

# Latino Migration and the New Global Cities: Transnationalism, Race, and Urban Crisis in Lawrence, Massachusetts, 1945-2000

Author: Llana Marie Barber

Persistent link: <http://hdl.handle.net/2345/1388>

This work is posted on [eScholarship@BC](#),  
Boston College University Libraries.

---

Boston College Electronic Thesis or Dissertation, 2010

Copyright is held by the author, with all rights reserved, unless otherwise noted.

Boston College

The Graduate School of Arts and Sciences

Department of History

LATINO MIGRATION AND THE NEW GLOBAL CITIES:  
TRANSNATIONALISM, RACE, AND URBAN CRISIS IN  
LAWRENCE, MASSACHUSETTS, 1945-2000

a dissertation

by

LLANA BARBER

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

August 2010

© Copyright by LLANA BARBER  
2010

# **Latino Migration and the New Global Cities: Transnationalism, Race, and Urban Crisis in Lawrence, Massachusetts, 1945-2000**

Llana Barber

Advisors: Marilyn Johnson and Davarian Baldwin

Drawing on urban history methodologies that re-frame “white flight” as a racialized struggle over metropolitan space and resources, this dissertation examines the transition of Lawrence, Massachusetts to New England’s first Latino-majority city between 1945 and 2000. Although the population of this small, struggling mill city has never exceeded 100,000, it is not unique in its changing demographics; low-tier cities have become important nodal points in transnational networks in recent decades, as racialized patterns of urban disinvestment and gentrification encouraged a growing dispersal of Latinos from large cities like New York.

While Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, and Cubans gradually began to arrive in Lawrence in the 1960s, tens of thousands of white residents were already leaving the city, moving (along with Lawrence’s industrial and retail establishments) out to the suburbs. As a result of this flight, the city was suffering from substantial economic decline by the time Latino settlement accelerated in the 1980s. Not all of Lawrence’s white population fled, however. Instead, many white Lawrencians fought to maintain control in the city and to discourage Latino settlement. I focus on two nights of rioting between white and Latino residents in 1984, as a spectacular example of the racialized contestations that accompanied the city’s social and economic transformations. Although the political power and public presence of Latinos dramatically increased in the years after the riots, half a century of uneven metropolitan development had left Lawrence without the resources or political clout to successfully confront the city’s pervasive poverty.

Lawrence's history demonstrates the expansion of urban crisis during the 1980s, and its impact on Latino communities in the Northeast. The building of a Latino majority in Lawrence was not simply a demographic shift; rather it was an uphill struggle against a devastated economy and a resistant white population. The transformation of Lawrence in spite of these obstacles highlights the energy and commitment that Latinos have brought to U.S. cities in crisis during the second half of the twentieth century.

## Table of Contents

Acknowledgments	vii
Introduction – Latinos in the Postindustrial City	1
Chapter One – Suburban Growth and the Origins of Lawrence’s Urban Crisis, 1945-1980	36
Chapter Two – “Why Lawrence?”: How Urban Crisis Shaped Latino Migration	76
Chapter Three – Prelude to the Riot: Early Latino Activism and White Resistance	148
Chapter Four – Race and Public Space in the Immigrant City: The Riots of 1984	190
Chapter Five – Claiming and Disclaiming the 1984 Riots	242
Chapter Six – After the Riots: Latino Inclusion into a Failing City, 1984-2000	317
Conclusion –Transnational Lawrence and the New Global Cities	381
Bibliography	407

**Abbreviations**

AH – Armand Hyatt (personal collection)

JFB – John F. Buckley (archived collection at the Lawrence History Center)

LDIC – Lawrence Development and Industrial Commission

LPLA – Lawrence Public Library Archives

LHC – Lawrence History Center

MA – Massachusetts State Archives

MCAD – Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination

MIT – Massachusetts Institute of Technology

SLoM – State Library of Massachusetts

VTNA – Vanderbilt Television News Archive

## **Acknowledgements**

I must begin by thanking my dissertation advisors, Marilyn Johnson and Davarian Baldwin. Both model scholars, they each brought a unique set of strengths and skills to advising me on this project, and I shudder to imagine what this dissertation would have looked like without their brilliant insights and their wise, patient criticism. A heartfelt thanks to Cynthia Young, as well, for her careful reading and challenging questions, and for her early efforts to help me think through transnationalism in the context of global racial and imperial hierarchies. I'd also like to thank Deborah Levenson who oversaw an initial foray into this research in an independent study and helped me to clarify what aspects of Lawrence's history I wanted (and would have the means) to investigate. The History Department and the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences at Boston College have been wonderfully supportive throughout my graduate career, both logistically and financially, and I am particularly grateful for a research year through the Presidential Fellowship in my fifth year of graduate study. This dissertation was completed thanks to the financial support of a Dissertation Fellowship from the American Association of University Women, and I imagine that its completion would still loom far in the future were it not for the AAUW's timely funding.

During the course of my research, Barbara Brown and Amita Kiley at the Lawrence History Center were incredibly helpful, pulling together a wealth of material and even helping me access it long-distance while I was pregnant and then caring for a young infant. I will be forever grateful for the newspaper clipping I desperately needed, which they tracked down, scanned, and email to me within moments, all with the utmost



good humor. I am grateful as well to Louise Sandberg, head of Special Collections at the Lawrence Public Library for her keen knowledge of Lawrence's past and for sharing the eclectic archive assembled there. Thanks, too, to William Maloney and the staff of the Lawrence City Clerk's office, as well as Jennifer Fauxsmith and the staff at the Massachusetts Archives, and at Special Collections in the Massachusetts State Library. I am also grateful for the material sent electronically by Joan Keegan from the AT&T Archives and History Center. Thanks to Lorlene Hoyt at MIT for providing transcripts from the Forgotten Cities seminar series, and to Ramón Borges-Méndez for allowing me to quote from his presentation in that series. Most importantly, I would like to thank the individuals who bravely shared their opinions on Lawrence's history in the form of oral history interviews: Isabel Meléndez, Jorge Santiago, Ingrid Garcia, Eric Spindler, and Armand Hyatt. Armand Hyatt is due particular thanks for generously lending me his personal collection of documents regarding the Immigrant City Community Housing Corporation and the origins of Lawrence Community Works (and giving me a rambunctious "guided tour" through this extensive personal archive). In spite of such wonderful contributions and such astute guidance, errors undoubtedly remain in this dissertation, for which I am, of course, solely responsible.

I also feel compelled to express gratitude to the ground-breaking researchers whose work has focused on Lawrence in the recent decades. Postwar Lawrence was off the scholarly radar for a long time, but a number of researchers have insisted in recent years that Lawrence has much to teach us about the contemporary world and the forces that have shaped it. Although I have only had the privilege to speak with a few of these

scholars directly, thanks go to Ramón Borges-Méndez, Jorge Santiago, James Jennings, Ramona Hernández, William Lindeke, Jeff Gerson, Glenn Jacobs (and others I have surely overlooked), as well as the students and faculty from the Department of Urban Studies and Planning at MIT who have pioneered a model of engaged scholarship in the MIT@Lawrence Project. Taken together, the work of these researchers and the tireless work of the Lawrence Public Library and the Lawrence History Center have enabled the preservation of an *archive* of Lawrence's recent history, without which my own work would have been impossible.

There is no way to sufficiently convey my gratitude to Eric Spindler and the Spinder/Deschamps family, who first introduced me to Lawrence and shared with me both their love of the city and their outrage at its myriad injustices. The views in this dissertation have been immeasurably shaped by long conversations, and long walks and drives through the city, particularly with Eric. I regret that one of his major concerns ended up beyond the purview of this project: the particular place of those who were “half and half” in the city's often dichotomous racial hierarchy, the children of those pioneers in Lawrence who loved and created families across the boundaries of race and ethnicity. Let his concerns be a challenge throughout this dissertation to any essentializing tendencies in my discussion of the conflict between white and Latino residents in the city.

My family has been an essential source of support throughout this project. Thanks to my sisters, Stephanie Barber and Cate Barber Moran for their unflagging belief in their baby sister's smartness. My parents, John and Eileen Barber, and my parents-in-law, Hok and Kim Heng, have provided countless hours of childcare in addition to massive

encouragement and understanding. I am amazed by this support and I literally don't know what I would have done without it.

Finally, I must thank my husband, Chiv Heng, and my two sons, Cadence and Noah, for their immense love, and for taking me at my word that I was actually *working* when I sat in my pajamas in front of my computer for a year and a half. What a beautiful, loving leap of faith that was! My greatest success would be if one day this dissertation convinced them that the moments I stole away from our time together were given to a worthy project.

## **Introduction – Latinos in the Postindustrial City**

Angry crowds of Latino and white rioters gathered at opposite ends of a narrow, tenement-lined street in Lawrence, Massachusetts in August of 1984. “Who’s American? We’re American,” “Go back where you came from,” and “U.S.A! U.S.A!” chanted the white rioters, as both sides shouted out their anger over two hot summer nights. Divided by burning trash cans, and hurling rocks, Molotov cocktails, and insults, both Latino and white residents claimed the Lower Tower Hill streets as their own, while local homes and businesses burned.<sup>1</sup> The 1984 riots in Lawrence were over quickly. No one was killed, only a few people were injured, and a few more were arrested. Although the property damage was significant for the tiny, impoverished mill city, it was far below the scale of other riots in the post-World War II decades. In spite of this small scale, the rioting drew international attention to Lawrence, a level of attention the city had not seen since its heyday as an industrial center, home of the 1912 “Bread and Roses” strike.

Yet the sudden media fascination with the city exposed more than just violent racial conflict. During the day, between the two nights of rioting, neighborhood kids laid cardboard over the trash and broken glass in the street, and started *breakdancing* in the very same intersection where white and Latino adults had faced off the night before.<sup>2</sup> As the reporters looked on, these youth claimed the intersection and proudly asserted an urban identity and their right to the city, although in manner that was quite different from the rioting. Two young Latinos built a makeshift camera out of a disposable diaper box and a flashlight and spent the day doing fake interviews, playfully parodying the sudden explosion of media interest in their small city, appropriating the role of the media in

documenting and interviewing their neighbors, if only in jest. As Latino rioters claimed the streets at night, loudly protesting the racism of their neighbors and the malicious neglect of the city, Latino youth claimed them during the day, offering a compelling counterpoint to the night's violence, but one that was no less forceful in its assertion of their right to have a public presence in the city. The 1984 riots in Lawrence were the most spectacular event in a long history of racialized contestations over public space and resources between white and Latino residents in the city, as Latinos struggled for the right to make a home in a city that was in the midst of a profound economic crisis. Like much of Lawrence's postwar history, the riots (and the struggle to interpret them) demonstrated with explosive clarity the relationship between urban disinvestment, white resistance to Latino settlement, and Latino activism.

At first glance, it might seem surprising to find a large Latino<sup>3</sup> population in this seven-square mile city. Nor would one expect to find the hallmarks of both urban crisis (rioting) and early eighties urban street culture (breakdancing) in a tiny town tucked up near the border of New Hampshire. Yet Lawrence holds many such surprises.<sup>4</sup> The 2000 census reported that the Latino population in Lawrence had reached an astonishing high of sixty percent of the city's population. This report officially made the old mill city the *first* Latino-majority city in all of New England. The Latino migration to Lawrence that had begun with a trickle of Puerto Ricans and Cubans in the late 1950s, had swelled to a powerful wave by the 1980s and 1990s, consisting mostly of Puerto Ricans and Dominicans, but representing no less than twenty national groups in all. Many of these migrants had previously settled in New York City, although a direct migration flow

between Lawrence and Latin America also existed. Lawrence's unique status as a Latino-majority city makes it inherently worthy of historical inquiry, but there is even more to the story. At the same time that Lawrence received tens of thousands of Latino migrants, it was struggling with a demolished tax base, overcrowded and deteriorating housing, white residential flight, an exodus of industry and retail, high rates of poverty and unemployment, failing schools, political corruption, debilitating waves of arson, race and prison riots, gang violence, and widespread notoriety as the center of New England's drug and stolen-car trade. Many of these aspects of urban crisis (understood broadly to include both economic disinvestment and the host of problems that accompanied it), were actually well underway *before* Latino settlement in the city began in earnest, when the city's population was still 99 percent white.<sup>5</sup> This timeline begs the question of what made Lawrence such an appealing settlement site for Latinos in the first place.

Lawrence's urban crisis and its remarkable rate of Latino immigration make it an ideal site to explore the relationship between post-World War II changes in the metropolitan political economy that encouraged suburban development at the expense of central cities, and the dramatic Latino immigration that occurred during the same era.

In some ways, Latinos were the saving grace of a devastated city, as Lawrence experienced rapid deindustrialization in the decades after World War II, as well as stiff competition from its growing suburbs for the region's middle-class residents and retail establishments. Lawrence essentially lost this competition, resulting in dramatic economic decline in the city, as its suburban neighbors prospered. Although Latino migration to Lawrence began in the late 1950s, it started off slowly and did not begin to

substantially impact the city's demographic makeup until after 1980, at which point Lawrence had already lost nearly forty percent of its white residents, as well as the backbone of its economy. In spite of the city's advanced economic crisis by the time Latino settlement became substantial, there is little evidence that the energy and labor of Latinos was welcomed by the remaining white residents in the city, many of whom adopted a range of strategies to make Lawrence unappealing as a Latino settlement site and to minimize the power of Latinos to thrive in the city.<sup>6</sup> Latino settlement in Lawrence was met with strong resistance not only from the city's white residents, but also from the local government. Settlement there required Latinos to vehemently assert their right to the city's homes and public spaces, making it an excellent case study of Latino political activism in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. I understand such activism broadly to include not only formal political acts like voting and lobbying city officials, but also quotidian assertions and confrontations over the use and control of Lawrence's space and resources, and the struggle to transform Lawrence into an economically viable, racially inclusive city. The riots of 1984, although not quite a *quotidian* claim on the right to public space (as such large-scale racial violence certainly did not happen every day), were an extension of such daily struggles. In the decade and a half after the riots, Latinos won increasing political power and an uncontested public presence within the city. At the same time, however, Lawrence's urban crisis only accelerated, undermining Latino efforts at self-determination, as the city became reliant on a state government dominated by suburban interests. This metropolitan history navigates three interwoven threads: the urban disinvestment and suburbanization at the root of Lawrence's economic decline,

“white fight” or the ways in which white Lawrencians resisted Latino settlement in the city, and Latino activism, including everyday struggles to make a home in Lawrence in the face of urban crisis as well as official and unofficial acts of exclusion, discrimination, and hostility.

**Small cities: “all the problems of a Boston, but none of the glory”<sup>7</sup>**

Lawrence’s small size seems to have placed it beyond the realm of historical inquiry for the post-World War II era,<sup>8</sup> yet the city’s history is emblematic of two of the most important processes of the second half of the twentieth century: urban decline and immigration. Indeed, Lawrence is among a number of small cities (mostly ex-mill towns) in New England that have developed substantial Latino populations in recent decades. As urban disinvestment, urban renewal, and gentrification displaced many communities of color from major metropolitan centers, small cities have become important new settlement sites.<sup>9</sup> Although Lawrence officially became the first Latino-majority city in New England with the 2000 census, the 2005-2008 American Community Survey reported that the Latino population of Chelsea, Massachusetts has reached fifty-six percent of the city’s total population, while Lawrence’s Latino population has increased to seventy-one percent of the city. In Connecticut, Hartford has a long established Puerto Rican community and even tiny Willimantic was one-third Latino in 2000. Near Providence’s substantial Dominican community, Central Falls, Rhode Island’s population was forty-eight percent Latino in the 2000 census, with a mix of Central and South Americans. All of these cities have struggled economically in the past decades, although



this struggle has not been uniform; some cities, such as Lawrence, seem to have been disproportionately affected by urban decline.<sup>10</sup>

With the highest proportion of Latinos in New England and the highest rate of poverty in Massachusetts in 2000, Lawrence might seem an extreme case. In reality, the degree to which the city has been transformed by urban decline and Latino settlement makes it an unparalleled site through which to explore the relationship between postwar changes in metropolitan political economy and the community formation of immigrants and their descendants.<sup>11</sup> In bold strokes and stark contrast, historians can see in Lawrence the devastation wracked by deindustrialization and suburban competition, as well as migrants' struggles to make a home in, and indeed transform, the city. The rapid decline of Lawrence's industry, the exodus of its white residents, and the collapse of its retail sector left the city impoverished by 1980, and many white residents and city officials believed that Latino settlement in the city stood in the way of the city's economic recovery. Yet, persistent activism eventually won Latinos the right to make a home for themselves in the city, as well as substantial political power.

### **Immigration and Urban History**

By focusing on racialized contestations over metropolitan space and resources in Greater Lawrence, I am examining a nodal point where the histories of Latino migration and urban crisis intersect. My goal is to demonstrate the extent to which these histories are intertwined in order to offer a new framework for thinking about both urban history and immigration history after World War II. Specifically, I hope this study calls attention

to the mutually transformative impact that transnational, multiracial urban communities and metropolitan political economies had on each other during this era. To begin, I will lay out the two fields that I wish to interweave in the subsequent chapters, as they have been thoroughly documented by other historians and social scientists. First, the story of urban economic decline and social crisis in the decades after World War II; second, the story of immigration from Latin America, particularly the migration of Puerto Ricans that began in earnest during World War II, and the immigration of Dominicans that peaked during the eighties and nineties. A quick caveat: clearly, Puerto Ricans are U.S. citizens and thereby not immigrants. (Indeed, even many of the non-Puerto Rican Latinos throughout Lawrence's history have been U.S.-born internal migrants from New York City, not immigrants.) Throughout the body of the dissertation, I use the term migration in reference both to Puerto Ricans and to general Latino settlement in Lawrence.<sup>12</sup> Yet I include Puerto Rico in this overview of immigration from Latin America, as it would be inaccurate to exclude one of the most influential sending points from the region.

Although urban historians and migration scholars have often shared a focus on urban communities, their approaches have been quite different. Migration scholars have documented skyrocketing immigration in the latter half of the twentieth-century, particularly from Latin America. Their emphasis has frequently been on the transnational networks of people, capital, and communication that migrants have formed, and the cultural and economic impact of migration on U.S. cities. Scholars of Puerto Rican and Dominican migration, in particular, have led the field in many ways in exploring transnationalism, migrants' return orientation, economic and cultural remittances, and the

role of gender in shaping migrants' experiences.<sup>13</sup> Urban historians, meanwhile, have convincingly argued that racialized political struggles over metropolitan social, spatial, and economic organization are central to understanding U.S. history in the twentieth century. They have linked urban crisis and white flight to the massive government and private investment in suburbanization after World War II, and the myriad forms of discrimination that kept African American communities in the Northeast overwhelmingly restricted to central cities throughout the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, as urban economies crumbled in the wake of industry and retail's flight to the suburbs.<sup>14</sup> Yet, urban history and migration studies have not been fully explored in conjunction with each other, and therefore no compelling explanation has been offered regarding how they might relate: how immigration impacted racialized metropolitan struggles; how major global cities like New York displaced some groups of Latinos, even as they drew others; or how anti-Latino racism shaped the national rejection of government responsibility for "urban problems," and contributed to the dismantling of the welfare state.

My aim is to make two main interventions into these fields. The first is to urge that the literature on urban crisis, white flight, suburban overdevelopment, and a suburban political agenda must consider urban immigrants: both the impact of these processes on settlement patterns, community formation, and daily life, as well as immigrant communities' efforts to transform the crumbling and profoundly segregated cities they encountered. The second is to urge that the literature on transnationalism and global cities must consider small, "low-tier" cities, with less than 100,000 residents (and must develop careful criteria that does not lump such cities in with suburbs).<sup>15</sup> Many of

these cities have a unique and profound reliance on the transnational economy and on the transnational flow of people, culture, and ideas stemming from their relative powerlessness on a state and federal level and the frequent absence of any other strong economic backbone.

Historians of African American communities in cities throughout the Northeast and Midwest have broken ground in exploring the roots of the poverty and racial violence that wracked postindustrial cities in the decades after World War II.<sup>16</sup> Some scholars have followed historians Kenneth Jackson and Thomas Sugrue in emphasizing the impact of urban deindustrialization and suburban competition, as suburbs drew white residents, industry, and retail establishments out of the city, creating an economic crisis in cities throughout the Northeast and Midwest.<sup>17</sup> Others, such as Amanda Seligman and Kevin Kruse, have traced the violent white resistance to African American settlement in white neighborhoods.<sup>18</sup> Given the deep roots of academic Black History scholarship in the Civil Rights/Black Power movement, it is not surprising that the most prolific approach has explored Black activism, particularly local and national efforts to challenge racialized urban disinvestment.<sup>19</sup> Much of this scholarship has focused on the activist heyday of the 1960s and early 1970s, and taken together, these histories help explain the growing, yet hard-won African American political power and cultural influence evident in postindustrial urban America. The metropolitan scale of much African American urban history has been among its most important innovations. The combination of studies on urban activism with studies on the impact of suburbanization offers a full account of racialized struggles over metropolitan space and resources, struggles that were ultimately

responsible for the failure of such substantial African American urban power to translate into a more complete eradication of structural racism on a national or international level. As African Americans won the cities, the suburbs won the nation; the 1980s brought to the fore a new, suburban political agenda that constructed poverty as an “urban problem” and rejected responsibility, dismantling the liberal welfare state that had been constructed during the New Deal and World War II.

The fact that the urban community of color in this story is Latino and not African American (indeed, African Americans have never been more than two percent of Lawrence's population) does not change at all the larger, structural processes that enriched white suburbs at the expense of central cities, as these processes were part of a national change in the geography of public and private investment in the decades after World War II. What does change somewhat in the examination of a Latino community's struggle against urban crisis are the terms through which exclusion and violence were justified – the frequent invocation of perceived Latino foreignness or un-Americanness, the belief that anti-Latino actions could actually slow or halt migration, and the argument that a city or state's resources ought to be reserved for the native born. In addition, examining Latino activism in the context of urban crisis gives a broadened perspective on the strategies that communities of color have utilized to survive racialized urban disinvestment and the resources they have brought to bear in transforming their cities, as Latinos in Lawrence mobilized a transnational field to address local problems and successfully developed a bilingual and bicultural service infrastructure within the city.<sup>20</sup> This study of Lawrence looks to expand the literature on the history of metropolitan

political economy beyond a Black-white binary and to reckon with the multicultural, global cities that characterized the late twentieth-century United States. While there is much work remaining to uncover the full history of African American urban activism, urban history as a field stands to be enriched by studies of how racism impacted, and was resisted by, other communities of color as well.

Examining the intersection of urban history and immigration scholarship demonstrates how post-World War II metropolitan changes (suburbanization, systemic discrimination, and urban economic crisis) imposed constraints on Latino residential and employment choices, which helped shape both the very *patterns* of migrant settlement as well as the conditions migrants faced in their new urban communities. Scholars of Latino migration have largely agreed with scholars of earlier European migrations that the availability of jobs (sometimes including active recruitment by employers) and the presence of kin have been the two main factors drawing migrants to specific locations within the United States.<sup>21</sup> Yet there has been a growing realization that the economic opportunities migrants pursued were not always available to them once they arrived or may have diminished over time, as was indeed true in Lawrence.<sup>22</sup> Indeed, scholars such as Ramona Hernández and Gina Pérez have described in brutal detail the impact of discrimination and racialized patterns of urban disinvestment on Dominican and Puerto Rican communities in U.S. cities.<sup>23</sup> During the 1960s and 1970s, Latinos were welcomed into jobs in Lawrence's declining manufacturing sector of the city, a sector that was rapidly losing jobs to suburban and global competition. Yet by the 1980s, Latino settlement in the city continued even after Latino unemployment rates skyrocketed.

Rising urban unemployment challenges scholars to look beyond economic opportunities for other explanations of Latino settlement.

A full consideration of transnational migration must take into account not only what encouraged Latino settlement, but also what limited or constricted it. Dominicans and Puerto Ricans, regardless of skin color, migrated not only into a racialized U.S. *social* arena, but also into a racialized U.S. *spatial* arena, a metropolitan geography that had already been profoundly shaped by the U.S. racial order. As such, migrants engaged in and were subject to an urban/suburban political struggle over resources that preceded their arrival, and they were compelled to struggle against substantial obstacles in order to make a life for themselves and their families in Lawrence.<sup>24</sup> Understanding why Latinos concentrated in Lawrence also includes understanding the obstacles to their settlement in the city's surrounding suburbs – suburbs with none of Lawrence's danger and decay, and where many of the jobs Latinos came to fill were actually located. Understanding why Latinos dispersed from New York City to Lawrence (and other low-tier cities) requires a look at the historical development of urban crisis and gentrification in New York. Such an emphasis on structural and constricting factors is not meant to obscure migrants' own agency. Without understanding the factors that constrained Latino residential and employment choices, however, scholars cannot truly understand the *stakes* of Latino activism.

Substantial research has been done into the forces that largely excluded African Americans from the suburbs in the early decades after World War II,<sup>25</sup> but there is far less information on what may have constrained Puerto Rican settlement choices during

these years. Scholars seem to concur that Puerto Ricans were similarly subject to the redlining practices and realtor discrimination that made suburban home ownership difficult for African Americans, as well as to the employment discrimination that kept wages low, yet the lack of a systematic exploration of Puerto Ricans and suburbanization in the early postwar decades leaves much to conjecture.<sup>26</sup> By the 1980s, however, when Latino migration to Lawrence was strong, the political economy of suburbia was already set. Racialized expansion of suburban homeownership opportunities on a national level and federal support for local zoning practices and suburban self-determination had firmly established a racial geography in the United States that filled most suburbs with white-occupied, single-family homes. Whatever racial barriers to spatial mobility may have been eradicated through 1960s-era civil rights legislation had been replaced by economic barriers. Decades of protected nurturing of suburban property markets had made moving to the suburbs far more expensive than in the postwar decades,<sup>27</sup> while global restructuring dismantled urban manufacturing in favor of a two-tiered service economy. In this new economy, real wages for the lower tiers of workers in all industries declined, further contributing to a cycle that kept urban residents confined to the cities. Although some Latinos did move to Lawrence's suburbs, particularly to Methuen in the 1990s, the racialized metropolitan geography of the United States played a major role in concentrating most of the region's Latinos in Lawrence.<sup>28</sup>

More than simply constraining the residential options of non-whites, local control over suburban resources resulted in the segregation of public services available to urban and suburban residents. As had been true under Jim Crow, these separate services were



far from equal. As Lizabeth Cohen has written in her study of New Jersey, suburbanization was a national phenomenon that brought about a new kind of inequality in the decades after World War II. She has argued that the racialized urban/suburban residential segregation “had consequences that deepened and broadened the nature of that inequality over the course of the postwar period. ...the inequities of postwar life expanded beyond housing to include public services provided and paid for by municipalities, the most important being the provision of education through local schools.”<sup>29</sup> As civil rights activism and new legislation was chipping away at segregation in urban housing, schools, and public spaces, the line between city and suburb became the new “color line” in postwar America, with a similar radical inequality in terms of housing, jobs, education, and other opportunities as had existed along the old color line. Suburbanization and urban disinvestment did not just constrain Latino settlement choices, they played a central role in shaping the urban environment Latinos encountered in Lawrence.

Although the metropolitan political economy of Greater Lawrence contributed to the concentration of Latinos in Lawrence, most Latino activism focused on the city itself, not on gaining access to suburbia. Although many white Lawrence elites argued for a dispersion of Latinos throughout the metropolitan region, most Latino activism in the city focused on transforming Lawrence into a place that was livable: a city with adequate jobs and public services (particularly education and health services), and a city free of discrimination, where Latinos could contribute equally both to the public culture of the city and to its governance. In the context of substantial white resistance to Latino

settlement in Lawrence, Latinos fought for the city. While the metropolitan focus of white Lawrence elites was on dispersing a fair share of the region's poor to live in the suburbs, the focus of Lawrence Latinos was often on drawing a fair share of the region's resources into the city and gaining access to decision-making about how those resources were to be allocated. Both these approaches were a substantial challenge to the urban/suburban or "intrametropolitan" inequality that had developed in the second half of the twentieth century, whose discourse naturalized the idea that poverty was endemic to cities and that the urban social problems that resulted were not suburban responsibilities.

The socio-economic struggles that plagued declining cities in the late twentieth century (poverty, joblessness, crime, drugs, arson) have so often been grouped together as "urban problems," that the association between such struggles and cities has come to seem almost natural. But ultimately there is nothing inherent about the relationship between socio-economic problems and cities. Indeed, one of the main arguments of this dissertation is that the *concentration* of such problems in cities, and the *association* of such problems with cities, has a history that is rooted in disproportionate suburban development and racialized intrametropolitan inequality in the second half of the twentieth century. The idea of "urban problems" -- that poverty and its related social ills only existed in, and indeed *ultimately stemmed from*, the city -- was a rhetorical construction that served to justify the denial of suburban responsibility for inequality and the problems it generated. Although I have, throughout this dissertation, dropped the quotation marks for other such constructed phrases like white flight and urban crisis, trusting that the reader will be able to bear in mind the broad definitions I lay out for

these terms in my introduction, I have kept the quotes for “urban problems” because this dissertation is itself a study of the construction of this term, of the discourse through which socio-economic problems became encased within municipal boundaries, both rhetorically and literally through the structures of political economy. I hope that such quotation marks will remind the reader not only that the concept of “urban problems” is a constructed concept, but also that it was, in effect, *under construction* throughout this era, as Greater Lawrence residents, businesses, and policy-makers fought to disperse or concentrate the region’s resources and its perceived liabilities (as poor residents were often understood).

Although much recent immigration scholarship has focused on questions of community formation, culture, identity, and transnationalism, there is also a solid precedent for exploring questions of urban political economy in Latino history: historians of Chicano and Puerto Rican urban activism in the 1960s have done remarkable work excavating the struggle of local Latino communities against urban crisis.<sup>30</sup> On the west coast, for example, scholars have documented the struggle of Mexican American residents of Chavez Ravine against the demolition of their community in order to build Dodger Stadium, challenging the uneven development at the heart of urban decline.<sup>31</sup> In the Midwest and Northeast, historians have documented the successful work of the Young Lords to improve the services available in low-income neighborhoods, through direct action to win regular garbage pick-up in Puerto Rican neighborhoods and to improve the abysmal health services at Lincoln Hospital in the Bronx. As Johanna Fernández has argued, “The history of the Young Lords, together with that of other urban

activists, suggest that, concurrent with the structural decline of the cities, there emerged a critique of and organized challenge to the worsening conditions of the city led *not* by elite policymakers, but by urban dwellers themselves.”<sup>32</sup> Taken together, these historians weave a rich portrait of 1960s-era racialized contestations over urban space and resources. This dissertation aims to build on such studies in four ways: 1. by exploring the roots of worsening urban conditions in the processes of postwar suburbanization, 2. by focusing on quotidian contestations over public space and resources in a city where nationally-known organizations like the Young Lords did not play a major role, 3. by exploring such a history through a pan-ethnic framework that developed in a city with a diverse Latino population, a population that included Dominican Americans (a group that has yet to be discussed in detail by historians),<sup>33</sup> and 4. by expanding the study of such urban activism into the 1980s and beyond, after the 1960s wave of Chicano and Puerto Rican radicalism had substantially receded.

In general, much of the literature on suburbanization and urban crisis has been an attempt to reach back into the early decades after World War II in order to uncover the origins of the intrametropolitan inequality that manifested in urban uprisings during the 1960s. This study embraces that approach, but also extends the story forward into the 1980s and 1990s. The roots of Lawrence’s urban crisis were indeed in the suburban growth and competition that took place in the early postwar decades. But Lawrence’s history demonstrates that the crisis in U.S. cities was a protracted one, reaching at least into the early 1990s. The racialized metropolitan patterns established in the postwar era calcified in the 1960s and 1970s, and were part of what encouraged the national turn to

conservatism evident in the 1980s and 1990s, as the suburban political agenda they enabled triumphed in state and national politics. Across the nation, overwhelmingly white and wealthy suburbs rejected responsibility for what they considered “urban problems,” such as poverty, and began to dismantle the welfare state that had been established during the New Deal (and nurtured through Lyndon B. Johnson’s “War on Poverty” programs). The concentration of Latinos within deteriorating cities was part of what catalyzed a resurgent nativism in the United States as well, as immigrants came to be associated with urban crime and dysfunction. Most of the nation had solidly supported immigration in the early 1960s, when many whites rediscovered their immigrant forebears and ethnic roots, electing Catholic, Irish-American John F. Kennedy as President, and culminating in the 1965 Hart-Cellar immigration reforms that ended the restrictive quota system on immigration. Yet, by the 1980s, many in the nation were calling for immigration reform, paranoid about “illegal aliens” and vocally rejecting the perceived social and economic costs of immigration. The history of Greater Lawrence demonstrates that the concentration of Latinos within deteriorating urban centers facilitated the scapegoating of immigrants for the decline of U.S. cities.

The persistence, and even acceleration, of urban crisis into the 1980s and early 1990s dramatically extends its timeline. Although urban crisis is often periodized by historians as a phenomenon of the 1960s and 1970s, the crisis in U.S. cities had certainly not abated by the 1980s. Cities across the United States suffered from fiscal crisis, an inability to provide adequate services to their residents, high unemployment and poverty levels, and high crime rates.<sup>34</sup> And although the 1960s are generally considered the era of

urban uprisings, the events in Miami in 1980, the Lawrence riots of 1984, and perhaps most importantly, the Los Angeles uprisings of 1992, demonstrate that not only was urban crisis still devastating U.S. cities, but that it had *expanded its reach during the 1980s and 1990s into small and Sunbelt cities*.<sup>35</sup> The racialized patterns of disinvestment that isolated urban communities of color from the suburban United States (and its prosperity) only increased in the 1980s, as the federal government turned its back on creating a comprehensive urban policy and dismantled the programs that had channeled federal funds into U.S. cities. Although structural explanations for urban crisis were drowned out in this conservative era by the rhetoric of local responsibility and community dysfunction, the systemic factors that had created urban crisis had certainly not gone away. Cities did not begin to recover from decades of disinvestment until the late 1990s, and even then such investment was not evenly dispersed throughout urban neighborhoods. Indeed, when Black or Latino neighborhoods in major urban centers experienced reinvestment, it was often premised on the displacement of the neighborhood's poor residents, further facilitating the dispersal of communities of color to low-tier cities like Lawrence.

## **Method**

Although I draw frequently on cultural forms and meaning-making in a methodology that I have learned from cultural historians, the very presence of such a substantial Latino population in the tiny, impoverished ex-mill city in northern Massachusetts is incomprehensible without delving into the political and economic

history of cities and suburbs in the postwar United States, as well as the social history of transnational migration of Latinos. As such, this dissertation will be shamelessly inter-methodological, ranging freely between a cultural, a political economic, and a social history. I focus much of my attention on the 1984 riots, as they are the single most dramatic contestation over Lawrence's space and resources in the city's postwar history. Further, the vast attention the riots brought to the city generated a rich archive through which to examine Lawrence's past.

A key aspect of my methodology is based on the observation that the struggle of Latinos in Lawrence for a fair share of the city's land and resources *eventually* moved into electoral politics, but began with myriad quotidian affirmations of and contestations over who was entitled to the city's many spaces and services (whether or not they could be characterized as "public"). It is important to note that space has been a key contested element in Lawrence's changing demographics for the past several decades; as Henri Lefebvre has noted, cities are not simply the *sites* of racial and other struggles, but their *stakes*, as well.<sup>36</sup> As such, Dominicans, Puerto Ricans, Italian-Americans, and French-Canadians struggled not simply *within* the city, but *for* the city, for the right to what each group perceived as a fair share of its land and resources, and for the right to represent the city and represent themselves within it. This struggle for Lawrence's land and resources often took place *outside* of officially recognized political arenas.<sup>37</sup> As such, streets, parks, schools, businesses, restaurants, and even homes were contested spaces, the sites of shifts in, and struggles for, an often racialized claim to the city's land and resources. Particularly, I understand political struggles to include Latino efforts to gain self-

representation, not only in government, but also in the public culture of the city and in the media. In this exploration, I will draw on the work of a number of historians of African American activism, who have argued that social movements have been enabled by a persistent and dispersed culture of opposition, in which resistance to racism and the struggle to enact alternative social, political, and economic visions have been manifested in myriad daily acts of confrontation, cooperation, consumption, and self-expression.<sup>38</sup>

This dissertation draws on a range of different sources: census data, newspaper articles, (particularly the extensive clippings on Latino history collected by the Lawrence History Center), government and academic reports, state and city records, TV news clippings, personal document collections, and oral histories (both those I conducted specifically for this project and those conducted by the Lawrence History Center). The oral history interviews contain a mix of important Latino community leaders and “regular” Latino, including some parents who were interviewed by their school-aged children for a Lawrence History Center project.<sup>39</sup> As a result, they are by no means representative of all Latinos in Lawrence, but they do offer a broad cross-section. As my focus throughout is generally pan-ethnic, it might be difficult to keep in mind that the national origin composition of Latinos in Lawrence shifted during the era I describe. From a mix of Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and Dominicans in the early 1960s, the Latino population expanded to include around twenty different Latino nationalities, but was predominantly Puerto Rican and Dominican for most of the time under discussion. Puerto Ricans outnumbered Dominicans in the early days, and then Dominicans began to outnumber Puerto Ricans at some point during the late 1970s or 1980s.



This study is not an ethnography of Latinos in Lawrence, nor even an ethno-history. Although there are many threads that I could have followed through Lawrence's history, I chose to study the often racialized contestation over metropolitan space and resources because I believe these threads offer the most insight into how contemporary Lawrence was shaped. Sadly, this meant that some aspects of the city's Latino history (religious or family life, for example), were beyond the purview of the dissertation. Of course, this study was also limited by the sources available. Even if I could have made an argument for the inclusion of certain topics, the scarcity of information about them in the archives and the oral histories I conducted precluded my treating them here.

Most notably, this dissertation will not make extensive comparisons between national origin groups in Lawrence. There are two main reasons for this. The first is that many of the sources used do not specify national origins, and so accurate data would have been difficult to obtain. The second, and more important, is that divisions among Latinos based on national origin groups have frequently been invoked throughout Lawrence's history to justify a lack of Latino political power in the city. Many Latino activists have considered these divisions overblown and have noted that the emphasis on internal divisions has obscured larger structural barriers to Latino political empowerment. Although individual ethnicities sometimes organized separately, like the Dominican American Voters Council, or created separate social or service organizations, like the many Lawrence social clubs, there has been a longstanding drive in the city towards pan-ethnic Latino organizing. In the context of Lawrence's diverse national origins, the adoption of a pan-ethnic Latino framework has been a useful organizing strategy

throughout the city's history, and my emphasis on Latino activism and Latino struggles (rather than Puerto Rican or Dominican activism and struggles) is an acknowledgement of the longstanding efforts in the city to forge a pan-ethnic movement, as well as an awareness that national-origin diversity has too often been used as a tool to justify Latino disenfranchisement in Lawrence. Further, comparisons among the national origin groups have often served to blame the cultural characteristics of certain groups for their lack of economic success (i.e. discussions of Cuban success based on education and industriousness imply lack of education and industriousness among Puerto Ricans and Dominicans as the reason why they have experienced less economic success). This dissertation instead looks at *structural* causes for Latino struggles in Lawrence, and I avoid cultural comparisons in order to steer widely around explanations that call to mind the "culture of poverty" thesis of the 1960s, a theory that blamed the culture of urban Puerto Ricans and African Americans for the struggles they encountered in the inner city.<sup>40</sup> Given all these concerns, I decided to place a thorough conversation of national origin distinctions outside the purview of this dissertation. This is not meant to collapse differences based on national origin or to imply that a pan-ethnic identification was the major identity embraced by most Lawrence Latinos in their day-to-day life (it wasn't). Given the transnational relationships that many migrants retained, national origins and ethnicity were central in the lives of many Latino Lawrencians. Nor does this project include a full account of the role of class among Lawrence Latinos. While the sources suggested that such an analysis would be tremendously rich, the sources *only* suggested, and did not give sufficient evidence to make solid claims about how class differences

functioned in this history. I hope that this project is only the beginning of research into the compelling history of Latinos in Lawrence, and that a more nuanced exploration of the amazing diversity among Lawrence Latinos will be forthcoming.

Weighing the impact of what Juan Flores has called the “disproportionate political and economic power among nations” on transnationalism, my exploration of transnational networks will perhaps not appear as sunny as many other accounts.<sup>41</sup> Although transnational migration and the creation/maintenance of transnational kinship, social, economic, political, and cultural circuits were most certainly acts of migrant agency that allowed Latinos to survive and even flourish across national boundaries, it is my contention that such transnationalism was also a *highly constrained* choice in which the structures of (semi, neo, post) colonial dominance made all of the things that migrants considered important parts of living (family, job, shelter/food, education, etc.) virtually impossible to achieve in the same place. Migration, in this sense, was partially a forced choice, and one that often caused logistical nightmares and a great deal of emotional pain, particularly when families were unable to live together, or when the threat of deportation hung overhead. With the exception of the conclusion, this book will not have a strong emphasis on the day-to-day processes of Dominican and Puerto Rican transnationalism. There have been several outstanding scholarly studies on the ways in which Caribbean migrants have created and maintained networks and traditions between and across borders, and I will not duplicate their work here. Instead, I hope to build on those studies by exploring how the existence of a transnational Dominican or Puerto Rican culture affected Lawrence’s crisis and enabled a reinvestment in the city. In the context of a

wealth of superb literature on transnationalism, I am less interested in documenting the presence of transnational networks, practices, and traditions, than I am in exploring how they influenced the decision to settle in Lawrence and how they were mobilized in the struggle to claim space and resources within the city.

Chapter One explores the roots of Lawrence's urban economic crisis in suburbanization. It traces the flight of Lawrence's white residents, industry, and retail establishments to the suburbs, as well as the panic such flight provoked among Lawrence elites and the strategies they advocated to stem or reverse the flight. This chapter unabashedly views suburbanization through an urban lens, exploring the views of Lawrence residents, journalists, and politicians on the losses the city was incurring to its suburban competitors.

Chapter Two attempts to understand what drew Latinos to Lawrence, initially mostly from New York City, but later in direct migration streams from Latin America. I conclude that three main factors were responsible for the development of Lawrence's substantial Latino population. The first is that urban crisis in New York City had created an environment that many Latinos considered dangerous and disappointing. Jobs in Lawrence's declining manufacturing sector attracted Latinos in the 1960s and 1970s, but migration to the city continued as Latino unemployment in Lawrence skyrocketed. Suburban overdevelopment, however, constrained most Latinos to urban living, and many continued to prefer Lawrence as a safer, calmer alternative to New York City in spite of the dwindling economic opportunities Lawrence presented. Although New York continues to attract immigrants to this day, this chapter illustrates that Latino dispersion

from the city was precipitated by racialized urban decline had made New York City inhospitable in their eyes.

Chapter Three explores the decade and a half leading up to the 1984 riots, in order to continue the argument that the three major forces evident in the riots (urban disinvestment, white flight, and Latino activism) did not suddenly and spontaneously erupt that summer. Specifically, Chapter Three looks within the city, at the racialized contestations over public space and resources that occurred between white and Latino city residents, chronicling white Lawrencians' resistance to Latino settlement and Latino activism to claim the city. This chapter, in line with the rest of the dissertation, understands activism broadly, to include Latinos' everyday struggles to make a home in the city, individually or collectively, in the face of official and unofficial hostility.

Chapter Four offers a narrative account of the riots of 1984, offering the first full historical account of the violence between white and Latino residents and of the city's response to the violence. The riots were the most spectacular and devastating example of the racialized struggle for the city, as white and Latinos attempted to decide with knives, rocks, guns, and Molotov cocktails, who would have the right to walk the streets safely and unharassed, and who would have to remain fearful and anxious. Ultimately, this was a contest over who would leave the neighborhood and who would stay. Chapter Five demonstrates that the battle for control of the city's spaces and resources did not end with the fighting, as different groups in and around the city argued over the meaning of the riots, their causes, and what should be done to prevent them. In these contrasting visions of the city and its needs, I attempt to reintroduce a metropolitan perspective, as the astute

residents and observers tied Lawrence's struggles to the exclusionary practices of its suburban neighbors.

Chapter Six explores the impact of the riots in the decade and a half that followed, arguing that Latino activism in the city eventually achieved hard-won political power, but in the context of Lawrence's diminished economic and political clout vis-à-vis the region's suburbs. Tracking Lawrence's accelerating urban crisis and its growing Latino population, this chapter extends the threads of suburbanization, white resistance, and Latino activism into the late 1980s and 1990s. Within the city, white backlash after the riot enabled the development of an anti-welfare political policy explicitly aimed at discouraging Latino migration to the city. When such an urban policy combined with suburban refusals to accept responsibility for Lawrence's problems or to acknowledge those problems as rooted in intrametropolitan inequality, the result was a state-level welfare reform that profoundly shaped national reform efforts. This history demonstrates that the racialized contestations over metropolitan space and resources that occurred in Lawrence were related to a larger suburban political agenda that refused to support a liberal welfare state that many suburbanites saw as unfairly privileging poor communities of color.

In my conclusion, I suggest that although Latino political power in the city of Lawrence did not truly offer self-determination because of the city's relative powerlessness on a regional, state, and national level, the true strengths of Lawrence lay in its relatively powerful transnational position and the bilingual and bicultural service (including retail services) economy that Latino activism in the city created. Although

entrepreneurialism created very few “rags to riches” stories in Lawrence, and Latinos in the city still suffered from remarkable poverty, the pervasive disinvestment that had devastated the city also enabled the ethnic enclave to have a magnified impact on the city as a whole.<sup>42</sup>

By 2000, a decade and a half after the riots had brought international attention to Lawrence, Latinos had achieved an official majority in the city. Lawrence today is nearly three-quarters Latino and vibrantly transnational, with myriad social and economic links to the Caribbean and to New York City. The city has been far more likely to make headlines for its dramatic struggles, however, than for its groundbreaking strides in forging a bicultural urban community. The transition to a Latino majority by the end of the century did not bring an end to these struggles, but decades of Latinos’ insistence on their right to make a home in Lawrence did thoroughly transform the city.

---

<sup>1</sup> This is a composite sketch culled from all accounts of the riots; see Chapters 4 and 5 for complete citations.

<sup>2</sup> *Eagle-Tribune*, “Police plan to clear streets after second night of rioting: 8 p.m. curfew in force tonight,” August 10, 1984. In the race neutral reporting of the 1980s, the reporter did not mention whether the kids breakdancing were white or Latino, but it was a common Latino youth past-time in Lawrence during this era.

<sup>3</sup> This is a history of Puerto Rican, Dominican, Cuban, and other Latin American migrants, as well as their U.S.-born descendants in Lawrence, Massachusetts. I have used the term Latino whenever referring to circumstances that affected all national origin groups regardless of generation, or whenever national origin or generation was not specified in the sources (as it most often was not). In spite of the ways in which the profoundly constructed term “Latino” is problematic, it is a useful construct in the case of Lawrence because of the confluence of myriad different national origin groups and generations in the city; Lawrence had third-generation Latinos as early as the late 1970s and over twenty different national origin groups. More importantly, the term Latino is useful on account of the explicitly pan-ethnic community building and political organizing efforts that many Latinos undertook in Lawrence over the past several decades. Most official and media discussions of Lawrence during this period used the term “Hispanic,” while the English term most used colloquially by Lawrence Latinos was “Spanish.” The term “Latino” was not uncommon, especially in the later years (and it was particularly used by activists), but there was no one term that clearly dominated. I have chosen to stick with “Latino” as it seems to be the term that most clearly invokes a political and social community forged out of *both* shared Latin American cultural elements *and* the shared experience of racism in the United States. As prominent Latino Lawrencian Jorge Santiago explained, “We cannot use a single term to describe a group of people who are as diverse as Cubans, Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, Mexicans, Salvadorans, Costa Ricans, etc. It is necessary, however, to have a name since political power in a democratic society like the United States is based on numbers.” In my use of the term “Latino,” I hope to highlight this contingent and constructed element. For perspective on the many different views on this topic held by Lawrence Latinos, see Kathie Neff Ragsdale, “‘Hispanic’ vs. ‘Latino,’” *Eagle-Tribune*, May 23, 1999. The above Santiago quote is also from this article.

