

Send to Printer

<< Back to Article



Local

Riots of '68 a precursor to bigger, better things in city



David Carey, The Examiner

2007-01-15 08:00:00.0

Current rank: *Not ranked*

BALTIMORE -

Martin Luther King Jr. was 39 years old when assassin James Earl Ray put an end to his life on a motel balcony in Memphis, Tenn.

April 4 marks the 39th anniversary of that horrific occasion, when a country still reeling from the unthinkable assassination of a president five years earlier had to deal with more grief, more heartache, more soul searching.

(AP)

Baltimore City Police search a suspected looter April 7, 1968, after looting and arson broke out in the city. "Soul Brother" signs were painted on many store windows.

Except this time things were different. Mixed with national tears of sorrow was blood on the streets of virtually every major American city, as King's violent death set off a chain reaction of riots and mayhem that pulled Baltimore along for its fiery ride.

Today would be King's 78th birthday, and his legacy of peace, tolerance and racial justice stands as strong as ever. The death of the civil rights movement's most honored and famous leader impacted Baltimore greatly then and continues to impact it today.

"We can now understand and see how complex a situation [the riots] were," said John Schwallenberg, a community outreach worker and a researcher at the University of Baltimore on the 1968 riots. "You want to see how people bounce back through economic development and revitalization. [The riots] got people thinking how we, as a city, treat each other."

By all appearances, the city rebounded well.

In the past nearly 39 years, Baltimore has undergone substantial economic growth. Travel-guide authority Frommer's recently ranked the city as one of the country's top summer destinations.

And no wonder. Planners from other cities continue to marvel at the 26-year-old Inner Harbor with its World Trade Center, world-renowned aquarium, Science Center and Hard Rock Cafe. Little Italy and Fells Point complement the Inner Harbor's continued redevelopment and expansion. Oriole Park at Camden Yards is a baseball fan's Mecca. Ravens M&T Stadium is a field of glory.

Tourists come to a convention center that has been upgraded and expanded, and substantial refurbishment has been made to both the Hippodrome Theatre and First Mariner Arena. Where there was urban decay, there is now growth. Downtown businesses again are congregating in what is now known as the Central Business District. Where looters ran rampant in 1968, there are thriving businesses.

All of this financial development and physical growth has gone a long way to make Baltimore a much different city from those racially charged days of 1968.

"The Old Town Mall (on North Gay Street) is a great example," [Schwallenberg](#) said. "It was built in the wake of some of the worst rioting."

[Jessica Elfenbein](#), director of community studies and civic engagements at the University of Baltimore, points out that the city got a big boost by the residents themselves, who formed urban leagues and promoted neighborhood events.

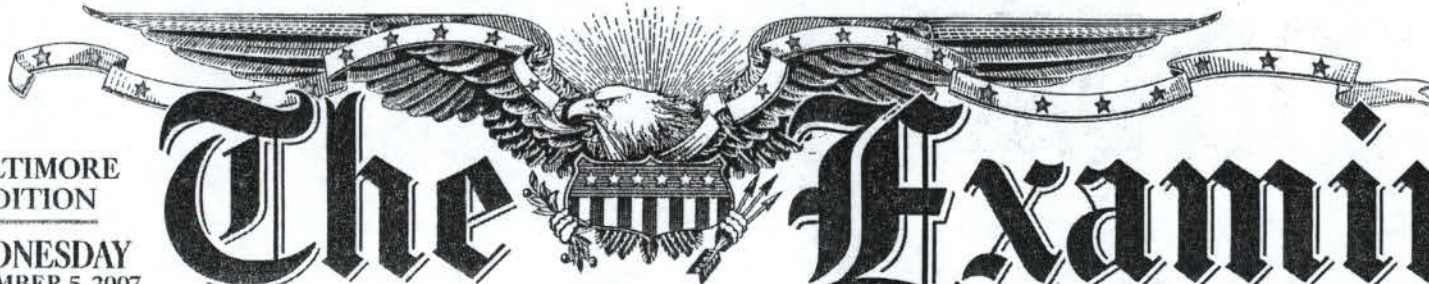
And many city watchers say the City Fair, which began its 21-year run in 1970, went a long way in easing racial tensions. It took away some of the fear.

