come there.

A dynamic of resistance to changing any of this developed even before the civil rights movement: Absorb the blow, but don't change until you must. The University of Maryland School of Law was nominally re-integrated in 1935, but there was no black undergraduate, and no blacks in the nursing school, until the 1950s.

A black student was barred from a law review course in 1954 lest white students decline to enroll. The same argument had been used in the 1890s when two blacks, already matriculated, were dismissed from the UM Law School. The University of Baltimore was opening a law school that Maryland officials thought would not admit blacks so they felt they had to level the playing field.

Separate but equal was patently illusory, of course: There was no black law school. Black students from Maryland went to Howard University in Washington, D.C., Thurgood Marshall among them.

Just the way it was.

The riots of 1968 were a reaction to the murder of the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. But they were also a reaction to the way life was in Baltimore then and for so many years before.

The riots apparently were not planned. There was no list of riot priorities. And there was little in the way of a post-riot response. The nation was moving into a law-and-order period, and in the wake of the riots, what support there had been for alleviating the black community's misery waned. Even the death of a charismatic leader was thought to be no justification for the destruction of private property.

The burning and looting created a powerful anti-civil rights backlash. The outside world reacted to the carnage, not to the history. Few were sympathetic to the argument that lawless behavior was justified, even after the murder of a leader who brought hope to the hopeless.

Just the way it was.

C. Fraser Smith's book
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