My use of such an umbrella term is not meant to collapse differences between Latino national origins/ethnicities. As Juan Flores notes, the danger in using such pan-ethnic terms is the development of a type of “model minority” myth based on the most successful Latinos that obscures the different ways Latino groups are positioned in U.S. society. As he writes, “Evading a rigorously comparative structural analysis (i.e., how each group is positioned within the existing relations of power and privilege of U.S. society), the public image typically gravitates toward the upper or most successful examples of ‘Latino’ life—what I call the highest common denominator—with the suggestion that those who fail to match up to this pattern of accommodation have primarily themselves to blame.” Although I clearly wish for my use of the term Latino to avoid reinforcing this tendency to obscure the structural obstacles to success for some Latino groups, the danger in this dissertation lies in avoiding the other extreme of this continuum. By emphasizing a particularly marginalized group of Latinos (low-income, urban, low-tier city Latinos, mostly Puerto Rican and Dominican) and exploring the myriad obstacles to their economic and social equality in this era, I do not mean to obscure the successes that they and many other Latinos have achieved within the United States. By no means are all Latinos highly or equally marginalized. Juan Flores, *From Bomba to Hip-Hop: Puerto Rican Culture and Latino Identity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 8.

<sup>4</sup> Although breakdancing might not be considered a part of traditional Puerto Rican culture, I am embracing Juan Flores’s discussion of “street culture,” an urban culture forged in the late 1970s and early 1980s in the shared urban spaces of African Americans and Puerto Ricans in New York City. Flores describes that this “street culture” included hip-hop and breakdancing, focused on life in urban communities, was critical of the police, and celebrated the creative powers of Black and Puerto Rican urban youth. “Street culture” was making its way heavily into the mass culture during this period, a fact that was perhaps even more important for those Puerto Ricans dispersed from the heartland of New York City, Flores, *From Bomba to Hip-Hop*.



---

<sup>5</sup> Although the term “urban crisis” has its origins in the Black urban uprisings (or riots) of the 1960s, historians have extensively demonstrated that such violence stemmed from decades of racialized urban disinvestment and metropolitan inequality. My use of the term, then, incorporates this understanding of the political and economic aspects of urban crisis, of the urban *economic* crisis facilitated by suburbanization and deindustrialization, by uneven development on a metropolitan scale (and within the city through the process of urban renewal). I hope readers will understand that with the phrase urban crisis, I am referring broadly to the urban economic decline that resulted from the residential, industrial, and retail flight from central cities that occurred in the decades after World War II. I use the term “urban crisis” to remind the reader that such decline carried with it a host of other economic and social problems: joblessness and poverty; a devastated tax base that resulted in inadequate city services, particularly educational and public safety services; and decaying infrastructure and housing stemming from public and private disinvestment. It should be kept in mind that such urban disinvestment stemmed from successful suburban competition for middle-class residents, industry, and retail, as well as a successful suburban political agenda that ensured the fruits of new suburban (but formally urban) economic activity would not need to be shared equally with city dwellers.

<sup>6</sup> The decision to use the term “white” throughout this dissertation was as complicated as the decision to use the term Latino. In the context of the racialized struggle in the city, white Lawrencians were generally termed Anglo in the media and by politicians and community organizers (the race of white suburbanites was rarely mentioned). I felt, however, that the term Anglo obscures not only the non-WASP ethnicity of many of Lawrence’s white residents, but also the ways in which whiteness operated in this history, and the ways in which white residents of Greater Lawrence were part of a national story of the transformation of racial hierarchies in this era. Outside of this conflict, it seems that most white residents would have identified either as American or with their ethnic identity. Yet, clearly they did not monopolize the term American, and referring only to their ethnic identity would obscure the workings of racism and white privilege in this history, in a way similar to what the use of Anglo would have done. In the end, I chose “white” to highlight race as not only a social, but a political category.

<sup>7</sup> Alan Lupo, “Lessons of the Street: What Lawrence never learned,” *Boston Phoenix*, August 21, 1984.

<sup>8</sup> The lack of a university in Lawrence may also be partly responsible for its poor showing in academic literature. For accounts of Lawrence’s earlier history see Donald B. Cole, *Immigrant City: Lawrence, Massachusetts, 1845-1921* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1963); Ardis Cameron, *Radicals of the Worst Sort: Laboring Women in Lawrence, Massachusetts, 1860-1912* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1995); and Rudolph Vecoli, “Anthony Capraro and the Lawrence Strike of 1919,” in *Labor Divided: Race and Ethnicity in United States Labor Struggles, 1835-1960*, Robert Asher and Charles Stephenson, eds. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), 267-282.

<sup>9</sup> In the second half of the 20th century, urban renewal and then gentrification reclaimed many major central cities (such as New York, Los Angeles, and Boston) as sites for work, leisure, and housing for a largely white professional class. It is well known that many communities of color were displaced by this process, often priced out of the city’s housing market altogether or left without sufficient work after the city’s transition to an information and finance-driven economy. What is less well known is where these displaced communities wound up. After 1970, it seems that many African Americans, children or grandchildren of earlier waves of migration from the South, returned to thriving Southern cities, such as Atlanta. 1970 is a the turning point for Puerto Rican migration, after which, for many years, more Puerto Ricans migrated back to the island each year than from the island to the mainland. Further, the proportion of Puerto Ricans living in New York City has dramatically declined since World War II. In 1940, eighty-eight percent of stateside Puerto Ricans lived in New York City. By 1970, New York City’s share had declined to only fifty-nine percent of stateside Puerto Ricans, a smaller proportion, but one that still left New York City as home to the majority of stateside Puerto Ricans. By 2000, however, less than a quarter of stateside Puerto Ricans lived in New York City. Continued migration *to* such cities as New York and Los Angeles has slightly obscured the parallel phenomenon of a continued dispersion *from* these cities, beginning in earnest, it seems, around 1970. Whether high rent, unemployment, the near impossibility of owning one’s home, crime, underfunded public schools, or simply distaste for the congestion and relative anonymity of big-city living drove these migrants from big Northern, Midwestern, and Western cities,

---

enough people left to warrant some scrutiny. The growing proportion of Latinos in low-tier cities, such as Lawrence, demonstrates that small cities might be a good place to look for where many displaced urban residents have re-settled. I discuss this further in Chapter Two and the Conclusion. Carmen Teresa Whalen and Víctor Vázquez-Hernández, eds. *The Puerto Rican Diaspora: Historical Perspectives* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2005).

<sup>10</sup> William A. Lindeke, “Latino Political Succession and Incorporation: Lawrence,” and Ramona Hernández and Glenn Jacobs, “Beyond Homeland Politics: Dominicans in Massachusetts,” both in *Latino Politics in Massachusetts: Struggles, Strategies, and Prospects*, Carol Hardy-Fanta and Jeffrey Gerson, eds. (New York and London: Routledge, 2002), 73.

<sup>11</sup> There is no graceful way to refer to communities that encompass second-, third-, and fourth-generation individuals. The term “children” of immigrants makes it sound like none are full-grown adults, yet I am aware that “descendants” is awkward as well.

<sup>12</sup> Although I am speaking broadly of global immigrant streams, particularly of immigrants from throughout Latin America, it is imprecise to speak of Puerto Ricans as immigrants, considering Puerto Rico was annexed to the United States long before large-scale migration began, and Puerto Ricans arrived stateside as citizens, not “aliens,” as migrants, not immigrants. In discussing Latino migration and settlement, neither the term migration nor the term immigration is sufficient; although the term migration is the more inclusive of the two, and thereby the most accurate, it elides the risks, challenges, and subordinate status that non-U.S. citizens face when arriving in the United States, whereas the term immigration elides the colonial history of Puerto Rico, as well as all of the ways that Puerto Ricans also face risks, challenges, and a subordinate status based on their perceived racial identity as well as on their (seemingly perpetual) perceived foreignness. Most importantly, by discussing one or the other, migrants or immigrants, we miss the historical moments in which these groups work together, are lumped together, or at the very least are subject to similar forces as Latinos in the United States.

<sup>13</sup> For examples of significant studies of Puerto Rican and Dominican migration and settlement, see Carmen Teresa Whalen and Víctor Vázquez-Hernández, eds. *The Puerto Rican Diaspora: Historical Perspectives* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2005); Virginia E. Sánchez Korrol, *From Colonia to Community: The History of Puerto Ricans in New York City, 1917-1948* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1983); Ernesto Sagás and Sintia E. Molina, eds., *Dominican Migration: Transnational Perspectives* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2004); Sherri Grasmuck and Patricia R. Pessar, *Between Two Islands: Dominican International Migration* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); Arlene Davila, *Barrio Dreams: Puerto Ricans, Latinos, and the Neoliberal City* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); and Eugenia Georges, *The Making of a Transnational Community: Migration, Development, and Cultural Change in the Dominican Republic* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990). An important exception to the general trend in explaining migration is Ramona Hernández's *The Mobility of Labor Under Advanced Capitalism: Dominican Migration to the United States* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), in which she argues that high rates of Dominican unemployment challenge the simplicity of the idea that migrants come to the U.S. because of the availability of jobs. For social or cultural remittances, see Peggy Levitt, *The Transnational Villagers* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001) and Juan Flores, *The Diaspora Strikes Back: Caribeño Tales of Learning and Turning* (New York: Routledge, 2009).

<sup>14</sup> For studies of racialized struggles over metropolitan space and resources after World War II, see Robert O. Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton, NY: Princeton University Press, 2003); Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton, NY: Princeton University Press, 1996); Eric Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight: Fear and Fantasy in Suburban Los Angeles* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006); Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America*, (New York: Random House, 2003); Kenneth L. Kusmer and Joe W. Trotter, eds., *African American Urban History Since World War II*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009); and Kevin M. Kruse and Thomas J. Sugrue, eds. *The New Suburban History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

<sup>15</sup> Many cities like Lawrence, with less than 100,000 residents and a workforce that often commutes to the suburbs are no longer considered “central cities” by the census, and have often been grouped in with

---

suburbs in many demographic studies that adopt different criteria than that used by the census. Lawrence was officially a “central city” in 2000 according to the census, but is no longer considered one at this time. For a thorough study of urban decline and renewal efforts in another low-tier city, see Howard Gillette Jr., *Camden After the Fall: Decline and Renewal in a Post-Industrial City* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2005).

<sup>16</sup> Although this process mainly affected cities in the Northeast and Midwest, similar histories have also been written of a few Western cities like Oakland and Los Angeles, although, by and large, the process of suburbanization and urban disinvestment was somewhat different in the Sunbelt.

<sup>17</sup> For literature on suburbanization and deindustrialization, see Kenneth Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987); Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton, NY: Princeton University Press, 1996); Robert O. Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton, NY: Princeton University Press, 2003); Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America*, (New York: Random House, 2003).

<sup>18</sup> For literature on white resistance to urban integration see Amanda I. Seligman, *Block by Block: Neighborhoods and Public Policy on Chicago's West Side* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Kevin Michael Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005). Although the title of *White Flight* focuses on urban disinvestment, much of the book focuses on white resistance to the integration of neighborhoods and public spaces in Atlanta, and indeed, demonstrates how white flight and “white fight” were interwoven.

<sup>19</sup> The literature on postwar Black urban activism is remarkably prolific. For a few examples, see: Martha Biondi, *To Stand and Fight: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Postwar New York City* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003); Heather Ann Thompson, *Whose Detroit? Politics, Labor, and Race in a Modern American City* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001); Nikhil Pal Singh, *Black is a Country: Race and the Unfinished Struggle for Democracy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004); Jeanne Theoharis and Komozi Woodard, eds., *Freedom North: Black Freedom Struggles Outside the South, 1940-1980* (New York: Palgrave-MacMillan, 2003); Peniel E. Joseph, *Waiting until the Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2006); and Cynthia Ann Young, *Soul Power: Culture, Radicalism, and the Making of a U.S. Third World Left* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006). *Soul Power* also explores stateside Puerto Rican urban activism in its study of the formation of a U.S. Third World Left.

<sup>20</sup> Lawrence Latinos were certainly not the first to invoke a transnational context to theorize and challenge urban problems, as this was a defining characteristic of the U.S. Third World left in the era of decolonization. This specific type of transnational radicalism unfortunately did not turn up in my study of Lawrence. Although Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, and Cubans on the islands have a long history of questioning and challenging U.S. colonial and imperial penetration of Latin America, and although this dissertation is an attempt to document Puerto Rican, Dominican, and Cuban challenges to U.S. racial hierarchies in Lawrence, I found little evidence of Lawrence Latinos connecting their experience of local racism in Lawrence with the global racism evident in the history of U.S. involvement in Latin America, although they seem certainly to have been aware and critical of both. This was surprising, in light of the provocative studies of the U.S. Third World left conducted by Cynthia Young, Robin Kelley, and others, who have noted the transnational identification and alliances made mainly by African American, Chicano, and Puerto Rican radicals in the 1960s. Members of the U.S. Third World Left, in an era of global decolonization, connected the processes and practices of domestic racism with the processes and practices of colonialism and imperialism, particularly in terms of U.S. cities, which many theorized as “internal colonies.” These visionaries argued for transnational solidarity in the struggle against global racism and capitalist exploitation of communities of color across the globe. Perhaps subsequent studies of Lawrence will unearth such material (a Lawrence chapter of the Young Lords, perhaps?). It is possible that this absence stems from the fact that by the time a substantial Latino population existed in the city, the historical moment that encouraged such radical anti-racism had passed. It is also possible, however, that, as Juan Flores has speculated, the counter-hegemonic impulse of transnationalism “from below” was mitigated by the upward mobility some migrants did indeed experience in the U.S. relative to their island

---

peers. Flores has pointed out that such mobility may lead to a complacency with, or even an investment in, the international political economy that enabled the migrants' relative success (thus negating the "from below" perspective). As was demonstrated in Lawrence, however, the absence of such a radical critique of global capitalism and imperial control absolutely did not preclude a local critique of U.S. racial hierarchies and processes of exclusion, and these have remained my emphasis, Cynthia A. Young, *Soul Power: Culture, Radicalism, and the Making of a U.S. Third World Left* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2006); Robin Kelley, *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2002); Juan Flores, *The Diaspora Strikes Back: Caribeño Tales of Learning and Turning* (New York: Routledge, 2009).

<sup>21</sup> A central theme in studies of Dominican and Puerto Rican migration has been the role of transnationalism, including return or circular migration, remittances, and frequent visits or communication between the islands and the United States. Scholars have argued that transnationalism has been facilitated by economic inequality between the U.S. and Latin America, as many migrants have come to the United States to fill jobs in the low-wage service or manufacturing industry, without relinquishing ties to home countries or hopes of return. Although the term "transnational" is not a perfect fit with regards to Puerto Rico, considering its Commonwealth status, scholars explore the same processes. Indeed, transnationality is facilitated by U.S. citizenship and the lack of legal immigration hurdles in the case of Puerto Rican migration. The emphasis in studies of Puerto Rican and Dominican migration on diaspora and transnationalism is evident even in the titles in the above citation of major works in the field.

<sup>22</sup> Ramona Hernández has been at the forefront of challenging the theory that jobs have been the main pull of U.S. cities for Dominican migrants and "the traditional correlation between migration and economic progress." She has declared that "one could safely argue that for many Dominicans migration to the United States has afforded them little more than a shift of scenery. Poor at home, they continue to be poor in the receiving country." Migration, in her analysis, has not been set in motion by a real need in the United States for Dominican workers; rather it has been spurred by the imperial relationship between the U.S. and Latin America. This relationship has extracted capital from the Dominican Republic for decades and migration has been the logical pursuit of that capital and the better life it can provide, regardless of whether the U.S. economy demonstrates a need for Dominican workers on U.S. soil (of course, the U.S. economy has certainly demonstrated a need for Dominican workers on Dominican soil, as free trade zones in the Dominican Republic are a major site of U.S. manufacturing), Ramona Hernández's *The Mobility of Labor Under Advanced Capitalism: Dominican Migration to the United States* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

<sup>23</sup> Ramona Hernández, *The Mobility of Labor Under Advanced Capitalism*; Gina M. Pérez, *The Near Northwest Side Story: Migration, Displacement, & Puerto Rican Families* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004). See also, Carmen Teresa Whalen, *From Puerto Rico to Philadelphia: Puerto Rican Workers and Postwar Economies*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001).

<sup>24</sup> The debate around whether Latinos ought to be considered a "race" is longstanding. Acknowledging the obvious constructed nature of the term, this dissertation will attempt to explore the ways in which systemic racism remains operative regardless of Latinos' racial self-identification. Indeed, this paper will explore the unpredictable collisions of different conceptions of race and different forms of discrimination, stereotyping, and prejudice that have shaped Lawrence's development, and the role of race and ethnic identity in mobilizing social activism. For an overview of the terms of this debate, see Jorge Klor de Alva, Earl Shorris, and Cornel West, "Our Next Race Question: The Uneasiness between Blacks and Latinos," in *The Latino Studies Reader: Culture, Economy, and Society*, Antonia Darder and Rodolfo D. Torres, eds. (Malden, MA, USA and Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing, 1998).

<sup>25</sup> Such processes largely, but not completely, excluded African Americans from most suburbs. As Andrew Wiese has documented, some African American families struggled to overcome the odds and purchase or rent homes in the suburbs, and he has encouraged historians not to erase that fact, cautioning that historians have been even more effective at keeping suburbia white than suburbanites were, Andrew Wiese, *Places of Their Own: African American Suburbanization in the Twentieth Century*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).

---

<sup>26</sup> Carmen Teresa Whalen, "Citizens and Workers: African Americans and Puerto Ricans in Philadelphia's Regional Economy Since World War II," in *African American Urban History Since World War II*, Kenneth L. Kusmer and Joe W. Trotter, eds. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

<sup>27</sup> As Robert Self has explained in his study of Oakland and Alameda County, "Even as housing and employment barriers lifted in degrees after the 1960s and metropolitan boundaries became more porous for African Americans, property markets changed slowly. Property value differentials hardened across space, and gaps between the urban and suburban per capita revenue from municipal property taxes widened, creating vast inequalities that functioned to reproduce racial disadvantage – especially in key property-tax supported urban services like education and health and welfare," Robert O. Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton, NY: Princeton University Press, 2003), 269.

<sup>28</sup> In exploring the impact of racism on Latino settlement patterns, it is important to note that discrimination was not the only form of racism at work. Racism was multi-faceted; it ranged from prejudice (harboring negative feelings about a specific group), to bigotry (explicitly expressing those negative feelings), to racial violence (the attempt to reinforce or challenge racial hierarchies through the use of force), to discrimination (allocating or withholding privileges, opportunities, or rights based on prejudice), to structural racism (the systemic maintenance of privilege among groups who have been privileged in the past, and those considered to be most closely aligned). It is beyond the purview of this study to ascertain the proportion of each form of racism responsible for the concentration of Latinos in Lawrence. This dissertation contains examples of all forms, although part of my argument is that bigotry and racial violence are most often present where discrimination and structural racism have failed to maintain white privilege, and therefore should not be taken as an indicator of where racism, as a whole, is most operative. Where racism is most effective at insulating white privilege, bigotry and force are rarely necessary. Perhaps most importantly, the argument that racism has been substantially responsible for the concentration of Latinos in Lawrence should absolutely not be reduced to the argument that *housing discrimination alone* has kept Latinos from the Greater Lawrence suburbs. Individual acts of discrimination are far less effective at maintaining white privilege than structural racism, and as a result, this dissertation focuses more on the latter. Structural racism, the ways in which power and privileges are maintained among the groups who have had it in the past, and the ways in which social mobility is restricted to those who are considered to be most closely aligned with the privileged groups of the past, necessarily requires a historical approach. In contrast to the post-Civil Rights-era trend that puts the burden of proof on those claiming racism's existence, a historical study allows us to trace the maintenance and transformation of the undisputed racial hierarchies that existed in the pre-Civil Rights era. In this case, post-World War II suburbanization brought a wide swath of the U.S.'s working poor into the fold of the middle-class, expanding and improving the public services at their disposal, particularly in education. Exploring the details of this process illuminates the fact that people of color were systematically excluded from it.

<sup>29</sup> Elizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America*, (New York: Random House, 2003), 228.

<sup>30</sup> For an excellent early study of racialized struggles over urban space in Chicano Los Angeles, see Rodolfo F. Acuña, *A Community Under Siege: A Chronicle of Chicanos East of the Los Angeles River, 1945-1975* (Los Angeles: UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center, 1984).

<sup>31</sup> Eric Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight: Fear and Fantasy in Suburban Los Angeles* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006); *Chavez Ravine*, videocassette, directed by Jordan Mechner (Los Angeles: Tiny Projects, 2003).

<sup>32</sup> Johanna Fernández, "The Young Lords and the Postwar City: Notes on the Geographical and Structural Reconfigurations of Contemporary Urban Life," in *African American Urban History Since World War II*, Kenneth L. Kusmer and Joe W. Trotter, eds. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 81.

<sup>33</sup> With his recent historical study of Santo Domingo and New York City, Jesse Hoffnung-Gaskof has broken ground in offering a historical portrait of Dominicans in the United States, Jesse Hoffnung-Gaskof, *A Tale of Two Cities: Santo Domingo and New York after 1950* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008).

---

<sup>34</sup> For a general overview of the of urban crisis in the 1980s and after, as well as the impact of the suburban political agenda on federal policy towards cities, see Howard P. Chudacoff, and Judith E. Smith, *The Evolution of American Urban Society*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2004).

<sup>35</sup> Of course, not all Sunbelt cities had been immune from earlier crises, as the Watts uprisings in 1965 demonstrate.

<sup>36</sup> Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, translated by Donald Nicholson-Smith, (Oxford, UK; Cambridge, USA: Blackwell, 1991).

<sup>37</sup> The slowness with which Latinos in Lawrence have gained electoral strength and direct participation in municipal government has been affected by a number of factors, not the least of which was the devastating illegal disenfranchisement of Latino residents by city officials. Community groups have fought and continue to fight such disfranchisement in the U.S. courts with partial success.

<sup>38</sup> For examples of a cultural approach to the history of Black claims on public space and resources, see Robin D. G. Kelley, *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class*, (New York: The Free Press, 1994); Davarian L. Baldwin, *Chicago's New Negroes: Modernity, the Great Migration, and Black Urban Life*, (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2007); and Cynthia Ann Young, *Soul Power: Culture, Radicalism, and the Making of a U.S. Third World Left* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006).

<sup>39</sup> I name key public figures directly in the text, but even though there are no restrictions on the use of any of these oral histories, if an individual was not a public figure, I include his or her name only in the notes, to preserve some small degree of anonymity.

<sup>40</sup> The "culture of poverty" thesis as it pertains to Puerto Ricans found its fullest expression in Oscar Lewis, *La Vida: A Puerto Rican Family in the Culture of Poverty - San Juan and New York* (New York: Random House, 1966).

<sup>41</sup> Flores, *From Bomba to Hip-Hop*.

<sup>42</sup> Joel Millman has argued that immigration has been an important force revitalizing U.S. cities. This has indeed been true in Lawrence, as well, as I will discuss more in the Conclusion. The positive impact of the ethnic enclave economy on the city itself, however, should not be equated with pervasive wealth and well-being throughout the Latino community. Lawrence's enclave economy stemmed at least partially from Latino marginalization in the regional economy and a white refusal to tailor services and goods to their Latino customers. These origins underscore the contingent nature of much immigrant entrepreneurial success. Although Latino-owned businesses and a bilingual and bicultural service economy would eventually prove to be the heart of the city's renaissance in the late 1990s, and although I argue that the labor, energy, skills, education, capital, and vision that Latino entrepreneurs have brought to the city have been unquestionably good for Lawrence, it is debatable how well self-employment has benefitted those Latinos who have felt compelled or inspired to undertake it. Juan Flores has cautioned scholars to be wary of the preponderance of the "success story" in literature on immigrant entrepreneurialism, and the overwhelming tone of "triumph against the odds." Although much of the literature on Dominican entrepreneurialism in particular has taken this tone, many scholars have also noted that self-employment is frequently a constrained choice in the face of economic marginalization. Although their study addresses Korean American, not Latino, entrepreneurs, Nancy Abelmann and John Lie have persuasively argued that urban immigrant entrepreneurialism most often involves excruciatingly long hours, a reliance on family labor, the substantial risk of theft or violence, a lack of any of the benefits in a salaried job (such as health insurance), and, too often, a minimal and unstable profit. This dismal portrait of the high risks and low remuneration for many urban immigrant entrepreneurs was echoed in the ethnic enclave economy that developed in Lawrence over these decades, Flores, *The Diaspora Strikes Back*, 23 and Hernández, *The Mobility of Workers Under Advanced Capitalism*. Hernández also cites a working paper by Alejandro Portes and Luis E. Guarnizo from 1990 entitled *Tropical Capitalists: U.S.-Bound Immigration and Small-Enterprise Development in the Dominican Republic*; and Nancy Abelmann and John Lie, *Blue Dreams: Korean Americans and the Los Angeles Riots* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997).

## **Chapter One – Suburban Growth and the Origins of Lawrence’s Urban Crisis, 1945-1980<sup>1</sup>**

After World War II, the United States entered an era of unprecedented prosperity. Federal support for suburban residential and industrial growth enabled substantial spatial and social mobility for a significant portion of the U.S. American population. Rapid suburban development was enabled by public and private investment in highways, housing, and industry. The fast growing suburbs posed stiff competition for central cities, most of which lost residents, industry, and retail business to their suburban neighbors in the decades after the war ended. This chapter explores the impact of suburban growth on Lawrence in the decades before Latino migration to the city began to accelerate. The idea that Latino migration somehow brought urban crisis to Lawrence in the 1980s was an extremely popular idea among white residents in and around the city, many of whom scapegoated Latinos for the city’s decline. In reality, the origins of Lawrence’s urban crisis date back further, to the processes of suburban development and competition set in motion in the decades after World War II. This chapter is designed to serve two functions: the first is to explore the intertwined fates of the city and its suburbs, as the Greater Lawrence story showcases national trends in suburban development at the expense of urban economies in the decades after World War II; the second is to demonstrate that the roots of urban crisis in Lawrence were the results of changes in its metropolitan political economy that preceded substantial Latino settlement in the city.

Suburbanization in the Merrimack Valley was part of a national trend. Throughout the country, rising wages and federal investment in government-backed mortgages and highway construction facilitated a flow of white city residents, many of

whom were the children or grandchildren of immigrants, out to the suburbs in pursuit of the American dream of prosperity and stability. Massive private and public investment in the suburbs brought about the dramatic growth, not only of homes, but of malls and suburban industry, drawing retail and business establishments out of urban centers. This suburban growth swelled the suburban tax base and increased the political power of suburbs relative to their low-tier urban neighbors such as Lawrence, Springfield, and New Bedford. At the same time, official and unofficial policies of segregation dramatically restricted the mobility of African Americans and Puerto Ricans into these new pockets of suburban prosperity, and many of them remained in cities devastated by unemployment and poverty. Lawrence's minority population in this era, however, was less than one percent; ninety-nine percent of Lawrence's population was white and many Lawrencians were able to ride the wave of suburbanization out of the city. The population of Lawrence dramatically declined and many of those who remained in the city were elderly or poor.

### **“Pull” factors in suburbanization**

The late 1940s and 1950s, a peak period of suburbanization across the nation, saw a dramatic decline in Lawrence's population as well as unprecedented growth in the population of Lawrence's surrounding suburbs, with nearby Salem, New Hampshire, for example, almost doubling in population in a single decade. Beyond the loss of urban residents, Lawrence also lost much of its remaining textile industry during this time, as well as its retail shops, theaters, and restaurants which had trouble competing with the



newly opened suburban shopping centers. Lawrence was clearly suffering the effects of urban crisis by 1980, as high unemployment, a devastated retail sector, and a massive exodus of its white residents had drastically undermined the city's tax base and its morale. Meanwhile, Latino migration to the city did not really begin to accelerate until after 1980. Although dozens of Latino families in the 1950s had turned into hundreds by the 1960s, Latinos were still only 3.5 percent of Lawrence's population in 1970. Those hundreds grew into thousands in the 1970s, but Latinos still did not make up more than sixteen percent of Lawrence's population in 1980, a far smaller "minority" population than the average U.S. city at this time. Lawrence's economic struggles as well as its "white flight" preceded the development of a large Latino population in the city.

Although historians have chronicled "white flight" from large urban centers like New York, Chicago, Oakland, and Detroit, the impact of this exodus on the economies and demographics of low-tier cities remains somewhat understudied, and it is unclear where these small cities fit in the larger narratives.<sup>2</sup> Lawrence, like many small cities in the 1950s, was ninety-nine percent white, and had never developed a sizable African American community,<sup>3</sup> and so the image of white residents leaving the cities as people of color, particularly African Americans, moved into their neighborhoods, simply does not apply to Lawrence in the decades after World War II. Yet, even without a racial/racist motivation to leave the city, Lawrence still lost twelve percent of its population between 1950 and 1960. Between the 1940 and 1980 census, Lawrence lost a total of nearly forty percent of its white residents, before substantial Latino migration to the city was underway. In this sense, Lawrence confirms the scholarly turn to the "pull factors" of

white flight, in which scholars emphasize the factors that enticed white urban residents out into the suburbs. Rising wages and federally guaranteed mortgages brought the ownership of single family suburban homes into range for many middle- and working-class white families while federally sponsored highway development kept the city accessible. At the same time, tax incentives and ample space for parking increasingly brought industry and retail establishments out to the suburbs, cutting the commute to work and shopping. Suburban growth in turn swelled suburban tax bases, enabling strong infrastructures and lily-white public schools flush with resources, as well as significant state and national political power relative to their urban neighbors, sufficient political power by the 1980s to make sure that “urban problems” were confined to cities.

The draw of Lawrence’s suburbs in these early decades was not that they offered an escape from the racial tension of the city (although white flight from Lawrence would dramatically accelerate as the Latino population in the city became substantial after 1980); rather the pull of the suburbs related to changes in the metropolitan political economy that developed the suburbs at Lawrence’s expense and enabled the suburbs to restrict economic diversity through exclusionary zoning practices. These changes in metropolitan political economy were national changes that were racialized in their origins (an effort to create and preserve prosperous, independent, “lily-white” suburbs), and I will argue they were tremendously racialized in their impact on the Greater Lawrence region. They were not, however, specifically racialized in their early application in Greater Lawrence, as there was no substantial urban community of color from which to flee--or to exclude from the suburbs. Despite the white racial homogeneity of the region

in these first decades of suburbanization, early “white flight” from Lawrence did conform to national patterns in that it created prosperous, independent, politically powerful and overwhelmingly white suburbs, as well as the legal and economic framework that would funnel future Latino migrants into Lawrence proper.

### **Suburban residential growth**

Lawrence is completely surrounded by three suburbs: Andover, North Andover, and Methuen. This study, however, will also include Salem, New Hampshire,<sup>4</sup> directly over the New Hampshire border from Methuen. Lying just north of Greater Lawrence, Salem would come to be the closest major retail center in tax-free New Hampshire and a heavy retail competitor with Lawrence. Indeed, by 1980, Salem was considered part of “Greater Lawrence” in booster efforts to recruit new industry and residents to the area. The four suburbs had somewhat different trajectories; Andover and North Andover, lying to the Southwest and Southeast of Lawrence, respectively (in other words, on the Boston side of Lawrence), were significantly more prosperous than Methuen and Salem (lying to the North). To acknowledge the diversity among suburbs, I will term Andover and North Andover “high-end” suburbs, and Methuen and Salem “mid-range” suburbs. I choose these terms over “working-class,” “middle-class,” or “upper-class” suburbs to emphasize that suburban living, and particularly suburban homeownership, was the major path to upward mobility in the postwar years. Whatever the class origins of Methuen and Salem residents, and whatever occupations they may have retained, for most, the move to suburbia enabled an upward social and economic mobility over the next few decades that

renders discussions of class extremely complicated in this context and beyond the purview of this dissertation.

Between 1950 and 1960, the number of people living in the Greater Lawrence metropolitan region remained relatively stable. This stability, however, obscured substantial shifts in urban and suburban population changes. While Lawrence lost twelve percent of its population, or almost 10,000 residents, Andover's population increased by twenty-eight percent, Methuen's by fifteen percent, and North Andover's by twenty-nine percent. The increase was even more dramatic just over the New Hampshire border, where Salem (soon to grow into a commercial hub) almost doubled in population during the 1950s, with a whopping ninety-two percent increase. This early suburban growth is particularly important because, as mentioned above, although white flight most likely did occur in subsequent decades, suburban growth and the flight of urban population, industry, and retail began before the city developed a substantial Latino population.

Between 1950 and 1960, as the population of Lawrence's suburbs grew, the city itself lost 10,000 residents, or twelve percent of its population. Between 1960 and 1970, at a time when the city's Latino population was still miniscule, Lawrence's population declined another six percent. By 1980, Lawrence's total population decline had slowed substantially, although it still managed to reach a new low of 63,175. The Latino population, however, had begun to establish itself, growing from only 2,327 in 1970 to 10,296 in a decade, and that increase accounts for a good deal of the population stability for the city overall. If we examine only the white residents of the city, we can see that their numbers continued to decline, from approximately 64,000 to around 52,000,

marking *almost a twenty percent decline* throughout the 1970s, and exceeding, in both numerical and proportionate terms, the decline of the 1950s.

There is no way to know for certain how much of the population growth in Lawrence's suburbs was fueled by the exodus of city residents. No doubt some new suburbanites came from Boston, or outside of Massachusetts entirely. Indeed, the level of growth in the suburbs far exceeded the level of population decline in the city, which may be partly explainable by the "baby boom" that occurred in the years after World War II. Descriptive and census evidence, however, strongly suggest that a good portion of the suburbs' expanding residents were former Lawrencians, as many suburban commentators on the city referred to a time when they or their parents lived in Lawrence. This would make sense considering that the decision to move would have been substantially easier if one could move without needing to change jobs, go to an unfamiliar place, or leave friends and family. The 1960 Census indicated that nearly forty percent of new Methuen residents had come from either Lawrence or Haverhill, and planning reports noted that many residents had left Lawrence's aging housing stock in pursuit of "more modern housing in the suburbs" and that "the suburban towns of Andover, Methuen and North Andover have absorbed the greater part of the out-migration and have thereby produced a fairly stable metropolitan area population since 1920."<sup>5</sup> Thus, there is substantial evidence to confirm that, although new suburban residents did not *always* come from Lawrence, a good proportion of suburban growth was fueled by emigration from the old mill city.

The decline in Lawrence's population continued through these decades, as the suburbs continued to develop. New highway construction in the 1950s and 1960s facilitated easy access between the suburbs and to the city, and the suburbs had ample open space for development. Housing development was largely restricted, however, to single-family homes, with federally guaranteed mortgage programs and expanded credit opportunities making these homes affordable for purchase and thus promoting high owner-occupancy rates. Homes in the suburbs were also often newer and in better condition than Lawrence's housing, much of which had been built at the turn of the century or earlier to house immigrant workers in Lawrence's textile mills during its industrial heyday. Federal funds were also far easier to obtain for new home purchases than for renovations.

In 1950, at the beginning of this suburban swell, median home values and household incomes were similar in Lawrence and its suburbs. Suburban homeownership was in reach for even average-earning Lawrence residents. In 1950, the median value of a single-family home in the city of Lawrence was \$8,989 (\$72,844 adjusted to 2005 dollars, to give a sense of change over time),<sup>6</sup> quite near the median home value for the Greater Lawrence area as a whole, \$9,210 (\$74,635 adjusted). Those Lawrencians who could afford to buy a home in this era likely had substantial choice over whether they purchased in the city or the suburbs. Indeed, considering that much of the federal support for homeownership was geared towards new construction, it was most likely easier for Lawrencians in 1950 to buy a home in the suburbs than in the city. This is significant in the study of suburban development, because at this time, when the economics of

homeownership were so egalitarian, the racial politics of home ownership were their most exclusionary. As discussed in the introduction, the very federal processes that enabled home ownership for so many white families explicitly excluded families of color from these opportunities. Although restrictive covenants were made legally unenforceable in 1948, and explicit references to race were removed from the FHA materials in the 1950s, the federally established policies of red-lining and denying mortgages to non-white applicants based on the perceived risk of the loan continued, as did housing discrimination. In the 1960s, this form of discrimination was outlawed, yet it persisted into the 1970s, even in liberal Massachusetts. By the time an enforcement mechanism (however inefficient) was in place to ensure equal opportunity lending and prevent housing discrimination, a solid gap had grown between urban income and suburban housing prices.

As mentioned above, the median home value in Greater Lawrence in 1950 was \$9,210 (\$74,635 adjusted), just over three times the median household income of Lawrence residents. Suburban housing was economically accessible to a large number of white urban families looking to buy their own homes in this era of public and private celebration of domesticity and the nuclear family. By 1980, however, the difference between urban wages and suburban housing prices had become dramatic. In Andover, in 1980, the median housing value had grown to \$80,684 (\$191,234 adjusted), nearly six times the median household income in Lawrence, and by 2000, at \$344,895 (\$391,161 adjusted), the median home value in Andover was nearly twelve times the median household income in Lawrence! Even in a mid-range suburb such as Methuen this

process occurred. By 1980, the median home value had only grown to \$50,004 (\$118,517 adjusted), just three and a half times the median household income in Lawrence. But by 2000, it was \$159,000 (\$180,329 adjusted), or five and a half times the median household income in Lawrence. Average household incomes in Lawrence declined slightly over these decades, but the true responsibility for this major gap lays in the virtually exponential growth of suburban housing prices. As Robert Self has noted in his study of Oakland and suburban Alameda County, at the same time that explicitly racial barriers to suburban living were being eradicated in the 1960s, “property value differentials hardened across space.”<sup>7</sup> As the decades advanced, discrimination was no longer necessary to ensure that the suburbs remained racially and economically homogenous, as low-income, urban workers, as most Latinos in Lawrence were, had been effectively priced out of the market to buy suburban homes.

While many urban workers had been priced out of buying homes by 1980, zoning standards and public opposition had dramatically limited the quantity of multifamily rental and subsidized housing in the suburbs. By 1980, between eighty-seven and ninety-four percent of houses in Andover, Methuen and North Andover were only in single-family dwellings.<sup>8</sup> Although Massachusetts had passed landmark legislation in 1969 to encourage the development of subsidized housing in its suburbs, such development remained slow and the suburban units that were built were most often for the elderly, not for low-income families.<sup>9</sup> In 1976, the year closest to 1980 for which data is available, Andover had 232 units of subsidized housing, North Andover had 154, and Methuen 308. All of these units combined do not even come close to Lawrence’s 2,203 units of



subsidized housing. Not only did the suburbs have dramatically less subsidized housing than Lawrence, but the majority of those units were for the elderly: seventy-six percent of Andover's subsidized units, eighty-seven percent of North Andover's, and eighty-one percent of Methuen's.<sup>10</sup> By contrast, only a quarter of Lawrence's subsidized units were for the elderly; the rest were for low-income families.<sup>11</sup>

By 1980, subsidized and even private multi-family rental housing was overwhelmingly concentrated in the central city, dramatically constraining renters' choices. Median home prices in most suburbs were beyond the means of the average Lawrence worker, particularly beyond the range of the average Latino worker, whose wages were substantially lower than the Lawrence median. The overwhelming majority of Latinos who settled in the Greater Lawrence region had little opportunity to find a home outside of Lawrence. Not only did this residential divergence constrain the settlement choices of Latino migrants, it also had a dramatic impact on the quality of public services. The skyrocketing property values in the suburbs contributed to their expanded tax bases, supporting solid school systems and effective government services in other realms, such as public safety. Residential property values were not the only rapidly growing source of suburban prosperity in the decades after World War II, suburban industry also experienced a dramatic acceleration.

## **Industry**

While the growth of racially and economically homogenous suburbs raised property values and tax bases in non-urban Massachusetts, residential property values

were not the only rapidly growing source of suburban prosperity in the decades after World War II; suburban industry also experienced a dramatic acceleration. In the middle of the twentieth century, New England's manufacturing economy was radically transformed as the demand for locally produced textiles collapsed. Particularly in Massachusetts, the textile mills that had clothed the nation and provided the backbone of the region's economy shut down soon after World War II, some heading South and others folding completely in the face of competition from southern industries and synthetic fabrics. As textile production was in decline, however, electronics production in New England was ascending, aided by government support for education and for defense development. Along Rt. 128, outside Boston, a high-tech electronics industry corridor began to develop, changing the industrial base of the state from textile manufacturing to electronics, which were in high demand in the post-World War II consumption-based economy and Cold War-based defense industry. In the decades after World War II, the base of New England's manufacturing economy shifted from textiles to electronics. This change was gradual throughout the state; in Lawrence, however, it was seismic. As the *Boston Globe* reported, "New England adjusted gradually to the changed economic world, but nowhere was the transition more dramatic, the extremes of prosperity and adversity so marked, as in Lawrence."<sup>12</sup> As Lawrence been at the center of the textile industry, it would also come to demonstrate the most significant drawback to New England's industrial transition. Whereas textile manufacturing had been largely an urban mill town phenomenon, electronics development and manufacturing would come to be largely a suburban process. As New England's industrial base shifted to electronics, it

also shifted to its suburbs, and this shift from urban textile production to suburban electronics manufacturing left former mill towns grasping for a new economic base.<sup>13</sup>

As the former woolen-worsted capital of the world, Lawrence had already struggled through a hard time in the 1920s when, in the midst of national prosperity, industry had bolted from the city on account of its perceived labor militancy. It had begun to struggle back on its feet when the Great Depression struck, undercutting it once again.<sup>14</sup> Like most of the country, however, Lawrence enjoyed a resurgence during World War II and for a couple of years after war's end, but in 1947, the mills began to close and tens of thousands of workers were laid off. Textile manufacturing had long operated cyclically, with times of high demand and lots of work, and times of low demand and lots of layoffs, so at first few in the city were worried. Unemployment benefits and a union-negotiated "stagger system" for layoffs (in which the majority of employees hired before 1941 shared the available work, working one week on, one week off, while eligible to collect unemployment benefits on the off weeks) kept income coming in to families, as did the fact that Lawrence had long been a city with multiple workers in each family. Indeed, for many low-paid textile workers, unemployment benefits, with added allowances for children, were comparable to what they earned in the mills.<sup>15</sup>

By 1949, the city was making headlines for its monstrous unemployment, with *Business Week* ranking Lawrence the country's number one unemployment problem. Part of what drew the national media attention, however, was the "paradox" that the city's forty percent unemployment had not dramatically impacted its retail sector, which was still thriving.<sup>16</sup> By 1953, the city had lost a total of 18,000 textile jobs, and still had a

twenty percent unemployment rate, with part of that declining rate reflecting the fact that thousands of discouraged workers had left the labor force. Yet, *Business Week* still considered the city fascinating for its contradictions, noting that, after six years of steady layoffs and mill closings, “The paradox is that instead of a closed-down depression city you find a hustling, modern town doing a bigger retail trade today than ever before.”<sup>17</sup> Essex Street businesses, the city’s main retail sector, were thriving, as the article described, “Christmas shopping reached a bustling peak this week in Lawrence, Mass. Merchants along brightly lighted, crowded Essex St. reported a high volume of business.” The article stressed that Lawrence was “no depression city;” not only was its retail sector thriving, but workers were not desperate. U.S. Rubber Co., a Connecticut firm, had sent a recruiting team into Lawrence, having heard about its high unemployment. They expected to fill 200 jobs, but after several days, left having filled only six. *Business Week* concluded, “There is joblessness, but apparently no desperation – no grasping at any job, regardless of location, pay, and work conditions.”<sup>18</sup> Lawrence workers were, by and large, skilled workers who had spent decades weathering the rise and fall of manufacturing work, who had myriad survival strategies already in place, and who were prepared to wait for their city’s industrial comeback. Further, the city had established itself as the center of the region’s retail trade, and was reaping the rewards of the era’s growing prosperity and consumerism. *Business Week* concluded, “Obviously, Lawrence – despite its ‘chronic unemployment’ tag—is not the sort of place a businessman thinks of when he hears the Lawrence jobless total: It’s no boarded-up, shut-down city of despondency and despair, with skyrocketing taxes and high relief rolls. It’s a bustling

small city, with modern and well-stocked stores and expanding business establishments.”<sup>19</sup>

Members of the city’s political and business elite were not waiting passively for the city’s industrial boom to return, however. They had initiated a concerted booster campaign to draw industry to the city, with a clear goal of maintaining the city’s emphasis on manufacturing, but diversifying the products manufactured. In 1951, former World War II colonel John J. Buckley, still in his thirties, was elected Mayor on a “diversify industry” platform, and he quickly pulled a team of the city’s business leaders together into the Greater Lawrence Citizens Committee for Industrial Development, and outfitted them with city funds to begin the work of drawing new industry to the city. Buckley would remain Mayor for twenty-one of the next thirty-four years, and would still be Mayor when the riots struck the city in 1984. He presided over some of the most dramatic changes to affect any U.S. city, and his influence is notable in the elite vision for the city that emphasized drawing in “first-class” industry and residents to the city, a vision which pervades official redevelopment plans to this day.<sup>20</sup>

In the decades after World War II, the largest and most profitable manufacturers in the Greater Lawrence area were located or relocated in its suburbs. The two most notable suburban manufacturers were Raytheon and Western Electric (which would become AT&T and then Lucent Technologies). Raytheon was located in Andover and was flush with Cold War defense contracts throughout this era, constructing high-end machinery. Western Electric, however, demonstrates cleanly the arch of intrametropolitan competition for industry in the postwar era. During World War II, Western Electric

produced communications equipment for both consumer and defense uses. In the postwar era, the company expanded into Lawrence, beginning to manufacture and warehouse in the former Monomac Spinning Mill in 1951. As a company brochure described, “Lanolin stains on the shop’s wood floor from the wool used as raw material lingered as a reminder of the textile industry’s heyday in Lawrence.” City elites were proud that they had managed to recruit Western Electric, a bright symbol that Lawrence could diversify its industrial base and be a part of the new high-tech manufacturing that was about to blossom in the state. Yet, just two years later, Western Electric broke ground on a larger, more modern plant in North Andover. By 1960, the plant in North Andover covered over one hundred and fifty acres, compared to the six acres of the Lawrence plant, and had space for 1,500 cars to park. By 1978, after years of rumors and decades of gradually transferring its operations and its workers to North Andover, Western Electric closed the Lawrence plant. Meanwhile, the North Andover plant was thriving, expanding seven times in the intervening years. Although Western Electric continued to provide employment for a substantial number of Lawrence residents, including Lawrence Latinos, for almost two more decades after its Lawrence plant closed, it was no longer contributing to Lawrence’s tax base, its old mill buildings, or its reputation.<sup>21</sup>

### **“Almost sinful”: The urban concentration of poverty<sup>22</sup>**

In light of the substantial urban/suburban competition for industry, the emphasis on cooperation and a “Greater Lawrence” pioneered by Buckley and his Greater Lawrence Citizens Committee for Industrial Development began to show its seams by the

early 1970s. By then it became evident that Lawrence was invested in suburban growth far more than the suburbs were invested in Lawrence's growth. Increasingly, the new industries looking to locate in Greater Lawrence were drawn to its suburbs. As a result, any hope of reducing the unemployment of Lawrence residents seemed dependent on *facilitating* industrial growth in the suburbs, not challenging it. When Hewlett-Packard wanted to locate in Andover in the early 1970s, it required Lawrence's approval to link into its sewer lines. The Lawrence Development and Industrial Commission (LDIC) claimed that this approval could be taken as a given and cited it as an example of the spirit of cooperation it was trying to foster with the Commissions of Andover, North Andover, and Methuen. It noted in its newsletter, however, that "Cooperation... is never a one way street... we would hope that, in the future, when one community wants another community to understand its problems, it reciprocates by trying to understand the other's problems. Lawrence, for many years, has taken on the problems of the Greater Lawrence Area. It is time that the surrounding towns start sharing some of these burdens."<sup>23</sup> Although the LDIC's cooperative approach was evident in a "Declaration of Intent" to work towards regional cooperation that had recently been signed by all four commissions, clearly metropolitan relations had given the LDIC some concerns that such cooperation might be one sided: that Lawrence might aid in suburban industrial development but receive little in return. Lawrence elites wanted to ensure that suburban officials recognized urban problems as shared, metropolitan problems.