"The City Fair was good for Baltimore then," [Elfenbein](#) said. "It brought people back together."

dcarey@baltimoreexaminer.com

Examiner

BALTIMORE
EDITION
WEDNESDAY
DECEMBER 5, 2007



The Examiner

examiner.com

BALTIMORE

BALTIMORE

— TODAY'S NEWSMAKERS —

UNIVERSITY OF BALTIMORE

The University of Baltimore will host a national conference on the 1968 riots in the city. Baltimore '68: Riots and Rebirth will focus on the causes and effects of the social unrest and the efforts at civic healing. The conference, scheduled April 3-5, is being sponsored by UB, along with the Maryland Humanities Council, the Annie E. Casey Foundation and Baltimore Collegetown Network.

BALTIMORE
EDITION
WEEKEND
MARCH 29 & 30, 2008



The Examiner

examiner.com

BALTIMORE

SEE PAGE 31
3 DAYS ONLY!
RAY & SCOTT
NO INTEREST
2010
or all of those 12 Call Applications \$499 or more with equal monthly payments.

REGION

— TODAY'S NEWSMAKERS —

UNIVERSITY OF BALTIMORE

The 1968 race riots that left great swaths of the city in ruins will be the focus of public events at the University of Baltimore. The university's Baltimore '68: Riots and Rebirth will focus on the history, causes and long-term consequences of the riots, as well as the many efforts at civic healing. The national gathering of experts includes historians and experts in race relations, civic engagement and 20th-century history. Riots and Rebirth begins 5 p.m. Thursday and continues through Saturday.

BALTIMORE
EDITION

TUESDAY
APRIL 1, 2008

MONARCHY DAILIES

The Examiner

EXAMINER.COM BALTIMORE

COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL: MAY NOT BE FURTHER REPRODUCED WITHOUT PERMISSION OF THE PUBLISHER

Baltimore was burning

By Michael Olesker

BALTIMORE - On the night America had its four-day heart attack 40 years ago this week, Baltimore Mayor Tommy D'Alesandro III was having dinner with Lou Azrael, the gray-haired columnist of The News American newspaper.

When they heard about the bullet that ended Martin Luther King Jr.'s life, Azrael turned to D'Alesandro and said, "Tommy, you'll have trouble now."

But no one imagined how much.

Forty years later, peering into that awful spring's smoke and ashes and lingering bitterness, we still can't fully measure how much trouble there was, and how painful it was for so many — and how intoxicatingly liberating for so many others who had grown frustrated marching peacefully and pleading for equal rights in reluctant America.

The simple facts about the Baltimore riots of 1968 are these: In four days and nights, beginning April 6, there were roughly 5,000 people arrested. Roughly 700 injured. Roughly a thousand businesses looted or burned, many never to reopen. Roughly a thousand separate buildings set ablaze. Six killed. Untold millions of dollars in property damage.

Immeasurable psychological damage that has taken decades to heal.

There were roughly 5,000 National Guard troops with fixed bayonets and 500 state police called out to try to restore calm, along with thousands of city police working around the clock, and they were all late by about a hundred years.

Business owners — almost all of them white — saw their life savings go up in smoke.

Inner-city residents — most of them black — watched the streets where they lived go up in smoke.

And yet it was only part of America's season in hell.

Hundreds of U.S. soldiers were dying each week in Vietnam that spring, and the Selective Service announced the draft call for May was 44,000 men. Bobby Kennedy, bidding for a Democratic presidential nomination, was instead on his way to assassination in a grubby Los Angeles hotel kitchen. In Richard Daley's Chicago, the Democratic National Convention would bring massive political rioting.

And in Memphis Tenn., the sniper's bullet struck Martin Luther King as he stood on a motel balcony and took his life, and set off rioting in more than a hundred American cities.

Forty years later, for all who were there in Baltimore, the memory is still vivid of people standing in streets littered with glass, many with tears in their eyes, crying,



Looting and vandalism affected about 1,000 Baltimore City businesses in the four days of riots following the 1968 assassination of Martin Luther King Jr.

Lt. James V. Kelly Collection, University of Baltimore

Researchers detail effects of 1968 riots on Baltimore businesses

By Andrew Cannarsa
Examiner Staff Writer

In the aftermath of the riots in Baltimore following the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. in 1968, city residents faced a grim reality.

"What was most distressing to the residents was when they realized, 'We destroyed our own access to retail,'" said David Stevens, executive director of the Jacob France Institute at the University of Baltimore.

"The King is dead," or, "They got The King," almost as though Jesus himself had been slain — and of tear gas wafting through the spring air, sirens screeching, fire all around, and smoke rising above the remains of burned-out buildings.

Broken glass, fire
and troops in the city

D'Alesandro was 38 years old that spring and considered Martin Luther King a friend. In his years on the City Council, D'Alesandro had introduced plenty of long-overdue civil rights legislation. For this, he heard white people call him a bum. That was the polite language.

As council president, he'd reached into black communities the way nobody but Theodore McKeldin ever had before. When he ran for mayor, he won 93 percent of the black vote. Understanding the lateness of the hour when he took office, he appointed the city's first black solicitor, its first black fire commissioner, its first black members of the zoning board and the parks board.

None of this mattered; the era of good intentions was now suspended for a brief glimpse of the apocalypse.

For many black people who heard the news about King's assassination, the riots became a howl of pent-up rage, or anguish, or a moment to redress all of history's outrages. For others, it was a once-in-a-lifetime chance to cash in, as stores and saloons were looted at will, and then burned.

When D'Alesandro turned on the television that first night, he saw rioting in what seemed like every big city but Baltimore. "If we can make it to Sunday morning, when the ministers can talk in church, we'll be OK," he thought.

But his city was already coming undone.

On Gay Street, on the East side, a pamphlet was distributed to business owners. In honor of Dr. King, it said, close your stores. The same kind of warning had been circulated in Washington before it exploded. At twilight the next day, a rock was thrown through a store window, and the riots in Baltimore commenced.

D'Alesandro was in the war room at police headquarters when he heard the news. Scores of fires were being set along decayed inner-city blocks. Here, poverty and bitterness were so ingrained that King's death was seen not only as tragedy but also as opportunity: No more begging for decent jobs, no more waiting around for decent housing that had already taken a lifetime to arrive. It was the fire this time.

At The News American, where I had just started working, a city editor named Eddie Ballard sent every available reporter into the streets for the next four days and nights.

By nightfall on the first full day of the riots, there was broken glass littering the streets like confetti, and streams of black smoke coiling into the sky, and troops on city street corners with upraised rifles.

At the corner of Eager and Ensor streets, by the Latrobe Housing Projects, city police began lining kids against a wall. The kids were violating a curfew ordinance, and the cops wanted to know why they were still in the streets. The dialogue was always the same:

Officer: "Where are you going?"

Teenager: "My mother's."

Officer: "Where are you coming from?"

Teenager: "My father's."

Looting and vandalism affected about 1,000 city businesses in the four days of riots. Most of the rioters were arrested within 10 blocks of their homes, meaning they were likely ruining their neighborhood store, said Peter Levy, chairman of the history and political science department at York College of Pennsylvania.

"It was mostly smaller retail stores that were affected. The bigger department stores were left relatively unscathed," Levy said. "Some [smaller stores] never recovered."

Levy and Kara Kunst, a graduate student at the University of Baltimore, studied the riots. Knowing most of the riots occurred along East Monument Street, Edmunson Avenue, Greenmount Avenue, Harford Road and West North Avenue, they surveyed the areas and researched land records to determine which buildings were businesses in 1968.

Kunst studied the effects on businesses in the decade after the riots, saying the number of lawsuits filed by insurance companies from 1968 to 1979 was "absolutely impressive."

"The big question was, 'Was the city responsible for the damage to the businesses?'" Kunst said. "The insurers were paying out a lot of money to the businesses, and they eventually dropped their suits when they couldn't prove the city could have done more to prevent the riots."