In a later newsletter, the LDIC elaborated on what specific burdens it felt the surrounding suburbs were not sharing, "One of these problems is in the field of housing.

Up until a few years ago Lawrence still had several outstanding sites for the construction of ‘high income’ apartments; and a vast open area that could have been designed for plush housing (housing that is now being built in the surrounding towns). However, the urgent need of housing for displaced urban renewal families resulted in the depletion of this land within a few years. Recently Mayor Buckley and the City Council have wisely put a moratorium on further ‘low-income’ housing construction. Although this action will not undo the mistakes of the past, it can at least ‘stem the tide’ of unhealthy community growth.”<sup>24</sup> The LDIC was explicit in its belief that the construction of public housing was a “mistake” and that it was responsible for Lawrence’s “unhealthy community growth.” They argued that Lawrence, too, could have had “plush” housing like the suburbs, but instead it bore a disproportionate burden of housing the region’s low-income residents. The LDIC believed that the suburbs ought to share responsibility for housing the region’s low-income residents because these were the very people who labored in suburban industry. “It seems almost sinful for the outlying communities to want prosperity through business and industry and not expect to provide housing for the people working in their stores and factories.”<sup>25</sup> Although the LDIC’s ultimate goal was clearly to “stem the tide” of growing poverty in Lawrence, this is still a rather radical argument. As Massachusetts Secretary of Communities and Development Thomas I. Atkins explained of the suburb’s eagerness to hire but not house urban workers, “They can’t have their cake and eat it too.”<sup>26</sup> In asking the suburbs to develop housing that would be accessible to urban workers in suburban industry, the LDIC highlighted the fact that suburban prosperity was based on the labor of urban workers, while suburban zoning and housing



development made that prosperity inaccessible to those same workers. It seemed “almost sinful” indeed.

The LDIC was not just complaining about this unfair situation; they had concrete solutions to propose, “Possibly what is needed is a Metropolitan Housing Authority which would have jurisdiction in the City and the surrounding communities. Planning for housing could then be done on a metropolitan basis; and the housing needs of all segments of the population more easily realized.” The 1975 report on Rt. 128 and segregation had also recommended this type of regional housing authority.<sup>27</sup> This practical approach to ensuring that quality housing and affordable housing were not divided by the urban/suburban boundary was never adopted, however, although Lawrence elites continued to press for a more equitable arrangement. In the absence of suburban cooperation, Lawrence elites forged ahead to create that “plush,” or at least middle-income, housing within the city boundaries, as a way to “stem the tide” of Lawrence’s growing poor population. As noted above, the city had put a moratorium on the construction of public housing in the early 1970s, and was working to ensure that urban renewal and redevelopment plans served middle-income residents in order to reduce the flight of such residents from the city. City elites had a vision of Lawrence’s renaissance that was built on holding on to or attracting middle-income residents to the city, while discouraging the settlement of poor families, as I will discuss in more detail below. While they could acknowledge that industry required low-wage workers, they challenged the idea that Lawrence was the natural home for such workers, and insisted that the suburbs had a responsibility to house the region’s workers.

**“The biggest money battle this area has known:” The retail competition<sup>28</sup>**

Perhaps even more critical to Lawrence’s decline than the industrial competition was the intrametropolitan retail competition. The city’s retail establishments were unable to compete with the new shopping centers springing up in the suburbs in the postwar decades. As noted above, even when unemployment skyrocketed in the late forties and early fifties with the loss of the textile industry, the city’s downtown retail and entertainment sector still thrived. Indeed, when long-time white residents of Lawrence talk about a renaissance in the city, about bringing Lawrence back to its former glory and prominence, they are generally not romanticizing Lawrence’s industrial past, a time when most of the city lived in slum tenements and struggled to get by; rather they are generally referring to the World War II and early postwar years when Essex Street thrived, and drew residents of the entire region to its shops and theaters. More than the loss of industry (although related to it), the loss of the city’s retail sector damaged both the city’s tax base and its morale. Already in 1974, an article on a well-known Lawrence restaurant described the heyday of the late 1940s with nostalgia, “But those were different days – days when laughter came more easily and Lawrence was alive with lights and fancy clubs and ‘every night there was a party.’”<sup>29</sup> By the 1970s, the loss of the city’s retail sector and the near-empty streets of Lawrence’s downtown symbolized the end of an era to many of the city’s residents.

The decline of the city’s retail sector began in the mid-1950s as Methuen and Salem gradually became the consumer hubs of the region. Earlier, as *Business Week* had

noted, Lawrence's downtown still thrived in spite of its declining manufacturing base, drawing consumers from throughout the region. The looming danger of suburban retail competition was not lost on Lawrence's leadership, who commissioned urban planners in 1957 to study how they could regain their competitiveness. The report, prepared primarily by James F. Liebke of Merrimack College, focused on the city's "Central Business District," an area encompassing Essex Street, stretching approximately from the river in the south to the Common in the north, Union Street in the east and Broadway in the west. The goal of the report was to analyze the physical characteristics of the area and to, "protect sagging valuations and tax income of the C.B.D. to the City of Lawrence," and to "retain and increase the commercial activities of the C.B.D." Not only did the report acknowledge that retaining commercial activities in Lawrence was a problem to be solved, and that declining tax revenue from the retail sector had already begun in 1957, but it also argued that the health of the city's downtown, "add[ed] to the general prosperity of the community," and so was crucial to the city's economy. Indeed the report noted that the C.B.D. covered only two percent of the land area of Lawrence, yet contributed 18.3 percent of the total real estate tax revenues to the city, and that "Many service and professional people derive their business from traffic brought to the area by the merchants and vice versa."<sup>30</sup> The report urged the city to protect the fragile symbiotic relationship between retail establishments and downtown professionals, such as lawyers.

The decline of the city's retail sector was occurring at the same time as the nation as a whole was experiencing a rush of prosperity and consumerism. The report noted that, between 1951 and 1956, the state of Massachusetts had experienced a fifteen percent

growth in sales volume. Greater Lawrence, however, had only experienced 1.2 percent growth, and sales in Lawrence's C.B.D. had declined by an unspecified amount, in spite of it being "the center" of the Greater Lawrence area, according to the report. The authors worried that some businesses had closed, one prominent block had one-third of its retail floor space vacant, and "Some new stores have come into the C.B.D. to service primarily the lower-income group." This decline in Lawrence's retail sector, they pointed out, was not due to decreased buying power in the region, as Greater Lawrence's "effective buying income" had actually increased by twenty-two percent over those same years.<sup>31</sup>

The report argued that Lawrence's population decline was partly responsible for its declining sales, although the authors noted that it was both the decline in residents and the decline in workers who came through or near the Central Business District on the way to the mills. They argued, "This trend of the movement of population has two forces,

- a. The now normal suburban movement of people leaving crowded areas to new homes in the suburbs of Lawrence, and
- b. The number of people who have been forced to look to other areas for employment."

Had Lawrence lost only jobs OR lost only residents, the impact on its retail sector might still have been noticeable, but the combined impact was ultimately catastrophic. The report further speculated that Lawrence's struggles maintain its industrial base were affecting the psychology of consumers, making them feel less secure economically, a point that is hard to quantify.<sup>32</sup>

The report continued, however, to point out what city elites were probably most reluctant to hear, "The people of the Greater Lawrence Area are doing business outside

[downtown].” The report acknowledged that the economic impact of this was currently small, but made the dire prediction that “this point will be the most serious problem faced by the C.B.D. within the next three years.” They continued, “If the C.B.D. of Lawrence could remain isolated from competition for the next ten years, as it has in the past, there is no doubt that with minor changes in the C.B.D., the goal of \$200,000,000 could be reached with a major portion in the downtown area.” Achieving this retail goal would be a huge economic boon for the entire city, they argued, “From the point of view of the city, this increased activity would stabilize and increase valuations and tax revenues, and for the businessman, increase profits.” In this elite vision of the city’s future, Lawrence could still produce profits if it could be protected from suburban competition. Lawrence’s isolation from competition, however, was unlikely to continue, as suburban shopping centers were springing up across the region (with ample free parking), and the new highways made them easily accessible to all Greater Lawrence residents.<sup>33</sup>

These highways were not only facilitating access to suburban retail establishments, the report argued; they were changing the very landscape of industrial and commercial activity in the region, “During the past ten years, a new network of roads and highways throughout the state has created new industrial areas; Route 128 is referred to as ‘industrial row.’ This increased ease in movement of goods and services and people is forcing many changes in industrial and commercial growth and activities.” The new highways were indeed improving Greater Lawrence’s economy, but they were not improving, and would not improve, the economy of Lawrence proper, “It is the desire of most people in this area that routes 28 and 110, that will now be outside the city of

Lawrence, but within the greater Lawrence area, will bring additional industrial activities to this area. But these new roads and highways are not drawing the Greater Lawrence market closer to new and proposed commercial centers [in the city].” New roads within Greater Lawrence but outside the city itself could not be expected to help Lawrence’s downtown, the report argued.<sup>34</sup>

The report worried over a shopping center under construction in Peabody, “less than 15 miles from the shopping center section of the C.B.D. It can be reached in less than 30 minutes. New route 28 should decrease the travel time.” The center included, “two of the largest retail establishments of Boston, as well as some 50 other units.” Also rumored were new shopping centers in Salem and Andover, which would be even more of a threat to Lawrence’s downtown. The report detailed the “major advantages” that suburban shopping centers had:

1. “The facilities are new and designed to fit the present and future needs of the consumer.
2. They are built near new highways so that the consumer can reach them conveniently, plus [they have] huge parking lots so parking is available.
3. They are in most instances controlled as to promotional activities and operations.”

The authors advised major cooperative efforts to compete with these suburban advantages, including making the downtown area more car-friendly and more geared toward women, who they argued, did most of the shopping. Ultimately, however, their prognosis for Lawrence’s downtown area was grim. In 1957, while shopping centers in Lawrence’s direct suburbs were still only rumors, urban planning consultants concluded

that the end of an era had indeed come, and Lawrence was on the verge of losing its position as the region's primary retail hub.<sup>35</sup>

Retail establishments did indeed come to line Route 28 in Salem, and the town's growing importance as a consumer site was aided by Massachusetts' decision to introduce a sales tax in 1966, which made the quick drive over the New Hampshire border (to one of the few states left in the country without a sales tax) quite appealing.<sup>36</sup> The *Journal of Greater Lawrence* called the commercial sector along Route 28 in Salem, "a sizzling strip of neon and a motorist's nightmare," yet stores like K-Mart still drew shoppers. The final blow to Lawrence's retail sector was dealt in the early 1970s with the construction of the Methuen Mall. In late November, 1973, *Journal of Greater Lawrence* reporter, Andrew Coburn, wrote, "Excuse the messy metaphor, but one hell of a heavyweight is flexing its muscles for the biggest money battle this area has known... the Methuen Mall versus every other shopping scene (particularly plazas) from here to Newburyport." At the time, the mall, what Coburn called "one huge consumer circus with something for everybody," was only partially open, with less than half of its projected seventy-five stores up and running, but Coburn reported that it "already [was] doing damage in downtown Lawrence." The Methuen Mall would be the biggest of its kind in the region, posing an immediate threat to the Merrimack Valley's shopping plazas. Most troubling for Lawrence, Coburn predicted that "it will touch the core of communities whose downtown districts have little to offer as it is."<sup>37</sup>

Like Liebke, Coburn detailed the suburban mall's advantages, "A concrete ballfield for free and easy parking, with no chance of a ticket on the windshield." This

was particularly important to those fed up with parking tickets in downtown Lawrence. The Methuen Mall also had “huge stores like Sears and Howland’s, with all the latest gimmicks, advertising money, and promotional fanfare to draw crowds from far and wide.” Sears had just left its long-time location on Essex Street in downtown Lawrence and so its relocation to the Methuen Mall must have caused some Lawrencians particular chagrin. Whatever hope Lawrence elites may have had for returning downtown to its prior prominence suddenly became unrealistic, as the Methuen Mall laid Essex Street down for the count.<sup>38</sup>

A 1978 redevelopment proposal for Essex Street focused on the “Sears Block” where the former Sears building remained vacant, leaving a large, unsightly gap in Lawrence’s downtown. The proposal demonstrated that at least some Lawrence elites still had hope for a renaissance in the city. It called for a rejuvenation of Lawrence’s downtown through renovation of the Sears Block and attracting “first-class tenants.” The proposal detailed the changes that had transformed Lawrence’s downtown over the past few decades, “For years Essex Street was the regional center for commercial activity. There were no malls and Lawrence served as the major retail center for a large area of the Merrimack Valley region and for southern New Hampshire. With the advent of the suburban malls and its relative, the commercial strip, downtown Lawrence lost its commercial predominance.” The authors listed the “vast” suburban competition that Lawrence faced by the end of the 1970s, with seven suburban shopping centers in southern New Hampshire, along with the 74-store Methuen Mall, the North Andover Mall and several other nearby suburban shopping centers. The flight of professionals



from Lawrence's downtown area to "suburban office parks" had also affected Lawrence's retail sector, as fewer people came through downtown each day.<sup>39</sup>

The proposal warned that the suburbs were "increasingly self-sufficient" noting, "they have attracted industries of their own, built numerous shopping centers and office parks and continued to build new housing." This suburban "self-sufficiency" was harming Lawrence economically, the proposal argued, "All of these factors have had a negative effect on Lawrence's economic base causing erosion of the tax base and general deterioration of the City."<sup>40</sup> They partially blamed a regional "strong prejudice against Lawrence," that had "intensified as the economy declined and the downtown deteriorated."<sup>41</sup>

Suburban competition and Lawrence's reputation, however, did not hinder the authors' optimism, "All that needs to be done is for space to be renovated, and goods and services promoted, so as to make people interested enough to walk through the front door." With a few "dramatic, well-done, concentrated public improvements" the downtown could be turned around, they argued, predicting, it "can and will happen in Lawrence."<sup>42</sup> Although this was a confident prediction that such a downtown renaissance was not only possible, but inevitable, the proposal also implied that there were those in Lawrence who lacked faith in the potential for redevelopment downtown. The very next paragraph explained that the remaining potential for profit downtown might be "startling news to some persons too conditioned to seeing the vacancies ... and the presently neglected appearance of building[s]." The proposal urged readers to not to be fooled by "present conditions" downtown and to ignore recent failed developments, such as an

attempt to maintain Lawrence's retail supremacy through the construction of an Intown Mall, a shopping center downtown that remained neglected for decades. These had no bearing, they argued on downtown's "future possibilities."<sup>43</sup>

The key, the proposal argued, was to gear development towards high-end consumers. "Superior and dramatic improvements highlighting the Sears Block will underscore the fact that SPACE IN THE RENOVATED BUILDING IS SUPERIOR SPACE... Such an image of superiority is essential to being able to attract first-quality commercial tenants, and to maintain a relatively high rent structure" [emphasis in the original]. Attracting "first-quality" commercial tenants was not merely good business sense for the developer, they argued, but necessary for Lawrence's struggling economy as a whole, "for the City of Lawrence just as badly needs to attract first-class tenants if its downtown is to become a regional, instead of a merely local, commercial center." The proposal explicitly warned against accessible, or affordable, development, arguing that, "Low price is not the way to attract 'first-class' commercial tenants. Indeed, for such establishments, price is secondary – the most important consideration is finding space that suits their image and enhances their prestige and identity. First-class renovated space – second to none – is the way to attract such tenants."<sup>44</sup> I quote this proposal so extensively because this vision of Lawrence redevelopment became a pervasive strategy among city elites over the next decades. City officials and business leaders believed that a renaissance in the city was only possibly by attracting "first-class" commercial or residential tenants, by investing city money in high-end development. Such a renaissance was premised on the exclusion and marginalization of the city's low-income residents.

Subsequent chapters will detail the struggle of community groups to counter this elite strategy with a plan for Lawrence redevelopment premised on improving the lives and building the assets of the city's low-income residents, rather than attracting new, high-end, "first-class" tenants.

### **City, suburbs, and the state: Routes 128, 495 and segregation in Massachusetts**

Greater Lawrence's suburban growth was part not only of a national trend, but also tied to the spectacular growth of suburbs in the Greater Boston area (of which Lawrence was a part). In spite of its reputation for liberalism, Massachusetts was no exception to the structural changes in metropolitan political economy taking place in these decades. In 1975, the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination (MCAD) and the Massachusetts Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights issued a joint research report on Boston's outer suburbs, those, like Andover, North Andover, and Methuen, that lined either Rt. 128 or Interstate 495.<sup>45</sup> The MCAD and the Advisory Committee concluded that government support for suburbanization had enabled these suburbs to become racially homogenous and prosperous at the expense of urban communities of color, who had been largely locked out of the newly developed suburbs. As they explained, "the Federal Government, although providing much of the financial basis for suburban growth, has failed to make real its prohibitions against segregation and discrimination."<sup>46</sup>

The report was issued shortly after Boston went through the throes of its own racial violence surrounding school desegregation in 1974, and the authors directly linked

Boston's racial struggles to suburban homogeneity and racial exclusion, "We hope that this report will point out the seriousness of the problem as the almost daily events in Boston point out the results of not dealing with the problem."<sup>47</sup> The report noted, however, that access to the suburbs was not a high priority on African American community agendas as there were already so many obvious and immediate needs *within* the city, "From the standpoint of many minority group leaders, the need for improved minority employment opportunities is so desperate, and the need for adequate urban housing so obvious that suburban housing, at this point in time, seems to have no relevance.... In this context, suburban housing is less important to minorities than relief from slum conditions and unemployment."<sup>48</sup> This would be true in Lawrence over the coming decades, as well; as the Latino population grew, access and power within the city were a far greater priority than access to the suburbs. Yet the report correctly pointed out that the future of urban communities would be shaped partially by white suburban communities, as the suburbs controlled much of the political and economic power in the state, and therefore the processes of suburban exclusion and overdevelopment were important to understand. The authors elaborated that their emphasis on white suburbanization was not meant to detract attention from urban problems, but to focus attention on suburban exclusion and overdevelopment as the *root* of urban problems. "This report is concerned with white enclaves rather than black ghettos. It reflects the growing awareness that the future of an urban area's minority population depends to a large degree on the decisions made and actions taken in the suburban communities where the white majority reside."<sup>49</sup> This, too, would be true in Lawrence, as a suburban political

agenda had largely crystallized by the 1980s, an agenda which held substantial power to shape state policy. Suburban political power on the state level would be no small matter in the 1980s and 1990s, after decades of residential, industrial, and retail flight left the city profoundly reliant on state funds.

Most importantly, the MCAD and the Advisory Committee pointed out that intrametropolitan inequality in Massachusetts was essentially racial segregation in a new form. In the post-Civil Rights era, local suburban control over housing effectively maintained segregation, maintaining the color line nearly as effectively as Jim Crow had done. “Those who wish to maintain segregated housing no longer have to rely on crude overt acts or restrictive covenants; they can now rely on a panoply of deterrents” (including but not limited to a “history of past insults”) which made many African Americans and Latinos unable to move (or wary of moving) to suburban white enclaves. The racialized metropolitan political economy that enabled suburban homogeneity and exclusion reflected an updated, more subtle method of maintaining racial hierarchies. “Suburban housing patterns warrant special consideration because they exemplify the complexity and subtlety of the subordination of blacks.” This subordination occurred in spite of constitutional protections of equal rights, and the report argues that suburban exclusion “illustrates a practical failure of constitutional guarantees.” In effect, urban communities, the report argued, were disenfranchised in the suburbs, “When minority citizens, limited to urban residence, have no standing to challenge the zoning restrictions or limitations on housing construction passed at suburban town meetings, there is a major flaw in the concept of equal protection.”<sup>50</sup>

Rather than being dismantled during the Civil Rights era, U.S. segregation was being reconfigured along urban/suburban lines. As Janet Abu-Lughod has noted of the Kerner Report (the findings of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders on the urban uprisings that had occurred across the nation in the mid-1960s), the Commission demonstrated that racial segregation and inequality were not simply lingering remnants of the Jim Crow era, but were processes that were *still occurring* in the 1960s. The Kerner Report concluded “Our nation is *moving toward* two societies, one black, one white – separate and unequal.”<sup>51</sup> The phrase “moving toward” illustrated that American racism was in the midst of a dramatic transformation in the 1960s and 1970s, as racialized suburbanization resulted in previous forms of segregation being restructured to run along urban/suburban lines. Beginning after World War II, and cresting at the very height of the Civil Rights and Black Power movements, racialized suburbanization had created a new color line, and this new form of segregation would continue to have a dramatic impact on cities into the 1980s and beyond.

The MCAD and Advisory Committee reached a similar conclusion about the new processes of segregation and racial inequality in Massachusetts. The report traced the postwar history of federal involvement in housing beginning in 1949 when Congress passed a Housing Act with the goal of facilitating “a decent home and a suitable living environment for every American family,”<sup>52</sup> noting that it was not until eight years later, after suburban development had already boomed in Massachusetts, that the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights was established. In 1962, President Kennedy made Equal Opportunity in housing a national priority, but by 1968 the Kerner Report and the

National Commission on Urban Problems had both documented that equal opportunity policies in housing had had little impact. The gains that the Civil Rights/Black Power movements were making in transforming national policy were not impacting on-the-ground segregation. Ongoing suburbanization served to quickly erode any gains made in urban desegregation. The report on Rt. 128 noted that as national policy was prioritizing equal housing opportunity, the suburbs outside Boston were experiencing “a period of accelerated and almost uninterrupted growth,” a growth that was overwhelmingly racially homogenous, as “virtually none of the new housing stock in Boston’s suburbs was made available to minority citizens despite evidence of discrimination in housing.”<sup>53</sup>

The Rt. 128 report noted that, with the exception of Cambridge, all the suburbs surrounding Boston were ninety-eight percent white. “The new housing, jobs, schools, and amenities of suburban life which followed the completion of Route 128 were for whites only.”<sup>54</sup> White suburbanites were not unaware of African American struggles in the cities, but they did not consider those urban troubles to be related to their suburban prosperity, “Problems of employment, housing, and education in the black community were not unknown to the residents of the suburbs. Yet the suburban white population saw prejudice and discriminatory practices as matters extrinsic to their communities.” Not only poverty, but discrimination, was viewed as an “urban problem.” Rather than acknowledge the role of suburban development in catalyzing urban crisis, suburban whites justified their prosperity as a result of their own hard work, and presumed that urban or suburban living simply reflected different choices or values. “The absence of racial minorities in the 128 belt was interpreted as something completely fortuitous. A

suburban home, it was thought, was the just reward for many years of individual effort.” The report pointed out the role of government in subsidizing and legally protecting (through support for local control) white suburban growth, a role conveniently forgotten by most suburban residents. “Many suburbanites forgot that Federal assistance facilitated their move from city to suburb. They failed to comprehend that the changing patterns of metropolitan development, which they themselves were influencing, excluded the same routes for blacks.”<sup>55</sup> As the nation began its push to dismantle the welfare system in the late 1970s, it was easy for suburban residents to dismiss the ways in which government aid had been essential to white upward mobility in the decades after World War II. As Joe Austin has argued, the structural shifts in the postwar political economy “rewarded the majority of suburbanizing white folks well beyond the free market value of their hard work and individual efforts. But the ‘naturalness’ of this good fortune, and its widespread enjoyment among so many whose parents had suffered through the Depression and the war, made it difficult for most of them to see the inequitable economic distributions at its core.”<sup>56</sup>

The suburban political agenda enabled by the new geography of racism would crystallize in Massachusetts in the decades after the Rt. 128 report was issued, reflecting a shared suburban ideology among Boston and Lawrence’s suburbs that rejected responsibility for “urban problems” and concluded that a lack of personal responsibility or improper cultural values were at the root of urban poverty. This political agenda was undergirded by the intrametropolitan residential segregation established in the postwar decades. Although the Anti-Snob Zoning legislation passed by the Massachusetts



legislature in 1969 might have given some grounds for optimism, in reality the measure had generated few concrete results, and the Rt. 128 report concluded that the legislation was “chiefly of interest for the near-hysteria of response it provoked in suburban town boards.” The new law had “failed to facilitate the development of racially inclusive housing,” and its main impact was “to stimulate suburban communities with new strategies for circumventing racial inclusion” such as building public housing for the elderly.<sup>57</sup> The report concluded unambiguously that twenty-five years of state and national legislation for fair housing had “failed.”<sup>58</sup>

Rather than celebrate the state’s token legislative action, the commission instead worried over the “new federalism” demonstrated by the U.S. Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 which was about to take effect. The “new federalism” with regards to housing “restricts federal involvement in local planning and development to a bare minimum.” This was worrisome because the best mechanisms to prevent discrimination existed at the federal level, and the federal government seemed to be abdicating its role in ensuring integration and equal housing opportunity. The report warned, “Local cities and towns will now receive Federal funds for housing and community development with very few strings attached. The major burden of reversing the trend toward increasing racial segregation will fall on the individual cities and suburbs – the level at which civil rights enforcement is at its weakest.”<sup>59</sup> The report concluded that with federal devolution, the responsibility to dismantle segregation lay with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, warning “unless the State acts swiftly, forcefully, and effectively, suburban residential patterns of segregation are likely to be

firmly established in a manner which cannot be changed for generations.”<sup>60</sup> Yet the state government, comprising powerful suburban interests, and having already passed pioneering (although ultimately weak and insufficient) legislation regarding affordable housing in the suburbs in its Chapter 40B legislation, was not committed to any further large-scale changes to the unequal patterns of metropolitan development.

### **Portrait of Greater Lawrence in 1980**

The Greater Lawrence Chamber of Commerce published an Economic Profile of the region in 1980 with the help of the *Eagle-Tribune*. The cover, pictured on the next page, showed an illustration of the Greater Lawrence area, with Salem, New Hampshire now included, and major industrial landmarks noted. Lawrence’s section of the map included an illustration of the Great Stone Dam, labeled “Hydro Plant,” its clock tower, and a South Lawrence mill. The *Lawrence Eagle-Tribune* was pictured in its new North Andover location. The local paper had left its Essex Street location for the suburbs in 1968 (and in 1987, a high point in the city’s crisis, the paper even removed the word “Lawrence” from its name).<sup>61</sup> The Merrimack Valley Textile Museum was right above it, also in North Andover, which seems a particular loss for Lawrence considering the Museum largely documented the city’s history. The Lawrence Municipal Airport was shown, also in North Andover. Between the museum and the airport is a factory that is most likely Western Electric, soon to become AT&T, and then Lucent Technologies. The factory pictured in Andover was most likely Raytheon, although Raytheon’s current location is below the intersection of 495 and 93, by Haggetts Pond. Phillips Andover

Academy and Merrimack College were shown, as well. Methuen had no landmarks, and Salem was illustrated with just a few houses and what appears to be a Town Hall or church. The distances to Boston, beaches, and the White Mountains were noted on the South, East, and North sides respectively. The two major highways that cross in Andover and hold Lawrence in a narrow “V” shape are shown, Interstate 93 and 495, with an illustrated truck and car. The Methuen “Loop” or 213 was also shown, connecting the two highways above Lawrence, forming a perfect loop around the city and providing easy access to the Methuen Mall which was not shown.

As this portrait of Greater Lawrence showed, the booster emphasis on metropolitan integration and cooperation could not hide Lawrence’s growing irrelevance in the metropolitan economy. By 1980, the suburbs had effectively won the battle for Greater Lawrence’s middle-class residents, its major industry, and its retail sector. The income gap between the city and its suburbs was indeed “almost sinful,” with Lawrence households only earning an average of 57 cents to Andover residents’ dollar, or 77 cents to Methuen residents’ dollar, and the city was in the throes of severe economic crisis. It was at this time that the migration of Latinos to the city began to accelerate, and Lawrence added racial tension to its list of woes. The next chapter will address early Latino migration to the city, and how urban crisis constrained migrants’ choices and contributed to making Lawrence a *relatively* appealing, and yet still often challenging and disappointing, settlement site.

---

<sup>1</sup> The title of this chapter is a nod to Thomas Sugrue's seminal study of metropolitan political economy in and around Detroit, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).

<sup>2</sup> For excellent studies on white flight to the suburbs, see Robert O. Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton, NY: Princeton University Press, 2003); Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton, NY: Princeton University Press, 1996); Eric Avila, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight: Fear and Fantasy in Suburban Los Angeles* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006); Elizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America*, (New York: Random House, 2003); Amanda I. Seligman, *Block by Block: Neighborhoods and Public Policy on Chicago's West Side* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Kevin Michael Kruse, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005).

<sup>3</sup> The lack of a substantial African American population in the city was perhaps a result of the fact that Lawrence's textile industry was already in decline by the 1920s and so the city would not have been as attractive as larger cities during the Great Migrations.

<sup>4</sup> Salem refers to Salem, New Hampshire for the rest of the dissertation, unless otherwise noted.

<sup>5</sup> *United States Decennial Census*, 1960; Lawrence City Planning Board, "Guide Plan for Lawrence, Massachusetts," 1957, LPLA.

<sup>6</sup> 2005 numbers are used rather than 2010 numbers because many of the statistics from 1970 and after are from the State of the Cities database, which gives figures consistently in 2005 dollars, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, State of the Cities online database, <http://socds.huduser.org/> accessed throughout 2009 and 2010. Conversions were done using an online calculator from the Bureau of Labor Statistics, <http://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/cpicalc.pl>, accessed throughout 2009 and 2010.

<sup>7</sup> Self, *American Babylon*, 269.

<sup>8</sup> Chamber of Commerce of Greater Lawrence, "Greater Lawrence Economic Profile," 1980, JFB papers at LHC.

<sup>9</sup> Jenny Schuetz, "Guarding the Town Walls: Mechanisms and Motives for Restricting Multifamily Housing in Massachusetts." *Real Estate Economics* 36.3 (2008), from *Academic OneFile*, [http://find.galegroup.com.proxy.bc.edu/gtx/start.do?prodId=AONE&userGroupName=mlin\\_m\\_bostcoll](http://find.galegroup.com.proxy.bc.edu/gtx/start.do?prodId=AONE&userGroupName=mlin_m_bostcoll) (accessed January 4, 2010). Data from the 1950 census does not include Salem as part of Greater Lawrence.

<sup>10</sup> Although a 230-unit family development had just been approved by the Appeals committee for North Andover.

<sup>11</sup> Merrimack Valley Planning Commission, "Chapter 774 (the anti-snob zoning law): its impact on the MVPC region," March 31, 1976, SLoM. The MVPC did not include Chapter 705, 707, or Section 8 housing in its definition of subsidized housing.

<sup>12</sup> Uncle Dudley, "City that wouldn't die," *Boston Globe*, December 11, 1960, reprint LPLA.

<sup>13</sup> Dudley, "City that wouldn't die."

<sup>14</sup> Dudley, "City that wouldn't die."

<sup>15</sup> *Business Week*, "Textile City Gets Along Despite Layoffs," May 7, 1949, reprint LPLA.

<sup>16</sup> *Business Week*, "Textile City Gets Along Despite Layoffs"; *Business Week*, "Lawrence, Mass.: Textile Town Stays Healthy" December 19, 1953, reprint LPLA.

<sup>17</sup> *Business Week*, "Lawrence, Mass.: Textile Town Stays Healthy."

<sup>18</sup> *Business Week*, "Lawrence, Mass.: Textile Town Stays Healthy."

<sup>19</sup> *Business Week*, "Lawrence, Mass.: Textile Town Stays Healthy."

<sup>20</sup> *Business Week*, "Lawrence, Mass.: Textile Town Stays Healthy"; Rear Admiral Thomas F. Halloran, "From Textiles to Electronics," as told to Jack McKallagat, reprint from SIGNAL, Official Journal of the Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association, LPLA. Oddly enough, Mayor Buckley would eventually lose power for not being strong enough in his opposition to the forces working to make Lawrence livable for its poor and Latino residents, as he was defeated in 1985 by Kevin Sullivan, who ran on a platform that embraced with anti-immigrant fervor the very redevelopment strategies that Buckley had pioneered in the early 1950s.

- 
- <sup>21</sup> Western Electric Company, Merrimack Valley Works documents, courtesy of AT&T Archives and History Center.
- <sup>22</sup> Lawrence Development and Industrial Commission (LDIC), "Industrial Newsgram," January/February, 1973, LPLA.
- <sup>23</sup> LDIC, "Industrial Newsgram," November/December, 1972, LPLA.
- <sup>24</sup> LDIC, "Industrial Newsgram," January/February, 1973, LPLA.
- <sup>25</sup> LDIC, "Industrial Newsgram," January/February, 1973, LPLA.
- <sup>26</sup> LDIC, "Industrial Newsgram," January/February, 1973, LPLA.
- <sup>27</sup> Massachusetts Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights and the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination, "Rt. 128: Boston's Road To Segregation," (1975), 94.
- <sup>28</sup> Andrew Coburn, "Battle of the Buck: Methuen Mall flexes its muscles and downtown and others flinch," *Journal of Greater Lawrence*, November 29, 1973, LPLA.
- <sup>29</sup> Chazy Dowaliby "At Nick Maloof's they meet the dawn of bygone days," *Today in Greater Lawrence*, December 31, 1974, LPLA.
- <sup>30</sup> James F. Liebke & Associates, "An Analysis and Recommended Program for the Central Business District: Lawrence Massachusetts," 1957.
- <sup>31</sup> Liebke & Associates, "An Analysis and Recommended Program for the Central Business District."
- <sup>32</sup> Liebke & Associates, "An Analysis and Recommended Program for the Central Business District."
- <sup>33</sup> Liebke & Associates, "An Analysis and Recommended Program for the Central Business District."
- <sup>34</sup> Liebke & Associates, "An Analysis and Recommended Program for the Central Business District."
- <sup>35</sup> Liebke & Associates, "An Analysis and Recommended Program for the Central Business District."
- <sup>36</sup> Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center, [http://www.massbudget.org/documentssearch/findDocument?doc\\_id=621&dse\\_id=561](http://www.massbudget.org/documentssearch/findDocument?doc_id=621&dse_id=561), accessed, January 6, 2010.
- <sup>37</sup> Coburn, "Battle of the Buck."
- <sup>38</sup> Coburn, "Battle of the Buck." The Rockingham Mall in Salem, NH was also built in 1973, and would represent major competition, as well, particularly considering the persistent lack of sales tax in New Hampshire. Kim Stevenson, "Hispanic and Minority Owned Businesses in Lawrence, Massachusetts: A Market Study of Essex Street and Downtown Lawrence," prepared for the Lawrence Community Development Department, October, 1991.
- <sup>39</sup> E. Denis Walsh & Associates. "Action Plan Lawrence Massachusetts: The Renovation and Reuse of Upper Story Space in a Block of Downtown Commercial Buildings" prepared for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Department of Community Affairs, Building Reuse Project, (1978), 14.
- <sup>40</sup> Walsh & Associates. "Action Plan Lawrence Massachusetts," 11.
- <sup>41</sup> Walsh & Associates. "Action Plan Lawrence Massachusetts," 12.
- <sup>42</sup> Walsh & Associates. "Action Plan Lawrence Massachusetts," 25.
- <sup>43</sup> Walsh & Associates. "Action Plan Lawrence Massachusetts," 26.
- <sup>44</sup> Walsh & Associates. "Action Plan Lawrence Massachusetts," 36.
- <sup>45</sup> Andover and North Andover lay just outside the line of suburbs directly included in this study, although they lay along 495 and were part of the high-tech boom along Rt. 128 (Methuen lay just north of Andover, North Andover, and Lawrence). As detailed in earlier sections, however, the processes discussed in the report were transforming Lawrence's suburbs just as thoroughly, as Andover and North Andover particularly were still within the sway of Greater Boston's highway development and Massachusetts' state law. I am careful to only cite material from this study that addresses general transformations of suburbs in this zone, Massachusetts Advisory Committee and MCAD, "Rt. 128: Boston's Road To Segregation."
- <sup>46</sup> Massachusetts Advisory Committee and MCAD, "Rt. 128: Boston's Road To Segregation," v.
- <sup>47</sup> Massachusetts Advisory Committee and MCAD, "Rt. 128: Boston's Road To Segregation," xii.
- <sup>48</sup> Massachusetts Advisory Committee and MCAD, "Rt. 128: Boston's Road To Segregation," 1.
- <sup>49</sup> Massachusetts Advisory Committee and MCAD, "Rt. 128: Boston's Road To Segregation," 1.
- <sup>50</sup> Massachusetts Advisory Committee and MCAD, "Rt. 128: Boston's Road To Segregation," 2.
- <sup>51</sup> Abu-Lughod pointed out the significance of the phrase "moving toward" in the report's ominous conclusion, calling the phrase "astonishing – as if racial segregation and inequality were new or

---

increasing!” Emphasis added, this line from the Kerner Report was quoted both in Janet L. Abu-Lughod, *Race, Space, and Riots in Chicago, New York, and Los Angeles* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007) and in Massachusetts Advisory Committee and MCAD, “Rt. 128: Boston’s Road To Segregation,” x.

<sup>52</sup> Quoted in Massachusetts Advisory Committee and MCAD, “Rt. 128: Boston’s Road To Segregation,” 2.

<sup>53</sup> Massachusetts Advisory Committee and MCAD, “Rt. 128: Boston’s Road To Segregation,” 2.

<sup>54</sup> Massachusetts Advisory Committee and MCAD, “Rt. 128: Boston’s Road To Segregation,” 13.

<sup>55</sup> Massachusetts Advisory Committee and MCAD, “Rt. 128: Boston’s Road To Segregation,” 16.

<sup>56</sup> Joe Austin, *Taking the Train: How Graffiti Art Became an Urban Crisis in New York City* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001), 25.

<sup>57</sup> Massachusetts Advisory Committee and MCAD, “Rt. 128: Boston’s Road To Segregation,” 62.

<sup>58</sup> The report specifically refers to twenty years of fair housing legislation in Massachusetts, the National Housing Act of 1949 and the Federal Fair Housing Act of 1968, Massachusetts Advisory Committee and MCAD, “Rt. 128: Boston’s Road To Segregation,” 89.

<sup>59</sup> Massachusetts Advisory Committee and MCAD, “Rt. 128: Boston’s Road To Segregation,” xi.

<sup>60</sup> Massachusetts Advisory Committee and MCAD, “Rt. 128: Boston’s Road To Segregation,” xii.

<sup>61</sup> Al White, editor of the *Eagle-Tribune*, personal correspondence, March 25, 2010. For simplicity’s sake I generally refer to the paper by its current name, the *Eagle-Tribune*, throughout the dissertation including in the endnotes, although it should be noted that the paper was officially named the *Lawrence Eagle-Tribune* until 1987.

## **Chapter Two –“Why Lawrence?”: How Urban Crisis Shaped Latino Migration**

In 1992, the director of Lawrence’s Minority Business Council, Jose Zaiter, told his family’s migration story to the local paper, explaining that it was typical of how many Latinos ended up in Lawrence. His family had moved from the Dominican Republic to New York City in 1965, and a year later, his uncle left New York for Lawrence and got a job in the city’s garment industry. While living in Lawrence, his uncle returned for frequent visits to New York, and he described Lawrence to his relatives as a safe city where jobs were plentiful. In the context of Lawrence’s crisis in the early 1990s (when Zaiter was telling his story to the newspaper), as well as the city’s reputation for crime, Zaiter found the fact that safety motivated Latino migration to Lawrence “ironic.” Yet in the context of New York City’s even greater struggles in the second-half of the twentieth century, the relative safety of Lawrence must have been welcome. The presence of jobs in Lawrence must have seemed no less ironic to Zaiter in the early 1990s, as Lawrence in 1990 had a twenty-five percent Latino unemployment rate. Decades earlier, however, when his family first came to the city, he remembered not only that “there were many jobs available,” but added that companies even used to pay \$50 bonuses to people who recruited new workers. After he moved to the city with his family when he was thirteen years old, his mother kept in touch with friends in New York, encouraging them to move to Lawrence as well, stressing that in a city with such an “immigrant flavor” from previous generations of European immigrants, it was easy to “blend in.”<sup>1</sup>

The above migration narrative demonstrates many of the “ironies” or apparent contradictions of Latino settlement in Lawrence, Massachusetts. Unless one has been to

or lived in Lawrence, the idea of a tiny, seven-square mile city on the border of New Hampshire, over a thousand miles away from the nearest Latin American country, becoming home to one of the highest proportions of Latinos in the nation seems preposterous. Lawrence is certainly not a major urban center with obvious name recognition or the home of a long-standing Latino community, like New York City. Further, as I will discuss in the next few chapters, throughout its history, many city officials and white residents have worked hard to make the city unappealing as a Latino settlement site, both through official policy and through quotidian harassment and exclusion. Finally, when one considers the dramatic economic crisis facing the city as a result of suburbanization and deindustrialization, the pull of the city for Latino migrants seems puzzling indeed! Why would tens of thousands of Latinos settle in a small, obscure city, with a resistant white population and a troubled economy? Why would they choose a deteriorating, bigoted, New England city, over New York, with its longstanding Latino neighborhoods, businesses, and communities and its reputation for racial tolerance? As Ramón Borges-Méndez has aptly phrased it, “Who in their right mind, looking for a job and looking for better economic opportunity... would move to Lawrence?”<sup>2</sup> Why did so many Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, and other Latinos choose to settle in Lawrence that they rapidly came to outnumber the city’s white residents? Why *Lawrence*?<sup>3</sup>

The answer is threefold, and all three parts are related to the development of urban crisis in U.S. cities in the second half of the twentieth century. First, racialized patterns of urban disinvestment in New York City led many Latinos to believe that New York City was not a suitable place to make a life for themselves and their families.



Second, racialized suburbanization constrained the settlement options of most Latinos, making the question of where to settle really a question of in which *city* to settle.<sup>4</sup>

Although these two understudied processes were essential to the development of a Latino community in Lawrence, and therefore comprise the bulk of what I argue in this chapter, the development of such a substantial Latino community in Lawrence was not overdetermined by these processes alone, as there existed countless other cities throughout the United States that did not develop such an ethnic profile.

Rather, the final critical factor in the rise of Lawrence's Latino community was the impact of urban disinvestment on the city. The process of urban decline in Lawrence opened the city's job market and housing to Latinos. Throughout Northeastern cities, manufacturing was in decline in the decades after World War II, as industry moved to the suburbs, to the U.S. South, and eventually off-shore. Lawrence's non-durable goods manufacturers welcomed and even recruited Latinos to Lawrence in the 1960s and 1970s as a means of remaining competitive with Southern and overseas manufacturers. This initial migration formed the basis of a Latino community in the city that was then fed through kinship networks, even after the employment incentive to settle in Lawrence receded. White flight made rental housing available in the city, although it was not necessarily "cheap" relative to Latino wages. At the same time, urban disinvestment was so complete in Lawrence that the Latino community was allowed to grow relatively undisturbed by gentrification or large-scale urban renewal. The absence of gentrification in the city enabled long-term community and small-business development, relatively uninterrupted by the displacement suffered by many Latino communities in larger cities.

Unimpeded by gentrification, the Latino community grew, Latinos developed an unmistakable public presence in the city, and Latino businesses and organizations proliferated, all of which in turn became factors that drew more Latinos to the city. Latinos came to Lawrence because of what previous settlers were able to build and create there.

Although the bulk of this dissertation addresses the damage wrought and struggles posed by urban disinvestment, this chapter will take a slightly different perspective. The structural changes transforming cities throughout the Northeast were a substantial part of what *enabled* Latino migration to Lawrence in the 1960s and 1970s, as these changes maintained opportunities for Latinos in Lawrence (particularly in terms of jobs and housing) that suburbanization had closed to them in most places throughout the Northeast. The postwar metropolitan political economy that encouraged the consolidation of predominantly white, wealthy, and politically powerful suburbs by the 1970s narrowed the choices of Latino migrants, leaving the suburbs (which had enabled upward mobility for generations of earlier European immigrants) out of reach for most. At the same time, though, the decline of the traditional manufacturing sector in central cities across the Northeast and Midwest, and the national transition to a two-tiered service economy, undermined the possibility for migrants to achieve a living wage or experience upward mobility from the low-wage manufacturing and service jobs they found in the cities, further reinforcing the *persistence* of urban Latino concentration, even for U.S.-born generations.<sup>5</sup>

As the manufacture of non-durable goods was transferred overseas in search of cheaper labor costs (often to the very countries migrants were leaving for the U.S.), Lawrence's remaining manufacturers were eager to hire Latinos, eager to exploit the very same workforce their competitors were exploiting "offshore," but without the need to relocate. In the early decades of Latino settlement in the city (the 1960s and 1970s), Lawrence manufacturers of non-durable goods, particularly shoes and clothes, welcomed Latinos, although the work was often poorly paid, unstable, and even dangerous. Yet, these economic changes that encouraged Latino settlement in Lawrence (the pull of jobs) are not sufficient to account for the substantial Latino migration to the city. Not only did many migrants express their frustration with the quality of the jobs available, but by the late 1970s, as migration to the city dramatically accelerated, jobs continued to evaporate in the face of suburban competition and deindustrialization, and Latino unemployment surged upward. By 1990, Latinos in Lawrence had nearly a twenty-five percent unemployment rate, almost double that of New York City's Latinos. Clearly by the 1980s, the decade of the most dramatic migration to Lawrence, Latinos were not settling in the city because of the jobs available; they were settling in Lawrence *in spite of the lack of jobs*.

This apparent contradiction can only be explained by looking beyond strictly economic motivations for migration. Latino migration narratives demonstrate that many Latinos chose to settle in Lawrence because they believed it provided an escape from New York City, another example of how the postwar metropolitan political economy was shaping Latino settlement. Latino newcomers to Lawrence believed that urban crisis had

made New York City an inhospitable, unsafe environment to live and raise their families. Like millions of families who left cities wracked by poverty, crime, and inadequate public services, particularly education, Latinos left New York City searching for a better *life*, not just a better *livelihood*. In the context of the constrained choices available to most Latinos in the Northeast and Midwest (i.e., not where to settle, but in which city), life in Lawrence seemed preferable to life in New York City. As much of the literature on immigration focuses on the pull of jobs in U.S. cities, this seemingly irrational choice (from a strictly economic perspective) to move to a city in which work was widely unavailable encourages a more nuanced view of migration from Latin America. In coming to the United States migrants struggled to improve their lives in a range of ways, and a job was often just a means to that end.