Some of the owners of the affected businesses — mostly grocery stores, liquor stores, drugstores and taverns and bars — either tried to reopen but couldn't or abandoned the venture altogether, Kunst said. The city took control of the abandoned properties and sold them below market value to new owners.



Soldiers from the National Guard seal off a downtown neighborhood, where tear gas was eventually used to drive back looters. — AP file photos

At North and Greenmount avenues, an entire neighborhood seemed to rage against itself. In those days, there were still bars on Greenmount Avenue that wouldn't serve black people. There were white food-store owners who had no blacks working for them. If the owner got sick, he simply shut the store down for the day.

Such places were among the first to be torched.

But there were others. Outside the Western District police station, crowds raced through the street in hazy sunlight, hordes of people panicked by police dogs or the sight of guns or the fires burning all around them, racing down the block like some ocean wave that might never stop because there was nothing there to stop it.

In the police station, the cells overflowed with the newly arrested and the courtroom was strangled with defendants. For some, the charges were related to the anguish over King's murder; for others, the riots were a chance to snatch a free TV, or a case of booze, or fill a shopping cart with food.

In odd ways, it was a chance for the two Baltimores, black and white, to discover each other across the enormous gaps carved over generations.

There were parties scheduled in white Baltimore that weekend. "Curfew parties," the lucky ones called them. They took place outside the city. On Palm Sunday, a woman in Timonium telephoned guests early in the day to cancel her party. Between sobs, she explained that her husband's business had been burned out.

Outside a rundown barber shop on Greenmount Avenue, a woman sobbed because her home had been burned out. The same convulsions had touched the lives of the two women — one white, one black — and in the aftermath the entire metro area would struggle to find its common humanity.

It's taken a long time, and still goes on.

In the quiet of 7:30 that Sunday morning, National Guard Maj. Gen. George Gelston took D'Alesandro for a jeep ride. They went to Gay

One interesting aspect, Kunst discovered, was the role Korean Americans played in the revival of business in the area of West North Avenue, now called Station North.

"That area had been badly impacted by the riots," Kunst said. "A large number of Korean Americans that bought the shops and started their own corner stores. If you walk around the area, you can still see the influence today."

acannarsa@baltimoreexaminer.com

Street and North Avenue. There were thousands of people already in the streets, but they were momentarily calm.

D'Alesandro looked at the ruins of his city, and he saw anger that hadn't yet been spent. It wasn't over, not yet. By 5:30 that afternoon, the first of 5,000 troops from the 82nd Airborne Division patrolled the streets, and slowly the world began to calm down.

Forty years later, an African-American man runs for president and thus offers a measure of distance America has traveled since 1968. There's now an enormous black middle class inconceivable before the riots, and a few generations of black doctors and lawyers and educators.

But in places like Gay Street, and North and Greenmount avenues, and Eager and Ensor streets, the world has changed only marginally. And the dream remains just out of reach.

After 1968 riots, Baltimore 'not worth it' for some residents

By Sara Michael

Examiner Staff Writer

As a 29-year-old pharmacy manager, Theodore Sophocleus ignored calls from his bosses to close the Read's drugstore at Light and Cross streets as riots raged across the city.

If he closed, his workers told him, looters would rob and destroy the store.

"They were concerned the devastation was working its way into South Baltimore," Sophocleus said, 40 years after Baltimore's race riots.

Rioters spared his store, and the next day it opened again. But the rest of the city suffered an enormous toll: Six died, and 700 suffered injuries. Rioters looted and burned thousands of businesses, causing losses estimated at \$10 million. Some neighborhoods never recovered.

But while the riots accelerated the decline of huge sections of Baltimore, the downward spiral had begun years before, as whites fled to the suburbs in the 1960s to escape a city ravaged by poverty, violence and growing racial divides.

Many residents, including Sophocleus, now a state delegate representing Anne Arundel County, had already answered the call of the suburbs before the riots.

"The riots by themselves didn't do it," said Dunbar Brooks, state school board president and demographer for the Baltimore Metropolitan Council.

In Baltimore County, the white population swelled in the years before the riots, said Peter Levy, a history professor at York College of Pennsylvania. From 1950 to 1970, the county's population more than doubled to 621,000, U.S. Census data show, while the city lost nearly 50,000, bringing its population to 905,000.

"The riots remind us there were other issues, but we shouldn't see them as the single cause," Levy said.

Many family-owned shops were destroyed, and some residents feared returning to the city, Sophocleus said.

"People just said, 'It's not worth it,' and closed up shop," he said.

Federal housing policies created more opportunities for homeownership, said Matthew Durlington, a Towson University assistant professor. This, coupled with a growing highway system, allowed more people to move to the suburbs, he said.

In some ways, the suburbs seemed isolated from the riot-ravaged city.

"It was sort of a city issue and a city problem. There wasn't a whole lot we could do," said Ed Cochran, former Howard County executive, who was finishing a term on the county school board when the riots erupted.

The riots widened the divide between the city and the suburbs, said Pamela Ehrenberg, author of "Ethan, Suspended," a children's book with the '68 riots as the backdrop.


Ehrenberg remembered growing up in Parkville and rarely visiting the city to see her grandmother.

After the riots, she said, "it was almost like a permanent wall went up."

smichael@baltimoreexaminer.com

BALTIMORE
EDITION

WEDNESDAY
APRIL 2, 2008



The Examiner
EXAMINER.COM BALTIMORE

COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL: MAY NOT BE FURTHER REPRODUCED WITHOUT PERMISSION OF THE PUBLISHER

Commentary - Antero Pietila:

Race dialogue begins in Baltimore

Although Barack Obama acted out of political necessity, the Easter week timing of his extraordinary race speech inspired congregations of various faiths to study and reflect on his themes. Friday's 40th anniversary of Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination ensures that race, in all of its complexities, will stay on the national front burner.

Such attention causes a profound sense of unease among many Americans, who fear increased polarization. I, for one, think the discussion is healthy and long overdue. We need dispassionate public airings of these issues locally and nationally. That is the only way toward a colorblind nation.

The University of Baltimore will lead the way Thursday, when a three-day conference convenes to examine the reasons and legacies of Baltimore's 1968 riots. The timing is a pure accident. When planning started more than a year ago, nothing indicated that the event, which is open to the public, would deal with headline news.

Whether we want to admit it, race continues to be "An American Dilemma," as Gunnar Myrdal called it in his 1944 landmark study. He ended the foreword with these prophetic words: "Not since Reconstruction has there been more reason to anticipate fundamental changes in American

race relations, changes which will involve a development toward the American ideals."

Myrdal was prescient. Within a decade, the Supreme Court delivered two far-reaching decisions changing America.

The 1948 *Shelley v. Kraemer* ruling stopped enforcement of covenants many neighborhoods used to exclude blacks, Jews and other minorities. Such covenants were so common three Supreme Court justices asked to be recused from the case; they lived in neighborhoods in Virginia and the District of Columbia barring minorities. The court convened with a bare quorum.

Baltimore pioneered residential segregation, and several people with local roots sparred before the Supreme Court. Among them was Philip Perlman, a former newspaper editor who had risen to be the U.S. solicitor general; NAACP's Thurgood Marshall, who felt so wounded by his native city that he seldom had anything good to say about it; and Alger Hiss, an erstwhile Bolton Hill resident, diplomat and Johns Hopkins honorary doctor. They all argued against covenants.

Among those on the opposite side were two other Bolton Hill residents. Thomas F. Cadwalader founded the Legal Aid Bureau in 1911; Carlyle Barton presided over the Johns Hopkins University board of trustees for 17 years. They told the court that Bolton Hill had managed to stay all-white because "attempted violations have been quashed by threatened

suits or by injunctions obtained from local equity courts." They predicted dire consequences if racial covenants were removed.

The Supreme Court's decision was unanimous. It spurred the white flight leading to the decline of major cities.