## **Method**

This chapter will explore Latinos' perspectives on their decision to move to Lawrence. As migration scholars who have emphasized “push” and “pull” factors in explaining migration have demonstrated, the question of “Why?” in migration is really multiple questions: What did migrants want or need that they felt they couldn't achieve where they were? What made migrants want to go to a specific location? What made migrants *able* to go to that location (often not the same thing)? What made migrants settle in a specific neighborhood or house within that location (often an entirely different set of criteria)? What kept migrants there once they arrived and stopped them from returning home or migrating again (again, sometimes also a different set of criteria)? What

challenges and obstacles did migrants find in their new homes? What did they eventually find or achieve there, if anything, that justified the move, or did they regret their decision?<sup>6</sup>

For two-step migrations to Lawrence, this entire set of questions needs to be applied at each stage of the move. The complex reasons for a migrant to move from Juana Diaz, where many of the early Puerto Rican settlers in the city came from, to New York City, would have been different than the equally complex reasons to move from New York to Lawrence. Further, the questions of why (and how) implicitly conjure their opposites: Was there anything they migrated in spite of? Was there anything migrants found that surprised them (negatively or positively)? Were there any ways in which migrants tried to keep “the best of both worlds”? For transnationalism and transurban links to New York City seem, in many ways, to have been exactly that, a way to mitigate the pain and disruption of migration by maintaining a life in both places.

The literature on what has encouraged Latinos to leave their home countries and come to the United States is extensive. In particular, the two main national origin groups that dominate Lawrence’s Latino population, Puerto Ricans and Dominicans, have been among the most rigorously studied groups in migration literature. As the migration narratives of Latino Lawrencians do not differ substantially from the narratives discussed elsewhere, in terms of what motivated Latinos to leave or to come to the United States, this chapter will not reproduce that general analysis here.<sup>7</sup> Instead, this chapter will focus on giving a nuanced account of what motivated Latinos to come specifically to Lawrence, and what made some of them leave. The analysis of why Latinos settled in Lawrence in

this chapter is based on census data in combination with a number of different qualitative sources, particularly oral history interviews.<sup>8</sup> Although the sources are not broad enough to claim statistical validity, this chapter is an effort, using migrants' own words, to develop a basic qualitative understanding of the factors involved in the complicated decision to move to Lawrence.

As is evident throughout these narratives, urban crisis in New York City, increasing deindustrialization in New England cities, and suburban overdevelopment throughout the nation, all shaped Latino migration. Taken together, the rise of the suburbs and the fall of the cities re-made the entire U.S. landscape in the second half of the twentieth century, particularly in the Northeast and Midwest, and so it should come as no surprise that such changes made some places more viable for migrant settlement than others. The specific reasons why Latinos chose Lawrence offer a window into the postwar racial geography of the United States. The national sea change in metropolitan political economy in the second half of the twentieth century both shaped migrant settlement patterns and undermined the opportunities that Lawrence could provide to its Latino residents. Thus, the constrained choice to settle in Lawrence marks a key site where transnational migration history meets the racialized history of U.S. cities, as the circumstances that made some places in the U.S. more suitable than others were not simply local circumstances, but national, and indeed global, processes.

### **“Lawrence filled-up with New York”: Who migrated and when**

Latino migration to Lawrence began with a trickle of Cuban refugees and Puerto Rican migrants in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Some have speculated that the earliest Puerto Rican settlers in the city had been farm workers in Massachusetts agriculture,<sup>9</sup> but it is unlikely that substantial numbers of temporary agricultural workers settled in Lawrence.<sup>10</sup> Nonetheless, the Latino population in Lawrence grew steadily over the next few decades, from dozens in the 1950s, to hundreds in the 1960s, to thousands in the 1970s. By 1980, census figures reported that over ten thousand Latinos lived in Lawrence, and unsurprisingly, members of the community estimated that the real population was substantially higher.<sup>11</sup> By 1990, the census indicated that the Latino population in Lawrence had tripled to nearly thirty thousand, and most districts in North Lawrence had already developed Latino majorities. As the local paper noted in the early 1990s, “The most dramatic increase in Lawrence’s Latino population came in the 1980s, when Dominicans drawn by family ties and the lure of a smaller, safer city streamed in from New York City and other East Coast locales.”<sup>12</sup> It is significant that the 1980s were the time in Lawrence when racial tension was at its height, when the remaining industries in the city were leaving and unemployment was growing, and yet it was also the time when the Latino population grew the most substantially. By 2000, with the further addition of more than ten thousand Latinos in the 1990s (a portion of which probably through natural increase), the census indicated that Lawrence had developed a substantial Latino majority (59.7 percent) in the city as a whole.<sup>13</sup>

According to census figures, the majority of Latinos who arrived before 1980 was Puerto Rican. Dominicans did not dominate numerically until the 1990s, although many Dominican migrants arrived during the early era as well, and by 1980 they were a close second to Puerto Ricans. Many community leaders, however, argued as early as the 1970s that the Dominican population had overtaken Puerto Rican population numerically. Undocumented Dominicans may have been reluctant to announce themselves to census takers, and there is evidence that some undocumented Dominicans claimed that they were Puerto Rican in order to stay and work in the United States without fear of deportation.<sup>14</sup> Puerto Rican community organizer and former minister Daniel O'Neill estimated that already in 1979, Dominicans outnumbered Puerto Ricans.<sup>15</sup> He argued that it was impossible for the census to grasp the exact numbers, because there were many people who had come with a student or visitor's visa and "they stayed here because they need[ed] the job, they need[ed] the money." Despite the inaccuracy of the census, however, he argued that an estimate could be made based on the number of attendees at Latino churches and the number of Latino clients of the city's social service agencies. O'Neill's estimate was that Dominicans made up between seventy and seventy-five percent of Lawrence's Latinos, with Puerto Ricans coming in second.<sup>16</sup> Puerto Ricans, however, were far more present in the media and as Latino community leaders throughout the 1980s, so it is possible that his estimate (which prioritizes church attendance and requests for aid) underestimates the size of the well-established Puerto Rican community in the city. Suffice it to say that from 1960 through 2000, Dominicans



and Puerto Ricans together made up the vast majority of Latinos in the city, although many other national origin groups were well represented.

The bulk of Latino settlement in Lawrence before the riots was made up of internal migrants, mostly from New York.<sup>17</sup> Although some direct migration occurred in the 1960s,<sup>18</sup> accounts from long-term city residents and community organizers contend that in the early 1970s the bulk of Latinos in Lawrence came from New York City. As Isabel Meléndez described, “Lawrence filled-up with New York.” She argued that the growing presence of New York Latinos was obvious, “The growth was weekly.”<sup>19</sup> A report on Lawrence’s Latinos in the mid-eighties explained, “In time, if New York Dominicans decide to stay [in the United States], they may move to another American city. In the mid 1970’s, many began choosing Lawrence. We heard again and again that ‘it is quieter here.’ ‘Lawrence is more peaceful than New York.’”<sup>20</sup> But this process was not limited to Dominicans, Puerto Rican migrant networks also had roots in New York City. The *Eagle-Tribune* described, “Puerto Ricans began immigrating here during the early 1960’s, the bulk of them making stops along the way, living for a time in New York City, and then hearing about Lawrence from friends and relatives.”<sup>21</sup> Among both Puerto Ricans and Dominicans, much of the early Latino migration to the city consisted of secondary migrants from New York City (although direct migration from the islands increased in the 1980s and 1990s) and family and commercial links between Lawrence and New York City remained quite strong.<sup>22</sup>

### **“Hay trabajo, pero no hay vida”: Why choose Lawrence over New York<sup>23</sup>**

As has been extensively documented by migration scholars, in the second half of the twentieth century, many Latin Americans believed that the economic opportunities that had been eroded in their home countries could be restored by finding jobs in the United States. Many migrants did find work in U.S. cities in the postwar decades, but in this same era most U.S. cities, particularly in the Northeast, were suffering from dramatic economic decline, poverty, overcrowding, and rising crime rates. In New York City, where the vast majority of Dominican and Puerto Rican migrants settled, there were indeed low-paying jobs available, offering at least the hope of economic opportunity. But living in New York was often viewed as a necessary evil, and many residents longed for a life without the danger, drugs, noise, and social turmoil of life in the throes of urban decline, “renewal” (often removal), and disinvestment. As the Dominicans interviewed by Glenn Hendriks in the early seventies often repeated, in New York, “Hay trabajo, pero no hay vida”; there were jobs in New York, but it wasn’t the place to make a life.<sup>24</sup>

The Latinos who eventually settled in Lawrence were not just searching for a job (livelihood), they were searching for a better *life*. As one Puerto Rican in Lawrence explained, this better life generally required a job in order to maintain it, but the job itself was not the goal, “We’ve all come because we want better work, health, schooling. We’ll do any work to get them.”<sup>25</sup> A better life (in this example: not just a job, but a good job, plus improved access to health and education services) was what spurred migration. The desire for a better life generally required a job, but jobs alone did not represent the full goal of migration. It is only in the context of this complicated and full desire for a *life*,

rather than just a *livelihood*, that the decision to migrate from New York to Lawrence makes sense.

Given the economic troubles and white resistance of postwar Lawrence, the intangible impulse behind much of the early migration to Lawrence was ultimately safety and quality of life. Although Lawrence would come to be known, at least regionally, for its economic problems and its crime and poverty, many of the Latinos who chose to move there were looking for the closest thing they could get to small-town life in the United States. Constrained by the exclusionary practices of suburbanization, Latinos looked for a small city, where they could build community, raise children and start businesses in safety, and escape the perceived danger and anonymity of life in New York. One Dominican woman explained, “*Una de las cosas es que el dominicano ha inmigrado más a Lawrence que fue la tranquilidad... tú sabes que Lawrence es pequeño y está fuera de las grandes urbes.*” [One of the reasons so many Dominicans have immigrated to Lawrence is the peace and quiet. You know that Lawrence is small and outside of the large urban centers.]<sup>26</sup> *Tranquilidad* was most certainly in short supply in New York City. Another Dominican woman who came to Lawrence as a child in 1970, believed that her parents came to Lawrence because, “It was quieter than New York.”<sup>27</sup> The relative *tranquilidad* of Lawrence resembled the life many Latinos lived before migration, “*Se parece más a nuestros barrios, a nuestro pueblo.*” [It more closely resembles our neighborhoods, our towns].<sup>28</sup> Latino settlers in Lawrence believed that this small-town life provided a safer environment in which to raise children, “*los muchachos pueden jugar en las calles, pueden estar fuera de su casa hasta tarde, sobre todo en el verano,*

*eso no puede suceder en otras ciudades. Entonces la tranquilidad es lo que siempre atrae para que nosotros vengamos a vivir para acá.*” [the children can play in the streets, they can be outside until late (above all in the summer); this wouldn't be possible in other cities. The tranquility is what attracts us to come here.]<sup>29</sup> One Latina explained that she came to Lawrence from New York City in 1981 not because she had been told about jobs in the area, but because she had been told that “it would be more peaceful for my children.”<sup>30</sup>

Many Latino Lawrencians mentioned dissatisfaction with New York City in their descriptions of why they moved to Lawrence. A young Dominican man explained, “We had a tough life in New York...Lawrence has a lot more to offer.”<sup>31</sup> A Dominican woman explained, “I moved to Lawrence because New York is, I don’t consider a nice place for a child to be raised in. You know, I was thinking about my kids to be raised in a nice city, not gangs, stuff like that, bad things.”<sup>32</sup> She explained what she liked best about Lawrence, “What I like best, it’s quiet. It’s not like New York City. It’s quiet. It’s nice people. You can walk in the night. You don’t have to be worried about somebody hitting you or something, killing you, like in New York City and you can walk.”<sup>33</sup> A young Dominican man explained to the *Eagle-Tribune* why his mother chose Lawrence, and the paper reported, “[she] first went to New York for a year and then she found Lawrence. To her... the city was like a church – quiet and peaceful. It was a much safer place to send her children to school.”<sup>34</sup> New York’s urban crisis, particularly its crime, was cited again and again as a reason to leave for Lawrence. A Puerto Rican pastor explained that those Latinos who judged the United States based on New York City were getting a profoundly

skewed view of the country, “When I first came to the United States, I came to New York City. I came with the idea that the entire United States were just New York City... Some people come here and they stay in New York City and they go back to their countries with a terrible feeling about the United States, just because they have judged the nation just by New York City. So, when I started seeing other places besides New York City, I loved the nation.”<sup>35</sup>

The “push” of Latinos from New York City helps account for their growing dispersal to small cities throughout the Northeast. The proportion of Puerto Ricans living in New York City has dramatically declined since World War II. In 1940, eighty-eight percent of stateside Puerto Ricans lived in New York City. By 1970, New York City’s share had declined to only fifty-nine percent, a smaller proportion, but one that still left New York City as home to the majority of stateside Puerto Ricans. By 2000, however, less than a quarter of stateside Puerto Ricans lived in New York City.<sup>36</sup> This dispersion from New York City was true of Dominicans as well by 2000. When discussing why they left New York to come to Lawrence, Latinos often referenced the lack of safety in New York City. One Lawrence mother came from the Bronx in 1985, saying, she used to bring her family to Lawrence every summer to spend their vacation with her stepmother, and then eventually decided to move, “I didn’t want my children to get involved in the violence in New York City, so I finally moved here to find a better life.”<sup>37</sup> One Dominican woman who came to the United States in 1963 never lived in New York City, but was affected by its urban crisis nonetheless. She landed in a New Jersey airport where her husband’s cousin picked them up to drive them up to Boston, and on the way, they

drove through Harlem. What she saw there provided a strong contrast to what she expected to find in the United States, “I envisioned [the U.S.] like a land with the streets paved with gold, beautiful, streets immaculately clean and I’m not a dress up person... I used to say, Oh my God, what am I going to do over there I have to wear stockings... And when we came in, we came through Harlem... and when I saw the mess, I couldn’t believe it. I talked to my husband and I told him, ‘This is the United States of America?’ I couldn’t believe it. I really couldn’t. So in that way, I was disappointed.”<sup>38</sup> The racialized disinvestment in U.S. cities in the decades after World War II shocked immigrants who expected that a wealthy nation should be free of such poverty and degradation.

By the late 1980s and early 1990s, New York City’s urban crisis had accelerated, as divestment continued in low-income neighborhoods, unemployment remained high, and the drug trade, addiction, and the militarized “War on Drugs” ravaged inner-city communities. By that time, however, Lawrence’s urban crisis was also deepening. In spite of Lawrence’s growing crisis, many families still fled New York City to come to Lawrence. A young Dominican woman whose mother moved their family to Lawrence in 1989, explained that her mother decided to leave New York City “because there was a lot of drug dealing, a lot of stealing, gun shots. That wasn’t a good area for us, to raise us. So she was concerned for our health, the way we [would] grow up, so she moved to Lawrence.” Although the reasons behind this late-1980s move echo the decisions of earlier migrants, once the family arrived in Lawrence, the young woman’s mother was profoundly disappointed to discover that their circumstances were similar to what they had left in New York.<sup>39</sup>

While Lawrence's urban crisis was accelerating in the late 1980s and early 1990s, Latino neighborhoods in New York City, particularly East Harlem, *El Barrio*, began to gentrify. As Arlene Dávila has demonstrated, while some of New York's Latino neighborhoods experienced renewed investment in the 1990s, this neighborhood revitalization often brought about widespread displacement of poor and working-class residents.<sup>40</sup> Most of the migration narratives used in this dissertation were from Latinos who came to Lawrence by the early 1990s. As a result of this time frame, the emphasis in discussions of leaving New York is on the danger and crisis in New York City, yet the potential role of gentrification in pushing some Latinos out of New York City cannot be dismissed. A recent report by researchers at the *Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños* at Hunter College studied Puerto Rican out-migration from New York City from 1995 to 2000 and found that outmigrants from New York City differed socio-economically and in terms of their motivations for leaving. While some upwardly mobile Puerto Ricans left New York City for the surrounding suburbs or for southern Florida, and some relatively successful Puerto Ricans left New York City to retire in Puerto Rico, many of the Puerto Ricans who left New York to move to small cities in New England (and the Northeast more generally) fell into a category that the researchers termed "the displaced." They characterized "the displaced" as "individuals/families having difficulty in the New York City employment markets and housing markets" noting that such outmigration was "primarily responding to 'push' factors in New York City." The "displaced" outmigrants from New York City generally had lower education and income levels, higher poverty

levels, greater Spanish language fluency, and a lower proportion of professional or managerial occupations than Latino outmigrants to other areas.<sup>41</sup>

This Centro study is the first to specifically examine Latino outmigration from New York City. In its emphasis on a “push” from New York, it echoes the migration narratives of Lawrence Latinos. It also helps to differentiate Latino settlement in small, impoverished New England cities from true suburbanization. While many middle-class, educated Puerto Ricans left New York City for improved employment or economic opportunities in the suburbs, this upward mobility was less true for those who went to small New England cities. As the report noted, “For those at the other end of the socioeconomic spectrum—the displaced—leaving New York has not freed them from poverty conditions. Outmigrants to New England, Pennsylvania, and [other sites in New York State] experience poverty at greater rates (42 percent, 42 percent, and 54 percent respectively) than is the case for typical New York Puerto Ricans who remained behind (32 percent among stayers...). For residents in smaller, de-industrializing Northeastern towns and cities, where they continue to face unemployment, crime, and poor housing, relocation did not deliver substantial improvements in socioeconomic wellbeing.”<sup>42</sup> Changing census definitions of a “central city” has led to the conflation of small cities with suburbs; indeed, the census no longer officially considers Lawrence a central city. Yet the differences between Latino suburbanites and Latino migrants to low-tier cities is substantial, as outmigration to small, impoverished cities did not bring about any “substantial improvements” in the lives and opportunities of Latinos.



Although the results of the Centro study resonate with stories of Latino outmigration from New York City told by Latino Lawrencians, the study covers a period of Latino outmigration that extends beyond what I cover in this dissertation. Latino outmigration in the late 1990s, particularly the displacement of Latinos to low-tier Northeastern cities, demonstrates how the era of racialized urban disinvestment in New York City was transformed into an era of gentrification in the 1990s, an era of a reinvestment in urban *spaces* without a parallel reinvestment in urban *communities*, which led to the growing displacement of urban communities of color from major metropolitan centers, like New York. Lawrence became an important refuge as the processes of displacement in New York enforced Latino dispersion (while suburban political economies constrained the settlement options of those who left New York City). The processes of gentrification and major urban renewal have been largely absent in Lawrence, and Ramón Borges-Méndez has concluded that this lack of successful major urban renewal projects in Lawrence was part of what enabled Latinos in the city to develop a strong network of community organizations and Latino-owned businesses.<sup>43</sup> As he explained, “The absence of urban renewal, rapid white flight, and rapid Puerto Rican/Latino population growth did allow the original *colonia* to grow unaffected by displacement, although at the price of widespread neighborhood deterioration, growing segregation, and rising poverty.”<sup>44</sup> Although urban disinvestment in Lawrence brought remarkable challenges, the gentrification of Latino neighborhoods in New York City demonstrates that urban *reinvestment* carried its own perils.

### **Lives and livelihoods: The role of jobs in Latino settlement in Lawrence**

Most literature on immigration cites jobs as the major pull factor in determining settlement, and in the 1960s and 1970s, the availability of jobs seems to have been a central factor in encouraging Latinos to move to Lawrence. As the *Eagle-Tribune* noted, “Often, enough to make a family head for Lawrence, was the help-wanted section of the *Eagle-Tribune* received from a friend.”<sup>45</sup> Yet as Lawrence manufacturing declined in the late 1970s, only the most fortunate Lawrence Latinos were able to move into the high-tech manufacturing going on in the region’s suburbs, while many of the rest suffered prolonged unemployment. In her study of Dominicans in Lawrence entitled, “City and Island,” Jessica Andors offered the story of “Alma”<sup>46</sup> to demonstrate the major themes in Dominican migration to Lawrence:

[Alma’s] parents, of “humble background,” emigrated from the Dominican Republic in the early 1960s after Trujillo died. They came first to New York, rapidly followed by a large circle of extended family and friends in what Alma described as “the domino effect.” In the late 1960s one member of the circle came up to Lawrence following rumors of work, and soon the rest followed; local industries were paying “headhunter fees” to those who brought in new workers (at this point the going rate was about \$25, according to several interviewees). Most members of the circle (male and female) worked in factory jobs, sewing shoes and coats. In the late 1970s many of them began moving into electronics firms such as Raytheon, Lucent, and Western Electric, which Alma described as “the elite of immigrant working class” jobs.<sup>47</sup>

The story of Alma's family demonstrates the role of employment opportunities in encouraging early Latino settlement in Lawrence. Yet it also demonstrates the transition to suburban manufacturing that occurred in the late 1970s (each of the firms named above were located in Andover or North Andover), a transition that left many Latinos unemployed at the same time that it dramatically reduced the city's tax base. Given Lawrence's consistently high levels of Latino unemployment after the late 1970s, along with the low wages, lack of upward mobility, and suburban workplaces of many of those who had jobs, it seems only a partial truth to claim jobs as the reason why so many Latinos settled in Lawrence. Indeed, particularly after 1980, without the contributing processes that pushed Latinos from New York City and prevented their dispersal throughout the Merrimack Valley region, the employment situation in Lawrence would most certainly not have led to such a substantial Latino influx to the city. This section will explore the ambivalent role of jobs in attracting Latinos to Lawrence.

Early Latino settlers (those that arrived before 1980) often noted that jobs were easy to come by in the 1960s and early 1970s. The increased global competition faced by most U.S. manufacturing in the 1960s made some Lawrence businesses, such as garment and shoe manufacturers eager to hire Latino workers. Although no records of Lawrence manufacturers' decision to recruit Latino workers exists, a study of similar firms in Boston in 1973 noted that they recruited Puerto Ricans because employers considered them less "intractable" than local African American workers. Although Lawrence had no substantial population of African Americans, the presumption of relative Latino tractability may have been an industry-wide belief throughout the Greater Boston area.<sup>48</sup>

Lawrence employers may have also recruited Latinos out of a belief that they would accept lower wages than native-born white workers. A 1980 Greater Lawrence booster pamphlet pointed out to prospective businesses that the real wages of factory production workers in the Boston metro area had actually declined since 1967.<sup>49</sup>

Employers seem also to have been aware of the particular vulnerability of undocumented Latino workers. Julia Silverio, who worked in the personnel office of a shoe factory in the early 1970s, noted that, during slack times, “the employers used to call the INS department. Dominicans, many of whom were undocumented and scared to be deported, used to abandon their jobs. After a while, ads looking for workers would be posted and Dominicans and others would be rehired as new workers... Workers were always new and, when they were not needed, they were simply let go in this manner.”<sup>50</sup> In this context, the preference for Latinos seems to have been due partly to the belief that they would be less likely to protest the periodic layoffs inherent in an industry in decline. The shoe factory that Silverio worked in closed a few years later. As Ramón Borges-Méndez concluded, “the available evidence indicates that immigrant workers are being used as a cheap supply of transitional labor... in breaking the resilience of unionized domestic workers to accept the occupational changes caused by modernization, or as a source of cheap, flexible labor that permits manufacturers to combine piecemeal modernization with old assembly-methods without skill and wage improvements.”<sup>51</sup> Latinos were incorporated into Lawrence’s labor force to cushion the impact of deindustrialization stemming from global competition.

As much of U.S. manufacturing moved to the South and then off-shore (particularly garment manufacturing), immigration allowed Lawrence manufacturers to utilize the same labor force they would use if they transferred their company overseas, without having to pay relocation or transportation costs. One garment manufacturer explicitly noted that Lawrence's Latino labor force was the source of his continued competitiveness compared with off-shore manufacturers. In discussing how U.S. manufacturers could remain competitive with foreign manufacturers, the owner of menswear manufacturer, the Paley Group, encouraged companies to explore the fruits of urban crisis, "You can go into any urban area and find pockets of poverty. But there are people there who are willing to work. They just need the opportunities."<sup>52</sup> Local shoe and garment manufacturers seem to have welcomed and recruited Latinos as a low-wage labor force, primed for miserable "sweat shop" work by their poverty, whether urban poverty or island poverty. As economist Michael Piore noted in his study of Greater Boston, "The secondary sector in the Boston area is closely related to the process of job export to underdeveloped countries. In a number of industries – shoes, textiles, garments in particular – employers saw the employment of immigrants as an alternative to movement abroad."<sup>53</sup> Whatever the reasons may have been for employer recruitment of Lawrence Latinos, the jobs that became available in the 1960s and 1970s did indeed facilitate Latino settlement in the city.

Many early migrants worked at the local shoe factories, such as Lawrence Maid or Jo-Gal Shoes. Father John J. Lamond, who directed a church-based center aimed at helping Latinos settle in the city, recollected hearing about job openings at a local shoe

factory. He recounted that he brought a young Latina woman who was looking for work over one morning, and the manager asked, “Did she bring her lunch?”<sup>54</sup> An Argentinian woman recalled a similar story. She explained that she went to Jo-Gal Shoes, a shoe factory at the corner of Essex and Union Street with her daughter. She could not understand English at the time, but the owner told her daughter that if she wanted to work, she could start the very same day. “I said ‘yes’ and that same day I filled out the necessary paperwork. I told him I was an illegal [alien] and he said not to worry, things would work out.” She worked adding shoelaces and rubber to the shoes, and was eventually promoted to forelady.<sup>55</sup>

Although these workers often worked for low-wages, it was not for lack of skills. Many Latinas who ended up in the factories used skills they had learned before migrating. A man who came to Lawrence from the Bronx as a child in 1975, explained, “My mom was a seamstress in the Dominican Republic and she learned her trade under the dictator Trujillo, and when she came to the United States, she worked primarily in the garment district in New York, and heard there was seamstress work here in Lawrence to be had, and my Grandmother had come before us, and that’s when we came.”<sup>56</sup> His mother worked at Grieco Brothers, in Lawrence, and at a suede company in Haverhill. Only one migrant recalled moving specifically to Lawrence because of the jobs available, and she moved directly from Puerto Rico. Unsurprisingly, family also played a role. She recalled, “I came to Lawrence because I have family here – two sisters already here. They – when they came here, they write to us. By that time, we don’t have telephone, so we used to write. They find that Lawrence was a great place to live. By that time was a lot of

work here, lots of jobs. They looking for people so and Puerto Rico by that time was very bad to find a good job.”<sup>57</sup> She found work at Lawrence Maid shoe factory.

Lawrence Maid was one of the most important employers of early Latino settlers in Lawrence. In 1974, the short-lived progressive Lawrence newspaper, *Today in Greater Lawrence*, did an exposé on Lawrence Maid entitled, “New immigrants in old sweatshops,” offering a good window into the type of jobs Latinos came to Lawrence to fill. As the article noted, “It would be hard to find a Spanish-speaking person who hasn’t at some time worked in Lawrence Maid – or has not had a mother, brother, spouse or in-law who has worked or is working there.”<sup>58</sup> In the exposé, the president of Lawrence’s Chamber of Commerce asserted, “The real sweatshops are the shoe factories.”<sup>59</sup> *Today* invoked Lawrence’s history as an industrial center, but noted the changing times, “Synthetics have cornered the wool market. The textile industry has retreated south, leaving the old mill buildings as shadows of what they once were – unless you happen to be there at 3:30 when the new mill workers are spilling out, and the place comes to life as if the turbines were still running... The faces are Spanish now, high-boned and sleek-haired.” In spite of that awkward description (high-boned?), Puerto Ricans did account for more than forty percent of Lawrence Maid’s workforce.<sup>60</sup>

Yet conditions at Lawrence Maid did not reflect a golden opportunity, “Not one of nine workers interviewed batted an eyelash about saying there are accidents of various sorts, and varying degrees of severity, all the time, ‘*todo el tiempo*.’” One worker explained, “The same guy got hurt four times in one day... I see the old man in the bathroom crying. A strong man. An American. Maybe 40. *Muy viejo y muy joven*, very

old and very young... Each time the machine took a little [of the man's finger].” The hourly rate on the floor was \$2.15, just pennies above the federal minimum wage, and many workers did piece work. One Italian woman explained that you could make a “good dollar” on piecework “if you’re fast... If you don’t mind conditions... It’s a dog eat dog rat-race. It’s kill, it’s really kill. If your machine doesn’t run, you suffer. It hasn’t change.” Workers also complained of the patronizing behavior of the bosses, “They talk hard to us... Like, ‘you, you got to do this.’ They don’t say please,” and “They treat us like kids – ‘*como hijos*,’ like sons.” These were clearly not the circumstances migrants were dreaming of, yet the author argued that many Latinos were resigned, “It’s still harder to make a buck in Puerto Rico, they say. ‘There are more opportunities here.’ Now that I’ve been here so long, I’d have to begin again.” One Latino worker explained, “You get used to it... [except that you feel] old and tired, *viéjo y cansado*.”<sup>61</sup>

Even these less-than-ideal jobs were to prove short-lived, as already in 1974, Lawrence Maid was going through layoffs, affecting both the day-to-day operations of the factory, as well as hopes of workers to unionize. *Today* noted, “Dust from machines, [one worker says], is thick enough to choke on. When Lawrence Maid laid off 500 last November, four of the five janitors for the five story structure got the axe.” The worker elaborated, “And we have to eat on dirty machines because there’s no workers lunch room. *El polvo es el postre*.” [the dust is the dessert]. From November of 1969 to November of 1976, the number of leather shoe workers in Massachusetts was cut nearly in half, from 26,350 to 13,200. From 1964 to 1974, eighty-seven Massachusetts shoe factories closed. As the Vice President of a New Hampshire shoe company summed it up,



“We’re exporting our labor-intensive industry abroad.”<sup>62</sup> By the early 1980s, most of Lawrence’s remaining manufacturing industry had shut down, provoking the massive unemployment protested in the riots.<sup>63</sup>

It would be only a partial truth to say that these miserable conditions and low wages were what caused Latino migration to Lawrence; jobs like those at Lawrence Maid, rather, were what Latino migrants *endured* in order to achieve other aims.<sup>64</sup> Low wage jobs were viewed as a stepping stone to better jobs, improved economic opportunity and most importantly, better health and education services, a better life for workers and their families. Latinos took the miserable jobs that were available, as a way to stay in the U.S. and eventually gain access to the better opportunities they believed staying would provide. As one Dominican man explained, “[*En mis*] diez meses residiendo aquí he tenido que trabajar en seis lugares; ninguno de estos tienen nada que ver con la formación académica que yo tengo de Santo Domingo... [*pero*] estos trabajos han permitido seguir sobreviviendo aquí.” [In my ten months residing here I have had to work in six places; none of these had anything to do with the academic background that I have from the Dominican Republic, but these jobs have permitted us to keep surviving here.]<sup>65</sup> The low quality, low wages, and instability of the jobs Latinos found in Lawrence were no doubt shaped by the fact that they were working in an industry that was rapidly globalizing, engaged in a international “race to the bottom,” in order to have as few expenses as possible (particularly in terms of labor) and thereby maximize profit. Yet, their acceptance of these jobs was contingent upon the lack of other employment options. As Carol Smith has found for Dominican and Puerto Rican garment workers in

New York City, “their knowledge of the instability of the garment industry and their lack of alternatives within the job market make them more accepting of the conditions within the industry, and fearful of leaving their jobs.”<sup>66</sup> The global context of manufacturing work in Lawrence, and the impact of international competition on wages and work stability in the city, was central to persistent Latino poverty in the city.

As these low-wage jobs in the dying manufacturing industry enabled migrants to stay in the U.S. and presumably work towards the “better life” they dreamed of, their labor was crucial to the continued existence of manufacturing in New England cities, particularly Lawrence. As early as 1967, the *Eagle-Tribune* reported that if Puerto Ricans were to leave the city, their labor would be “sorely missed.”<sup>67</sup> Their central, yet poorly remunerated, contribution to the Greater Lawrence economy was apparently not lost on many Latino workers. As one ESL teacher explained, “A lot of my students came [to learn English] because they sensed that they’re here in Lawrence to be exploited.”<sup>68</sup> Few better jobs were open to most migrants, but without employers willing to hire Latinos, migration would have been impossible. Within this context of constrained choice, then, the existence of jobs in the shoe industry in Lawrence enabled Latino settlement and community formation in Lawrence.

By the late 1970s, the decline of the manufacturing industry in Lawrence (and other small New England cities) was accelerating, and the city’s growing unemployment affected Latinos far more dramatically than other workers. Lawrence’s unemployment, high in 1950, had been rescued by the introduction of new diverse industries described in the last chapter, yet non-durable goods manufacturing (mostly shoes and clothing) had,

for the most part, been the only industries that had remained in the city long term. At 9.4 percent in 1950, unemployment had dropped to 4.5 percent in 1960, and 4.4 percent in 1970. By 1980, the city's unemployment was increasing once again, as even the new, diversified industries left the city.<sup>69</sup> Lawrence's unemployment was seven percent, yet Latinos, concentrated in manufacturing, were feeling the loss far more acutely. Latino unemployment in Lawrence was substantially higher, at nearly twelve percent. Although the new, diversified industries had relied on the low-wage labor that Latinos provided, it was not sufficient to keep these industries in the city, and Latino communities suffered significantly from their loss, contributing substantially to the frustration expressed during the riots. As the State Office of Affirmative Action noted, "Many Hispanics migrate to Massachusetts to pursue employment opportunities. Yet many cannot find work and those who are employed are stuck in low-paying jobs in the secondary sector of the economy with little opportunity for mobility. Actually, the Hispanic unemployment situation deteriorated during 1984 relative to both the nation and [to non-Hispanics in] Massachusetts. This threatens to make Hispanics a permanent underclass in the Commonwealth."<sup>70</sup>

Although jobs were an (ambivalent) motivating factor for migrants in the 1960s and 1970s, by the time of the riots in 1984, employment had certainly ceased to be a significant factor for migration to Lawrence. Given the key role of kinship networks in enabling migration (discussed below) migrants to Lawrence would certainly have been warned about the in finding jobs. One unemployed Latino resident explained the fierce competition among Latinos for any available jobs, "Now I hear there are more jobs

coming into the area. Suddenly my friends who are also unemployed become very secretive. They do not want me to find out about the jobs...and I do not tell them what I have heard either... it is the competition...first I get a job and then I will tell you about the opportunity... this goes against my concern for my people...but in America we must all compete.”<sup>71</sup> The high unemployment rate in Lawrence, combined with such interview evidence, indicates that the unemployment situation in Lawrence had made at least some Latinos quite competitive and secretive about the scarce jobs, and renders it highly unlikely that people were recruiting friends and family to move to Lawrence for its great job market (although it is possible that there was a lag between when the jobs disappeared and when people stopped viewing Lawrence as job rich). As the Puerto Rican minister and community organizer Rev. Daniel O’Neill explained in 1987 when asked why Latinos moved to Lawrence instead of places like Hartford or New York City or Miami, “They do go to those places. But Lawrence? It used to be jobs that brought Hispanics to Lawrence. Many here went home or wrote letters saying there was work in Lawrence. That’s how it began. Now, it’s the rumors of jobs.”<sup>72</sup> O’Neill’s comment confirms that jobs seem to have been a major factor in the initial recruitment of Latinos to Lawrence, but that the migration continued long after the job market in Lawrence could sustain it. Three years later, in 1990, Latino unemployment in Lawrence had reached twenty-five percent, while migration to the city continued.

Given that many Latino Lawrencians came from New York, or had kin in New York, it is worth exploring the economic situation in Lawrence compared with the economic opportunities available to Latinos in New York City. A look at the census data

for the two places confirms the theory that jobs were indeed plentiful in Lawrence in the 1960s and 1970s and even that Lawrence may have offered a better economic opportunity in those early years, as Lawrence Latinos had somewhat higher median incomes than New York City Latinos.<sup>73</sup> In 1970, the median annual income for Latino families in Lawrence was \$7,052 compared with \$6,331 in New York City.<sup>74</sup> This positive economic situation in Lawrence relative to New York City was true in spite of lower educational attainment among Lawrence Latinos, with only twenty-three percent having finished high school compared to twenty-eight percent of New York Latinos. The poverty rates in Lawrence, however, were only slightly lower than New York City, with twenty-two percent of Latino families in Lawrence below the poverty line compared with twenty-four percent of Latino families in New York City. Lawrence also had far fewer of the social indicators commonly associated with urban poverty: fewer female-headed families (sixteen percent of families in Lawrence compared with twenty-six percent of families in New York City) and more children living with both parents (eighty-two percent to sixty-three percent). In 1970, at least, it seems that Lawrence offered significant economic opportunities for Latinos compared with New York.

Lawrence's higher household income might have to do with the substantially higher workforce participation among Latinas in Lawrence, with sixty-one percent of Latinas in the labor force in Lawrence, nearly double the New York rate of thirty-six percent. Non-durable goods manufacturing in Lawrence seems to have welcomed, and perhaps specifically targeted, female workers.<sup>75</sup> All Latinos in Lawrence were far more concentrated in manufacturing than Latinos in New York City, with eighty-three percent

of Lawrence Latinos in the manufacturing industry in Lawrence, compared with only thirty four percent in New York City. This astounding concentration of Lawrence Latinos in manufacturing supports the argument that Lawrence's factories were a major draw for early Latino migrants. The fact that manufacturing was the absolute basis of most Latinos' income boded ill considering the city's continued deindustrialization. In New York, however, the manufacturing industry, including the garment industry, had ceased being the economic backbone of the Latino community already by 1970. Most Latinos in manufacturing in both places were involved in non-durable goods manufacturing, textiles or in the case of Lawrence, often shoes.

It seems that manufacturing jobs may have been particularly easy for Latinas to find in 1970, as eighty-two percent of employed Latinas worked as operatives and the female unemployment rate for Latinas was only 3.2 percent (many of the unemployed were professionals). New York had just over half as many Latinas in the labor force as Lawrence did, and only thirty-six percent of employed New York City Latinas were operatives. The massive engagement of Latinas in Lawrence with the manufacturing industry, however, meant two things. First, wages for women in manufacturing were low (Latina operatives averaged \$3,208 per year in 1970, compared with male Latino operatives' \$5,096), so the relatively high household incomes in the city were premised on multi-wage households. Secondly, as Lawrence continued to deindustrialize, jobs for women in the manufacturing sector would soon disappear. In the meantime, New York City offered an economic advantage over Lawrence only in two important respects. It seems to have been easier for men to find a job in New York City, as the male

unemployment rate for Latinos was only five percent in New York, compared with 7.6 percent in Lawrence. In addition, more Latino households in New York (nine percent) owned their own home than in Lawrence (three percent), perhaps tied to the longer settlement history of Latinos in New York City. Both these factors, however, would be important over the next few decades, as Latino unemployment in Lawrence escalated and as working Latinos continued to be unable to translate their employment into home ownership.

The effects of deindustrialization in Lawrence were evident by the very next census. By 1980, Lawrence had lost all of its relative economic advantage over New York City. This is important because the 1980s were the decade of the greatest Latino migration to Lawrence, and so the fact that Lawrence had no economic advantage over New York City means that Latinos settling in Lawrence were looking for something other than strictly economic opportunities. The median household income for Latinos in Lawrence in 1980 was \$8,968, compared with \$9,676 in New York City. In real terms, adjusted for inflations, Latino households in Lawrence experienced a twenty-five percent decline in income in the 1970s! By 1990, the gap between Lawrence and New York was even more extreme: the median income for Latinos in Lawrence was only \$14,779, compared with \$20,402 in New York.<sup>76</sup> Although the decline in real wages for Lawrence Latinos was not as severe as in the 1970s, the relative decline compared to New York City was substantial. Income was not the only difference between Lawrence and New York City. By 1980, the unemployment rate for Latinos in Lawrence was only slightly higher than in New York City (11.8 percent to 10.9 percent), but by 1990, Lawrence

Latinos faced an unbelievable 24.9 percent unemployment rate,<sup>77</sup> compared with 13.4 in New York City. By 1980, the percent of Latino families in poverty in Lawrence had more than doubled to forty-five percent, compared with only thirty-five percent in New York City. In the 1980s, the family poverty rate in Lawrence continued to increase to forty-seven percent, while it declined in New York City (to thirty-one percent). Latinos in New York City, spread out through the city's service, manufacturing, and professional sectors, were in a far better position to weather the storm of deindustrialization than Lawrence Latinos, and New York's service economy was booming, unlike Lawrence.

The impact of the decline of the manufacturing sector on Latinas was evident even by the 1980 census. Although seventy percent of Lawrence Latinos (male and female) still worked in manufacturing, now just over half of employed Latinas were operatives. Whereas in 1970, more females were operatives than males, by 1980 those numbers had reversed. It was in the late 1970s and early 1980s that the shoe manufacturers that had been so avid in their hiring of Lawrence Latinas (such as Lawrence Maid) began to struggle and lay off their employees. By 1990, after the turbulent deindustrialization of the 1980s, only forty-six percent of Lawrence Latinos worked in manufacturing, and less than one third of employed Latinas worked as operatives. This dramatic decline in Latina manufacturing jobs gave Latinas in Lawrence a 25.4 percent unemployment rate by 1990.

In light of this economic devastation in the city, Latinos who settled in Lawrence after 1980 (when the bulk of migration to the city occurred) were clearly looking for something other than a good job. By 1990, more than one quarter of Latino families in



Lawrence were receiving public assistance, although nearly half of Latino families in the city were in poverty.<sup>78</sup> Although there does not seem to be any evidence that Massachusetts offered better welfare benefits than New York, and although the cost of living between the New York City and Boston metropolitan areas seems to have been comparable (so welfare didn't necessarily go further in Lawrence than in New York City), Lawrence's extraordinarily high Latino unemployment in 1990 underscores the reality that available jobs were not necessary to maintain migration. Particularly for those Latinos who could not work (either because they were caring for small children or because they were disabled), and for those who had been discouraged by long-term unemployment, the lack of jobs in Lawrence would not be perceived as a barrier to settlement in the city.

In addition to high Latino unemployment in Lawrence, the share of regional employment that was located within the city sharply declined over these decades, as the suburbs successfully competed for the region's industry and retail establishments. The proportion of regional jobs that were located in the suburbs increased substantially in the 1980s and although Latinos were somewhat more likely to work within the city than their white counterparts, by 1990, less than thirty-nine percent of Latinos in Lawrence's labor force actually had a job in Lawrence.<sup>79</sup> In the 1990s, Jessica Andors noted, "Conversations with three local temporary employment agencies of varying sizes – most of whom work with a majority Latino population – indicate that a number of Lawrence's residents are serving the temporary and seasonal laborforce needs of manufacturers in North Andover, Haverhill, Wilmington, and other neighboring towns and

cities.”<sup>80</sup> Although Latinos were recruited into Lawrence’s dying industries in the 1960s and 1970s, employment opportunities alone cannot account for the persistent residential concentration of Latinos within Lawrence’s municipal boundaries, as many of the jobs that did not disappear entirely, dispersed into the suburbs. The role of suburbanization in concentrating Latinos in Lawrence is essential to the story.

### **The metropolitan history of housing in Lawrence**

A common speculation on the concentration of Latinos in Lawrence (and other urban centers) has been that it was a result of cheap rent. The existence of affordable housing in Lawrence is better understood, however, as a lack of affordable housing in other areas. Mid-century suburbanization was premised on single-family homeownership and the image of quiet, tree-lined streets. With their increased tax base and political power, most suburbs throughout the nation successfully fought against the creation of multifamily, rental housing, and particularly fought the creation of public or subsidized housing in their neighborhoods, arguing that it would lower property values. This is certainly true of the suburbs around Lawrence, as discussed in the last chapter. Migrants looking to settle in northeastern Massachusetts would have had few options for apartments to rent outside of central cities like Boston, Lawrence, or Haverhill. Many of the very qualities that migrants were searching for: tranquility, safety, small communities, and even access to jobs, would have been better served by living in the suburbs around Lawrence, not in the crisis-wracked city itself, and so it is important to consider what factors confined settlers to the city.

The concentration of multi-family rental housing, and particularly the concentration of public housing, within Lawrence's borders was of critical importance. In addition to the paucity of rental housing in the suburbs, purchase prices for homes in Andover or Methuen were well beyond the reach of all but the wealthiest Latinos for most of the period under discussion, even if discrimination were not a factor.<sup>81</sup> Further, the lack of multifamily rental housing in the suburbs was not race neutral; the political power of suburbs, the power to set their own agenda and determine the type and quantity of housing within their boundaries, to keep themselves free of public housing, and to keep "urban problems" locked in the city was part of what encouraged white flight from Lawrence in pursuit of better (and essentially segregated) schools and public services. The development of this intrametropolitan inequality was a national and profoundly racialized story. To say that Lawrence Latinos could not afford a home in the suburbs is to invoke the multi-decade racialized history of what kept homes in the suburbs so expensive in the first place.

Given Lawrence's industrial origins, the vast majority of housing in the city has always been in multi-family structures. It has never in its postwar history had more than twenty-five percent of its units in single families, or an owner-occupancy rate higher than thirty-five percent.<sup>82</sup> Although rents were certainly not "cheap" in the context of the low wages generally paid to Latinos, apartments were widely available for rent, as was true in other central cities in the region, most of which were experiencing the type of out-migration described above in the decades after World War II. If housing issues confined the overwhelming majority of Latino migrants to central cities, what then were the factors

that made them choose Lawrence over other nearby cities such as Haverhill, for example? This is particularly relevant considering that Haverhill and Lawrence are so close together that no job accessible from one could be inaccessible from the other.

In 1970, as the migration to Lawrence increased from a trickle to a noticeable flow, Lawrence had the third highest number of Latino residents in the state, after Boston and Springfield. Comparing these three cities, along with Haverhill, Lawrence's closest urban neighbor within its SMSA, in 1970, when migrant destination patterns were just beginning to coalesce yields an interesting perspective on rental housing. Overall, Latinos in all four cities paid more each month for rent than the city median. Although it is perhaps conceivable that Latinos were paying higher rents because they were living in better quality housing, there is a barrage of evidence to indicate that, in Lawrence at least, this was not the case; in fact, Latinos in Lawrence, and most likely in the other cities as well, were paying higher rents for some of the worst housing in the city.<sup>83</sup> Given the discrimination that many Latinos faced in their search for housing, the higher rent that Latinos had to pay may correlate loosely with the level of resistance they faced from local landlords. For argument's sake, I will call the percent above the median rent that Latinos paid the "discrimination factor" for each city. Interestingly, the discrimination factor in Lawrence and Boston was quite low compared with Haverhill and Springfield. In Lawrence, the median contract rent for the city was \$65 per month, while the Latino median rent was just \$68 per month, an increase of only five percent. In Boston, the median city rent was \$98, while for Latinos it was \$100, an even smaller increase of only two percent. Lest we think it was the size of the Latino populations that mitigated the

discrimination factor, Springfield, with the second largest number of Latinos, had quite a high discrimination factor: median rent for the city was \$76, but it was \$86 for Latinos, or a thirteen percent increase. Haverhill was even more pronounced, with \$75 for the city and \$103 for Latinos, a whopping thirty-seven percent. Although I expected this to be tied to vacancy rates, it was not; Haverhill's vacancy rate was actually higher than in Lawrence.<sup>84</sup>

These numbers are even more significant when we consider that Latinos were relegated to some of the most decrepit neighborhoods in the city, where rents were generally quite low. In Lawrence, for example, if we look only at wards that had more than 100 Latino residents (eighty-nine percent of the city's Latino residents lived in such wards, although they were not necessarily the majority of residents in those wards), we see that the median rent for those wards was actually only \$59 dollars per month. So Latinos in Lawrence were actually paying an extra fifteen percent, a pattern which was most likely repeated in the other cities. By 1980, the rent in Lawrence had increased to \$155 dollars per month, but \$157 for Latinos, for a factor of only one percent, while in Haverhill, it was \$187 dollars per month, but \$203 for Hispanics, for a nine percent discrimination factor. Although Latino settlers in Lawrence faced substantial white resistance in settling in the city, and complained of substantial struggles in searching for apartments that landlords would be willing to rent to Hispanic tenants, the *relative* lack of housing discrimination in Lawrence is significant, and may be part of what encouraged Latinos who came to the region to settle in the city. Although many in Lawrence invoked their immigrant ancestry to deride Latinos for not "making it" in immigrant-friendly

America, it is possible that Lawrence's history as the "Immigrant City" and the multi-ethnic population that existed even before Latinos arrived, may have made some landlords more willing to rent to Latino tenants than in other cities. One Puerto Rican woman explained that in the early years of Latino settlement in the city, she was able to communicate somewhat with Italian and Portuguese speakers, even though there were few Spanish speakers in the city.<sup>85</sup> There is insufficient data to do more than speculate, but as Jose Zaiter's mother found in the quote that opens this chapter, the city's "immigrant flavor" may have somewhat mitigated the discrimination that Latinos experienced elsewhere. Altogether, though, the substandard, racially over-priced, and often hard-to-find housing situation in Lawrence makes it hard to attribute Latino settlement in the city to an unqualified claim of "affordable housing."