Even more momentous was the Supreme Court's 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling. Baltimore again made the news. It was the first major city not only to desegregate promptly but on a citywide basis. Emotions flared, but desegregation proceeded without violence.

What kind of place was Baltimore in those days? Luckily for later generations, volunteers from more than 50 civic organizations, in cooperation with governmental anti-bias agencies, were preparing a snapshot of Baltimore's race relations right at that moment. Published in 1955, "An American City in Transition" continues to be an important, authentic account of conditions in a Jim Crow city on the cusp of unforeseen epochal changes. (See accompanying excerpt.)

The University of Baltimore conference is taking place at a similar defining moment in history. It should be used as a foundation for a continuing examination of things that not only separate us but unite us. Baltimore would be a better city as a result.

Antero Pietila
is a Baltimore Examiner columnist.
He can be reached at
hap5905@hotmail.com.

BALTIMORE
EDITION

THURSDAY
APRIL 3, 2008

MONARCHO DAILIES

The Examiner

EXAMINER.COM BALTIMORE

COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL: MAY NOT BE FURTHER REPRODUCED WITHOUT PERMISSION OF THE PUBLISHER

40 years later, city takes a hard look at race riots

By Kelsey Volkman
Examiner Staff Writer

BALTIMORE - Christina Ralls' mother had never spoken about the 1968 riots that destroyed her East Baltimore home.

Now, 40 years later, Ralls' mother told her story for the first time, along with nine others who lived through the riots.

The details became the focus of a mosaic Ralls created honoring the memories and reflections of the riots.

"I never knew the details or anything about it," said Ralls, a master's student at Maryland Institute College of Art and visiting artist at the University of Baltimore.

She learned the story of her mother and a story of the city during some of its most turbulent days through her research.

The mosaic, which Ralls called "a monument for the people," will be presented on Saturday as a part of a two-day conference on the 1968 riots that ravaged much of Baltimore.

Ralls met for several weeks with a diverse group of those who saw the riots up close — from her mother who lost her home to a person who admitted looting. The forum gave the group's members a chance to tell their stories of the riots and hear those of others.



A looter is arrested after police discovered whiskey bottles filled with gasoline stuffed in his pockets during riots following Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination.

Each member created a story tile for the mosaic, Ralls said.

She hopes the mosaic will be displayed in the city and become a place for reflection where the past informs the present.

"I hope this can be considered the city's story," Ralls said.

Forty years after the riots swept through Baltimore and more than 100 other cities, the UB conference, "Baltimore '68: Riots and Rebirth," showcases a wide

range of researchers, activists and storytellers.

Panels will explore topics like the riots' effect on businesses, politics and race relations; the role of the black clergy; public housing and segregation; lingering effects in an overwhelmingly black city.

The conference will bring together those who lived through the riots and younger generations who know little about it.

"You can't understand this city unless you know about what happened in April 1968," said Jessica Elfenbein, lead organizer of the conference.

"Even out of difficult circumstances, some good stuff does come."

The conference, 2 1/2 years in the making, grew out of Elfenbein's realization that talk of the riots seemed to be missing from Baltimore history discussions. The conference also solidifies the role of history in civic life, making a good case for universities as civic leaders, she said.

For Towson professor Matthew Durlington, talking about the riots provides a chance to examine the complex factors in Baltimore's

changing neighborhoods.

Durlington and four of his Towson students will present their research on the gentrification of the Sharp Leadenhall neighborhood. By analyzing a specific area, the researchers can view the wider story of gentrification in Baltimore, he said.

"The '68 riots provide one more narrative arc on this longer history since World War II in the rationale for gentrification," Durlington said.

Riots and rebirth

The University of Baltimore is hosting "Baltimore '68: Riots and Rebirth" beginning Thursday, April 3 with an evening reception.

smichael@baltimoreexaminer.com

Scheduled events

Friday, April 4

- o 10:30 a.m. – Round table discussion on urban renewal and dislocation in postwar Baltimore; round table on response of faith community
- o 2:30 p.m. – The riots and structural racism
- o 3:45 p.m. – 40 years of gentrification dilemmas

Saturday, April 5

- o 9 a.m. – Teaching the riots of 1968: High school teachers' round table; political reaction and policy consequences
- o 11 a.m. – Convergences and divergences: The civil rights and anti-war movements; collecting and using personal recollections

BALTIMORE
EDITION

FRIDAY
APRIL 4, 2008

The Examiner

EXAMINER.COM BALTIMORE

COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL: MAY NOT BE FURTHER REPRODUCED WITHOUT PERMISSION OF THE PUBLISHER

Colts players unsung heroes of '68 riots

By Ron Snyder

Examiner Staff Writer

BALTIMORE - As hundreds of National Guard troops and police officers tried to restore calm to Baltimore in the riotous days that followed the April 4, 1968, assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Lenny Moore and John Mackey decided to make sandwiches. Bologna sandwiches to be exact. Hundreds of them. And they weren't for any picnic.

They were for the estimated 2,500 desperate detainees at the Civic Center (now the 1st Mariner Arena), most of whom were being held by police after unknowingly breaking curfew. No bathroom breaks. No food. No one to turn to. And that's when the two Baltimore Colt Hall of Famers took the field — unannounced, but with a feeling that something had to be done before a really bad situation became much, much worse.

"We couldn't let it alone," said Moore. "All hell was about to break loose in there. Most of those people hadn't eaten in 24 hours."

So Moore contacted the office of Mayor Tommy D'Alesandro III in hopes of finding a way of defusing the escalating situation. He eventually worked things out with Dan Zaccagnini, the mayor's manpower coordinator. Moore said his status as a Colt helped him calm down many of the detainees.

"People listened to us because of who we were," Moore said. "They all felt we would be able to help [them]."

With a plan in place, Moore, now 74, and Mackey, now 66 and struggling with frontotemporal dementia, called area businesses, and soon there were deliveries of donated lunch meat, cheese, bread and milk to feed those at the Civic Center. And — thanks to Zaccagnini, Moore and Mackey — police allowed everyone to use the restrooms. Zaccagnini, now 75, said that without Moore and Mackey's help, the riots could have been even deadlier and more destructive. The mood in the Civic Center before the Colts arrived was boiling over. In all, the riots caused six deaths, 700 injuries and \$10 million in property damage.

"Lenny Moore and John Mackey were respected by everyone in the city," Zaccagnini said. "They understood their responsibilities as icons in the community. People listened to them much easier than they would have to me or any police officer. I don't know what would have



store owner and his son dig in to protect their property from looters.

happened if they hadn't been there."

Once calm was restored, Moore knew there was a lot of work ahead to rebuild the city and make sure a whole generation of young people didn't get lost in the process. Along with Mackey, he worked with the city to create a summer program to give at-risk youths a venue where they could participate in activities.

"Nothing like those riots had ever happened in the city before," said Moore, who works for the state Department of Juvenile Services. "We wanted to try to make something positive out of it. Out of that horrible situation came a great program. It just shows you what can be done when people work together."

As a result, the city ran a program over the next several summers that bused thousands of kids to the Bainbridge Naval Training Center in Cecil County, where they played sports and, most importantly, learned about making the right decisions in life.

"Things happened so fast during the riots, Lenny Moore and John Mackey never got the credit they deserved," Zaccagnini said.

rsnyder@baltimoreexaminer.com

BALTIMORE
EDITION

SATURDAY
APRIL 5, 2008

MONARCHO DAILIES

The Examiner

EXAMINER.COM BALTIMORE

COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL: MAY NOT BE FURTHER REPRODUCED WITHOUT PERMISSION OF THE PUBLISHER

Religious leaders take strength from riot's lessons

By Sara Michael
Examiner Staff Writer

BALTIMORE - The anguish and tension that erupted into violence in the wake of Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination still simmers in Baltimore forty years later, faith leaders said Friday.

"The seeds are there [for similar violence]. Walking around Baltimore City, you see lots of reasons why people are so overwhelmed," said Father John Harfmann, who was associate pastor of St. Peter Claver Church in West Baltimore at the time of the 1968 riots.