The difficulty of finding quality housing in the city was exacerbated in the late 1970s by an urban renewal project north of the Common that cleared a small, but still significant Latino neighborhood and displaced its residents. The difficulty in finding quality housing can be seen in the descriptions given by displaced North Common residents of their pre-eviction apartments as well as their search for replacement housing. Those residents removed from the North Common site in the late 1970s, described their homes generally as acceptable when they first moved in, but deteriorating quickly from lack of maintenance, as rumors circulated that the area was about to be cleared. Landlords neglected apartments "to the point that there were rats, broken windows, cockroaches and other items of disrepair." Even the original adequacy of the apartments was not always a result of the work of committed landlords. One resident explained, "The condition of the

premises was very good at the beginning (I fixed it up). Towards the end the Landlord stopped taking care of the place and we started having a leaky roof, broken windows, rats and other problems.” After being expelled from these already deteriorated apartments, Latino residents struggled to find somewhere else to settle in a city undergoing a long-term affordable housing crisis. They complained that apartments were too small for their families, rents elsewhere in the city were too high, neighborhoods seemed unsafe, schools were too far away, and often they encountered landlords who were unwilling to rent to them. One parent explained, “Since we moved out of the above location, we have had certain difficulty in locating good, affordable housing in Lawrence which is big enough for our family, in a good neighborhood, clean and near the schools. There was not enough time to find a good safe place for my kids. Many Landlords said I had too many children. Rents were too high. Some places were filthy.” Another explained her difficulty finding an apartment, “Nobody wanted kids and the rents were too high. It was hard to find a place that was decent enough... My current landlord does not want to make repairs to my present apartment which is in a state of disrepair.” Another explained, “My current apartment is too small. Trash is always put in front of the house and there are cockroaches in the apartment. It is unsanitary. There are no storm windows and the apartment needs a new sink and some new wallpaper.”<sup>86</sup>

As more white families left the city in the 1980s, one could imagine that the housing crisis might improve, but this was not the case, as older homes continued to deteriorate and as landlords neglected their properties. Further, racial tension was at its height in the 1980s, and many Latinos still reported substantial discrimination when

trying to find a home. The Massachusetts Commission on Hispanic Affairs reported after a hearing in Lawrence, that Latinos there faced numerous housing problems including the “inability to obtain affordable, decent housing, lack of enforcement of housing code laws, deterioration of public housing, and discrimination against Hispanics by landlords.”<sup>87</sup>

Although Latinos in Lawrence were generally relegated to the city’s worst housing in the early decades of settlement, Lawrence’s housing crisis became so extreme by the 1980s that it affected the entire city. The Urban Studies Institute, a joint research venture between Phillips Academy in Andover and Lawrence High School, published a report on the city’s housing crisis in 1988.<sup>88</sup> The report noted that in the past five years, housing prices in Greater Lawrence had more than doubled, while family income in the city of Lawrence actually fell, a whopping twenty-five percent in North Lawrence (where home ownership also fell by seventeen percent). Meanwhile in Lawrence, between 1984 and 1987, rents had tripled, and although rents were lower in Lawrence than the surrounding suburbs, that gap was narrowing; rents were only twelve to fifteen percent lower in Lawrence by 1989, although very little rental housing was available in the suburbs. For tenants in Lawrence, absentee landlords were common; the report found that North Lawrence had seventy percent of its units owned by absentee landlords, resulting in the bulk of rent revenue leaving the city.<sup>89</sup> Lloyd concluded that growing rents in Lawrence and extreme housing costs in the suburbs had made it very difficult to settle in Lawrence, noting that even past settlement had been the result of constrained choice, “It used to be the place you could go when there was no place else to go. That isn't true anymore.”<sup>90</sup>



This crisis was only more extreme for Latinos. A study of Lawrence after the riots explored how the patterns of Latino settlement and the conditions and cost of Latino housing had been shaped by discrimination. “If we take the City of Lawrence as an example, we can see two patterns of housing discrimination. On the one hand, Hispanics over-concentrate in four neighborhoods all located in one half of the City: Arlington (33 percent Hispanic in 1980), Arlington Extension (48.6 percent Hispanic in 1980), Lower Tower Hill (38.1 percent Hispanic in 1980), and Newbury Street (53.9 percent Hispanic in 1980). This depicts a strong pattern of housing segregation.” The report included the following chart to document the ongoing discrimination factor in rent, as well as the overcrowded and lower-quality housing to which Latinos in Lawrence were subject:

Averages for Renters:

	# of rooms	# in Household	Value of residence	Rent
White	5 or 6	2	\$50-100,000	\$150-200
Hispanic	4	3 to 4	\$30-50,000	\$150-200

The report noted, “This second pattern strongly suggests discrimination among renters.

As we can see in [the chart], Hispanic renters in Lawrence have apartments 25 percent to 50 percent smaller compared to White renters. However, Hispanic renters have one-half to two times the number of persons in the household compared to White renters.

Furthermore, Hispanic renters tend to rent residences of much lower value. Hispanic renters were required to pay the same rent as Whites for much smaller apartments in lower value residents. This pattern of discrimination results in higher Hispanic household

density.”<sup>91</sup> In the early 1990s, Lawrence, like many urban neighborhoods where disinvestment was extreme, added widespread arson to its list of housing woes.

As Lawrence’s housing crisis accelerated in the 1980s, frequent moves within Lawrence became a necessity for many Latinos, as stable, affordable housing was in truly short supply. In a report on the crisis, Puerto Rican community leader Rev. Daniel O’Neill estimated that about 5,000 Lawrence residents were engaged in what the report termed “a rootless, continual migration from one ‘home’ to another: doubling up with relatives here, finding an apartment there, then losing the apartment and trying the shelters for a while, then doubling up again.” These poor Lawrencians, many of whom were Latino, were “always looking for – but never finding – a place of their own,” (although O’Neill emphasized that Latinos were less likely than poor whites to end up in shelters as extended Latino family networks generally could provide emergency shelter).<sup>92</sup> In addition, many Latinos who had come to Lawrence to escape violence and drugs in New York City were dismayed to find those same troubles plaguing their new city. One young Dominican woman who had moved from New York City with her mother described that for the first seven years they lived in Lawrence, they moved constantly, searching for a safe place to live, “because my mother was trying to look for a quiet area, quiet place and everywhere she went was nice for a couple of months, then boom drug dealing... and all of that. So she said, forget it, I’m moving... I don’t want you to be raised in that bad area but I guess we were being raised in a bad area because everywhere there is drug dealing.”<sup>93</sup>

Many social scientists have explored this tendency among some poor and working-class families to move frequently, constantly trying to improve their living situations whenever they can afford it, frequently encountering economic setbacks that force them to downsize or move to a less acceptable living situation. This is demonstrated in the example above, but was true for many Latinos in Lawrence from the beginning. Not only did many leave New York City to improve their living situations, but many continued to strive to incrementally improve their living situations as they could afford it. This link between social mobility and spatial mobility is demonstrated in a journalist's 1967 description of early Latino settlement patterns in the city, "The Newbury Street district appears to be where the more prosperous Puerto Ricans live. Husband and wife and older children work in the factories along Canal Street and in the Arlington District, and they rent roomy tenements in the triple-deckers... Poorer Puerto Ricans live in the Park Street area of the city and in the Hancock Project. Those who want to better themselves dream of moving to the Newbury Street area while those already there think about the suburbs which may not be for them but for their children."<sup>94</sup> Socio-economic mobility in this description, "those who want to better themselves," is expressed by spatial mobility: a move from the projects or the Park Street, over to Newbury Street, or from Newbury Street to the suburbs. The difficulty of making these moves is evident, however, as this journalist found that even the city's most prosperous Latinos were not dreaming that the suburbs were within their own reach, but perhaps within the reach of the next generation. This optimistic view of the next generation's upward mobility,

however, did not anticipate the role of urban disinvestment in creating persistent Latino poverty in Lawrence.

Although uneven metropolitan development had ensured that affordable rental housing would be scarce in the suburbs, and that urban wages would not enable suburban homeownership, it is still only a half-truth to say that Latinos settled in Lawrence because of affordable housing or cheap rent. Not only was it extremely difficult to find adequate housing, but Latinos often paid inflated rent for the inadequate housing they did manage to find. Only within the context of constrained choices can housing in Lawrence be considered among the things drawing Latinos to the city.

### **The role of family: Reason to leave and reason to stay**

Throughout the decades of Latino settlement in Lawrence, migrants who came to the city often had family or friends already established there, and many cited the presence of such kin<sup>95</sup> as the reason why they chose Lawrence. Indeed, like earlier generations of immigrants, kinship and chain migration was substantially responsible for much of the dramatic growth of the Latino population in the city. A young Dominican man explained, “We had a lot of family here in Lawrence. This was the first town or city where they all migrated to from the Dominican Republic and throughout the United States. I guess we probably had another choice to go to Michigan. We also had family there.”<sup>96</sup> Family is seen here as an enabling factor. Having family in Lawrence and in Michigan gave his family a choice between those two places. Settling somewhere without family or friends already established was not unheard of, indeed many early migrants to the city were

pioneers for their families, yet kinship networks greatly facilitated settlement in Lawrence.

Given the fact that migration virtually always entails a move *away* from family to some degree, especially for those in the first wave of settlers, kinship networks can only go so far as an explanation for why Latinos settled in the city. Kinship networks, however, were an essential “how” for migration to Lawrence; the opportunities presented by the city, constrained as they were, would have been unknown to New York or island Latinos, were it not for active kinship networks. Further, the move to a new city – finding a place to live or stay, finding a new job, enrolling kids in a new school, and generally traversing the Massachusetts bureaucracy – all were enabled and facilitated by friends and family who had already made the move. Although kinship was a mechanism through which migrants settled in Lawrence, it is only a partial explanation for why migrants chose to settle in the city, as migration almost always entails leaving someone behind. One woman who migrated from the Dominican Republic explained that she ended up in Lawrence because her sister-in-law invited her husband to move to the U.S., and, as a wife, she had to accompany him, (“*tuve que venir con él*”). When asked what she had to sacrifice to come to the U.S. (“*Cuales fueron algunas cosas que tuvo que sacrificar para venir para los U.S.A?*”), she replied, “*dejando todos mis hijos atrás*” (leaving all her children behind). Clearly the move to Lawrence entailed a substantial movement away from close kin, and she explained that having to live in the U.S. without her children resulted in it taking a long time for her to adjust to her new home. Even when her children eventually joined her, she said that she dreamed of returning home, “*porque*

*tengo mi madre atrás*” (her mother still lived in the Dominican Republic).<sup>97</sup> The impact of kinship on her decision to move to Lawrence was ambivalent, at best.

Many early migrants describe a somewhat distant relative or friend who helped them establish themselves in Lawrence, and they describe the relative or friend as someone who helped them establish themselves, not someone they came to Lawrence to join or be near.<sup>98</sup> As a local service organization that worked with Latinos noted, early settlers worked hard to help new arrivals. A local priest involved in helping Latinos access city services, Father John J. Lamond, noted that as the Latino population in the city grew, “the people who had been here for quite some time kind of took care of the newcomers.”<sup>99</sup> Established kin played a key role in helping new migrants settle in the city, particularly in providing temporary places to live and then often helping new settlers find their own apartments. Many also helped newly arrived kin (understood broadly to mean close and extended family as well as friends) find jobs. The young Dominican man mentioned above, for example, stayed with his grandmother, while Isabel Meléndez stayed with a cousin.<sup>100</sup>

Kinship seems to have been central to all groups in terms of helping people settle in a new city, but the role of kinship was especially strong for Dominicans, as most of those who came legally came through family visas, requiring a family member already in the U.S. to sponsor them. In her time working at the Greater Lawrence Community Action Council, Isabel Meléndez remembered helping process hundreds of applications by Dominicans to bring relatives to Lawrence. In 1988 she explained, that Dominicans would come to her office to ask how to bring other family members, and that she helped

bring hundreds of Dominicans into the city all through one or two early settler families.

<sup>101</sup> She explained, “They come here, they work hard and they save every penny... just in order to bring the whole family. And this is happening every day.”<sup>102</sup> Meléndez argued that this chain migration was responsible for the growing number of Dominicans relative to Puerto Ricans in the city. The family preferences for migration established by the 1965 Hart-Cellar immigration act facilitated such chain migration, although kin networks were certainly important to Puerto Rican migrants as well, who as citizens were not subject to immigration laws. Although the presence of kin in Lawrence was not solely responsible for Latino settlement in the city, it certainly enabled such settlement. Migrants, searching for a better life, in the broadest sense, utilized kin networks to arrive and settle in their new home. As Jessica Andors described, “For many migrants, social networks are overlaid like so many ligaments and tendons on the bare bones of economy necessity; they are what makes movement possible.”<sup>103</sup>

#### **“The best town in the world for me:” Lawrence as a Latino city<sup>104</sup>**

As Lawrence developed a sizeable Latino population in the 1980s and 1990s, the presence of such a substantial Latino community became its own draw. Although the challenges of the city were still substantial, the rewards of a living near other Latinos outweighed those challenges for some. For others, particularly professional Latinos, relatively low housing prices compared with the surrounding region provided a unique opportunity for home ownership. Dalia Díaz is a great example of the draw Lawrence offered for some Latinos by the 1990s. After years in the United States improving her

English skills, Díaz eventually got a job as a secretary at Prime Computers in Natick, with typing skills she had brought with her from Cuba. After her son was born, she moved from Cheslea to Natick for Natick's superior school system. It seems she did not move to Lawrence until the late eighties or early nineties, after her son turned eighteen and she was laid off from her job in Natick. Her husband was working in Malden (north of Boston), and they were looking to buy a house, and decided they should look north of Boston. She recalled, "We started looking for properties along Route 93 and they were very expensive. When we looked around in Lawrence, it was a lot cheaper." She and her husband were no strangers to Lawrence, as by this time it had become a Latino hub in the region. "We were coming to Lawrence every weekend to the Hispanic restaurants and the factory outlets. Every single weekend we were coming here."<sup>105</sup> They decided, "If this is the place where we come every week-end, why not live here?" They settled in Mt. Vernon, in South Lawrence -- one of the wealthiest neighborhoods in Lawrence, where the bulk of the city's single-family houses were located. Díaz explained, "We bought this little house, we love it -- it's a very nice neighborhood, nice backyard, we grow a vegetable garden every summer. We've been very pleased."<sup>106</sup> Díaz was deeply involved in the Latino community as the founder of the bilingual newspaper *Rumbo*, and she and her husband had the means to buy one of the few single-family houses in the city, in a relatively tranquil section. For someone in her circumstances, Lawrence was not a "crisis" but an opportunity, particularly considering that other houses in the region were prohibitively expensive.



There is some evidence that the possibility of homeownership in Lawrence was a major draw for a good portion of Latino migrants to Lawrence. The Urban Studies Institute noted that extended Latino families worked together to buy and share triple-deckers in the Newbury street area, “drawing on extended family members to help themselves into all the tax and equity advantages of homeownership.”<sup>107</sup> Even workers with relatively low wages could eventually own their own home if there was more than one worker in a household. Jessica Andors cites a Dominican woman who grew up in Lawrence who explained that her family was able to purchase a triple-decker house in Lawrence, even though they never made more than eight or nine dollars an hour in their suburban manufacturing jobs. Further, the Urban Studies Institute saw a rise in educated, professional Latinos settling in Lawrence during the 1980s and 1990s, migrants who “sought to put down roots in one of the few Eastern Massachusetts cities that seemed... to offer a chance for inexpensive home ownership.”<sup>108</sup> The very urban/suburban inequality that made life for most Latinos in Lawrence so difficult, brought homeownership within reach for some professional Latinos. Yet, overall, the proportion of Latino families owning their own home in the city remained quite low, only 12.5 percent in 1990.

Even for Latinos without the means for homeownership, the Latino community in the city could be a strong draw. The *Boston Globe* reported in 1988 that “In a typical week several dozen new families show up in Lawrence, drawn by reports from relatives and friends who have come before. The city’s huge Hispanic population – estimated at 20,000 to 30,000 – seems to be the biggest attraction. Hispanics can find grocery stores,

dry-cleaning shops and plumbing businesses run by other Hispanics.” Jorge Santiago added, “The weather is different and the architecture is different but otherwise you could be walking around in your home town.”<sup>109</sup> Julia Silverio and her husband moved from Salem to Lawrence in 1974 because the city had a more substantial Latino population. She recalled, “[we] decided to move back to Lawrence because he was a lot into sports and the population in Salem – the Spanish population – the Spanish-speaking population was not large and so he didn’t have his friends and people that he could play – do sports with so we ended up moving back to Lawrence.”<sup>110</sup> Although this decision was precipitated by her husband’s desire to live within a sizeable Latino community, Silverio subsequently built a substantial business selling insurance, arranging travel, and performing other assorted services for the Latino community in Lawrence, a position that eventually launched her successful political career. In 1999, Silverio became the first Dominican woman elected to political office in New England when she became a City Councilor in Lawrence.<sup>111</sup>

In 1992, the *Eagle-Tribune* profiled a young Latino couple, a machinist at Lawrence Pumps Inc. (a shoe manufacturer) and a nursing aide, who had just married and bought a two-family house in Lawrence, where the husband’s brother would live upstairs. “They have read the stories about Lawrence that have made headlines nationwide this year, stories of stolen cars, fires, teen-aged pregnancy, insurance scams and welfare schemes. They know the city is home to all of those problems and more. But it is also home to their families and friends, their memories and their hopes.” The husband was Dominican, and had moved to Lawrence ten years ago with his parents and

seven siblings, all of whom live in the area. The wife was Puerto Rican, but born in Lawrence, and considered herself, “more Lawrencian than Latina.” The paper described the couple, as “among many people in the city’s Latino community who view Lawrence’s problems as its shadow, not its substance.” The profile argued that family ties and the potential for homeownership was not the city’s only draw; Lawrence had elected its first Latino official, two hundred Latino-owned businesses operated in the city, and community resources were abundant, including parents’ groups that gathered in homes “sharing information about schools, city government, health and other neighborhood concerns.” The article continued, “Latino churches are thriving, from storefront ministries to established parishes.” Perhaps most shocking to city leaders who had been trying unsuccessfully to revitalize downtown Essex Street, “Downtown Lawrence has developed a decidedly Caribbean flavor. Clothes boutiques, restaurants and nightclubs catering to a Latin crowd are attracting people from Boston, Lowell, Worcester and New Hampshire.” Latino migration had brought life to the city, and that life was responsible for drawing more Latinos.<sup>112</sup> Lawrence Garcia, a Lawrence-born Dominican whose parents named him after the city, drove a cab for Borinquen Taxi, and insisted that Lawrence was a prime settlement spot for Latinos, in spite of its struggles. “Outsiders don’t come in to see what it’s all about,” he observed. “There’s a lot of bad, but there’s a lot of good, especially for the Hispanics. That’s why there are so many Hispanics here. It’s the best town in the world for me.”<sup>113</sup>

***“Si hubiera un puente”: Moving home and moving away***<sup>114</sup>

The challenging circumstances that Latinos faced in Lawrence were part of what made many migrants dream of returning home. As mentioned in the introduction, I use the term migrants partly because the term immigrant is misleading when discussing Puerto Ricans, and partly because for many Latinos, the move to Lawrence was neither their first nor their last. The privilege of being able to have a family, community, a safe and comfortable home, and the means to preserve them (usually a job) all in one place was one that very few Lawrence Latinos could possess. As a result, many moved frequently in search of a better arrangement.

The dream of moving home was, for many, the most compelling, although it was often elusive; many migrants simply did not have the means to move home. As the *Eagle-Tribune* explained in 1984, “It has been an abiding flirtation, like the tide’s with the shore... In the last few decades, thousands of Spanish-speaking people have streamed into Lawrence – many to build new lives and dreams, others to turn and retreat, as their expectations dissolved like sand castles. Some have left and returned several times. But in the great pull and flow, most have found themselves with the same question asked by other immigrants before them: Where, exactly, is home?”<sup>115</sup> The *Eagle-Tribune* reported that, “Roughly half of the Hispanics interviewed for this story said they would like to return permanently to the country of their birth. Three out of four said they still have relatives there. But statistics show that most will never return, except for visits. They will, instead, live out their lives..., straddling two cultures, apart yet still a part.” This desire to “return” was not limited to those who had actually migrated; their U.S.-born descendants

also felt the pull of the “home” country, “even among the Lawrence-born, many still feel the pull of another place, still leave and return again and again.”<sup>116</sup>

Many of those who intended to come to Lawrence temporarily wound up staying permanently. For Cubans, the dream of return was premised on the removal of Castro from power.<sup>117</sup> As they gradually realized that would not occur, many Cubans began to resign themselves to permanent settlement in the U.S. The prospect of staying in the United States, however, spurred some families to resettle within the U.S., many moving down (*back* down for some) to South Florida as the region developed. The realization that a return to Cuba was not imminent is also what spurred at least one Cuban family, however, to leave Miami in the early sixties and move someplace where the family could settle down and build a life for themselves. In 1966, the *Eagle-Tribune* profiled a young Cuban girl who had recently settled in Lawrence, “After a while it became clear that matters in Cuba were not going to be resolved promptly. From other Cuban refugees, her parents heard about Lawrence, Mass. an industrial city in the north. They decided to come here, settle down, and obtain work.”<sup>118</sup>

Other Latinos chose not to return home because they refused to give up access to the improved services or economic opportunities they believed they could find in the United States. Specifically, many Latinos would not let go of their dreams that they, or more often their children, could have access to the improved health and educational services available in the United States. Yet this did not mitigate their longing for their home countries. A fifty-one year old Puerto Rican woman interviewed by the *Eagle-Tribune* is a good example. The paper’s interpreter reported, “She’d like to return to San

Juan and have a little house of her own and die back in Puerto Rico.”<sup>119</sup> The paper argued that her longing to return was common among local Latinos, “She is like many Lawrence Hispanics who feel themselves caught between two cultures, and she helps explain why more are not fully integrated into the mainstream of city life. [She] was 36 when she came to this country – not because she wanted to, but in order to help her sickly mother who wished to leave Puerto Rico. At first, she says, she wanted to return. But, thinking her children could get a better education here, she decided to stay for a time. That was 15 years ago.” Her decision to stay had been motivated by the educational services available on the mainland, but by the time of the interview, economic troubles were what made it impossible to return. She lived in the Beacon Street housing projects and could not afford her dream of having her own home in Puerto Rico. Yet, she was unwilling to relinquish her dream of return, maintaining a return orientation, even when actual return was not feasible or likely. The interpreter explained, “She plays the lottery number and hopes that, through that, she can make her dream come true. Who knows?”<sup>120</sup> Others tried to return home, but could not re-adjust to their home countries after living in the United States.<sup>121</sup>

For some, it was the discrimination they faced in Lawrence that made them dream of returning home. A young Dominican man profiled by the *Eagle-Tribune* was clear about his preference for his home country, arguing that the discrimination he faced made the city unlivable, “They think we are all the same... They thing we are all from Puerto Rico. They call us spics.”<sup>122</sup> In another article, the paper interviewed a young Puerto Rican father who, in spite of his relative success in the United States, “still dream[ed] of

raising his children in his homeland where they could not be singled out because of their race.”<sup>123</sup> Jessica Andors reported, “One [Dominican] woman I talked with at the Department of Transitional Assistance, who had been in the States for 25 years (first in New York, then in Lawrence), informed me that she was leaving for the Dominican Republic the following week, despite the fact that most of her family was here, citing discrimination and the instability of temporary work as her main motivations for returning.”<sup>124</sup>

Another Dominican woman’s view on return also illustrates that even successful Latino Lawrencians who seem to be well “incorporated” into U.S. life sometimes dreamed of return. The *Eagle-Tribune* reported that the woman had “a supervisory position at a local shoe firm and a daughter attending a prestigious Massachusetts university,” yet she still wanted to go back to her home country “and stay there.” She explained, “I want to go because life over there is better than over here. You don’t work that hard. You don’t get [these] cold winters... It’s more friendly. It’s very rare if you find a Dominican that [doesn’t] want to go back home.”<sup>125</sup> Although the goal of many Dominican and Puerto Rican migrants to ultimately buy property on the island was shared by a number of Lawrence Latinos, the “pull” of home was sometimes underscored by a “push” from Lawrence. As Gina Pérez demonstrated in Chicago, Jessica Andors noted that, in Lawrence, the liabilities of a city in crisis sometimes gave a particular urgency to Latinos’ desire to return home. Indeed, U.S. cities were seen as dangerous places to raise children.<sup>126</sup>

The longing of migrants for home, and the difficulty of giving up on the dream that brought them to the United States demonstrates the hardship of transnationalism. For most migrants, the building blocks of the “better life” they hoped for did not exist all in the same space. Even when Lawrence offered jobs, those opportunities came with urban dangers, frequent discrimination, poor schools and services, and miserable winters. Latinos in Lawrence longed for both economic opportunities and the chance for a good life and a sense of home. Yet, the building blocks of that dream were spread across national boundaries. As one Dominican explained, “*Yo te puedo asegurar que si hubiera un puente de aquí para allá, todos íbamos para allá.... vamos y venimos diario.*” [I can assure you that if there were a bridge from here to there, all of us would be going there. Going and coming daily.]<sup>127</sup> Without a bridge, this daily form of transnationalism was impossible, but many migrants did visit frequently, communicate with kin back home even more frequently, and dream of returning home to stay. Such transnationalism was a way to mitigate the structural inequities that made it impossible for migrants to have everything they needed within reach.

Home was not the only place that drew migrants from Lawrence. Many migrants maintained kinship links with New York City, and some returned there to live. A young Dominican woman, for example, described moving to Lawrence to live with her father in 1988, and then moving down to New York City to live with her mother.<sup>128</sup> Other migrants told of living in many cities in the United States. A Dominican teenager had already lived in two other major cities when he explained, “I liked New York and Chicago, but I love Lawrence.”<sup>129</sup> A young Puerto Rican man, raised in Lawrence,



described surprising mobility, including a time living in Puerto Rico, “I went to Puerto Rico to see if I could stay. I couldn’t get used to it. I’ve been to Kentucky, Oklahoma, New York, Boston. Everyplace I go, I miss Lawrence. It’s a very boring town. It’s boring, but it’s home.”<sup>130</sup> This degree of mobility was not typical (no other Latino Lawrencians mentioned living in far-flung U.S. places such as Kentucky or Oklahoma), but the drive to re-locate, to try to “get used to” their or their parents’ native country or a new city, was indeed representative of many Latinos’ experience.

The main place, besides New York City, that drew migrants from Lawrence was Florida. For many Cubans, particularly, Florida was a powerful draw. As Dalia Díaz explained, “My whole family was here, and little by little, they trickled down to Florida, even my son. My kids used to spend summers in Florida and my son always said, ‘when I turn eighteen, I’m moving to Florida,’ and he did. The day he turned eighteen, he got in his car and left.”<sup>131</sup> She speculated that the lure of Florida was, “What I miss the most -- the sun!”<sup>132</sup> The massive economic and cultural changes that had transformed southern Florida into a prominent Latin American outpost must have influenced the decision as well.

One young Dominican man described how the changes brought about by Lawrence’s own urban crisis encouraged some Latinos to leave the city. “Well things in Lawrence as you know in the mid’90s were rough, especially Bromfield Street, Margin – we recently in that time bought a –our family bought a home in Margin Street – 48 Margin –which the house still is there. We [no longer] own it but we bought it and things were so rough, we were broken into three times within the first month. And so my family

became discontent with the area [sic in transcription]. They noticed they wanted a change. So we moved to Florida. We went to Florida on a vacation trip following that and decided to stay. You know, come back there a few months later because the environment, the weather, you know, better opportunities than they saw at that time. So that's how we ended up in Florida. We first moved to Miami and then moved to Hollywood, which is 14 miles north of Miami." At the time, Florida seemed to provide a better life for his family than Lawrence. Years later, they eventually moved back to Lawrence because his mother was able to make better wages working in a nursing home in eastern Massachusetts than in Florida, a good example of the growing centrality of the health services industry to Latino Lawrencians. He recalled, "in her field of work of nursing home, the pay is really, you know, things that we're paying here at that point -- \$12, \$14 -- over there started at \$4.75. ...the cost of living is a lot cheaper down there but you still got to adjust to that minimum wage."<sup>133</sup>

**"Tú añoras lo que no tienes – cuando lo tienes, no es como pensabas": Challenges and disappointments<sup>134</sup>**

For many Latinos in Lawrence, migration was a survival strategy after U.S. imperial penetration of Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic had sharply curtailed economic opportunities on the islands. Once in the U.S., however, a number of factors combined to influence migrant settlement sites. Migrants gravitated to places where there were jobs that would accept them, often without initial language skills or U.S.-mainland educations. These were generally jobs in the declining manufacturing sectors -- factories

that had been steadily lowering wages in an era of suburban, Southern, and off-shore manufacturing. Settlement sites also needed to have housing that Latino families could afford, which meant rental housing for all but the wealthiest migrants. Further, Latinos could only settle where the prevalent postwar discrimination in jobs and housing was weakest or where sufficient organizing had been done to overcome it. Finally, migrants generally only knew about these job and housing availabilities in areas where kin or friends had already settled. These factors combined to account for much of the migrant concentration in large cities, like New York or Chicago. Yet, these same cities that provided some economic and housing opportunities provided little else necessary for making a good life for Latinos and their children. Substantial research has been done on what Latinos encountered in New York and Chicago: prejudice and harassment, violent crime and police discrimination, low wages, and overcrowded and overpriced housing. Racism and urban crisis shaped migrants' experiences in these cities, encouraging circular migration and the dream of return. Many migrants went back and forth between big U.S. cities and the islands, for example, because they were being forced to choose between having a job and having a place where they could be at home.<sup>135</sup>

Secondary migration to cities like Lawrence was an attempt to resolve the dilemma of transnationalism, a way to pursue the economic opportunities presented by life in the United States, without risking or enduring the perceived danger of major urban centers in crisis. Migrants moved to Lawrence because they craved the peace and tranquility they felt they had left behind in coming to the United States. While the prospect of life in a smaller New England city seemed to offer an escape, in reality the

political economy of metropolitan New England dramatically limited Latino access to the amenities they sought, such as good schools and safe neighborhoods. Increasingly, such amenities were found almost exclusively in the suburbs, which were out of reach to all but the wealthiest Latinos (and even they had to struggle with discrimination and prejudice to settle there). In the end, the cities that were intended to serve as an escape from urban crisis were really only a small step up from places like New York. Smaller and quieter, yes, but on the same track of increasing joblessness and poverty, substandard housing, and perhaps most importantly, dramatically inadequate educational and public safety services. At the same time, given the racially homogenous nature of Lawrence's surrounding suburbs, once Latinos had settled in the city in sufficient numbers, the community they established there did act as a bulwark against white prejudice and harassment, as well as a comforting and inspiring reminder of home. Thus, the Latino community itself became a draw, in spite of the city's ongoing economic and social struggles.

The remarkable Latino immigration to Lawrence occurred at the very same time as white emigration from the city. Just as thousands of white Lawrencians were deciding that Lawrence was unlivable, thousands of Latinos were deciding to call Lawrence home. Although forty percent of Lawrence whites had left the city before 1980, white flight dramatically accelerated as Latino migration increased, with the largest numbers of white residents leaving in the 1980s. Part of the explanation for how Latinos developed a majority in the city was that white residents left en masse. The simultaneous immigration and emigration that Lawrence experienced in the second half of the twentieth century

highlights the effect of race in locating people within the postwar metropolitan political economy. Whites and Latinos encountered very different situations in Lawrence, and the decision whether to live there was made in the context of a field of radically different and profoundly racialized options. Most whites came to see Lawrence as worse than their other options (suburban homeownership), while most Latinos came to see Lawrence as substantially better than their other options (poverty or economic stagnation in the Caribbean, or New York City's urban crisis). Most Latino settlers in Lawrence who viewed the city positively did so because they were largely comparing living in Lawrence to living in New York or the Caribbean, neither of which offered migrants both the life they dreamed of *and* the means to maintain it.<sup>136</sup>

In the context of this constrained choice, many Latinos who moved to Lawrence were deeply disappointed and frustrated by what they encountered. Isabel Meléndez's story sums up many of the challenges Latinos encountered in Lawrence, and the disappointment those challenges could provoke. She moved from Juana Diaz, Puerto Rico to Lawrence with her husband in 1959 when she was twenty-two years old. They were one of only a handful of Latino families in Lawrence at the time, and they initially stayed with Meléndez's cousin, who had previously lived in New York. Meléndez had been a teacher in Puerto Rico, and she hoped to work as a teacher in the United States, but that never happened. They did not have jobs when they first arrived, but she recalled that there were jobs available. Her cousin's husband brought her to an employment office, and she got a job working for Lawrence Maid for one dollar an hour. She remembered that she only lasted there one week, before she got ill. The smell of the shoe

factory overwhelmed her, and communication issues made work very difficult. Although Lawrence Maid would come to be a major employer of Lawrence Latinos, Meléndez recalled no other Latinos working with her in 1959. The English she had learned in Puerto Rico was not useful and it was hard to spend all day without talking to anyone. Her husband had gotten a job at Jo Gal Shoes as a janitor, and Meléndez eventually moved to Gerber Shoes in the Everett Mill. There, too, she was the only Latina. She remembered eating her lunch alone, and asking where the water fountain was, but no one understood her. A university-educated professional in Puerto Rico, Meléndez was devastated by her new work situation. She recalled, “I couldn’t stand it... I thought I was going to have a nice job... It would make me cry.”<sup>137</sup>

After two months, she and her husband found their own apartment on Union Street, but it had no bathtub, just two sinks for dishes and clothes. She had to go out and buy a big plastic tub to bathe in. She recalled her shock at the miserable living conditions in Lawrence, “I come from a poor family... but we have a bathtub.” She remembered asking herself, “nobody here takes a bath?” This absence of a bathtub was not rare, however; as late as 1970 the census reported that six percent of housing units in Lawrence lacked full plumbing facilities, and Latinos were disproportionately likely to live in the city’s worst housing. Although her life in Lawrence eventually improved, she remembers the move to Lawrence as a terrible disappointment and disruption in her life. She described, “believe me, I suffered when I came, I did suffer,” and “when I came here... the ambition... I was expecting so many things... that didn’t happen to me.”<sup>138</sup> Yet, Meléndez’s story is far from tragic. As I will discuss in the next chapter, she was one of

the most active community leaders in the city, working tirelessly as both a service provider and community advocate to improve the lives of Latinos in the city, and eventually becoming the first Latino (male or female) to win the Democratic primary for Mayor in 2001. The next chapter will explore how white resistance also posed obstacles to Latino settlement, as well as the myriad strategies Latinos embraced to overcome such challenges.

---

<sup>1</sup> Jose Zaiter, quoted in Hilda Hartnett, "Lawrence's Latino history diverse, complex," *Eagle-Tribune*, September 20, 1992. The term "blend in," however, was the journalist's paraphrasing of Zaiter's comments.

<sup>2</sup> Ramón Borges-Méndez, quoted in a transcript of his presentation at the "Forgotten Cities" seminar series on October 27, 2004, hosted by the Department of Urban Studies and Planning at the MIT. Transcript archived with the Department of Urban Studies and Planning, and quote used with permission from the speaker.

<sup>3</sup> Some have assumed that Latino migration to Lawrence is merely the latest chapter in its paradigmatic role as an "Immigrant City" or "gateway city" since the early twentieth century. But early twentieth century immigrants to Lawrence came at the height of the city's manufacturing dominance, drawn by plentiful jobs and even active recruitment in their home countries by Lawrence employers. This is in direct contrast to late twentieth century experience, in which Latinos came in spite of massive unemployment. Yet despite the city's unpredictable magnetism, specialists in immigration have been noting with increased vehemence the ongoing dispersion of immigrant populations from major urban centers such as New York City or Los Angeles to such "low-tier" cities as Lawrence, and so the city's transformation has much to tell us about these larger diasporic trends.

<sup>4</sup> This is less true on the West Coast and Southwest, where Latino agricultural labor and longstanding Mexican American communities complicate this postwar paradigm of racialized metropolitan development.

<sup>5</sup> Underfunded urban school systems were also profoundly responsible for the persistence of urban Latino poverty, a terrible cycle of urban crisis, as I discuss in the next chapter.

<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Peggy Levitt, *The Transnational Villagers* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

<sup>7</sup> Some early Latino settlers were political emigrants from Cuba and the Dominican Republic, but most Latino migrants to Lawrence emigrated as a result of the economic situation of their home islands. Scholars have generally agreed that the changes in the Puerto Rican and Dominican economy introduced by U.S.-led, export-oriented industrialization created widespread rural unemployment for the poor and stymied economic opportunities for professionals. Migration was viewed as a means to improved economic opportunities for all sectors of society, although the very poor rarely have had the means to migrate, especially in the case of the Dominican Republic where legal barriers to even visiting the United States have proven to be costly hurdles. These arguments are echoed in Lawrence migration narratives, occasionally even to the extent of blaming U.S. imperialism for the island's economic state. As one Dominican explained, "*Sabes porque tantos dominicanos han venido aquí? Es porque los Estados Unidos han cogido toda la riqueza de nuestro país*" [You know why so many Dominicans have come here? It's because the United States has taken all the wealth of our country], quoted in Jessica Andors, "City and Island: Dominicans In Lawrence: Transnational Community Formation in a Globalizing World," (Unpublished Master Thesis, MIT, 1999), 71. For discussions of Dominican and Puerto Rican migration, see Carmen Teresa Whalen and Víctor Vázquez-Hernández, eds. *The Puerto Rican Diaspora: Historical Perspectives* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2005); Virginia E. Sánchez Korrol, *From Colonia to Community: The History of Puerto Ricans in New York City, 1917-1948* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1983); Ernesto Sagás and Sintia E. Molina, eds., *Dominican Migration: Transnational Perspectives* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2004); Sherri Grasmuck and Patricia R. Pessar, *Between Two Islands: Dominican International Migration* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); Arlene Davila, *Barrio Dreams: Puerto Ricans, Latinos, and the Neoliberal City* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004); Eugenia Georges, *The Making of a Transnational Community: Migration, Development, and Cultural Change in the Dominican Republic* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1990); Ramona Hernández *The Mobility of Labor Under Advanced Capitalism: Dominican Migration to the United States* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002); Peggy Levitt, *The Transnational Villagers* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Gina M. Pérez, *The Near Northwest Side Story: Migration, Displacement, & Puerto Rican Families* (Berkeley: University of



---

California Press, 2004); and Carmen Teresa Whalen, *From Puerto Rico to Philadelphia: Puerto Rican Workers and Postwar Economies*, (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001).

<sup>8</sup> Sources include a handful of oral history interviews I conducted specifically for this project, more than twenty oral history interviews conducted by the Lawrence History Center over the past three decades, and interviews reported in newspapers and reports since the late 1950s. In total, this chapter makes use of several dozen accounts of migration to Lawrence, some substantially detailed and others representing no more than a single-line quote in a high school report. With no statistical claim to representing the full diversity of Lawrence's Latino community, and with such a paucity of detail among some of the accounts, I can only begin to sketch out some of the commonalities among migrants to Lawrence. For a full list of the twenty-eight complete oral history interviews used, please see the bibliography.

<sup>9</sup> For example, see Hartnett, "Lawrence's Latino history diverse."

<sup>10</sup> The Massachusetts Commission on Hispanic Affairs concluded in the mid-1980s that, "in the 1940's and 1950's agricultural workers from the Island were sometimes brought into Massachusetts (e.g. Springfield, Holyoke) to do seasonal agricultural work, but there is little evidence that the permanent, urban communities that took root in the 1960's were outgrowths of this early, temporary migration," Massachusetts Commission on Hispanic Affairs, "Hispanics in Massachusetts: A Demographic Analysis," August 1986. In 1967, the *Eagle-Tribune* reported that Massachusetts had approximately four hundred Puerto Rican farm workers, about one hundred of whom worked in Greater Lawrence agriculture, but there is no evidence that those workers settled in the city, *Eagle-Tribune*, "Charges Migrants Kept in Serfdom," July 21, 1967. The finding aid for the Puerto Rican government's Migration Division indicates that there are no archived folders that directly pertain to Lawrence.

<sup>11</sup> It is not surprising that local leaders claimed that the census undercounted Lawrence Latinos; the accusation that the census undercounted Latino populations was widespread.

<sup>12</sup> Hartnett, "Lawrence's Latino history diverse."

<sup>13</sup> *United States Census*.

<sup>14</sup> Ray Huard, "Ex-revo," *Eagle-Tribune*, June 5, 1973.

<sup>15</sup> Interview with Daniel O'Neill by Thomas Mofford, 1979, LHC.

<sup>16</sup> Interview with Daniel O'Neill by Thomas Mofford, 1979, LHC.

<sup>17</sup> Ramón Borges-Méndez, "Urban and Regional Restructuring and *Barrio* Formation in Massachusetts: The Cases of Lowell, Lawrence and Holyoke," (Unpublished PhD dissertation, MIT, 1994). New York was the major source of internal migrants, but not the only source; internal migrants came from elsewhere in the stateside U.S. as well during these times. Borges-Méndez quoted Isabel Meléndez, "Every day I had new people coming to this office [Greater Lawrence Community Action Council] saying they had arrived from New Jersey, Chicago, Pennsylvania," although I have encountered only a few examples of migrants from elsewhere in other sources.

<sup>18</sup> Ramón Borges-Méndez has argued that, at least among Puerto Ricans, migrants in the 1960s most often came straight from Puerto Rico, and this direct migration was true of many Cubans as well, who were resettled as refugees in Massachusetts. Jessica Andors has argued that, for Dominicans, the earliest migrants came from New York and direct migration from the island came later. Indeed, there are many examples among the migration narratives of the move to Lawrence being a secondary migration for the Latinos who settled in Lawrence as early as the 1960s, for Dominicans particularly but also for some Puerto Ricans and Cubans. No quantitative study has been done, and it suffices to say that the earliest Latinos in Lawrence comprised a mix of direct and secondary migrants. Borges-Méndez supports the timeline that internal migrants dominated the migrant stream beginning in the early to mid-1970s, with evidence from two other cities as well, Lowell and Holyoke, and the narrative of two long-time Lawrence residents and prominent community members Isabel Meléndez and Ralph Carrero, Borges-Méndez, "Urban and Regional Restructuring and Barrio Formation in Massachusetts"; Jessica Andors, "City and Island: Dominicans In Lawrence: Transnational Community Formation in a Globalizing World," (Unpublished Master Thesis, MIT, 1999), 47.

<sup>19</sup> Isabel Meléndez, quoted in Borges-Méndez, "Urban and Regional Restructuring and *Barrio* Formation in Massachusetts."

- 
- <sup>20</sup> Lawrence High School/Phillips Academy Urban Studies Institute, "Growing Up Hispanic in Lawrence," (1986), 10.
- <sup>21</sup> Andrew Coburn, "The Puerto Ricans: Lawrence's Latest Wave of Immigrants," *Eagle-Tribune*, July 21, 1967.
- <sup>22</sup> In addition to transnational businesses, such as travel, money transfer, and shipping agencies, Lawrence's economy is bolstered by transurban businesses between the city and New York City, such as an array of Lawrence to New York van services, and many Latinos in Lawrence described frequent visits to family in New York, similar to the comments from Jose Zaiter that opened the chapter.
- <sup>23</sup> Glenn Hendricks, *The Dominican Diaspora: From the Dominican Republic to New York City-Villagers in Transition* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1974).
- <sup>24</sup> Hendricks, *The Dominican Diaspora*.
- <sup>25</sup> Urban Studies Institute, "Growing Up Hispanic in Lawrence."
- <sup>26</sup> Andors, "City and Island," 32.
- <sup>27</sup> Interview with Ingrid Garcia by author, November 10, 2009.
- <sup>28</sup> Andors, "City and Island," 32.
- <sup>29</sup> Andors, "City and Island," 32.
- <sup>30</sup> Charles Stein, "Lawrence case study: A struggle of the poor," *Boston Globe*, June 24, 1988.
- <sup>31</sup> Urban Studies Institute, "Growing Up Hispanic in Lawrence," 7.
- <sup>32</sup> Interview with Carolina DeJesus by Joan Kelley, 1995, LHC.
- <sup>33</sup> Interview with Carolina DeJesus by Joan Kelley, 1995, LHC.
- <sup>34</sup> *Eagle-Tribune*, "Dominican student unhappy with education, food, weather."
- <sup>35</sup> Interview with Daniel O'Neill by Thomas Mofford, 1979, LHC.
- <sup>36</sup> Whalen and Vázquez-Hernández, eds. *The Puerto Rican Diaspora*.
- <sup>37</sup> Mary Fitzgerald, "An American Success Story," *Eagle-Tribune*, March 18, 1994.
- <sup>38</sup> Interview with Mercedes Johnson by Yadira Betances, 1997, LHC.
- <sup>39</sup> Interview with Yamilis Maracayo by Joan Kelley, 1995, LHC.
- <sup>40</sup> Dávila, *Barrio Dreams*.
- <sup>41</sup> The study used IPUMS data to examine characteristics of Puerto Ricans who in 2000 said they had been living in New York City in 1995. The study grouped outmigrants as settling in one of seven places: New York City suburbs, Florida, Puerto Rico, New England, all other states (except suburbs of New York City that are located in New Jersey), all other places in New York state, and Pennsylvania. Outmigrants who moved to New England had the highest proportion of females of any group of outmigrants (54 percent) and the highest proportion of those born in Puerto Rico (36 percent), with the exception of the group of outmigrants who went to Puerto Rico, of which 74 percent were Puerto-Rican born. With the exception of those who went to Puerto Rico, New England migrants also had the lowest education achievement (measured by greatest number of those who did not complete high school), the lowest English language ability (with only 84 percent speaking English "well" or "very well"), the lowest rate of employment (43 percent -- although not the highest rate of unemployment, in which Pennsylvania beat New England by a narrow margin). Even including the group that went to Puerto Rico, New England migrants had the lowest proportion of white collar workers among males (12 percent), while Pennsylvania edged out New England again for females (13 percent New England, 11 percent Pennsylvania), and the absolute lowest proportion of owner occupied housing, with a dismal 15 percent. Gilbert Marzán, Andrés Torres, and Andrew Luecke, "Puerto Rican Outmigration from New York City, 1995-2000," Policy Report from the Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños at Hunter College (CUNY), 2008.
- <sup>42</sup> Marzán, Torres, and Luecke, "Puerto Rican Outmigration from New York City, 1995-2000."
- <sup>43</sup> It is possible that Lawrence is just on a slightly delayed path to gentrification, but at present, most evidence seems to indicate that massive capital investment in Lawrence is not imminent.
- <sup>44</sup> Borges-Méndez, "Urban and Regional Restructuring and *Barrio* Formation in Massachusetts."
- <sup>45</sup> Coburn, "The Puerto Ricans."
- <sup>46</sup> Andors changed the names of her interviewees.
- <sup>47</sup> Andors, "City and Island," 48.