Rampant poverty, under-performing schools and drug addiction weigh heavily on many of Baltimore's residents.

And although the city may be grappling with these problems, the common focus and need that brought people together in the wake of the riots should draw communities together again today, Harfmann said.

This is a great opportunity to revisit the things that made us strong and made us work together," said Harfmann,

who sat with other religious leaders on a panel at the University of Baltimore's conference, "Baltimore '68: Riots and Rebirth."

In the years before the riots and during the hours when the city was engulfed in smoke, the faith community was closely connected, working together for a common cause.

"Synagogues and churches came to their noblest during those days," said the Rev. Marion Bascom, pastor emeritus at Douglas Memorial Community Church in Baltimore.

"Had it not been for the religious community, only God knows what would have happened to the civil rights movement."

Harfmann remembered joining with other local leaders to sell milk from a Cloverland Dairy refrigerator truck and later selling bread.



Baltimore's riots ended with about 5,000 arrests and \$12 million in damages.

"If you called on us, we would do it," he said.

The Jewish community used to meet regularly with members of the city's African-American community to discuss issues such as race and poverty, said Rabbi Martin Weiner, who was a 29-year-old associate rabbi at Temple Oheb Shalom in Baltimore during the riots.

Those kinds of gatherings should be continued today, he said.

Today's black political leaders, like Mayor Sheila Dixon and presidential hopeful Barack Obama, offer hope for healing the racial wounds, Weiner said.

"As people of faith and as Americans, we have to have a sense of hopefulness," Weiner said.

smichael@baltimoreexaminer.com

'Not all of us were rioting'

By Andrew Cannarsa
Examiner Staff Writer

BALTIMORE - Lynnwood Taylor's memories of the 1968 riots in Baltimore include the smell of smoke from the fires, the sight of the National Guard at Mondawmin Mall and the abrupt ending to his girlfriend's junior prom at the Civic Center.

His memories don't, however, include participating in the uprisings.

"Not all of us were rioting," Taylor, who was 17 and living in Northwest Baltimore at the time, said Friday at the University of Baltimore's conference on the 1968 riots. "We didn't all think alike."

Taylor, who now lives in East Baltimore, attended the conference because the events of April, 1968 "truly had an impact" on his life.

"I had to seek out what being a black man meant to me," Taylor said. "It made me stop and start asking questions and seeking answers."

Eunice Anderson was 12 and living in Edmondson Village at the time of the riots, remembering the vandalism that occurred at two Jewish-owned markets near her home.

"We didn't know the owners very well, but they were part of the neighborhood," Anderson said. "After that, there were bars on store windows, and the owners got guard dogs. The neighborhood just became so unfriendly."

Anderson, like Taylor, said there were many blacks who didn't participate in the looting and arson. Her parents warned her three older brothers not to participate or bring any stolen items home.

"It was scary, watching it unfold on the news," said Anderson, who still lives in Edmondson Village. "It was really sad, but it was a place in history."

When she told her husband she wanted to attend the conference, Anderson's spouse asked, "Why would you want to relive that?"

"It's important to know what has changed that needs to be explained," Anderson said. "I want to know more about what was going on politically."

Taylor and Anderson were among about 200 people who listened to a talk by York College of Pennsylvania professor Peter Levy. Levy outlined the causes and consequences of the riots in Baltimore.



National Guard troops keep an eye on things after calm was restored to Baltimore's streets.

"In the aftermath of the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., the United States experienced its greatest wave of social unrest since the Civil War," Levy said. "The uprisings caused \$12 million in damages alone in Baltimore."

The social unrest in Baltimore included 1,000 fires, 1,200 lootings, 5,000 arrests and six deaths. WYPR's Fraser Smith, who spoke at the university on Thursday night, said a resistance to discrimination had developed among blacks years before the 1968 riots.

"The riots were directly related to the murder of Dr. King," Smith said, "but it was also a reaction to 'the way it was.'"

The conference continues today. For more information, visit ubalt.edu/baltimore68.

acannarsa@baltimoreexaminer.com