---

<sup>48</sup> Michael Joseph Piore, "The Role of Immigration in Industrial Growth: A Case Study of the Origins and Character of Puerto Rican Migration to Boston," (May 1973).

<sup>49</sup> Chamber of Commerce of Greater Lawrence, "Greater Lawrence Economic Profile," 1980, LHC.

<sup>50</sup> Julia Silverio, quoted in Ramona Hernández and Glenn Jacobs, "Beyond Homeland Politics: Dominicans in Massachusetts" in *Latino Politics in Massachusetts: Struggles, Strategies, and Prospects*, Carol Hardy-Fanta and Jeffrey Gerson, eds. (New York and London: Routledge, 2002), 288.

<sup>51</sup> Borges-Méndez, "Urban and Regional Restructuring and *Barrio* Formation in Massachusetts," 52.

<sup>52</sup> *Eagle-Tribune*, "Lawrence's Garment District," May 25, 1997.

<sup>53</sup> Piore, "The Role of Immigration in Industrial Growth."

<sup>54</sup> Interview with Father John J. Lamond by Jeanne Schinto, 1992, LHC.

<sup>55</sup> Interview with Ester Aparicio by Sandra De Vita, 1997, LHC.

<sup>56</sup> Interview with Daniel Rivera by Joan Kelley, 2003, LHC.

<sup>57</sup> Interview with Lucy Ortolaza Mane by Joan Kelley, 2001, LHC.

<sup>58</sup> With one exception (a teacher) every female migrant interviewed by Lawrence History Center who came to the city before 1980 and mentioned a job in her interview mentioned working at Lawrence Maid.

Although this may stem from a sampling bias, the *Today in Greater Lawrence* exposé confirms the factory's importance for Latinos in the city. Lawrence Maid seems to have been the single most important employer for early Latina settlers in Lawrence. Although men worked there as well as women, there are not enough interviews with men to determine how significant it was for them, Ruth Weinstock, "New immigrants in old sweatshops," *Today in Greater Lawrence*, June 26, 1974, LPL.

<sup>59</sup> Weinstock, "New immigrants in old sweatshops."

<sup>60</sup> Weinstock, "New immigrants in old sweatshops."

<sup>61</sup> Weinstock, "New immigrants in old sweatshops."

<sup>62</sup> Ward Morehouse III, "Help for New England Shoe Industry Getting Attention," *The Lewiston Daily Sun*, February 5, 1977,

<http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1928&dat=19770205&id=UAsgAAAAIBAJ&sjid=emUFAAAAI&pg=1545,964202>, accessed March 25, 2010.

<sup>63</sup> Weinstock, "New immigrants in old sweatshops."

<sup>64</sup> The availability of low-wage jobs in old industrial cities seems to have been important for migrants who moved to other low-tier Massachusetts cities in these early decades as well. Dalia Díaz's story of why her family left Miami and ended up in Chelsea is illustrative. Díaz and her family landed in Miami after a harrowing boat journey fleeing Cuba in the early sixties. The Cuban Refugee center gave them 100 dollars a month, but they were paying 87 of it for rent so they were left with only 13 dollars a month for everything else for a family of five. Díaz's mother and step-father went to work in the tomato plantations in Homestead, outside of Miami, but as she described, "people were greatly exploited at that time in 1963." They worked long days at less than minimum wage, but "They couldn't complain, they couldn't go anywhere because Miami wasn't what it is today. There were no industries, factories, banks. It was just plantations and people had to leave Miami." She elaborated on her recollection that Miami's scarcity of suitable employment options meant that "people [Cubans] had to leave Miami." She explained, "The Cuban Refugee Center was going crazy at the time, trying to get rid of us, sending us anywhere – a one-way ticket anywhere in the country." The refugee center was encouraging dispersal from Miami, but her parents were slow to take up the offer. She remembered, "Three months later my step-father left and he came to Boston and my mother didn't want to come because she was afraid of the cold weather, but the week after he arrived in Boston, he wrote a letter saying that he was making a dollar sixty and hour in a factory in Chelsea, and that in two weeks after he finished the training process he would be making – watch this – two dollars and two cents an hour. We thought we were going to get rich!" For Díaz and her family, the economic opportunity provided by low wage factory work in Chelsea, another low-tier city outside of Boston, was a compelling alternative to sub-minimum wage agricultural work in Florida's tomato plantations. Further, the sheer number of different employment alternatives in Massachusetts allowed Díaz and her family to resist exploitation by changing jobs until they found a good fit, something they did not feel able to do in still-developing Miami. In addition, as their time in the U.S. lengthened and their English-language skills improved, they were able to leverage those skills into better and better-paid work. Díaz

---

remembered that at sixteen she went to work shelling shrimp, "I was only sixteen years old and I went to work at what is today the Marriott Hotel on Atlantic Avenue near the Aquarium [in Boston]. At that time, that was all fishing piers and dingy little houses and warehouses and the boats used to come in that area and unload the fish. I went to work there shelling shrimp. That was my first job... Sixteen. Ice water up to my knees shelling shrimp." After working shelling shrimp, Díaz moved on to a factory in Cambridge, "stitching because I had learned how to sew in Cuba. All girls in Cuba had to learn to sew and to do embroidery." Contrary to the frequent depiction of Lawrence Latinos as unskilled laborers, Díaz is one of many Lawrence Latinos who came to the U.S. with skills learned at home. Within months, she had learned enough English to get a job at American Built, a shoe factory in Chelsea, where her father already worked packing rubber soles and heels. She remembered changing jobs frequently, although she would have rather been in school, "that was my dream, to get an education, and I didn't," interview with Dalia Díaz by Sandra DeVita, 1997, LHC

<sup>65</sup> Interview with Dominican man in his 40s, former professor, now factory worker, in Andors, "City and Island," 65.

<sup>66</sup> Carol Joan Smith, "Women, Work, and Use of Government Benefits: A Case Study of Hispanic Women Workers in New York's Garment Industry," (Unpublished Thesis, Adelphi University, 1980).

<sup>67</sup> Coburn, "The Puerto Ricans."

<sup>68</sup> Urban Studies Institute, "Growing Up Hispanic in Lawrence," 24.

<sup>69</sup> Although Latino involvement in the service industry would grow in the 1990s, in the earlier decades, Latinos in Lawrence were disproportionately concentrated in manufacturing, even compared to Latinos in New York.

<sup>70</sup> State Office of Affirmative Action, Commonwealth of Massachusetts, "Report of the Hispanic Task Force," 1985.

<sup>71</sup> Joseph D. Duran, "The 1984 Riots: Lawrence, Massachusetts," (Unpublished Masters Thesis, MIT, 1985), 28, 29, already translated from Spanish in thesis.

<sup>72</sup> Eduardo Paz-Martinez, "Hispanics ready to emerge in Lawrence" *Boston Globe*, March 16, 1987.

<sup>73</sup> It is, of course, possible that more industrious Latinos self-selected to leave Lawrence in those early decades, but given the convergence of census data with Lawrence's manufacturing history, this seems an unlikely explanation.

<sup>74</sup> Although economic data from the census is often from the previous year, as this analysis combines economic and social data, I will use the date the census was conducted throughout to maintain consistency. Incomes are unadjusted for inflation, unless noted, *United States Decennial Census*.

<sup>75</sup> See note 58 above about the importance of Lawrence Maid in female migration narratives.

<sup>76</sup> Although New York City Latinos may have had a higher cost of living, this was not necessarily the case, as Bureau of Labor Statistics indicated that the cost of living for the Boston metropolitan region was actually slightly higher than the New York City metropolitan region, and rents in Lawrence had tripled in the 1980s. Cost of living comparison from the Bureau of Labor Statistics website, <http://data.bls.gov>, accessed April 6, 2010. Lawrence rent information from The Lawrence High School/Phillips Academy Urban Studies Institute, "The Family Housing Crisis in Greater Lawrence: A Backgrounder for Concerned Citizens," (1988).

<sup>77</sup> Many Latinos who had jobs in the 1990s worked essentially as "permatemps," working regularly in suburban industries through a temporary labor contracting agency without ever being hired on directly. See Loren McArthur, "Organizing Just-In-Time in the Merrimack Valley," (Social Policy: Winter 2001/2002), 43-48.

<sup>78</sup> *United States Decennial Census*, 1990.

<sup>79</sup> Thirty-nine percent of Lawrence Latinos in the labor force worked in a central city in the Lawrence-Haverhill PMSA, and at least some of them undoubtedly worked in Haverhill. This low number is also partly attributable to the fact that nearly twenty-five percent of Lawrence's Latino labor force was unemployed, *U.S. Decennial Census*, 1990.

<sup>80</sup> Andors, "City and Island," 33. Andors also noted, "While many Dominicans living in the City are employed in the region's low-wage manufacturing and service sectors, a good number also work in one of the few union shops in town: Malden Mills, the producers of PolarTec™ fleece and the City's second

---

largest employer. Malden Mills is well known in the City as a source of better-paying and more highly skilled manufacturing jobs, as well as for owner Aaron Feuerstein's commitment to remaining in the City after a devastating 1994 fire gave him what seemed like the perfect excuse to relocate. However, Malden Mills represents an exception in terms of the employment opportunities open to immigrant workers," 59.

<sup>81</sup> Some Latinos in the Merrimack Valley were able to settle in the suburbs, of course, as some were wealthy enough, and discrimination, although likely prevalent, was not universal.

<sup>82</sup> Most likely this is true throughout all of Lawrence's history, not just its postwar decades, *United States Decennial Census*.

<sup>83</sup> Census data indicate that Lawrence Latinos lived in the poorest and most deteriorating sections of the city, and most inquiries into housing in the city noted that Latinos lived in the city's worst housing, Urban Studies Institute, "The Family Housing Crisis in Greater Lawrence," and Massachusetts Commission on Hispanic Affairs, "Hispanics in Massachusetts: A Progress Report," (December 1985). Earlier than the 1980s, Latino discussions of housing frequently noted the poor conditions. See affidavits from those evicted in the North Common controversy, AH and interview with Isabel Meléndez by Margaret Hart, 1988, LHC. Ramón Borges-Méndez also noted that Latinos were concentrated in the worst housing, Borges-Méndez, "Urban and Regional Restructuring and *Barrio* Formation in Massachusetts," 118.

<sup>84</sup> Haverhill's vacancy rate was 7.4 percent compared to Lawrence's rate of 7.1 percent, *United States Decennial Census*, 1970.

<sup>85</sup> Isabel Meléndez, interview by the author, June 2010.

<sup>86</sup> After a protracted battle with the city over the fate of the cleared North Common site, Latino community organizers and their allies eventually won a bid to construct cooperative housing, as I discuss in the next chapter, Affidavits from those evicted in the North Common controversy, AH.

<sup>87</sup> Massachusetts Commission on Hispanic Affairs, "Hispanics in Massachusetts: A Progress Report."

<sup>88</sup> The report focused on intrametropolitan inequality, and I will return to it in Chapter Six.

<sup>89</sup> Urban Studies Institute, "The Family Housing Crisis in Greater Lawrence."

<sup>90</sup> Andrew Dabilis, "Housing Study an Education in Itself," *Boston Globe*, July 10, 1989, <http://proquest.com>.

<sup>91</sup> Massachusetts Commission on Hispanic Affairs, "Hispanics in Massachusetts: A Progress Report."

<sup>92</sup> Urban Studies Institute, "The Family Housing Crisis in Greater Lawrence."

<sup>93</sup> Interview with Yamilis Maracayo by Joan Kelley, 1995, LHC.

<sup>94</sup> Andrew Coburn, "The Puerto Ricans."

<sup>95</sup> I use the term "kin" broadly to include nuclear and extended family as well as close friends.

<sup>96</sup> Interview with Francisco Urena by Joan Kelley, 2007, LHC.

<sup>97</sup> Interview with Ana A. Pichardo by her daughter, 1998, LHC.

<sup>98</sup> Interview with Ingrid Garcia by author, November 10, 2009.

<sup>99</sup> Interview with Father John J. Lamond by Jeanne Schinto, 1992, LHC.

<sup>100</sup> Interview with Francisco Urena by Joan Kelley, 2007, LHC.

<sup>101</sup> Interview with Isabel Meléndez by Margaret Hart, 1988, LHC.

<sup>102</sup> Interview with Isabel Meléndez by Margaret Hart, 1988, LHC.

<sup>103</sup> Jessica Andors, "City and Island," 49.

<sup>104</sup> Hilda Hartnett, "Should it be called Latino or Hispanic?" *Eagle-Tribune*, September 20, 1992.

<sup>105</sup> Interview with Dalia Díaz by Sandra DeVita, 1997, LHC.

<sup>106</sup> Interview with Dalia Díaz by Sandra DeVita, 1997, LHC.

<sup>107</sup> Urban Studies Institute, "The Family Housing Crisis in Greater Lawrence."

<sup>108</sup> Urban Studies Institute, "The Family Housing Crisis in Greater Lawrence."

<sup>109</sup> Stein, "Lawrence case study."

<sup>110</sup> Interview with Julia Silverio by Joan Kelley, September 2002, LHC.

<sup>111</sup> Yadira Betances, "Trailblazing Dominican woman receives award," *Eagle-Tribune*, October 8, 2005.

<sup>112</sup> Hilda Hartnett, "For Latinos, a dynamic time," *Eagle-Tribune*, September 20, 1992.

<sup>113</sup> Hartnett, "Should it be called Latino or Hispanic?"

<sup>114</sup> Dominican woman in her 40s, teacher, quoted in Andors, "City and Island."

<sup>115</sup> Kathie Neff, "Torn between two worlds," *Eagle-Tribune*, April 24, 1984.

---

<sup>116</sup> Neff, "Torn between two worlds."

<sup>117</sup> *Eagle-Tribune*, "First Cuban Airlift Refugee in Lawrence," December 21, 1965.

<sup>118</sup> Mary Fitzgerald, "A Cuban Girl's Life in America," *Eagle-Tribune*, October 21, 1966.

<sup>119</sup> Neff, "Torn between two worlds."

<sup>120</sup> Neff, "Torn between two worlds."

<sup>121</sup> The findings of some scholars that Latinas are less likely to accept the move back to their home countries than male Latinos was echoed in some of these narratives. A Dominican woman explained, "In 1975 my husband decided that he wanted to go back to the Dominican Republic. He really – he had all of his family there and he felt that it was really hard living here and he really wanted to go back. So he went back in May. He resigned from Compugraphic, went back in May of 1975 and I went in July. We spent probably three months after I was there. We came back in September of 1975 and – because I wasn't happy. You know, by then, I had made my life here. My family was here, my sisters, my mom, my dad and we only had my daughter and my little girl and she was really sick all the time we were there so I was miserable those months. It was not about us anymore. It was about our daughter. And she didn't eat all the time and we had a real difficult time so we came back." (Interview with Julia Silverio by Joan Kelley, 2002, LHC). In spite of her husband's feelings that life in Massachusetts was "really hard" and difficulty being away from his family, they ultimately chose to return to Lawrence for the health of their daughter and to be near her family. Again, the migration was precipitated by the fact that family, community, a safe and comfortable home, and the means to maintain it, could not all be had in one place. His family was in the Dominican Republic, but her family had migrated to Massachusetts. Life in Massachusetts was hard for him, but life in the Dominican Republic was hard on his daughter's health. Although her health concerns regarding her daughter may have been unique, her explanation that they came back to the U.S. "because I wasn't happy" echoes scholarship that finds many Latinas are less willing than their male counterparts to return to life in their home countries. While men may miss the status they had at home, women often become attached to the perks of life in the U.S. As one Puerto Rican woman explained, "In the U.S., women can spread their wings for the first time." In general, however, both men and women in Lawrence expressed a desire to return home, and the argument that Latinas preferred the U.S. because it granted them greater freedom may overstate Latinas' increased gender equality in the United States relative to Latin America. For scholarship that theorizes return is more difficult for women, see Grasmuck and Pessar, *Between Two Islands* for Dominicans and Pérez, *The Near Northwest Side Story* for Puerto Ricans.

<sup>122</sup> *Eagle-Tribune*, "Dominican student unhappy with education, food, weather," April 30, 1979.

<sup>123</sup> Kathie Neff, "A Hispanic middle class is emerging," *Eagle-Tribune*, April 25, 1984.

<sup>124</sup> Andors, "City and Island," 77.

<sup>125</sup> Neff, "Torn between two worlds."

<sup>126</sup> Andors, "City and Island," 48. Gina Pérez has documented this element of the return orientation (the fear of urban danger for children) among Chicago Puerto Ricans as well, Pérez, *The Near Northwest Side Story*.

<sup>127</sup> Dominican woman in her 40s, teacher, quoted in Andors, "City and Island," 75.

<sup>128</sup> Interview with Carolina DeJesus by Joan Kelley, 1995, LHC.

<sup>129</sup> Urban Studies Institute, "Growing Up Hispanic in Lawrence," 11.

<sup>130</sup> Neff, "Torn between two worlds."

<sup>131</sup> Interview with Dalia Díaz by Sandra DeVita, 1997, LHC.

<sup>132</sup> Interview with Dalia Díaz by Sandra DeVita, 1997, LHC.

<sup>133</sup> Interview with Francisco Urena by Joan Kelley, 2007, LHC.

<sup>134</sup> Interview with Dominican woman, in Lawrence for 30 years, business owner, quoted in Andors, "City and Island," 36.

<sup>135</sup> For a fantastic account of the struggles facing Puerto Ricans in urban Chicago, see Pérez, *The Near Northwest Side Story*.

<sup>136</sup> This favorable view of Lawrence compared to living in the Caribbean did not apply to most Cubans, many of whom viewed themselves as in exile.

<sup>137</sup> Interview with Isabel Meléndez by Margaret Hart, 1988, LHC.

<sup>138</sup> Interview with Isabel Meléndez by Margaret Hart, 1988, LHC.

### **Chapter Three – Prelude to the Riot: Early Latino Activism and White Resistance**

Latino settlement in Lawrence was no simple matter. As the city's economy faltered, many white residents blamed Latino newcomers for Lawrence's decline and worked through all available channels to discourage Latino settlement in the city. Along with the structural factors impoverishing the city, devastating its services, and limiting Latinos' opportunities for work and social mobility, Latinos faced substantial resistance from the white population that remained in the city. Settling in Lawrence required more than finding a landlord willing to rent to Latino tenants, although that itself was a struggle; it required repeated acts of courage to claim a space in the streets, parks, restaurants, and government of the city. Longtime Latina community activist, Isabel Meléndez argued that this struggle created a strong bond between the growing Latino community and the city, as many had to overcome a great deal to make Lawrence their home. She explained that "to feel like you belong to a city and to feel intimately linked to its roots, it is not enough to just reside in a city. To accept a city as your own, you have to have lived, worked, suffered and forged the history of that city."<sup>1</sup> This chapter is the story of these Latino struggles to make a home in Lawrence in the face of substantial white resistance in the years before the riots.

The Latino population grew in the 1970s, but it remained a "minority" in the city. By the 1980s, however, the public presence of Latinos dominated many neighborhoods in the north half of the city, and anti-Latino fervor in the city grew to the pitch demonstrated by the riots in 1984. Although the previous chapter discussed some of the struggles inherent in migration and the ways in which Lawrence's urban crisis reinforced a return

orientation for many Latinos, this chapter will focus specifically on the challenges and disappointments presented by *white resistance* in the years before the riots. Without a doubt, inadequate housing, unstable employment, and sub-standard health and educational services frustrated many Latinos, as did their exclusion from city government. One of the most trying obstacles to feeling at home in the city, however, was the quotidian experience of prejudice and harassment. Although urban disinvestment, or “white flight,” created obstacles for Latinos in the city, “white *fight*” was also a significant obstacle to settlement in the city, and Latinos struggled individually and collectively to overcome it.

### **Claiming public space**

The riots of 1984 were neither anomalous nor a turning point in Lawrence’s racial relations. The spectacular contestation over public space that erupted during those two nights (and the subsequent debates over how to interpret it and prevent its recurrence) highlighted longstanding tensions in the community, and recapitulated longstanding arguments about what was best for the city and who was entitled to claim it. The riots were contiguous with both earlier forms of white resistance to Latino settlement in the city and with earlier forms of Latino activism to claim Lawrence as their home.

As the Latino population grew in the late 1970s and 1980s, the white flight that had begun after the war accelerated. Those who could leave Lawrence quickly did. There were many white residents, though, who could not, or would not leave the city. Some were concentrated in South Lawrence (where the effects of urban crisis had not



substantially hit, beyond the school system which could be circumvented with private schools). Some were invested in Lawrence as homeowners, business owners, or politicians, and insisted Lawrence was on the verge of an imminent renaissance. Others, particularly in North Lawrence, simply did not have the means to leave; many were elderly, early immigrants whose second-generation, upwardly mobile children had moved out to the suburbs without them. Many were poor: low-income working families, single mothers, or other families or individuals with fixed incomes, often from social security or welfare. It was those without the means to easily leave the city that most often shared neighborhoods with Latinos, as discrimination concentrated Latinos into the poorest neighborhoods of the city. Those who remained in the city were unable to distance themselves from Latinos through zoning measures and ostensibly neutral market practices, or through discriminatory legislation or policing, or through denying Latinos housing or employment. Working-class white Lawrencians who shared urban space with Latinos had basically two options: either befriend, or at least tolerate, the new arrivals, as many did, or use more direct methods to let them know they were not welcome, discourage them from staying, or at least keep them in their place. As one resident explained after the riots, “Token liberalism isn’t a luxury people in [the housing projects] can afford. They either really believe in brotherhood, or they hate.”<sup>2</sup>

This section will focus on these more direct forms of resistance to Latino settlement in the city, “white fight” rather than “white flight” not because I believe they were the most racist or the most effective at restricting social and residential mobility for Latinos. On the contrary, I think that subtle, structural forces were far more effective, but

stories of white resistance give a sense of the day-to-day contestation over Lawrence that occurred between white and Latino residents. Indeed, the riots were part of a longstanding pattern of both white resistance and Latino activism in the city, part of a longstanding struggle over the right to claim or withhold the city's space and resources. Beyond outlining the stakes of Latino settlement in the city, exploring "white fight" reminds us of the role that class plays in determining what methods of maintaining racial hierarchies are available to white people.<sup>3</sup> Those with the means to effectively erect structural barriers to Latino settlement in the city did not need to rely on quotidian acts of hostility to resist the growing Latino presence in the city.

Perhaps most importantly, these day-to-day contestations remind us that Latinos were not passive victims of white racism in Lawrence. Aside from the very obvious fact that, from a crude perspective, Latinos "won" the battle for Lawrence, as the city transitioned to a Latino majority by 2000, and the public culture of the city today is overwhelmingly Latino, these quotidian contestations over the right to public space, over the right to live and work and walk the streets in Lawrence were a form of Latino activism. Just as the means of instilling a racial hierarchy were affected by class, so were the means of resisting such a hierarchy. Yelling back or throwing punches when called a "Spic" or even hanging out on your front stoop and talking loudly in Spanish were ways of insisting that Latinos had a right to the city. The struggle for Latino empowerment in Lawrence was not only evident when Latinos registered voters or ran for office, but also when they resisted white efforts to make them disappear, "go home," or immediately assimilate.

Historically, explicit political protest has often been only the tip of the iceberg. As Robin Kelley has persuasively demonstrated, formal politics are often only the most visible manifestation of a more diffuse struggle for control over space and resources, much of which takes place *outside* of officially recognized political arenas.<sup>4</sup> In this sense, streets, parks, schools, businesses, restaurants, and even homes became political spaces in Lawrence, the sites of shifts in, and struggles for, an often racialized claim to the city's land and resources. Latinos in Lawrence formed a persistent and dispersed culture of opposition to racism, as manifested in myriad quotidian acts of confrontation, cooperation, consumption, and self-expression. Indeed, the movement toward Latino political empowerment often blurred with the movement toward a celebration of Latino cultural identity. For example, the drive to have a Latino cultural celebration in the city, *Semana Hispana*, was intended also as a way to register Latino voters who “were citizens but were intimidated to go to city hall to register to vote.”<sup>5</sup> White resistance took the form of a battle for public space as well, as restaurant and storeowners refused service to Latinos in the 1970s,<sup>6</sup> as the city tried to deny Latinos the use of the Common for *Semana Hispana*, and as white residents complained about Latinos speaking Spanish or listening to loud music. One interviewee stated that in the days before the riot, white and Latino residents of the Lower Tower Hill neighborhood that erupted in violence in 1984 used to yell and curse at each other – not explicitly about racial differences and antagonism, but about quotidian issues such as parking or what music was being played and how loud. She recalled that white and Latino residents would fight about “why are you parking here or things like that, or pick up your garbage... something that really was big is the music,

it was everywhere and it was just opposite each other. This kinda music and this kinda music.”<sup>7</sup> In the early 1980s, one (presumably white) resident summed up how racial tension was reflected in cultural terms in his call for “more Van Halen and less Michael Jackson.”<sup>8</sup>

### **Daily contestations**

*“Essex Street may be getting a facelift, but fancy brick sidewalks and gaslights won’t make Lawrence a better place to live if the city is an armed camp of racial anger.”<sup>9</sup>*

*- Eagle-Tribune, 1981*

In the early-1980s, Lawrence was known for its bigotry. A local journalist explained, “For this is the town where Hispanics have been called ‘Spics’ on the police log, where racial war is played out regularly on the graffittied walls of public restrooms, and where a former school committeeman once stated publicly that Americans introduced Hispanics to shoes.”<sup>10</sup> Official expressions of bigotry combined with insults in public spaces like bathroom walls to create an atmosphere of hostility and unwelcome for Latino settlers, even before the riots. Much of the hostility focused on Latinos very right to be in the city. As one Puerto Rican woman explained, “Hispanics are INVADERS, they think. You can see it on people’s faces. It really hurts me. After all, Americans were invaders, too. How can they forget how hard it is?”<sup>11</sup> This feeling that white Lawrencians did not want them there was not simply paranoia. A forty-year old white Lawrencian expressed his animosity towards the city’s Latinos and his wish that the government could remove them from Lawrence, “I call ‘em ‘Spics,’ like when I was a kid they called me ‘Guinea’

and ‘Wop’... My grandparents are from Italy. They worked from the day they got here to the day they died, seven days a week. My aunts, my uncles, also. I’ve heard a lot of stories about how they all pushed themselves. The Hispanics don’t do that, absolutely not... I wish to hell they’d send them all back, to be honest with you.”<sup>12</sup> His justification of his feelings based on his family’s own immigrant origins was not uncommon.

Often white animosity centered on language, on Latinos’ need or desire to communicate in Spanish. As one white woman explained about Puerto Ricans, “I think they should try to speak more English. They can, but they pretend they can’t. If they figure out they’re an American citizen, they should talk our language. Then we could communicate.”<sup>13</sup> The argument that Puerto Ricans could all speak English but were pretending not to be able to demonstrates an extreme paranoia, and the phrase “if they figure out they’re an American citizen” reflects not only the belief that English is and ought to be the U.S.’s official language, but also the strange idea that Puerto Ricans might be unaware of their somehow secret U.S. citizenship, rather than intensely aware of the U.S.’s long colonial involvement with the island. Finally, the idea that if Puerto Ricans spoke their hidden English, “then we could communicate” completely rules out white Lawrencians learning Spanish as a means of cross-cultural communication.

Some white residents felt so certain of their right to deny Latinos their language that they resorted to physical remonstrations. One Latino teenage male recalled “I was at Burger King, one time, and I was speaking Spanish. An old lady behind me in the line says, ‘I hate Spanish!’ and just then the counter guy hands me my burger and she snatches it away and throws it on the floor.” This racialized encounter during the

quotidian act of purchasing fast food demonstrates that virtually all sites were ripe for contestation, ripe for a struggle to determine whether Latinos had the right to truly be at home in Lawrence. Latinos were certainly not passive recipients of this animosity; they firmly asserted their right to defend themselves, although in this case the teenager demonstrated remarkable restraint. Another Latino teenager present at the interview replied to the story, “I hope you hit her!” and the young man who had lost his hamburger answered in the negative, “How could I? She was 60 years old.” He continued, though, with a warning reminder that he would not, as a rule, stand for such behavior, adding, “Now if she’d a been 20...”<sup>14</sup>

It seems that young Latinos, like the teenager above, were particularly vulnerable to such expressions of white animosity. A collaborative high school report, “Growing Up Hispanic in Lawrence,”<sup>15</sup> noted that young Latinos were more likely than adults to feel that “the white people are always looking down on you.” Young Latinos explained that they walked through the city expecting the “disapproving (or downright angry) stares that greet them as soon as they open their mouths, whether to speak Spanish or accented English.” The authors of the report asked if the young Latinos “ever g[o]t used to that kind of thing.” They all replied at the same time, “No, no, no, we never do.”<sup>16</sup> It is unclear why young Latinos were subject to increased hostility; perhaps teenagers conjured particular fears of crime and disorder, or perhaps their youth signaled to some that their contempt could be expressed without the potential ramifications of expressing their hostility toward full-grown adults.

In addition to this outright hostility, many whites, including those in the media, expressed stereotypes about Latinos, stereotypes that were anything but compassionate. In the months before the riots, one interviewer summed up these stereotypes bluntly, “Hispanics are stereotyped as dirty, violent, welfare recipients who are bringing Lawrence down.”<sup>17</sup> As brutal as this depiction might seem, it succinctly summarized the common white complaints against Latinos in the city. One of the interviewees, Carlos Ruiz, was a seventeen-year resident of the city, the President of Alliance of Latinos for Political Action and Progress, as well as the Equal Opportunity Specialist for Western Electric. He noted that Latinos were often accused of being dirty, and that whites even charged that Latinos brought cockroaches to the city, to which he replied, “How can they say that? Do they think we imported them? Cockroaches have been around for millions of years.”<sup>18</sup> Latinos were often relegated to the worst housing in the city, housing that was profoundly neglected by its landlords (including the city, in the form of the Lawrence Housing Authority) and often in disrepair. Clearly, this did not stop white Lawrencians from blaming the victims of this neglect. This view of Latinos as dirty was clearly painful for settlers in Lawrence. As one Dominican woman explained, “When you hear ‘They’re all filth,’ you get hurt.”<sup>19</sup>

The stereotype that Latinos were violent was also prevalent, and contributed to the view of Lawrence as fraught with particularly “urban,” i.e. non-white, dangers. A few months before the riots, an *Eagle-Tribune* reporter interviewed fifty white and Latino Lawrencians about race relations in the city. She concluded, “None of the Anglos interviewed for this story had experienced violence at the hands of a Spanish-speaking

person in Lawrence, but most said they were afraid to walk the streets because of Hispanics.”<sup>20</sup> She quoted a middle-aged, white resident of Dorchester Street who elaborated on this fear of Lawrence’s presumably violent Latinos, “I fear for my mother and father. My father’s been robbed before with a knife and they just robbed the battery out of his car after he just got one. He lives in a heavily Hispanic neighborhood. Were his attackers Hispanic? Tell you the truth, I don’t remember.”<sup>21</sup> The unjustified stereotype of Latinos as violent must have been particularly painful to those Latinos who faced real racist violence at the hands of white Lawrencians. The interviewer quoted a Puerto Rican grandmother who described, “My other daughter, a deaf mute, was raped by five white boys in back of a garage on Andover Street three years ago. It was 10:30 at night. Three of them watched outside... The police came. When she was found, she was walking the streets, all muddy.” The interviewer elaborated, “That ‘other daughter’ is now 23, a fine-boned woman of delicate beauty who lives on Tower Hill with her husband and newborn son. Communicating in sign through her 10-year-old sister-in-law, the young woman confirms her mother’s story and suggests that her attackers may have had a racial motive.” The interviewer was quick to note, however, that such a brutal experience of racialized, sexualized subjugation did not harden the young woman’s heart into prejudice, as the man she eventually married was white.<sup>22</sup>

The final aspect of the stereotypes summed up by the interviewer above was that Latinos were all on welfare, presumably without deserving such aid. Some expressions of this stereotype focused on a rumored sign directing Latinos to Lawrence. Given the city’s economic troubles by the early eighties, white Lawrencians could not imagine a reason



for such substantial Latino settlement in the city beyond its presumed welfare generosity. As the *Eagle-Tribune* explained, “There is supposed to be this sign somewhere. San Juan, Santa Domingo [sic], southern Florida – no one can place it exactly. But on it, so the rumor goes, are large letters exhorting in Spanish, ‘Come to Lawrence for welfare.’ You can find hundreds of ‘white’ Lawrence residents who have heard – or told – the story of the sign. And none who has actually seen it.”<sup>23</sup> An older white woman implied that the federal government was responsible for letting Latinos into the country, and then the sign was responsible for directing them to Lawrence, “Who let them in? Was it Kennedy?... There’s a big sign coming out of Florida that says ‘Go to Lawrence, Mass. for welfare.’ Someone told me about it.”<sup>24</sup> Not only was the idea of a sign directing Latinos to Lawrence paranoid, but the idea that Lawrence offered luxurious welfare benefits was simply untrue.

In spite of the paranoia evident in the sign fears, the belief that Latino Lawrencians were all on welfare was prevalent, and would be a huge factor in racialized Lawrence politics after the riots. The condemnation of welfare use was often offered in conjunction with a celebration of earlier European immigrants’ work ethic. As a retired white woman argued, “The immigrants coming over now – the government has made it too easy for them. If they can’t get a job, they’re taken care of with food stamps and welfare. The first immigrants, if they didn’t have a job, had to scrub floors or whatever to support their families.”<sup>25</sup> At least the woman above gave Latinos the benefit of the doubt that Latinos on welfare “can’t get a job.” Others decried Latinos for a presumed *refusal* to work. A white man explained, “I know everybody’s got their beautiful car. If you go

shopping and buy food, I never saw the Puerto Rican pay with money. He's got the food stamps. That means most everybody's on welfare... Most of them don't want to work."<sup>26</sup>

That this man was speaking in stereotypes is evident from his use of the singular "the Puerto Rican," although he deduces from his narrow experience that "most everybody" was on welfare. Like the woman who suspected that Puerto Ricans were hiding their English skills, this man implies that Puerto Ricans (or all Latinos because the term Puerto Rican was often a stand-in to refer to Lawrence's entire Latino community) had a hidden source of funds, as "everybody's got their beautiful car."<sup>27</sup>

The dishonesty and lack of a work ethic that some white Lawrencians attributed to Latinos, particularly Puerto Ricans, was reminiscent of the "culture of poverty" thesis, popular in the mid-sixties that blamed African Americans and Puerto Ricans for their own poverty based on cultural traits that, adherents argued, prevented them from being able to lift themselves out of poverty.<sup>28</sup> This attention to Latino morality, or lack thereof, in white expressions of prejudice was nearly ubiquitous. Some of the very strategies Latinos used to overcome Lawrence's hostile environment were used against them as signs of their immorality. As a young Dominican woman explained, "We tend to put more people in a household than Anglos do. We have many relatives and many friends who, when they're in need, we provide them with a place to stay."<sup>29</sup> Opening their homes to kin in need was not only an act of extreme generosity, but it was a community survival skill in the face of a housing crisis in the city that was particularly extreme for Latinos. Many white Lawrencians, however, did not see it this way. As a thirty-two year old white man explained, "I really don't think they have any morals as far as having two or three

families, mother and father situations, under one roof. I would almost maybe refer to it as a Kentucky or a mountain situation, but those people seem to have more on the ball than the Puerto Rican people do –I’ve heard of kissing cousins, but these people carry it too far.”<sup>30</sup> This condemnation of extended family sharing a home is one more example of the ways in which Lawrence Latinos were blamed for the very obstacles they had to overcome in the city.<sup>31</sup>

Even where hostility was absent, true compassion and empathy were not necessarily forthcoming. “Growing Up Hispanic in Lawrence” explained that, “Several Hispanics told us that ‘Americans’ were superficially friendly, but too busy with their material concerns ever to be close ‘in the way we’re used to...So few Anglos understand our culture – or care about it.’” This lack of willingness to learn about Latino cultures was evident in the tendency for many white Lawrencians to lump all Latinos together as “the Puertoricans.” “Growing Up Hispanic in Lawrence” argued that this was particularly galling to Dominicans, while Puerto Ricans took discrimination and exclusion especially hard, as one Puerto Rican argued, “It’s our country, after all.”<sup>32</sup>

The popular anti-Latino sentiment discussed above was painful to the city’s Latinos, but it was whites in power who were in a position to effectively discriminate against Latinos. The discrimination Latinos faced when they looked for housing or applied for jobs, the low wages and more difficult work their jobs entailed, and the public spaces to which they were denied access created more concrete obstacles to Latino settlement in the city. Perhaps most galling was their complete exclusion from city government, and their near-complete exclusion from city jobs such as firefighters and

police officers. In 1984, this exclusion from city jobs would be loudly trumpeted by Latino organizers and media observers as one of the many causes of the riots.

White official expressions of bigotry blurred the line between prejudice and discrimination, as they disproved official proclamations that Latino exclusion was coincidental, personal, or cultural (i.e. based on Latinos' presumably flawed culture), rather than racial and racist. When city officials accidentally or purposefully betrayed their negative views towards Latinos, Latino exclusion was logically viewed to be a result of that bias, rather than a result of some Latino inadequacy. The publically expressed bigotry of city officials spurred the Latino community into action with incredible force, most likely because it gave the often hidden functioning of government bias a face, and because it demonstrated that the very people who were supposed to be working to ensure the equal protection and equal services for all city residents were as reluctant to allow Latinos those protections and services as their hostile white neighbors. When a School Committee member, for example, heckled a group of Latino parents, making fun of their accents and insisting they came to the U.S. poor and homeless, Latinos responded in force.<sup>33</sup> As International Institute director Kathy Rodger explained, "I saw the Hispanic community come together just once, for one reason – when they were out to get Callahan (Edward J. Callahan, Lawrence school committeeman, known for negative remarks about the Hispanic community). They were just about kissing each other. It would kill him to know that he was the one to unify the Hispanics." Although such depictions of divisions among the Latino community were often overblown, it is not surprising that official proclamations of racism from city leaders would have a substantial galvanizing effect.<sup>34</sup>

White resistance to Latino settlement in Lawrence also took the form of a refusal to tailor services to Latinos. There were social service organizations in the city that devoted staff and resources to help Latinos settle in Lawrence. Some, like the International Institute, had a longstanding tradition in the city of helping with immigrant settlement. The services they provided were limited in scope, however, and could not make up for the lack of a comprehensive bilingual and bicultural social service system in the city. Most strenuously, Latinos complained about the absence of health services available in Spanish. The difficulty of attempting to get treatment in times of sickness or injury when they could not communicate with doctors or nurses was an overwhelming problem. The lack of bilingual educational services also frustrated Latino parents, who organized in a door-to-door campaign to pressure the city to provide bilingual education and then pressured the city to equitably fund and truly invest in these services. Finally, the lack of Spanish-speaking police officers created a great deal of tension between Latino residents and the Lawrence Police Department. Although the presence of Latino officers on the force equal to the proportion of Latinos in the community would have been welcome, Latino organizers frequently proposed that, at the very least, the city invest in having some officers learn to speak Spanish, and to familiarize themselves with Latin American cultures.

In the minds of many Latinos, however, the structural problems they faced *merged* with the prejudice they encountered to form their overall perception of Lawrence as a difficult place to live. A 1970 profile of the family of a Puerto Rican girl named Juanita demonstrated some of the challenges that Latinos faced in the city, including and

sometimes related to prejudice. The profile described, “Juanita was five years old and playing with a rubber ball on a Newbury Street sidewalk the first time she heard the word ‘spic.’”<sup>35</sup> She didn’t know what the word meant, so “Juanita carried [the question of what “spic” meant] up gnarled stairs to the drab two-bedroom, third-floor apartment where she, her baby sister, two older brothers and parents lived since coming to Lawrence from Puerto Rico a few months earlier.” Three years later, the prejudice their children suffered combined with other troubles the family was having “caused Juanita’s father and mother, who consider themselves typical of the Puerto Rican parents in the city, to wonder how wise a move it had been to leave Puerto Rico.” The obstacles to Latino settlement were substantial enough to give migrants second thoughts about their decision to come to Lawrence. The paper described, “Sometimes the father and mother, lured here by letters from Puerto Rican friends who were pulling steady wages from Lawrence textile mills and shoe shops after settling here in the early 1960s, still wonder [if they should have migrated].” The article is careful to be clear that Juanita’s parents had jobs, but the types of jobs available for Latinos in Lawrence did not necessarily give them access to the “better life” that had spurred migration, “They have found jobs, but now, with cutbacks in the textile and shoe industries, wages are down and security has gone out the window.” The Eagle-Tribune discussed their issues with housing as well, “They have rented apartments (despite landlords who know ways to avoid renting to Puerto Ricans), but the apartments have never been much more than shelters and rents are currently soaring.”<sup>36</sup> The prejudice faced by their children, the low wages and job insecurity in the declining manufacturing sector of the city, or in other words, the absence of the steady jobs their

friends and families had promised existed in the city, as well as the difficulty finding landlords who would rent to Puerto Ricans, the inadequacy of the apartments and the soaring rents, all combined to make Juanita's parents question if they were better off in Puerto Rico. Juanita's father had learned his English as a draftee in the U.S. army and at the time of the interview was making an average of eighty dollars a week in a shoe factory where his hours were often cut to four hours a day. He explained, "But there is a lot that makes us believe we haven't found a home in Lawrence... Too many people show us no respect... They act like we are all bums and thieves and selling narcotics and that we all live like pigs and the only reason we come to America is to get welfare money." His wife elaborated, 'Puerto Rican people, even our children aren't trusted here... it makes you sad when they don't give your children a chance.'<sup>37</sup>

For Juanita's family, economic disappointments merged with white resistance to make them question their decision to come to Lawrence. These factors combined to convince them that they had not "found a home" in Lawrence. The quotidian hostility from many white Lawrencians was not experienced in isolation, but in conjunction with systemic discrimination and structural inequality that made settling in Lawrence difficult. This seems to have been a common feeling. As the *Eagle-Tribune* explained already in 1970, "disappointment has pushed deeply into the mood of the Spanish speaking community in the last six months. The Spanish-speaking were troubled six months ago by unemployment and low-paying jobs, by a lack of housing and bad available housing and by prejudice and discrimination from more settled segments of the Lawrence

population.”<sup>38</sup> Lack of adequate jobs and housing were challenges to Latino settlement in the city as formidable as the prejudice that made many Latinos feel unwelcome.

### **“Fighting to get ice cream”: Denied service in Lawrence**

Civil Rights activists in the 1950s and 1960s had worked hard to ensure that no one could be denied service at a store or restaurant on account of race. The goal of unfettered access to white-owned businesses remained elusive, however, not only in the South, but also in Lawrence, as some Latinos struggled for service in local business establishments in the 1970s. One Lawrence resident, Eric Spindler, recalled a story told to him by his uncle, who had migrated from the Dominican Republic as a child. As a teenager in the 1970s, his uncle Louis had gone to a corner store in Prospect Hill, an overwhelmingly white neighborhood, with his younger sister, Miriam. Eric recounted, “They go to a store to get some ice cream, and Miriam comes out and she’s crying and Louis says ‘what’s up?’ and Miriam says, ‘they won’t serve me, he says he won’t serve spics,’ and Louis comes in and says ‘I just told her the same thing I’m gonna tell you: I don’t serve spics,’ and something happens where Louis hits him.” Whatever assumptions the storeowner might have made regarding his power to exclude and insult the two young Dominicans, Louis’s response demonstrated his unwillingness to be a passive victim of such exclusion and harassment. In Spindler’s telling of the story, he made clear with a laugh that “Miriam eventually got the ice cream,” but he also noted that his uncle was arrested for hitting the storeowner. The judge who presided over Louis’s case was not sympathetic to the fact that he had been provoked by racial taunts. Spindler felt that this



story, “fighting to get ice cream in Lawrence, Massachusetts” summed up well the struggles of many Latinos in the city: white Lawrencians were not held accountable for their discrimination, and Latinos had to literally fight for basic rights, a decade after the Civil Rights movement had supposedly secured those rights across the nation.<sup>39</sup>

Although many such incidents of Latinos being refused service in restaurants and shops likely went unreported, one Lawrence merchant garnered media attention for denying service to Puerto Ricans when he did so by posting a sign in the window of his sandwich shop. In August, 1971, the cover of the *Eagle-Tribune* carried a photo of a sign reading, “This store closed to all Purto [sic] Rican in this building and all their bum friends.” Along with the sign, a list of the store’s hours and signs prohibiting bare feet and animals in the store were also visible.<sup>40</sup> The photo’s caption read, “No Puerto Ricans – Sign on Green’s Sandwich Shop, Hampshire Street, is particularly aimed at Puerto Ricans living above the store and their friends, says manager Joseph Green.” Green elaborated on the sign, making clear that he was not trying to exclude all Puerto Ricans, “If they can talk English and we know what they want, they can come in.” He was not unaware of the risks involved in refusing service to such a large group, noting that he could lose his license, but was convinced that he would have the support of the local government, “A lot of people will back me up at City Hall.” He explained his feelings against Puerto Ricans, “I’m not against their rights, there’s just too many of them on welfare.” He complained of noise late at night, banging on the doors after the store is closed, and Puerto Ricans who, he believed, drove cars without a license, and sold “dope.”<sup>41</sup>

Although the sign was taken down shortly after its photo ran in the paper, it sparked a dramatic protest. The *Eagle-Tribune* reported that over a hundred “Spanish-Americans” had gathered in front of the store in protest that night, before moving the protest to the Lawrence Common. The next day’s paper showed a photo of jubilant Latino youth, two of whom held up peace signs, and one with a raised fist, above the caption “Spanish-speaking Lawrencians demonstrate against discrimination.”<sup>42</sup> The protest continued the next day, until Green came out of the shop and apologized for his comments and said that he would sell the shop. The paper reported that the demonstrators did not seem satisfied by his apology, and there were plans for a formal complaint with the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination.

Orlando Salazar, Spanish coordinator for the Greater Lawrence Community Action Council contacted city officials who, the *Eagle-Tribune* reported, “have expressed little interest so far,” none of whom believed they had the authority to do anything about the situation. Salazar then went with an *Eagle-Tribune* reporter to confront Green. The paper described, “A heavy-set man, the proprietor sat with his back to Salazar and the reporter and answered questions with curses.”<sup>43</sup> Green told Salazar and the reporter that his anger began with his upstairs Puerto Rican neighbors parking in front of his shop (their apartment building), which took space away from his customers. Green had applied to the police department for a special loading zone in front of the shop and been denied.<sup>44</sup> Salazar went to the flower shop next to Green’s sandwich shop, the owners of which claimed they never had any trouble at all with their Puerto Rican neighbors.<sup>45</sup> This type of coverage of anti-Latino discrimination, detailed and sympathetic, was rare, but it offers a

vivid portrait of both the anger of local whites and the inaction of local city officials, as well as a glimpse of early, dramatic protest on the part of local Latinos who demonstrated in order to ensure their right to the city's public spaces, shops, and restaurants.

### **Latino activism**

As can be seen above, instances of white resistance to Latino settlement were met with individual and collective responses from Latinos, as they asserted their right to make a home in the city. Latino efforts to claim the city included community based social service provision, zero-tolerance protests of media and government expressions of stereotypes and prejudice, collective and individual resistance to Latino exclusion from housing and the city's public spaces, and pan-ethnic organizing to celebrate a public, united Latino community in Lawrence's streets, schools, library, and Common. All of these forms of activism had essentially the same end: to assert Latinos' right to build lives in the city and to challenge white efforts to deny them that right. As I will discuss in the next chapter, the riot was absolutely in line with these assertions of the right to the city. Latinos in Lawrence had long been required to defend themselves against the steady pressure to leave the city; they built lives in Lawrence in spite of the lack of welcome they received, and they collectively challenged white visions of the city that did not include a Latino presence.

Even the most basic forms of Latino community organizing displayed a political element in the context of the exclusion that Latinos often faced in the city. The pressure exerted by white Lawrencians was directed towards forcing Latinos to leave the city, or

at the very least, to assimilate. In that context, Latino efforts to stay, to build community, and to embrace their identity publicly were all challenges to white efforts at displacement. Organizing to provide for each other what white Lawrence denied them, and to provide it in a way that respected or even celebrated Latino culture, was an implicit assertion of Latinos' right to the city. The most basic forms of Latino organizing -- forming social clubs, storefront churches, service organizations, and small businesses that served the Latino community -- were all forms of collectively laying down roots in Lawrence and claiming it as home. Although some were money-making ventures, businesses, social clubs, churches, and service organizations all functioned to ensure that Latinos had access to the services and sense of community that they were otherwise denied in the city. This form of laying down roots in Lawrence began almost immediately after the first Latino families arrived in the city.

Although the earliest organized service providers that worked with Latinos were not Latino-run, the services they offered were shaped by Latino needs and requests, and early settlers frequently involved themselves in service provision for newer arrivals. The Spanish Center was opened by the Catholic Church in 1965, and offered English classes and children's programs, and helped with court interpretation.<sup>46</sup> Father John J. Lamond, who ran the Spanish Center, remembered that they rarely helped Latinos find apartments, not because finding apartments was easy, but because "most of the time they would do it through friends of their own." The alacrity with which friends and families took care of newcomers enabled the Spanish Center to continue its work without being overwhelmed, even as the number of Latino settlers in the city grew. Father Lamond noted, "the people

who had been here for quite some time kind of took care of the newcomers.”<sup>47</sup> This mutual assistance in the face of official marginalization enabled Latinos to find homes, jobs, and other important resources in the city.

Other organizations, like the Greater Lawrence Ecumenical Area Ministry (GLEAM), also provided a range of services (and occasionally advocacy) for Latinos in Lawrence. The most important organization in terms of Latino settlement aid was the Greater Lawrence Community Action Council (GLCAC), which had a Spanish Coordinator position. The Spanish Coordinator, was a Latino or Latina staff member who was responsible for coordinating services for the Latino community. Isabel Meléndez gained the position in 1973 after applying for it for years. She recalled that she was particularly eager to get the job because she had been unofficially providing settlement and other services for the Latino community for years, and it had been ruining her retail business. She had been the first Latino to open a clothing shop in Lawrence, Casa Meléndez, which she opened in 1970 on Newbury Street. She recalled that in the three years it was open, the store was successful, with around three hundred customers, but she was taking a lot of time off to help people look for jobs or housing, so people would try to come to the store to buy clothes and it would be closed because she was off helping people navigate the social service bureaucracy in the city.<sup>48</sup> As Spanish Coordinator for GLCAC, she did not have to take time away from her work to give to the community, helping the Latino community in Lawrence became her job, and she works at the GLCAC to this day (2010). Meléndez and her husband were also the first Latinos to form a social club (for former residents of Juana Díaz, Puerto Rico) in the city, opening the

*Club de Juanadinos Ausentes* on Garden Street off Newbury in 1964. Together, they ran the social club for fourteen years, eventually moving to Common Street after a fire in the Garden Street location.<sup>49</sup> Although the services performed by organizations like the International Institute, the Spanish Center, GLEAM, and GLCAC were undoubtedly helpful for Latino settlers in the city, they were a far cry from a comprehensive, bilingual and bicultural social service infrastructure. The majority of the health, educational, housing, welfare, and recreational service organizations in the city refused to shape themselves to fit their Latino clients until after the riots.

### **Latino-owned businesses**

By 1970, even though the Latino community in Lawrence was still quite small, Latinos had formed their own business district, a four-block strip of Newbury Street, between Essex and Orchard Streets, that the *Eagle-Tribune* described as “the business district of the estimated 8,500 people who in the past decade have come to Lawrence from more than 20 Spanish-speaking parts of the world.” The article noted that the district was located in a formerly Italian section of the city and included about a dozen shops, stores, and restaurants, “all operated by Spanish-speaking people.” The paper noted the speed with which Latino settlers in the city had engaged in community formation, “They’ve only been here a few years but already they’ve dug in, taken root and formed their own community within a community with a sprinkle of little Spanish shops and stores and churches (sometimes a church within a church).” It described the stores and their contents, illustrating the transnational and bicultural retail sector that

Latinos had created in Lawrence already by 1970, “The variety shops sell crucifixes with the Lord’s Prayer inscribed in Spanish and magazines that feature articles of Luis Ferre, Col. Sanchez Hernandez, and El Cordobes. Tacos, tortillas, green bananas and Goya canned goods move well in the grocery stores while the diners serve a syrupy black coffee in tiny gold cups. The clothing stores [are] stocked with a soft explosion of colorful dresses, flashy ties and flamboyant shirts and the music (always loud) in the record shops ranges from Isaac Albeniz to Ricky Ray.”<sup>50</sup> The article also contained an introduction into early Latino church attendance, “up the street is Holy Rosary Church once dominated by an Italian membership which, now, however, is taking into itself Spanish parishioners who attend Masses conducted by a Spanish priest. Protestant Puerto Ricans attend the Spanish Evangelical Church at the corner of Lowell and Warren Sts.”<sup>51</sup> The colorful description of the Newbury Street business district continued, “Here is where industrious Puerto Rican families have opened up shops, which include a Spanish restaurant (about the size of a coat room with two tables and a counter the size of an ironing boards), a grocery store where ‘Goya’ canned goods dominate the shelves, and a music shop that’s really a kind of variety store since along with sheet music, records, guitars and drums, one can buy Spanish girly magazines, paperbacks, cameras, transistor radios and lamps. The paper’s claim, however, that most of the Newbury Street businesses were owned by Puerto Ricans may have been an assumption, rather than a fact, as few Lawrencians acknowledged or were even aware of Latino diversity at the time, and some of the city’s most successful business owners were Cuban or South American. Regardless, by 1970, Latino community formation was well underway,

spurred partly by migrant entrepreneurialism and partly by the void created from white neglect of Latinos as customers and tenants.

By the time of the riots, Latino-owned stores had proliferated. In 1983, the *Eagle-Tribune* reported, “Sixty businesses owned by Hispanics are scattered throughout the city’s neighborhoods... They range from gas stations, retail stores, restaurants, ‘Mom and Pop’ groceries and real estate agencies.”<sup>52</sup> The growth of Latino-owned businesses was due partly to the hard work of their proprietors and partly to the resistance of white store owners to tailor their goods and services to Latinos clients. In 1983 Jose Zaiter, director of the Hispanic job incentive program and the Industry-Hispanic Relations program at the Greater Lawrence Chamber of Commerce, argued that Latino-owned grocery stores thrived because most Lawrence grocery stores did not stock the types of foods that Latino customers were interested in. He also argued that the language barrier, presumably between migrant shoppers and white retail establishments without bilingual employees, kept Latino customers at Latino establishments, as did the lack of transportation for many Latinos, which forced them to shop within their neighborhoods. Zaiter argued that as a result of a lack of white interest in serving the Latino community, Latino-owned businesses were only “competing with each other, not the chain stores for business.” According to Zaiter, by 1983, Latino-owned businesses had already become an important part of the city’s economy, “Now they’ve [Hispanic-owned businesses] become an integral part of the community, a sort of sleeping giant.”<sup>53</sup> He also emphasized that their modest economic success was due to the purchasing power of Latinos. Latino-owned



businesses were “surviving, and doing it pretty well, with 90 percent of their customers being Hispanics.”<sup>54</sup>

Although there is not enough evidence to claim this definitively, it is possible that continued Latino settlement in Lawrence was due partly to the success of these Latino-owned businesses, as successful business owners often also invested in apartments. It would not be surprising if Latino landlords were less likely to discriminate against prospective Latino tenants. Indeed, anecdotal evidence suggests that successful Latino business owners, such as Cuban Clemente Abascal, provided apartments for hundreds of Latino settlers in the city.<sup>55</sup> Already by 1983, Abascal alone owned three hundred apartments in Lawrence in addition to his Essex Street retail store and a Laundromat. Virgil Perez opened a small grocery store in 1979, and by 1983 had expanded the store, opened the first Latino-owned liquor store in the city, and bought twenty-three apartments.<sup>56</sup>

### **Celebration as activism**

Community formation activities, such as church or social club formation or the creation of businesses or organizations to serve the Latino community, often blurred into explicit political activism. The best example of this phenomenon was the advent of the *Semana Hispana* festival. Intended as a celebration of pan-ethnic Latino culture, designed to bring different Latino groups together to celebrate what they had in common, the festival was, from the beginning, also about empowering the Latino community. Beginning in 1979, *Semana Hispana*, or Hispanic Week as it was called in English,

included a parade and pan-ethnic celebration of Latino cultures. Over the years, the annual festival grew into the largest event in the city, drawing tens of thousands of people from throughout the Northeast into the heart of Lawrence. Yet, this public cultural celebration had to struggle for its very existence. At first, the city government attempted to deny the organizers a permit to use the Campagnone Common (the large park in the center of North Lawrence) to hold the festival. One of the organizers and eventually prominent Lawrence politician and business owner, Julia Silverio, recalled, “You see, these were the times when there was a lot of racism and antagonism against us in the city. We had to fight the city to be able to get a permit to use the park. Some authorities claimed that we were going to use the park to get drunk and other bad things.”<sup>57</sup> In the years that followed, *Semana Hispana* frequently struggled with the city government for the continued right to hold the festival in Common, and to shape the festival the way they envisioned it. One of the most substantial controversies in the years leading up to the riot was the fight over whether or not the festival could serve as a voter registration site as well. The reluctance of the city to allow Latinos to use central public space in the city to celebrate Latino cultures and the desire of the organizers to include voter registration as part of the festivities demonstrate the clear political element inherent in collective cultural self-expression and celebration.

*Semana Hispana* was also one of the clearest indicators that the various Latino groups in Lawrence found it politically and socially important to forge a pan-Latino identity in order to claim a space for Latinos in the city. Prominent Latinos argued that this commonality was partly an intrinsic one, based on a shared language and many

shared values and similar traditions. As Latina activist and original *Semana Hispana* organizer Isabel Meléndez explained, many people believed that “Hispanics they don’t get along together. That’s not so. I believe that we have something in common. When you come from Latin America, you have something in common.” She argued that Latinos in Lawrence shared an “*amor de unificación*. You know, unity.” She listed different Latin American nationalities, arguing that in spite of their differences, they also had important commonalities, such as language and foods, and most importantly, a common “understanding”<sup>58</sup> She argued that Latinos ultimately got along well, and used *Semana Hispana* as proof, “And to show that, that’s a good proof, the Hispanic week celebration that we’re having here, Hispanic Week, the goal was to identify all the Latin countries, okay? And bring it together. For ten years, Hispanic week has been in effect, okay? Where we have nineteen different countries getting together in only one place, and not even one incident. That shows that we can get along well.”<sup>59</sup>

Pan-ethnic Latino cohesion was partly about commonalities, but also partly a response to the racism Latinos encountered in Lawrence. However much many Latinos would have preferred to maintain an identity based on their homeland or, for some, to embrace an “American” identity, to many white residents and officials, the city’s Latinos were all “Spics” at worst, all “Spanish” at best. Many community organizers chose to embrace a Hispanic or Latino identity as a way of building a coalition to struggle against the bigotry and exclusion they faced in the city. Although there was certainly a good deal of tension between different nationalities, most explicitly political organizations, such as the Alliance of Latinos for Political Action and Progress (ALPA), adopted a pan-Latino

framework from the early years of Latino settlement in the city. Indeed, many organizers were particularly eager to showcase the commonalities among Latinos, as Latino disenfranchisement was often blamed on a lack of unity stemming from national-origin differences.

This emphasis on showcasing certain aspects of Latino cultural and community life was not unique. A number of different community events during this period emphasized the display of Latin American cultures as a way to build bridges with white Lawrencians. *Semana Hispana*, for example, was geared towards sharing Latino culture with white residents, a festive education on all the positive contributions Latinos could make to the city. An article describing the festival's history described, "*La Semana Hispana fue fundada para dar a conocer los valores hispanoamericanos, sus costumbres, tradiciones; su arte y cultura.*"<sup>60</sup> [*Semana Hispana* was founded as an opportunity to demonstrate<sup>61</sup> Hispanic-American values, customs, traditions, art and culture.] This important annual event during which Latino Lawrencians celebrated and empowered (and in the process helped to construct) their own pan-ethnic Latino community, was also conceived as a way to win over their white neighbors.

Smaller events served a similar function. In 1980, the elaborately named "First Annual Family Solidarity and Hispano-American Brotherhood Indoor Soccer Tournament" was held in the gym at the Bruce School. The event was sponsored by the Merrimack Valley Bi-Cultural House of the Community. The Bi-Cultural House had been formed in October of 1978 with fifty one members from Lawrence, Lowell, and Haverhill. The goal of the Bi-Cultural House, according to its by-laws, was to "To

preserve the Hispanic-American culture within the United States,” as well as to cooperate with other local and international groups and to represent those Latinos in the region “who so desire to be represented.”<sup>62</sup> A few months after its founding, the organization sponsored a Latino art exhibit and cultural program in the Lawrence Public Library, which they hoped would serve as an “*intercambio educativo*” [educational exchange] to benefit the entire community.<sup>63</sup> Again, the exhibition of Latino culture in one of Lawrence’s key public spaces (the library) was geared towards serving both Latino and white Lawrencians.

Although soccer games are not always considered within the rubric of “cultural events,” the Bi-Cultural House clearly considered soccer to be a positive aspect of Latin American culture to be shared with white residents of Lawrence. The soccer tournament in 1980 involved eight teams from throughout the Northeast and as far away as Peru. The organizer of the tournament and the head of the Bi-Cultural House, Miguel Lopez explained how the tournament fit in with the House’s mission, “Part of the function of the Bi-Cultural House is as a foundation to promote sports activities in order to relate to the rest of the Lawrence community.” Lopez was explicit that soccer was a pride among Latin American traditions, and he hoped this cultural showcase would help encourage Lawrence residents (presumably white residents) to look positively on their Latino neighbors. “We wanted to show families of the Lawrence area the soccer tradition of the Spanish people. We used sports as a means of getting to the community.” Like *Semana Hispana*, this claim on public space (in this case a public school gymnasium) was not a militant or confrontational battle to mark off “turf” like the riots were; rather it was a

public relations strategy to show white Lawrencians the positive contributions that Latinos could make if welcomed as full and equal members of the Lawrence community. Mayor Buckley's response to the tournament was guarded, however, as he acknowledged, "You guys have an awful lot of power as athletes...you have a powerful influence," but he then took the opportunity to offer a veiled admonition of the Latino community in his request that the athletes use their power to improve their community, "All I ask is that you use that [influence] in your community, assume responsibility."<sup>64</sup> In spite of the diligent work of Latino activists to offer an inclusive model of Latino cultural celebration, prejudice and exclusion still operated in the city.

### **Competing visions for the city**

As described in the introduction, none of these accounts of white resistance to Latino settlement in the city is meant to obscure the fact that some white Lawrencians accepted with neutrality, or occasionally perhaps even enthusiasm, their new Latino neighbors. Evidence of cross-racial friendships, work relationships, and even marriages abound, even during the thick of the riots. Although they are nowhere near as prominent as examples of tension or bigotry, this is perhaps because they were deemed less newsworthy than negative interactions. If so, we should not repeat the media's mistake in obscuring the very real presence of neighborliness, friendship, and even love between some whites and Latinos in the city. Further, Latino community organizers were not without white allies. Particularly in religious and social service organizations, Latinos teamed up with sympathetic whites to struggle against discrimination and for equal

access to services, particularly housing. Nunzio DiMarca, for example, was an Italian American, fluent in Spanish, who was a consistent part of Latino organizing in the city, working with Latino activists during the riots, even becoming the head of *Semana Hispana* organizing for a time in the mid-1990s.

Another example of interracial organizing was the creation of the city's first Community Development Corporation, Immigrant City Community Housing Corporation. Immigrant City was a successful interracial effort to keep affordable housing in the city, as a handful of white professionals in Lawrence aligned themselves with Latinos displaced by urban renewal to advocate for affordable housing in the North Common. Many Lawrence elites, including the city government, had long been engaged in a steadfast booster campaign to draw and keep industry and middle-class residents in the city. Lawrence's urban renewal efforts had been geared toward bringing about a renaissance in the city that would make it attractive as a home for people other than the poor residents who had populated the city's slums since its inception. As part of the urban renewal effort in the city, nine blocks north of the Common were razed in 1978, with the predominantly Latino residents of the demolished neighborhood promised that they would be given priority access to the new development. As the *Eagle-Tribune* described the demolition, "A giant has plucked out all the houses and buildings in the heart of the city," and nearly three hundred households, and forty-five stores had been displaced. Rep. Kevin Blanchette discussed the importance of the nine-block section that had been decimated by, what he termed, "urban removal," calling the neighborhood "the last frontier for development in the city."<sup>65</sup> When bids were requested for the new

development in the early 1980s, however, the Mayor, the Council, and the Lawrence Redevelopment Authority made clear that they wanted the development to be specifically designed for middle-income residents, as part of the longstanding plans to draw middle-class residents back into the city. Lawrence business elites were major advocates for the elimination of low-income housing from the proposed development. Under the leadership of Andover's Nicholas Rizzo, these elites formed Lawrence Strategy, an organization to advocate for middle-income housing on the North Common site. Lawrence Strategy argued that middle-income tenants in the North Common were key to Lawrence's retail sector, and they lobbied for "upward mobility" for the site.<sup>66</sup> As Rizzo explained, "A family of four making \$22,000 is going to spend money on Essex Street. But a family of four making \$15,000 – well, it's just not there."<sup>67</sup> Mayor Buckley concurred, "Lawrence is faced with the loss of our greatest resource – our young people and middle-income residents who have been moving out of the city... Lawrence cannot afford to be a city of the poor and the elderly."<sup>68</sup>

This view of city elites -- that Lawrence would be best served by attracting middle-income residents, and by purging itself of poor residents -- contrasted sharply with a letter from the leaders of twelve Latino churches in Lawrence, who urged Mayor Buckley to "support inclusion of low income housing units." The Latino religious leaders explained "many of our members are working people who earn \$13,000-\$15,000 [a year] who could not obtain a unit if none were available in that income level." They informed the mayor of the housing crisis Latinos faced in the city, "Housing is a very severe problem for our church families and others in the community, who though their incomes



are low, would make very good residents of that neighborhood and would bring stability to the North Common, which has been deteriorating for a long time.”<sup>69</sup> The Latino clergy who authored this letter detailed a very different vision of the city than the vision put forward by Lawrence Strategy, as well as a very different vision of how Latinos could contribute to the city. The clergy were clear that the neighborhood decline had been longstanding, and stability in the neighborhood required residents who would be committed to the neighborhood and to the city, unlike the middle-income people who had been abandoning the city for decades. While Lawrence Strategy advocated “the highest, financially feasible income level for this area” in order to make a “top-flight development,”<sup>70</sup> Latino clergy and Immigrant City Housing Corporation wanted housing for the Latino residents of the city who were experiencing a crisis of housing availability, affordability, and quality.

Immigrant City Community Housing Corporation had formed in the early 1980s as a coalition of displaced North Common residents, Latino community organizers including Isabel Meléndez, and white supporters of affordable housing and community-based development, such as lawyer Armand Hyatt. As they described themselves, “Immigrant City Community Housing Corporation (ICCHC) is a non-profit corporation whose membership is composed, in significant part, of Hispanic residents of Lawrence... Its purpose is to help alleviate the shortage of low and moderate income family housing in Lawrence through development of cooperative housing for the various immigrant groups, specifically including minorities, who live and work in the City of Lawrence community.”<sup>71</sup> The group had worked to submit their own bid, to build co-op apartments

on the site. Their bid was denied in late 1983 by a Lawrence Redevelopment Authority profoundly in line with the vocal city leadership, who were committed to a project that did not include low-income or cooperative units. Immigrant City drew up a lawsuit alleging that the city's insistence on a development without low-income housing was illegal as it did not conform to the city's Urban Renewal Plan. The primary funding for the project so far had come from Community Development Block Grants, totaling \$6 million over the past eight years. The conditions of these grants required the adequate relocation of residents from what was formally a lower income and minority neighborhood, as well as "priority access" to the new development for "Hispanic and other minorities of the City who have suffered from a lack of housing opportunities."<sup>72</sup> Immigrant City's lawsuit was designed as a class action suit, arguing that the civil rights of several displaced Latino residents had been violated, both by the refusal to prioritize low-income housing, and by the lack of Latinos involved in the process stemming from the city's abysmal minority hiring record.<sup>73</sup> As a result of the threatened legal challenge from Immigrant City, the chosen developer withdrew their bid in February 1984. Rather than choose between the two remaining proposals, however, the LRA decided to re-solicit bids and maintained its commitment to exclusively middle-income or "moderate-income" housing.

Although it would seem that state and federal funding the city was receiving for the project would require the inclusion of at least some affordable units, in early August 1984, the state advised that the project could go ahead without an affordability component, and build only middle-income housing. The local paper trumpeted the

decision with the headline, “Mayor, council score victory as low income homes banned.”<sup>74</sup> Days later, the Oxford Street neighborhood across the city erupted in the 1984 riots. Some speculated that the blatant message of unwelcome sent by city elites to Latinos displaced from the North Common may have contributed to the tension that erupted in the riots. Whether or not the North Common controversy played a direct role, the competing visions of the city evident in the struggle over the North Common (one plan for the city that included Latinos and another that excluded them) was mirrored in the riots. Indeed, the riots were interpreted by many as a militant call for improved affordable housing in the city. In their wake, with a new city council in place, a compelling legal challenge drawn up, and strong community support, Immigrant City eventually won the new bid and constructed 140 cooperatively-owned units on the North Common site in 1989.

Both the fight to include/exclude affordable housing in the North Common site and the 1984 riots were efforts to claim the right to the city, to be at home in its public and private spaces, as well as to assert a vision of the city, a vision in which Latinos were notably present or notably absent. Latino rioters challenged the efforts of local whites and white elites to deny their right to the city, to be a part of it and to have a say in its decision-making. The elite vision for the city had often been premised on drawing “first-class” people and businesses to the city, and by extension, on the displacement of poor Latinos.<sup>75</sup> During the riots, white residents were attempting to do with stones and firebombs what city officials had long been trying to do with urban renewal and middle-income housing: deny Latinos a place in Lawrence.

## Conclusion

I include such detailed information on the prejudice and hostility that Latinos faced in Lawrence because I think it is important not just to document the *fact* that Latinos had to struggle against white racism in order to settle and thrive in Lawrence, but also to trace the *strategies, narratives, and impact* of white resistance to Latino settlement. The blatant bigotry on the part of some city officials is important to note, lest we fall into the trap of believing that Lawrence's white working-class was the sole source of the animosity directed against Latinos. All classes of white people in and around Lawrence (not necessarily all white people, but all *classes* of white people) resisted Latino immigration. City elites resisted Latino settlement through disenfranchisement, the refusal to hire Latino employees or to provide Spanish language services, and the failure to keep Latino rental housing up to code. Suburban whites, meanwhile, were sheltered from Lawrence's struggle by restrictive zoning practices that kept multifamily and public housing in the city, as well as by a metropolitan political economy that protected suburban schools from regional desegregation. These were more legal and classier (pun intended) forms of resisting Latino settlement, but their impact was ultimately no different than the quotidian hostility of their working-class peers. Indeed, middle-class whites, both urban and suburban, were generally in more of a position to do the most damage through their resistance to Latino settlement, i.e. through job or housing discrimination. Although the bias of their working-class white neighbors may have been

very hard for many Latinos to deal with, it was the institutionalized and customary practices of whites *in power* that truly created a struggle for survival.

By 1984, the city was going through a substantial demographic transition as well as experiencing growing conflict over visions for its future. Lawrence elites, like city officials and the members of Lawrence Strategy, envisioned a return to prosperity through the recruitment and maintenance of Lawrence's middle-class residents and support of private retail and industry. Some Lawrence residents shared that vision, but many more, including most of the city's growing Latino population, insisted that the city had to be accountable to the residents already there and devote its resources to providing adequate housing and services (particularly educational, recreational, and public safety services). Although the fighting on the streets of Lower Tower Hill in August 1984 was limited to neighborhood residents (and police and firefighters), the issues discussed in this chapter, specifically these conflicting visions of the city, were dramatically at play.

---

<sup>1</sup> Isabel Meléndez, press conference on December 14, 2003, <http://www.notilatino.com/id9.htm>, accessed October 27, 2009.

<sup>2</sup> Eugene Declercq, "While suburbs duck, Lawrence flounders: Riot wasn't just urban problem" *Eagle-Tribune*, August 12, 1884, clipping, JFB scrapbooks at LHC.

<sup>3</sup> In the context of the rest of this dissertation, I hope it becomes obvious that the most obvious forms of racism (racial violence and slurs) are often a last ditch effort of those with the least power, and are therefore not the most responsible for maintaining racial hierarchies.

<sup>4</sup> Robin D. G. Kelley, *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class*, (New York: The Free Press, 1994). Kelley notes that he has adapted this approach from James C. Scott's idea of "infrapolitics."

<sup>5</sup> Ramona Hernández and Glenn Jacobs, "Beyond Homeland Politics: Dominicans in Massachusetts" in *Latino Politics in Massachusetts: Struggles, Strategies, and Prospects*, Carol Hardy-Fanta and Jeffrey Gerson, eds. (New York and London: Routledge, 2002), 289.

<sup>6</sup> *Eagle-Tribune*, "Sign Cost Owner \$200 and an Apology," September 14, 1971.

<sup>7</sup> Ingrid Garcia, interview by the author, November 10, 2009.

<sup>8</sup> *Eagle-Tribune*, "Sound Off," August 19, 1984.

<sup>9</sup> Thomasine Berg, "Lawrence: Can it survive its ethnic growing pains? Two leaders voice opinions," *Eagle-Tribune*, November 22, 1981.

<sup>10</sup> Kathie Neff, "Facing up to our prejudice: First of a Series," *Eagle-Tribune*, April 22, 1984.

<sup>11</sup> The Lawrence High School/Phillips Academy Urban Studies Institute, "Growing Up Hispanic in Lawrence," (1986), 12. The Urban Studies Institute was run out of Phillips Academy, a prestigious private high school in Andover, and the report was a collaborative project by Phillips Academy and Lawrence High School students. Although this report was put together after the riots, I have included material that discusses the general experience or histories of Latinos in Lawrence, since many of those experiences and histories happened before the riots.

<sup>12</sup> Neff, "Facing up to our prejudice."

<sup>13</sup> Neff, "Facing up to our prejudice."

<sup>14</sup> Urban Studies Institute, "Growing Up Hispanic in Lawrence," 13.

<sup>15</sup> Urban Studies Institute, "Growing Up Hispanic in Lawrence," 13.

<sup>16</sup> Urban Studies Institute, "Growing Up Hispanic in Lawrence," 14.

<sup>17</sup> Berg, "Lawrence: Can it survive its ethnic growing pains?"

<sup>18</sup> Berg, "Lawrence: Can it survive its ethnic growing pains?"

<sup>19</sup> Urban Studies Institute, "Growing Up Hispanic in Lawrence," 13.

<sup>20</sup> Neff, "Facing up to our prejudice."

<sup>21</sup> Neff, "Facing up to our prejudice."

<sup>22</sup> Kathie Neff, "Family offers window on Hispanic life" April 23, 1984

<sup>23</sup> Neff, "Facing up to our prejudice."

<sup>24</sup> Neff, "Facing up to our prejudice."

<sup>25</sup> Neff, "Facing up to our prejudice."

<sup>26</sup> Neff, "Facing up to our prejudice."

<sup>27</sup> Neff, "Facing up to our prejudice."

<sup>28</sup> See, for example, Oscar Lewis, *La Vida: A Puerto Rican Family in the Culture of Poverty, San Juan & New York* (New York: Random House, 1966).

<sup>29</sup> Neff, "Facing up to our prejudice."

<sup>30</sup> Neff, "Facing up to our prejudice."

<sup>31</sup> Many of these condemnations were common early in the twentieth century as well, as European immigrants were blamed for the very slum conditions they were forced to endure.

<sup>32</sup> Urban Studies Institute, "Growing Up Hispanic in Lawrence," 15.

<sup>33</sup> *Eagle-Tribune*, "Callahan: His insensitive behavior insults the whole city," undated clipping, likely March 1980, LHC.

---

<sup>34</sup> Berg, "Lawrence: Can it survive its ethnic growing pains?"

<sup>35</sup> Jack Wark, "Juanita's Family Worries: Maybe Leaving Puerto Rico Was Wrong," *Eagle-Tribune*, December 7, 1970.

<sup>36</sup> Wark, "Juanita's Family Worries."

<sup>37</sup> Wark, "Juanita's Family Worries."

<sup>38</sup> Jack Wark, "City and Spanish Rub Each Other," *Eagle-Tribune*, December 10, 1970.

<sup>39</sup> Eric Spindler, interviewed by the author, 2006.

<sup>40</sup> *Eagle-Tribune*, photo and caption, August 3, 1971.

<sup>41</sup> *Eagle-Tribune*, photo and caption, August 3, 1971.

<sup>42</sup> Bill Stetson, "I'll Sell the Shop – Green," *Eagle-Tribune*, August 4, 1971.

<sup>43</sup> Stetson, "I'll Sell the Shop."

<sup>44</sup> Stetson, "I'll Sell the Shop."

<sup>45</sup> Stetson, "I'll Sell the Shop."

<sup>46</sup> Father John J. Lamond, interviewed by Jeanne Schinto, 1992, LHC. Court interpreter services were particularly important given the paucity of city services provided for Latinos, including the lack of, or inadequate, court interpretation. In 1970 weak legal services even resulted in a defendant relying on his own accuser for interpretation. Unsurprisingly, the man was convicted, Jack Wark, "Accused's Testimony Translated for the Court by His Accuser," *Eagle-Tribune*, August 4<sup>th</sup>, 1970.

<sup>47</sup> Father John J. Lamond, interviewed by Jeanne Schinto, 1992, LHC.

<sup>48</sup> Isabel Meléndez, interviewed by Margaret Hart, 1988, LHC.

<sup>49</sup> Isabel Meléndez, interviewed by Margaret Hart, 1988, LHC.

<sup>50</sup> Jack Wark, "It's a Vest-Pocket Version of Home...", *Eagle-Tribune*, December 8, 1970.

<sup>51</sup> Andrew Coburn, "The Puerto Ricans: Lawrence's Latest Wave of Immigrants," *Eagle-Tribune*, July 21, 1967.

<sup>52</sup> Mary Beth Donovan, "Hispanic firms: Lawrence's 'sleeping giant,'" *Eagle-Tribune*, July 24, 1983.

<sup>53</sup> Donovan, "Hispanic firms."

<sup>54</sup> Donovan, "Hispanic firms."

<sup>55</sup> Abascal was widely mythologized as someone who made his fortune from the few dollars he had in his pocket when he arrived in Lawrence, so an accurate history of his business development in Lawrence is hard to ascertain.

<sup>56</sup> *Eagle-Tribune*, "Investor shows appreciation," July 24, 1983.

<sup>57</sup> Hernández and Jacobs, "Beyond Homeland Politics."

<sup>58</sup> Isabel Meléndez, interviewed by Margaret Hart, 1988, LHC.

<sup>59</sup> Isabel Meléndez, interviewed by Margaret Hart, 1988, LHC.

<sup>60</sup> Alma Grande, "Altibajos de Semana Hispana," *Enlace*, June 1997, LHC.

<sup>61</sup> The closest translation for *dar a conocer* would be "to inform" but as inform requires as direct object in English, it makes for an awkward translation.

<sup>62</sup> Merrimack Valley Bi-Cultural House of the Community, Inc. by-laws, LHC.

<sup>63</sup> Merrimack Valley Bi-Cultural House of the Community, Inc. art exhibit program, LHC.

<sup>64</sup> Pete Goodwin, "Hispanics use soccer tourney to promote understanding," *Eagle-Tribune*, April 13, 1980.

<sup>65</sup> Joe Sciacca, "Redevelopment target is Lawrence's 'last frontier,'" *Eagle-Tribune*, November 7, 1982, clipping, AH.

<sup>66</sup> Darlene Sordillo, "Questions over development of 7 acres spark tug-of-war among Lawrence leaders," *Boston Globe*, undated clipping, AH.

<sup>67</sup> Mary Beth Donovan, "Low-income housing limit to be asked," *Eagle-Tribune* November 8, 1983, clipping AH.

<sup>68</sup> Sordillo, "Questions over development of 7 acres spark tug-of-war among Lawrence leaders."

<sup>69</sup> Undated letter from "Clergy of Hispanic Churches" to "Mayor-elect John Buckley," AH.

<sup>70</sup> Letter from Nicholas Rizzo, on behalf of Lawrence Strategy, Inc. to Lawrence Redevelopment Authority, August 26, 1983, AH.

<sup>71</sup> Draft of proposed class-action lawsuit proposed by Immigrant City Community Housing Corporation, AH.

---

<sup>72</sup> Letter from Gaston Snow & Ely Bartlett, the law firm representing Immigrant City Community Housing Corporation to David Dronsick of the Executive Office of Communities and Development, December 9, 1983, AH.

<sup>73</sup> Draft of proposed class-action lawsuit proposed by Immigrant City Community Housing Corporation, AH.

<sup>74</sup> Annemargaret Connolly, "Mayor, council score victory as low income homes banned," *Eagle-Tribune* August 1, 1984, clipping, AH.

<sup>75</sup> See a larger discussion of this in Chapter One.



## Chapter Four – Race and Public Space in the Immigrant City: The Riots of 1984

*“The mobs are gone: white adolescents  
who chanted USA and flung stones  
at the scattering of astonished immigrants,  
ruddy faces slowing the car to shout spick  
and wave beer cans.”*

- Martín Espada, from “Toque de Queda: Curfew in Lawrence”<sup>1</sup>

For two nights in August 1984, hundreds of white and Latino residents from Lawrence’s Lower Tower Hill neighborhood faced off against each other along Oxford Street. Banging on metal garbage drums and yelling racial slurs and insults, the two crowds hurled rocks and Molotov cocktails along the street at each other, as neighbors shouted down at the crowd from triple-decker balconies, or cowered in fear inside their apartments. Whenever police or firefighters would appear to disperse the crowd or put out the blazes in the firebombed buildings, the two sides would join together to throw rocks at the police and firefighters, temporarily putting aside their animosity to struggle against a common target. Both white and Latino Lawrencians rioted, claiming the streets and expressing their anger at the unfairness they saw in the city. Historians have noted a transition in the form taken by race riots in the mid-twentieth century, when white rioting designed to reinforce racial hierarchies gradually yielded to Black urban uprisings, protesting disinvestment, discrimination, and police brutality.<sup>2</sup> Yet, the Lawrence riots of 1984 demonstrate that these two forms of rioting could co-exist, not only in the same historical moment, but on the very same narrow street. The riots are a spectacular example of the ways in which city residents claimed and contested public space in this

era, as they negotiated a rapid and major shift in Lawrence's racial demography, as well as the brutal effects of their city's impoverishment.

The riots are essential to understanding Lawrence's history, but not because they mark a clear turning point. Although they precipitated a number of changes within the city, they did not radically alter its path. The importance of the riots stems, instead, from the fact that they dramatically demonstrated the intersection of urban disinvestment, white resistance, and Latino activism in the city. These three processes, which had, for the most part, unfolded gradually in Greater Lawrence, in quotidian actions and decisions barely noticed by the media or by scholars, suddenly exploded into public consciousness during these two nights of violence. The riots brought vast media, government, and scholarly attention to the city. Taken together, these efforts to document and interpret the riots created an unparalleled archive, one specifically attuned to understanding urban crisis, white bigotry, and urban Latino frustration. Ultimately, Lawrence's transformation was protracted, comprised of decades of organized and individual struggles, of which the riots were just one example. The riots certainly had a major impact on the city, but their even greater significance lies in the ways in which they crystallized and displayed the competing claims for urban space that had pervaded (and would continue to pervade) the city for decades. This chapter will give a detailed narrative overview of what happened during the riots, and the next chapter will analyze the competing interpretations of the riots that proliferated.

**Wednesday, August 8<sup>th</sup>, 1984 (Daytime)**

The riots took place in a Lower Tower Hill neighborhood most commonly referred to by the press as the Oxford Street neighborhood. As the local paper, the *Eagle-Tribune* described it, “Oxford Street is a quarter-mile stretch of crowded three-story homes that abuts the Merrimack Courts Housing Project. Most of the buildings are two- and three- story apartment houses with neat porches and small yards. An average of two to five families live in each.”<sup>3</sup> Beginning in the early 1970s, the neighborhood’s demographics had begun to change. Previously, it had been dominated by ethnically French-Canadian white residents, but by 1980, half the residents of the neighborhood were Latino. Latinos accounted for three-quarters of the 5,000 people living in two World War II-era housing projects in Lower Tower Hill at the time of the riots, one of which was the Merrimack Courts housing project on Essex Street (also commonly referred to as the Essex Street projects), but there were also a number of Latinos living in the three-decker tenements throughout the neighborhood.<sup>4</sup> Even before the riots, many residents complained of longstanding difficulties and misunderstandings between white and Latino residents.<sup>5</sup> One nearby resident said she was spared the direct confrontations between French-Canadian and Latino residents that preceded the riots, but remembered, “I would hear the screaming and the yelling... even walking down the street, I would be hearing them scream at each other.”<sup>6</sup>

It is unclear how the two nights of rioting began, with witnesses, participants, and the police all giving sharply different accounts. Unfortunately, and much to the dismay of many Latino residents, no inquest into the riots was ever made. The following sketch is

drawn from interviews, city council records, and TV coverage, but relies heavily on newspaper reports, as the local and national newspapers did the most thorough investigations. Unfortunately, however, most papers interviewed far more white witnesses/participants than Latinos. Where possible, I have corroborated information from the reports with other sources. Where information is unclear or conflicting, I have tried to note it as such or leave it out completely. There was certainly a conflict between two groups of people that preceded the rioting itself, and that is where I shall begin.

On the first day of the riots, the tension began even before night fell, when a group of young Latinos went to the home of Gary Gill, Rick Brady, and John Ball (known to friends as “The Hawk”) to confront them over a broken window. Anna Ocasio claimed that John Ball and his friends had thrown a rock through her apartment window the night before, shattering the glass next to her five-month old baby. She explained to the *Eagle-Tribune*, “they broke my window. The glass, it shattered all over my baby. My kids was right there.”<sup>7</sup> She said that some of her friends, angry about the broken window, had gone up the street to confront Ball, who was sitting, in turn, with some of his friends outside a green house on the corner of Oxford and Haverhill Streets.<sup>8</sup> It is unclear whether Ocasio’s avengers actually planned to hit anyone or just to make noise and it is also unclear whether Ocasio was with them. Regardless, when the group of young Latinos arrived at “The Hawk’s” house to confront him about the broken window, a fight ensued. As the *Eagle-Tribune* described, “Insults and obscenities flew back and forth. Someone grabbed a bat and started clubbing a dog belonging to the owner of the house. The riot began.”<sup>9</sup> Some accounts challenge this idea that one of the young Latinos hit the

dog, but the *Eagle-Tribune* offered this anti-canine violence as the origin of the rioting, and they initially took little interest in the victims of the broken window and their side of the story. Indeed the *Eagle-Tribune* (and the police) frequently described a broken *windshield* in their coverage, which made the young Latinos' anger seem quite out of proportion to the initial offense.<sup>10</sup>

Accounts of this confrontation varied widely, of course. The *Boston Herald* reported that witnesses described the young man who allegedly clubbed the dog as actually just a boy. These witnesses claimed that the boy only kicked the dog through a fence because it was barking at him, and noted that dozens of people saw him get "slapped around" by the group of men as a result.<sup>11</sup> The *Boston Globe* reported that Rick Brady told them that "about '40 Puerto Ricans' falsely accused him and his friends of breaking the windshield, then attacked them with bats." Brady said the three men threw rocks at the Puerto Ricans because "we figured by throwing rocks at them, they would back off." But the *Globe* reported that, instead of backing off, the Puerto Ricans "took control of a two-block area by placing burning garbage cans in the center of the street. In return, residents of French-Canadian descent and others blocked Haverhill and Oxford streets."<sup>12</sup>

In spite of the tight narrative of the newspaper coverage (dog clubbed - riot began, or rocks thrown - intersection occupied), it is ultimately unclear how directly related this initial skirmish at John Ball's was to the rest of the rioting. Considering that the riots did not begin until hours after this incident and included hundreds of people, newspaper accounts suggesting that this early skirmish somehow "caused" the riots are misleading.<sup>13</sup>

Although this incident may have represented or fueled some of the established tensions, the rioting was *about* something bigger than a broken window or an assaulted pet. This is clear in Ocasio's defensive comments to U.S. Representative Jim Shannon when he walked through the riot neighborhood. She explained, "We don't mess around with nobody... They hurt my kids. They said they was gonna burn this house. When we go to the store they call us names and everything."<sup>14</sup> To Ocasio, she and her family were victims of pervasive harassment and violence, and the defense of herself and her family were justified. Her comments make clear that the tension that erupted was a result of repeated incidents of harassment and intimidation, the confrontation stemming not from a desire for violence, but from a desire for safety, for the right to walk to the store unmolested and live without the fear of glass raining down onto one's children. Although she does not spell out to whom the pronouns "we" and "they" refer, the hundreds of white and Latino rioters who gathered on opposite sides of the street when night fell made clear that this was bigger than a family issue.

An opinion piece in the *Boston Phoenix* after the riots supported this idea that the confrontation at "The Hawk's" house should not be understood as the "cause" of the riots, and listed the range of incidents rumored to have incited the riots. The author, Alan Lupo, made a distinction between "incidents" and "causes," explaining, "Real or rumored incidents – a boy kicking at a dog, a man slapping a boy, a gang breaking a windshield, a guy heaving a brick through a window, a fire in the package store of a man who is also a landlord, taunts among thugs who share streets that are conduits of drugs from New Hampshire and points north – they can unlock the gates to hell." But these incidents were

not the causes; the causes were “Unredressed grievances. Unassuaged resentments.” These causes, he argued, were “what give the incidents their incendiary potential.”<sup>15</sup> The smaller conflict that afternoon did not cause the riots, but it set aflame larger tensions that exploded when the sun went down.

### **Wednesday, August 8<sup>th</sup>, 1984 (Nightfall)**

By nightfall, a number of people had gathered on the corner of Oxford and Haverhill streets. The police log reported, “8:59 – Youths fighting. 448 Haverhill St.” Yet officers reported that the neighborhood was, “Okay on arrival.” In spite of this apparent calm, the situation at that intersection was clearly on the verge of erupting. Just fourteen minutes later, the log read, “9:13 – Large disturbance, all cars.”<sup>16</sup> In addition to calling out all on-duty local police, the log indicates that police from the surrounding areas and state were also notified of the disturbance that just fourteen minutes earlier had been described as “Okay on arrival.” Witnesses say the violence had escalated when two police cruisers that had initially arrived at the scene were pelted with rocks; the cruisers’ retreat signaled to the crowd that they had the run of the streets.<sup>17</sup> Over the course of the next several hours, between 200 and 300 people gathered on opposite ends of the street, evenly divided between white and Latino, each shouting at the other side and many throwing rocks at each other, at the surrounding houses, or at any cars that braved the intersections. As CBS news noted, police and firefighters were met with substantial resistance whenever they attempted to restore order, “When local police and firefighters arrived at the scene, they were already heavily outnumbered. The mob turned its anger on

them.”<sup>18</sup> A company of police officers in Lawrence was twelve men on a normal night, and the outnumbered officers and unprotected firefighters decided to go back to their respective stations and wait for reinforcements.

The melee continued without police interference for hours, with hundreds of rioters participating. It seems that even many of the “bystanders” were actually involved in the rioting, as the *Eagle-Tribune* reported, “Home-owners and tenants stood on the porches and screamed down at the rioters, who responded with rocks, slingshots and warning shots from pistols and sawed-off shotguns.”<sup>19</sup> One Latina resident recalled that she didn’t participate, only watched, but still felt somewhat involved, because “of course whoever you are, you know, you had your sides. I had my side in the Hispanic part, the Latino side.”<sup>20</sup> At 11 p.m. rioters broke into Pettoruto’s liquor store, on the ground floor of the building where, it seems, either Gary Gill or John Ball lived. The *Eagle-Tribune* reported, oddly, that at first the two groups fought over the liquor and then they cooperated to divide it up and share it, after which “a lull followed with a lot of public drinking.”<sup>21</sup>

The lull in the fighting could not have been long lived, because by 12:15 a.m., a Molotov cocktail had set the building on fire. At this point, the police had still not arrived at the scene of the riots, and they would not arrive until after 1 a.m. Without a police escort, the fire trucks that came to the scene turned back after the rioters threw rocks at them. The *Eagle-Tribune* reported, “Firefighters said they tried to reach the scene four times before 1 a.m. but were driven back by rock throwers because they had no police escort. Lawrence police also said they were driven away by stoning three times before



reaching the area.” Sergeant Leo Ouellette, commander of the Lawrence police tactical unit said, “They were throwing anything they could get their hands on.”<sup>22</sup> As the paper described it, the firefighters were not sympathetic to the police’s decision to turn back and wait for reinforcements. “For the first four trips, the firefighters rushed to the neighborhood without police protection. When they returned, they stood in the parking lot of the fire station which was across the street from the police station.” Firefighters yelled across the street to their police colleagues, “Why don’t you help us do our job, protect us?” Every time firefighters tried to respond to the riots, they steered their trucks around the barrels put in the road by rioters, only to be turned back by the crowd. The *Eagle-Tribune* described, “Each time they had to duck the rocks and beer cans aimed at them by people in the street and others hanging out of tenement windows.”<sup>23</sup> The newspaper interviewed Firefighter Raymond Pelletier who “paced in circles around the Lawrence Fire Station.” He admitted, “I’ve never been scared of anything in my life... A guy’s house can be on fire and I’ll go right in. I’ve never been afraid... Until tonight.”<sup>24</sup> Residents were dismayed by, and furious about, the failure of the firefighters. One resident, whose home was burned to the ground during the riots, demonstrated residents’ efforts to fend for themselves, “We came out here with blankets, towels, water. We put our fires out.” Without the help of the firefighters, however, their efforts were unsuccessful. The woman continued, “When I brought these people to the hospital is when I came back and found my house gone.” Her comments, delivered in tears, reflect the anger that many residents felt about being left alone by police and firefighters.<sup>25</sup>

The police, however, defended the delay in their response to the *Eagle-Tribune*. They claimed they had made several efforts to calm things down before making the decision to wait for reinforcements. Police claimed that they went into the area twice and were stoned once by each of the groups. On the third attempt, Sgt. Ouellette said, both groups attacked police, “Now the war between two factions is no longer two factions,” he said. “They’re united to stone the police – that was more fun.”<sup>26</sup> The decision to wait for reinforcements was based on the rioters superior numbers and obvious anger towards the police. Sgt. Ouellette told the *Eagle-Tribune*, “To have sent men in (sooner) would have done the public no good... They would have been picked off one by one.”<sup>27</sup> Police Capt. Frank Foley called for back-ups just after the first riot calls came in at 9:13 pm, but opted to keep officers at the station until reinforcements arrived. “If I had sent ten men up there, they’d get their a—s kicked in,” he said. “God only knows if they’d be out of the hospital by now. You have to wait ‘til you have the strength.”<sup>28</sup>

When reinforcements finally did arrive, including forty officers from the regional tactical unit and thirty state troopers, they joined ten Lawrence police officers, and it seems they made an intimidating sight. The *Eagle-Tribune* reported, “It was a fearsome paramilitary force, especially in the dark. More than 80 policemen, in black riot gear, marched along darkened Lowell Street, stamping and shouting cadence.”<sup>29</sup> The paper called them “heavily armed”<sup>30</sup> in dark uniforms, with visored crash helmets and bullet-proof vests, carrying “billy” clubs, rifles, shot guns and tear gas. “The men marched silently at first, and then began singing in unison, picking up a cadence.”<sup>31</sup> TV coverage showed the police marching in lines, calling out “Left, left” to keep in step.<sup>32</sup> As they

approached Broadway, they began stamping, and their footsteps echoed “across the dark lots and empty streets.”<sup>33</sup>

By the time the police force had gathered together and marched the five blocks to the riot scene, however, the rioting had already been raging for five hours and had mostly run its course. The firefighters were already beginning to battle the blaze at Pettoruto’s, and the fighting in the street had ended. “There was nothing on Oxford Street between the police and the fire, except overturned barrels, piles of trash and broken glass.”<sup>34</sup> In spite of the five hour wait and the dramatic, theatrical march to the scene, the police had missed much of the action, “The police lined up across the end of Oxford Street and waited there a few minutes before sweeping up the street toward the fire. They found no opposition.”<sup>35</sup>

Although the fighting was over, there were still some people milling about the neighborhood and the police organized to disperse them. Clearing the residents from the area was a bit of a challenge. Although no one was fighting, neither the rioters nor the onlookers were particularly cooperative. The *Eagle-Tribune* continued, “After the police reached Haverhill Street, they turned left toward May Street, pushing bystanders before them and ordering people off porches. Some of the people were reluctant to move, and as they went, they overturned trash barrels at Haffner’s service station and broke the windows there.” This intractable crowd were clearly not intimidated by the reinforced police contingent, “The police stopped at May Street, and told the people, most of them young, to keep moving. When some of the bystanders did not move fast enough, a canister of tear gas was fired and it landed near them.” Even this was not sufficient to get

the milling crowd to cooperate, as the wind blew across the street, carrying the fumes away from the bystanders. The crowd moved away, but slowly, “taunting the police.”<sup>36</sup> Although this taunting perhaps undermined the “fearsome” image the police wanted to present, they eventually manage to clear the area. “With no further trouble on their hands... the tactical police spent the rest of their time watching over the area and protecting the firefighters... It was a desolate, dreary, smoky scene, and before long, the police were relaxing, taking turns sitting in the empty lot which occupies one corner of the intersection. Some had soft drinks, even while they were on the alert, as it became evident the trouble had passed.”<sup>37</sup>

A news article two days later gave a potential explanation for why the situation escalated so dramatically, although again, given the scope of the involvement, it is reductive to allege that any one incident “caused” the riots. While watching the two groups square off in the intersection early in the night, fifteen-year old David Vasquez stepped off the curb on Oxford Street and was hit by a beige truck that promptly sped away. His leg was broken so badly that the bone showed through his skin. A witness, who asked the *Boston Herald* to keep him anonymous for fear of retribution said, “Some dude came hauling down the street and just hit him. The guy definitely tried to hit him,” and police said that “one of the main instigators” of the rioting was wanted in connection with the hit-and-run. The *Boston Herald* reported that, “police and witnesses said yesterday they believe it was the act of random violence which cut down David that turned the night of tension into a full-scale riot.”<sup>38</sup> Yet, clearly witnesses did not believe the violence had been random.

Many neighborhood residents did not join the crowd in the street during the riots, but a number of them still watched, shouted, and even threw things from their porches and balconies. In addition to this “participant/bystander,” there were many other neighborhood residents who were simply terrified by the riots, and the *Eagle-Tribune* gave these “innocent bystanders” a good deal of attention. The paper focused on families trapped in their homes, cowering in fear, desperate for some type of police protection that was not forthcoming. They wrote, “Neighborhood residents, barricaded in their homes during the disturbance, deluged local and state police with hundreds of phone calls during the night and were told to stay away from their windows until help arrived. Some residents were forced to battle small fires at their homes with blankets and garden hoses.

<sup>39</sup> It is possible that the paper chose this angle because of its implicit criticism of the Lawrence police department, and certainly because of its implicit criticism of the rioters who, in the paper’s view, terrorized their poor, innocent neighbors. The *Eagle-Tribune* wrote:

While more than 250 people took part in a riot, their neighbors sat in their houses and desperately called out for help.

They called the Lawrence police.

They called the state police in Andover

They ran into the police station carrying their children.

They fled in cars with smashed windshields

They called the mayor of Lawrence.

They called the Eagle-Tribune.

They tried to call the governor.<sup>40</sup>

The paper quoted police descriptions of residents' terrified phone calls to the local and surrounding police stations, statements like "We're trapped" and "I'm laying on the floor and I'm scared." Some residents called the *Eagle-Tribune* directly. One tearful woman pleaded with the paper, "We're innocent victims being held prisoners in our own house. I'm afraid something terrible is going to happen, please get us help... This has been going on for three hours, but no one is coming to help us." An hour later she called back crying that the police had not yet arrived, "These things [fire bombs] are coming in the windows. Someone is going to be hurt. It is women and innocent children. I have four families in here, we're huddled."<sup>41</sup> For many residents of the neighborhood, the riots were a nightmare.

### **A race riot without race?**

There is little to indicate from the *Eagle-Tribune* reports that this was, indeed, a race riot. The focus was on the disorder and the fighting, not its impetus. By the 1980s, newspapers seemed somewhat unsure of when they should mention race, or when doing so would itself be racist, and so most accounts of the riots refer vaguely to "one group" or "the other [group]," never referring to the "white group" or the "Latino group" even though it was clear from the reporting that the groups were divided along racial lines. Interviewers rarely asked for or mentioned the race of their interviewees.<sup>42</sup> A common approach to the *Eagle-Tribune* reporting on the riots is illustrated by this quote, "Racial slurs were traded between the groups that were on opposite sides of the intersection.

Rocks were thrown and there were skirmishes involving bats and car aerials.”<sup>43</sup> The use of passive voice eliminated the need to describe which group did what. Although the use of racial slurs against Latinos in Lawrence was common, I have not come across any specific examples of Latinos using racial slurs towards whites. The vague, passive-voice description of the riots implies (inaccurately, most likely) that both groups engaged in all behaviors equally, and unfortunately it is nearly impossible to tell the difference between white and Latino riot behaviors from the local coverage.

The only time in which the racial tenor of the riots came near the surface in the *Eagle-Tribune*’s coverage was in a story of a blonde woman, named Linda Noone, who, as she claimed, was almost scalped and killed by a group of young men. The paper did not explicitly say that she was white, nor that her attackers were Latino. They just quoted her saying, in English, “They told me they hate blondes and said they were going to scalp me... They started cutting my hair and then slicing me all over.” The paper implied that her attackers were Latino and that Noone’s hair symbolized her whiteness, but never said it outright. The paper did note, however, that it was a Puerto Rican teenage girl who pulled Noone away from her attackers, and in Noone’s words, “They would have killed me but this girl saved my life.” Although Noone did need some stitches for a cut on her head, and was clearly terrified by the experience, there is no evidence that her life was in actually danger, particularly considering that these men, who she claims had a gun, could not have been too committed to killing her if a “Puerto Rican girl about 13” was able to stop them when she “dragged” Noone away.<sup>44</sup> It is significant to note, however, in this

era of race neutral reporting, that only the rescuer's ethnicity was named, and no other mention of race or ethnicity was made in what was clearly a racialized incident.

Media from outside the city were far less hesitant to discuss the riots' racial nature. As the *Boston Herald* reported, "One merchant, holding a gun as he stood in front of his store, said 'We've got a race riot here.'"<sup>45</sup> In its initial coverage, CBS described the fighting as between "Latins and whites," while ABC used the terms "white" and "Hispanic." By the second night of coverage, CBS had also adopted the terms "white" and "Hispanic." NBC adopted the terms "Hispanic" and "Anglo," even though most coverage emphasized that the white rioters were French speaking or of French-Canadian descent.<sup>46</sup> Even these TV networks, however, were reluctant to ascribe any specific behaviors to one group of rioters and not the other, vaguely referring to the rioters, in general, as throwing rocks, hurling firebombs, and racial slurs, etc. Even after NBC showed a group of rioters shouting "U.S.A., U.S.A.," they did not mention the fact that it was specifically white rioters chanting.<sup>47</sup> As a result, it is difficult to glean from even non-local media reports the ways in which white and Latino rioters most likely behaved differently during the riots.

As the first night of rioting wound to a close, no one had been killed, and no one had been critically injured. Judging from the last names of those arrested (an inaccurate method, of course), five Latinos were arrested for riot-related activity, mostly disorderly conduct. One white man was arrested, for driving under the influence and possession of marijuana. All of those arrested were in their late teens or early twenties, and all pleaded "not guilty." Gary Gill was taken into protective custody.



### **Thursday, August 9, 1984 (Daytime)**

Neither Mayor Buckley nor Governor Dukakis answered their phones the night of the rioting, but the next day, an emergency meeting of the city council convened at 11 a.m. to discuss “the disturbance and riot at Lowell, Haverhill and Oxford Streets neighborhood.” Public Safety Alderman Raymond Johnson was more direct than the *Eagle-Tribune* when he clearly explained the racial divide of the riot, explaining to the council and those present that “rioting broke out between hispanics [sic] and whites.” In spite of this candidness, Johnson did not attribute the actions of the “mob” to any longstanding grievances. The Council minutes reflected that, “he added that it is believed that the incident started with a broken windshield between two parties and due to the heat, he thought that tempers flared which caused some of the rioting.”<sup>48</sup> He added that the riot was “an isolated incident” and that there were no issues or demands.<sup>49</sup> After the meeting, he elaborated for the press, “It was an isolated incident over nothing important... It was not racial. It was simply a warm night, tempers were high . . . Things just got away with themselves.”<sup>50</sup> The Council attempted to calm residents by explaining that the state would help them. The records noted, “Mayor Buckley said he has talked to residents throughout the City and they are fearful of this situation, and the Mayor said they don’t need to be in fear because he plans to contact the State to help the City.”<sup>51</sup> The police also agreed that the riot was “not racial. It just happens to be two factions that would make it appear that it was racial.” Since one of the party’s homes had been burned, Sgt. Ouellette expected that there would be no more trouble, “It’s probably over because

the faction involved in the problem won't be living there and I don't think they'll retaliate... I think the assailants have satisfied their search for revenge." He left open, however, the possibility that the riot may have grown beyond its origins, adding, "That's not to say they haven't sparked someone else. A riot often sparks off a few other groups that want to keep this thing alive."<sup>52</sup>

In addition to the City Council's low-key response to the rioting, they defended the response of the police. The aldermen asked Police Chief Tylus if there was anything the police could have done to shorten their response time, and the chief said no. They asked if the outside reinforcements were necessary, and he said yes. These answers went unchallenged by the Council. But when the President of the Police Union was allowed to speak later on in the meeting, he was less sanguine. He claimed a pipebomb loaded with powder had been found in the riot neighborhood two weeks ago." He explained to the press that without the necessary "manpower," "the city could be burned down" before help arrived. He argued that city officials had "taken away 32 to 40 of our men [from a 132-person force in 1980]... We don't even have enough patrolmen to protect the cops on the street, let alone the public."<sup>53</sup> The council records noted his anger that, "there is a lack of manpower in the City and if we had a full complement of manpower on Wednesday, we could have stopped the riot before it happened." He said that it was not an isolated incident and blamed Mayor Buckley for the shortage in manpower, claiming that the City had surplus money from last year that could have been used to hire instead of lay-offs."<sup>54</sup> Indeed, the budget surplus from the year before had been enabled by the lay-offs, and did not reflect a positive economic situation in the city. The Mayor evaded this accusation

that he had dangerously underfunded the police department, and responded that the state government would come to their rescue. The Council ended the meeting by voting unanimously to contact the governor's office, to "furnish manpower to avoid this type of situation."<sup>55</sup>

In contrast to the city leaders' dismissal of the riot as an "isolated incident," a result of hot tempers and hot weather, state leaders appeared more alarmed. Fifth District Congressman James Shannon, who represented Greater Lawrence in the U.S. House of Representatives, came to the Lower Tower Hill neighborhood the next morning. Although his arrival was greeted with "boos," people were willing to talk with him about the riot and share their thoughts on why it had occurred. Shannon also noted that he was upset over the national attention the riot was drawing to Lawrence, "I don't like to look at the national news and see Lawrence has made the news because of a riot. I don't want to see it happen again."<sup>56</sup> The time that Shannon devoted to talking with neighborhood residents affected his view of what the appropriate response should be. During the emergency council meeting that morning, he publicly disagreed with Lawrence Public Safety Alderman Raymond Johnson when Johnson claimed the riot was an isolated incident. He replied that he had spent an hour and a half talking to residents and that the tension was serious and another riot could break out.<sup>57</sup> He told the *Eagle-Tribune*, "If we let this thing fester, it could break out again at any time,"<sup>58</sup> and "the only thing absolutely clear to me is you can't say, 'Boy, I hope that never happens again,' and leave it at that. Whatever ingredients made it happen are still there."<sup>59</sup> The Community Relations Specialist from the U.S. Department of Justice was also present at the emergency council

meeting, and challenged the idea of this being an “isolated incident.” He suggested that the council needed to show by action its willingness to address this “long-standing grievance,” and work on the underlying problems.<sup>60</sup>

State Representative Kevin Blanchette also toured the area and expressed extreme concern. Contrary to the city’s idea of residents simply blowing off steam, Blanchette noted that his tour had revealed serious issues to him, “The housing down here is terrible... This could have been duplicated anywhere in our neighborhoods ex[c]ept for two or three. Let’s look at why it happened and let’s be honest about why it happened.” Blanchette did not dismiss the idea that the heat was partly responsible for the riots, however, as he told the *Eagle-Tribune* that he was literally “praying for rain... I think that can only cool off the situation.”<sup>61</sup> Like Shannon, Blanchette also noted the national attention the riot was drawing to Lawrence, and expressed concern that it might amplify the neighborhood’s problems, “I’m afraid with the national attention and highly volatile situation we need to find a safety valve initially to ease the pressure,” he said. “We need to bring people together and talk. There has not been nearly enough communication.” He elaborated on this idea of communication as key to easing the tension, “I’m looking for the mayor to take charge and organize talks,” he said. “I call upon leaders of the Hispanic community to come forewarned and participate in talks to avoid further violence.” Shannon also cited increased communication as key, “I think the most important thing is to get the people talking together to calm things down... We need to get everybody together right away – the mayor, other city leaders, neighborhood people.”<sup>62</sup> In a meeting after the Council adjourned, Shannon and Department of Justice Community Relations

Specialist Edward D. McClure clarified, “We want guys who can stand out on the street and talk to people – not Chamber of Commerce people.” Although McClure emphasized the need to address underlying problems, he also supported the value of communication, saying “Give it a negotiating chance first.”<sup>63</sup>

Presumably, McClure meant that leaders should “give it a negotiating chance” before bringing in the strong arm of the police, and Shannon made this explicit, “I don’t think the answer is going to be to just send in police.”<sup>64</sup> Although state leaders agreed on the role of communication, Blanchette and several others simultaneously emphasized the need for an increased police presence. State Senator Patricia McGovern explained, “We need a real police presence to see that there is a police group present to stave off any further trouble... I just walked through the street and talked to some of the people who live there and they are frightened.”<sup>65</sup> What state and city leaders agreed on was the role of the state in helping Lawrence address this crisis. Although McGovern emphasized that it was city leaders “calling the shots,” she also echoed the mayor’s plan to turn to the state, noting her immediate plans to speak with the Governor and see what type of resources the state could commit.<sup>66</sup>

The call for communication resulted in a dramatic scurry to determine who the Latino communities’ “leaders” were. As Latinos had been so pervasively locked out of City Hall, there was not an obvious group representative for the city or the media to turn to. The *Eagle-Tribune* decided to interview Eduardo Crespo, a former president of the Latin Lions Club, but Crespo refused to represent the rioting Latinos, saying he would not interfere in a neighborhood problem, “I am not about to go to Oxford Street and say

‘Here I come. I am the Saviour,’ ...Neighborhoods have different problems. I think the leaders of the neighborhood, whoever that might be, are the ones that can immediately do something about the problem. They do not need a group of community leaders marching down there.” He did, however, attribute the riot to the inactivity of city leaders regarding Latino residents, and expressed his frustration that it would take a riot to make the government respond, rather than their acting pro-actively to address the Latino communities’ concerns. He said, “Now we will react to a disturbance... Police will now say to community leaders, ‘We need you.’ That is fine... at one point, the Lawrence Police Department was suppose[d] to have officers going to Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic. That was more than a year ago? What happened to that?” His words implicitly challenged the idea that the riots were an “isolated incident,” as he asked, “Why did people react that way? ...What has been happening? Violence does not erupt in half a minute.”<sup>67</sup>

Meanwhile, in the Lower Tower Hill neighborhood itself, glass lay scattered through the intersection. The *Eagle-Tribune* described the scene as “almost carnival-like as neighbors leaned off their porches and through windows, anxious to talk to anyone.” The paper continued, “Two children sat on the curb as if waiting for a parade. Women wheeled toddlers in strollers over broken glass and garbage. A pregnant girl in a cotton smock giggled with friends outside a house that had been pelted with rocks the night before.”<sup>68</sup> The overwhelming presence of children helped add to the relaxed, festive atmosphere. In most of the TV coverage, kids group together behind the reporters, trying to ensure they are in the camera’s shot.<sup>69</sup> The *Eagle-Tribune* noted, “As late as 8:30, a

young couple walked through the crowd carrying their blonde baby girl dressed in pink pajamas.”<sup>70</sup>

Many of the photos show, perhaps inadvertently, the ways in which the presence of Latinos had shaped the landscape of the city. A photo of the liquor store that burned showed that it was, already in 1984, advertising in Spanish, as the “Cerve-” of a *cerveza* sign was still visible in the window.<sup>71</sup> The presence of early 1980s urban culture was visible in the photos as well, as one of the young Latino men arrested was photographed wearing a Michael Jackson’s “Thriller” T-shirt<sup>72</sup> and one reporter noted, “Children did break dancing on cardboard in the middle of the intersection.”<sup>73</sup>

The media were an overwhelming presence. The *Eagle-Tribune* listed the following, “The riots led both Boston daily newspapers, Boston radio and TV news reports and United Press International’s national wire report. The second night of rioting made page three of *USA Today*. Both days led NBC’s Today Show. Covering from the scene were Boston television stations 4,5,6 and 56 and channels 9 and 50 from New Hampshire. Shortwave radio buffs reported hearing the news over a Russian station. Calls were received from a national Hispanic network in California and a Montreal newspaper.<sup>74</sup> The television stations, in particular, drew attention with their massive equipment, including a 90-foot crane, two 50-foot antennae, and spotlights when darkness fell.<sup>75</sup> This media presence was a source of frustration and embarrassment to city officials, who were desperate to minimize the riots.

At first, residents were reluctant to converse with the press, but by the end of the day, they lost their reticence. The *Eagle-Tribune* described, “Men, women and children

were milling about anxious to tell their story to dozens of TV and newspaper reporters.”<sup>76</sup> Young Lawrencians seemed particularly excited about all of the T.V. cameras, “As the early evening news was being filmed, boys leaning on their bicycle handlebars stayed within camera range and teenagers jumped in the air during live interviews.”<sup>77</sup> Two young Latinos engaged in a brilliant parody of the sudden media fascination with their neighborhood, “The camera crews proved an inspiration to Jose Colon, who lives on Essex Street, and Eddie Santiago, of 52 Melvin St. They delivered a mock impersonation of a news team. Colon, 9, and Santiago, 12, walked around the area holding a camera made from a disposable diaper box with a flash light in it and the other with a rubber microphone.”<sup>78</sup> Another boy rode his bicycle in circles around the people and reporters filming on the closed street, exclaiming to his friends, “It’s just like a movie.”<sup>79</sup>

When Congressman Jim Shannon returned to the neighborhood in the afternoon, residents approached him to tell their stories. However, when he visited Merrimack Courts, the predominantly Latino housing project a couple of blocks away, it was a different story. The *Eagle-Tribune* described, “more than 100 project residents were reported to have taken part in Wednesday night’s riot. When Shannon asked them what happened, no one knew anything about it.”<sup>80</sup> It is more likely the case that none of the Latino residents of the project were interested in discussing any riot-related activities with this white politician and his media entourage. Certainly they must have been aware of what had occurred just a couple of blocks away; such presumably feigned ignorance presents an interesting picture of the understandable mistrust from some of Lawrence’s Latino residents toward the government and media.



Many white residents were more forthcoming. Some registered overwhelming disappointment with what the riots said about Lawrence, including one man who said “If my father could see this, he would turn over in his grave.”<sup>81</sup> Others offered their theories on why the riot had occurred. One man pointed to Merrimack Courts and said, “Down there, man, it’s totally crazy... They should have done something about the drugs 10 years ago. Now it’s out of hand. They have no control over it.” One even joked that Shannon’s sudden interest in the neighborhood was strange, “This goes on all the time. I don’t know what you’re surprised about.”<sup>82</sup> By the time Shannon left the neighborhood, a second night of rioting had begun. Neighborhood residents implied that this was only the beginning. The *Eagle-Tribune* reported that, as Shannon left, he called out good night to those sitting on their porches.

“Good night!”[Shannon said]

A pleasant-sounding woman’s voice called back:

“Good night,” she said.

And then, a moment later, she added:

“See you tomorrow night.”

The Congressman sighed heavily.<sup>83</sup>

#### **Thursday, August 9<sup>th</sup>, 1984 (Nightfall)**

Ten local church leaders, both white and Latino, including Rev. Daniel Rodriguez from the Hispanic Baptist Church, organized a bilingual religious ceremony for early Thursday evening, in order to calm the residents through bible readings and songs. The

ecumenical service took place outdoors in front of an abandoned firehouse on Oxford Street.<sup>84</sup> As Canon Rudolph Devik of Grace Episcopal Church explained, “We’re telling them that Lawrence is made up of people who can live together with unity, with love. It’s very important that we do that.”<sup>85</sup> The ceremony took place right near the burned-out building from the night before. As people gathered, Rodriguez told the *Eagle-Tribune*, “If it rains, someone has answered our prayers,” but the weather stayed dry.<sup>86</sup> The church leaders and residents prayed for peace, but the papers reported that literally minutes after the religious ceremony ended, the crowd broke up into two groups, and the conflict began again. The *Boston Herald* reported, “The service was held to calm racial tensions. But when it ended, hundreds of Hispanic men formed in one section of Oxford Street and hundreds of whites banded together at the other. The Hispanics began beating on garbage cans and both they and the whites shouted racial slurs at one another. A line of Lawrence policemen moved in across Oxford Street between the two groups and minutes later, Molotov cocktails were hurled through the air at both the police and the white group.”<sup>87</sup> Not everyone was dismayed to see the tension escalate, as the *Eagle-Tribune* noted, “‘It’s starting,’ a woman said, grinning,” and “as outbursts became more frequent, fewer women and children were on the street. The music from the bilingual service at Engine 4 faded as the crowd swelled. The first man was led out of the crowd in handcuffs. There were cheers. There was chanting, raised arms and clenched fists. A group of white men shouted, ‘U.S.A., U.S.A., U.S.A.’ and ‘Who’s American? We are.’”<sup>88</sup>

The *New York Times* told a similar story, although they did not portray the Latino rioters as such eager instigators, “About 180 police officers stood between one group of

300 predominantly Hispanic men who were beating on metal garbage cans and another, much smaller, predominantly white group that included men shouting, ‘U.S.A. U.S.A. Go home. We were here first.’”<sup>89</sup> TV news coverage showed two groups massed at opposite ends of a street, with what looked like less than a hundred feet of empty space between them. In the dark of the summer night, the cameras followed the arch of a firebomb that was thrown from one side at the other, crashing just shy of its presumed target and exploding in flame on the street.<sup>90</sup> One resident recalled the fires that she could see from her apartment nearby, as cars and buildings burned.<sup>91</sup>

Latino Patrolman Walter Soriano (one of two on the force) described the night’s violence, “In the 14 years I’ve been a cop, I’ve never seen anything this bad.” Four people, including a Latino man who had allegedly hurled a firebomb, had already been arrested when one of the Latino rioters asked Lawrence Police Sgt. Leo Ouellette, commander of the tactical unit for the area, for negotiations. Ouellette described, “They [Latino rioters] are afraid, they told us... They said they just wanted to go back to their homes. They said they started it because they were harassed.”<sup>92</sup> The *Boston Herald* also expressed that the Latino rioters were motivated by fear, elaborating on this request for negotiations. Shortly after midnight, the *Boston Herald* explained, an army of police had been assembled on Oxford Street ready to drive the Hispanics back to the Essex project. But suddenly four Hispanic men came forward to bargain with the police. “We’ve got everything settled down and then one guy started up again,” one of the men told three police officers, explaining that the Latino rioters “don’t like this crowd of police. They’re scared.”<sup>93</sup> This idea that Latinos were reluctant rioters was echoed at one point in the

*Eagle-Tribune* coverage as well, when Shannon, on the scene as the riot started, told one group of Latinos out at the riot site, “Go home and go to bed.” A young Latina answered him, “We can’t. If we go to sleep, they’ll burn our house down.”<sup>94</sup>

Regardless of whether the coverage painted the Latino rioters as eager instigators or fearful defenders, none of the papers denied that Latinos were active participants in the riots. At this point, most of the papers still focused their attention on the fact that there were *two* groups rioting.<sup>95</sup> This is important to keep in mind, as coverage *after* the riot often made it seem that it was purely a Latino riot. This perhaps stemmed from the fact that Latinos were best able to turn the riot into a political protest in the media, citing the legitimacy of the violence given the discrimination and living conditions, while white rioters were not, in the 1980s, able to make a political program out of their bigotry. That does not make their rioting any less of a protest, however, or any less political.

Indeed, most papers noted that, similar to the night before, not only were two groups rioting, but much of the anger and violence was actually directed by both groups *at the police*. The *Boston Herald* was perhaps the most ostentatious in its emphasis that this was a battle between police and rioters, rather than between the white and Latino rioters, with its cover page article, “New Riot Hits Lawrence: SWAT team in action against wild mob” complete with a graphic picture of a cop holding a bloody, racially indeterminate man in a headlock with another cop holding his arm, and the caption “Another night of rioting hit Lawrence yesterday as an army of police tried to quell the raging violence.”<sup>96</sup> The *Boston Globe* paraphrased Alderman Anthony Silva’s claim that the night’s rioting *originated* as violence against the police, “The trouble last night

started... when a group of up to 100 people, many of them Hispanic, began banging on 50-gallon barrels and hurling Molotov cocktails at approaching police officers as they marched from Railroad street toward Oxford street. Almost simultaneously... a predominantly white group on the other side of the police began hurling bottles and rocks at the police. Some of them chanted ‘USA, USA.’”<sup>97</sup> This is, of course, a strange narrative, considering that, if this is how the violence *began* that night, why were police officers already marching to Oxford Street. Were they putting on a big show of force as a preventative measure? That certainly would not have been in line with the “low-key” approach the Council had planned.

This emphasis on the confrontation with the police strongly supports the argument that both groups were angry, not just with each other, but with the city government for their perceived role in creating this tension. Latinos were understandably angry at the city because of their marginalization in city decision making and the harassment they received from the police. It is less clear why white rioters directed their anger at the police. It seems that white rioters were angry at the city because they blamed local government for the changes in their neighborhood and felt that police were intruding when residents tried to take matters into their own hands. The police described the neighborhood in which the riot occurred as having been, essentially, in a state of insurgency all summer. Police Capt. Samuel Aliano said tension in the area had been building for months, “We felt the riot was going to come,” he said, “When it was going to ignite, we didn't know.”<sup>98</sup> The President of the Police Union said that a street department worker who went to the neighborhood to turn off a fire hydrant the week before, had had gasoline thrown in his

face. Two weeks before the riot, they had found a pipe bomb loaded with gunpowder. A few weeks before, when the police went to the neighborhood to break up a fight, they found several Molotov cocktails and a home-made bomb fashioned out of a car battery. Another police officer said, “There hasn’t been a secure night on Oxford Street. This has been festering for two months. We found an arsenal of rocks and bottles. There have been five or six fires there recently and there was a major fire this past weekend. They’re burning each other out. Shooting and stabbing each other.”<sup>99</sup>

Nor were firefighters exempt from the general anger of both groups of rioters. The *Eagle-Tribune* reported, “When a fire truck entered the neighborhood, a man threw a metal barrel in front of the vehicle, and several people rushed the truck and began throwing rocks. Two firefighters standing in the back of the truck barely escaped injury.” One firefighter said, “It’s a worse situation up there tonight. It’s meaner.” Thrown rocks had broken a window in the drivers’ side door of the fire truck, and dented the door. Firefighters’ fears, however, were even worse than the grim reality. One firefighter said, “You were hoping they [the rocks] weren’t bullets... I thought they were going to drag us out.” Indeed, no one was dragged out, and no shots were fired at either the police or the firefighters. Regardless, the Deputy Fire Chief was clear, “I’d feel safer if the National Guard were in here.”<sup>100</sup>

Many police blamed city government for the riot, from the general upheaval in the neighborhood throughout the summer, to the inability of the police to keep a crowd from gathering and the direct attacks on officers and firefighters during the riot. Particularly the head of the police union remained vocal in his emphasis that budget cuts interfered

with the police's ability to do their jobs. Public Safety Alderman Johnson insisted there were sufficient numbers of police officers to protect the city, although he also stated that he would have hired more if the budget had allowed for it.<sup>101</sup> The firefighters also complained about their lack of resources, and "manpower." One firefighter told the *Eagle-Tribune*, "We only had 10 people for four pieces of apparatus... Before we used to have 20 [firefighters]." <sup>102</sup> Another made clear that their inability to respond effectively to the riot impacted not only firefighters view of themselves, but the entire city, "We want to be proud of the city, do a good job, but how can we if we're scared?" <sup>103</sup> In the minds of many of the police and firefighters, the city's budget woes were directly responsible for the failure to provide adequate public safety services.

The riot went on until the early morning. By ten-thirty at night, the head of the Northeast Middlesex County Tactical Police Force "arrived to find Lawrence police pinned down – lying on the ground to avoid gunshots, rocks, bottles and Molotov cocktails." <sup>104</sup> An early contingent of forty Lawrence police officers and the regional SWAT team was no match for the hundreds of rioters who claimed the streets. The *Boston Herald* reported that the officers, "outnumbered by the jeering crowds, drove back rioters by firing tear gas. Other officers charged forward, clubbed the rioters and dragged them to awaiting cruisers." <sup>105</sup> The *Eagle-Tribune* described, "The tactical force was ordered to stay cool but return fire if fired upon. Police dodged Molotov cocktails and fired tear gas canisters." <sup>106</sup> One officer told a reporter, "One of the Hispanic leaders said they won't hurt you – but they firebombed us and him." <sup>107</sup> Some of the onlookers expressed a cynical gratitude that the police were at least present, as opposed to the first

night of the riot, as one man told the *Eagle-Tribune*, “You should have been here last night. It was the same thing, only there were no cops out there.” His wife peeked through the sheer curtain in the front window, adding “We’re stuck inside... Why can’t people get along? It’s sick.”<sup>108</sup>

The *New York Times* claimed that shortly before midnight, the police drew back to clear a path to allow Latino rioters to return to their homes. As noted above, some Latino rioters had approached the police, saying they were scared and just wanted a chance to go home. According to the *Boston Herald*, the officers responded by saying, “You have 10 more minutes. We’re not stopping once we start. We’re tired of playing games.” By 12:30, between 200 and 300 officers, including local police from the surrounding towns and state police from six barracks, marched in cadence down the streets, pushing the Latino rioters in front of them, herding them to the Merrimack Courts projects, where virtually all the newspaper accounts assumed all the Latino rioters lived. The *Boston Herald* reported, “At 12:20 a.m., the police drove the Hispanics into the project and inside the dilapidated buildings.”<sup>109</sup> The *Eagle-Tribune* said, “Nearly 200 police joined forces to push Merrimack Courts project residents into their homes before severe violence could break out again.”<sup>110</sup> They elaborated in another article, “The rioting stopped shortly after midnight when police officers split into three lines and converged on Lowell and Oxford streets. As police marched toward them, rioters scattered and ran towards their Merrimack Court homes. ‘Let’s go, move it! You’ve got homes, let’s get back to them,’ police yelled. They shone flashlights at people in houses. ‘Get away from that window, stay in your home,’ police shouted.”<sup>111</sup> The riot neighborhood itself, a



couple of blocks from the projects, also had some Latino residents living in its triple-decker homes, and it is unlikely that all the Latinos rioting lived in the projects. One can only imagine the scurry of non-residents to find someone who would let them into their home, or the panic of residents who were not involved in the rioting, as the police came charging through the projects, clearing the sidewalks and streets. The *Boston Herald* interviewed two project residents about the police action, “Standing in front of one of the project buildings yesterday, tenant Elsie Rodriguez, 31, claimed that a police officer whacked her with a club as she ran into her house when police marched into the project. ‘I feel like I was abused even though I wasn’t involved,’ she said.” Another project tenant, Joseph Miner, 41, said police “marched in here like the Gestapo throwing tear gas for nothing. This is crazy.”<sup>112</sup> One resident later recalled feeling like the police assumed she was involved in the riot simply because she was Latina, even though she had only been watching.<sup>113</sup>

The *Boston Herald* summed up the end of the riot, “By early this morning, about 200 state police, a SWAT team and officers from surrounding communities, carrying rifles and shotguns and using dogs, drove the Hispanic group from the riot scene. The officers then swarmed into the grounds of the run-down Essex housing project and chased the rioters into the buildings. Their presence forced an uneasy truce. Hundreds of whites who had challenged the Hispanics on Oxford Street had drifted away or were forced by police from the scene.”<sup>114</sup> Unlike the Latino rioters, white rioters were not “chased” into their homes.<sup>115</sup> The police seemed to consider Latino rioters more of a threat, pushing them from the scene first and violently pursuing them until they were all

inside their (or someone's) home, while many of the hundreds of white rioters were allowed to "drift" from the scene.

In spite of the fact that white participation in the riot was eclipsed in the days that followed, the equal participation of white rioters is echoed in the list of those arrested. In spite of the fact that the Lawrence police department had long faced accusations of bias against Latinos, many more white than Latino rioters were arrested. Overall, more than a dozen people had been arrested and several more taken into protective custody. The way in which the names and addresses of those arrested or taken into custody were given in the *Eagle-Tribune* suggests that "protective custody" may have been a way to detain and remove from the riot those for whom charges might not stick. Only a handful of those brought in were Latino, one was taken into protective custody, and the others were arrested for crimes such as inciting a riot, breaking and entering, or looting. The rest, the overwhelming majority of those brought in seem (again, using the inaccurate tool of names) to have been white. A handful of white arrestees were the only ones charged with assault and battery of a police officer, although most of those arrested were charged with similar crimes such as disorderly conduct or inciting a riot, or occasionally for possessing or throwing a Molotov cocktail. All of those arrested were between sixteen and thirty-six years old, with most in their late teens or early twenties, and all were men.<sup>116</sup>

Most of those arrested were from the neighborhood, although some of the white rioters detained were from the surrounding suburbs of Methuen or Pelham, New Hampshire. The interest of white suburban residents in the riots was echoed by the *Eagle-Tribune*, "Curiosity was too much for several residents of nearby communities who came

to the scene last night to see the situation for themselves.” One Haverhill resident explained, “Right now everybody in town is talking about it.” He attended the riot and watched as the police force Latinos into the projects. He explained his interest simply: “It’s a hometown kind of story.”<sup>117</sup> A police officer even went so far as to lay much of the blame for the riot’s escalation on outsiders, “The main problem now is a lot of curiosity seekers who are trying to incite.”<sup>118</sup> After the first night of the riots, an *Eagle-Tribune* article also reprimanded out-of-towners, “Curiosity seekers must stay out. People have shown up from other parts of the city and surrounding communities to gawk and, at times, to add their two cents of prejudice or opinion to what is going on. We understand their curiosity. But they only get in the way and add more problems to a situation that is already volatile. We urge them: STAY HOME.”<sup>119</sup> Although suburban residents showed up to “gawk,” city leaders truly feared a different kind of “outsider.” Latino transurban connections with New York City remained strong, and rumors circulated that Latino rioters had sent for reinforcements from New York. This threat ultimately never materialized, however, as the rioting did not continue the next night.

The City Council had diverse opinions on how to address this second night of rioting. Mayor Buckley was the most adamant in his attempts to minimize the riots. The day after the first disturbance, he had met with Public Safety Alderman Raymond Johnson and they decided to take a “low-key approach” to the possibility of another night’s riot. Johnson put all Lawrence police on notice that they might be called in, and he met with “Hispanic leaders and advisors who helped him plan a strategy to quell the rioting,” as well as a former Methuen town manager who the *Eagle-Tribune* said had

“experience dealing with riots in Cambridge” without elaborating.<sup>120</sup> When the riot began on the second night, however, Johnson dropped his low-key approach, calling in all Lawrence officers, as well as the tactical unit. The Mayor, however, was less committed. While the second night of rioting brewed, Buckley attended a School Committee meeting until nearly ten p.m., and the *Eagle-Tribune* claimed that he then drove through the riot area and decided not to take charge of any public safety measures.<sup>121</sup>

Buckley intentionally delayed declaring a state of emergency, which would make the city eligible for state and federal relief. During the second night of the riot,<sup>122</sup> Alderman Silva and Engineering Alderman Richard D’Agostino were in the neighborhood when the riot started. The *Eagle-Tribune* described, “When bottles and rocks began to fly, the two ducked into a house and Silva phoned Johnson, ‘We’ve got to call an emergency [council] meeting and get them off the street,’ he said. ‘Ray, you’ve got hundreds down here. If you don’t get someone down here you’re going to get a couple more fires.’”<sup>123</sup> Silva called a special meeting of the city council to declare a state of emergency and impose a curfew. Silva, D’Agostino, and the Health and Charities Alderman Kevin Sullivan (who would become Mayor in 1985) were at City Hall by 10:30 p.m. for an emergency council meeting, waiting for Johnson, who was at the riot scene. The *Eagle-Tribune* reported that around midnight, “Buckley came out of his office and said someone had finally contacted Johnson. ‘He’s at the scene. He said they have it contained and he won’t be available for a while,’ the mayor said.” As the paper described it, Johnson was “wandering around, doing television and radio interviews and chatting with reporters.”<sup>124</sup> The council could not declare an emergency without all five members,

but Johnson said he could handle the riot without emergency powers. Silva, however, was anxious to declare a state of emergency, as they would do for a snow storm or flood. The mayor encouraged the remaining aldermen to go home, and expressed concern that their eagerness to declare a state of emergency was drawing negative attention to Lawrence. He told Silva, “I don’t see anything we can accomplish with a special meeting... We’re just feeding fires all over the country. Right now you don’t need a curfew. There’s nothing we [can] do until tomorrow.”<sup>125</sup> Mayor Buckley’s boosterism, his desire to avoid drawing negative attention to Lawrence, won out, and the meeting was delayed until the next morning.

Although none of the aldermen considered the riots “racial,” none were as anxious to downplay them as Buckley. In their efforts to bring together an emergency meeting during the second night of rioting, Silva and D’Agostino both had made clear their desire for a more proactive approach to dealing with the riots. D’Agostino said, “If the group was never allowed to congregate, the tension never would have gathered.”<sup>126</sup> Silva agreed, “In my opinion, the crowd should not have been allowed to gather. There’s no doubt the crowd caused the problem. There should have been a curfew... There weren’t enough cops.”<sup>127</sup> He concluded, “We never should have let things go tonight.”<sup>128</sup>

Even without emergency powers, police did eventually manage to put an end to the riot. After the rioters had been cleared, police continued to patrol the area and workers cleared up debris.<sup>129</sup> The media was reluctant to leave, eager to talk with residents and local leaders to get some sense of why the riot occurred and what it meant for the city of Lawrence. The *Boston Herald* described the scene after the second, and

last, night of rioting, “After police had cleared Oxford Street, the scene looked like something out of Beirut. Bottles and rocks littered the pavement and the windows and fenders of a car parked there were battered and smashed.”<sup>130</sup> One officer told the *Boston Herald*, “This will be going on all weekend... This isn’t over by a long shot.”<sup>131</sup> And, indeed, it certainly seemed like the anger fueling the riot had not been extinguished. This was, however, the last night of open, mass violence. Whether the residents had satisfactorily voiced their anger or whether the curfew instituted by the city council the next day was effective, there was no more open fighting in the streets. The riots themselves were over, but in many ways, the battle had just begun, as people worked to re-build their homes, their neighborhood, and the city.

#### **Friday, August 10<sup>th</sup>, 1984 - The Curfew**

*“Toque de queda: curfew signs  
outlaw the conspiracy of foreign voices  
at night.  
Barricades surround the buildings  
widow-black from burning, collapsed in shock.  
After the explosion of shotgun pellets  
and shattered windshields,  
sullen quiet stands watching on Tower Hill”*

- Martín Espada, from “Toque de Queda: Curfew in Lawrence”<sup>132</sup>

The morning after the second night of rioting, the mayor called a special emergency meeting of the City Council, much of which was spent behind closed doors in executive session. When the Council emerged, Mayor Buckley addressed those in attendance, explaining, “The past 48 hours has seen a situation develop which has been fueled by rumor and controversy. The events are both tragic and senseless and have led to

a situation where too many people are reacting without reason or logic.”<sup>133</sup> After meeting with state and law enforcement officials, as well as residents of the riot neighborhood, the council had decided to declare a state of emergency in order to render the city eligible for more state and federal assistance.<sup>134</sup> Under this state of emergency, the Mayor declared a curfew in the riot neighborhood from 8 p.m. until 6 a.m. for the weekend. His declaration read, “I, John J. Buckley, Mayor of the City of Lawrence, on this 10<sup>th</sup> Day of August 1984 state that as a result of the civil disorder which occurred in the Oxford Street area of the City of Lawrence both last night and the night before, I am satisfied that a riot or other civil disorder may occur and that a curfew is necessary for the public safety of the City of Lawrence.”<sup>135</sup> The curfew prohibited people from being out on the streets, sidewalks, or vacant lots of the area between Broadway, Haverhill, Margin, and Essex streets. In addition, “all places of amusement and entertainment within the area affected by the curfew” were to be closed, which in practice referred to bars and liquor stores, and the city banned the sale of gasoline in containers in order to stem the production of Molotov cocktails.<sup>136</sup>

The Mayor was clear that “the only persons or motor vehicles that will be allowed to use the public ways in the area affected by the curfew will be public safety vehicles, public safety personnel and travel for emergency purposes only,”<sup>137</sup> and the city attorney explained that anyone found violating the curfew would be subject to a fine of up to \$300, and arrest and detention for up to 24 hours.<sup>138</sup> Afterwards, Public Safety Alderman Johnson downplayed the curfew to the press. The *Eagle-Tribune* reported that Johnson emphasized, “We’re not going to stop people from living – if they have to go grocery

shopping or go out or something. We just don't want people roaming the streets.”<sup>139</sup> The City Attorney, however, was much more adamant, telling the paper that traffic would be allowed only on Broadway and that, “All people - I repeat all people - who are out on the public ways will be subject to arrest. Going out to the store to buy cigarettes is not an emergency purpose.”<sup>140</sup> He also warned of a much stricter punishment than he had announced during the council meeting, claiming that curfew violators were not only subject to arrest and detention for up to 24 hours with no warrant, but that the fine could be as high as \$500, and that those arrested could face up to six months incarceration.<sup>141</sup>

Although the Lawrence Police Department had three-quarters of its 100-member force on duty, rather than a normal night's company of twelve officers, the council decided *not* to bring in extra police from out of town to help enforce the curfew. They did, however, keep them at the ready, beyond Lawrence's borders, announcing “While we believe the situation is under control, we have taken the necessary steps to ensure that additional police are in a stand-by position in the event they are needed.”<sup>142</sup> Indeed, the *Boston Globe* reported that “a force of law enforcement officials from 12 nearby cities and towns was standing by to enter the area if needed” and “between 30 and 50 troopers were ordered to report to nearby Andover State Police barracks to await a possible call for help.”<sup>143</sup> The assertion that the situation was under control, and the refusal to invite the supporting groups of police into Lawrence to help enforce the curfew, was a considered public relations strategy. Johnson told the *Eagle-Tribune*, “We want people to realize the Lawrence Police can take care of this because when the tactical police and everybody else are gone we're still left here.”<sup>144</sup> Although Alderman Sullivan pointed



out that the state of emergency would allow the Mayor to call in the National Guard, Johnson was clear that there were no plans to do so.<sup>145</sup>

In addition to the curfew and “show of force” that Johnson planned, the council asked Massachusetts Electric to put up search lights in the Oxford Street neighborhood through the weekend.<sup>146</sup> All media were banned from the curfew zone, and the *Boston Herald* reported that, “police threatened to arrest reporters and photographers who refused to stay corralled behind police lines.”<sup>147</sup> In addition, the council explicitly asked “for the cooperation of the media in verifying any reported incident and to practice restraint in the coverage of this story.”<sup>148</sup> The City Council also established a rumor control hotline, in order to dispel the rumors they believed were also at the root of the disturbance.<sup>149</sup> Most preparations for the riot proceeded smoothly. The *Eagle-Tribune* reported, “There was only a minor snafu in setting up the curfew. Signs warning people of the curfew were ordered printed in English, Spanish and French. The signs in English were ready in plenty of time for posting, but the signs in the other languages were late coming from the printer. When the delivery time kept slipping back, police decided not to post them at all to avoid standing in the dark in the trouble area.”<sup>150</sup> This justification for why no signs were posted explaining the curfew seems somewhat odd, however. The Council had requested that Massachusetts Electric flood the area with light and the *Eagle-Tribune* reported that the lights were, indeed, installed on Oxford Street. Even without the flood lights, however, it seems unlikely that the officers would have been afraid to enter the very area they were supposed to be patrolling. By the next day, at least some of the signs had been posted, as a photo from the *Boston Herald* shows a police

officer next to signs explaining the curfew in English and in French.<sup>151</sup> Whether signs in Spanish were ever posted is unknown. Whatever the reason for the missing signs, the majority of calls to the rumor control hotline were to ask for details on the curfew.<sup>152</sup>

Preparations for the curfew continued. The police blocked off the entrances to the curfew area with sawhorses, and “high-intensity street lights” lit up Oxford Street.<sup>153</sup> The Cozy Café, a popular hangout for white neighborhood residents had installed new glass in its windows, and alarms.<sup>154</sup> The *Boston Globe* reported, “Shortly after 8 last night, about a dozen helmeted police, wearing flak jackets and carrying clubs, moved through the neighborhood, ordering people off the streets. ‘Let’s go,’ one policeman shouted, ‘You’re going to have to get out of here right now.’”<sup>155</sup> The *Eagle-Tribune* reported, “Those who dared police by walking the streets were either arrested or told to go back indoors after 8 pm,” and afterwards, officers marched in cadence on deserted streets.<sup>156</sup>

Most residents of the area were not happy with the curfew. The *Boston Herald* reported, “Oxford street residents pleaded for an end to the violence in their riot-torn neighborhood yesterday, but insisted respect – not a curfew – was the solution.”<sup>157</sup> Latina community leader Isabel Meléndez had warned the city council, “that you have to talk to the people and tell them that the curfew is for their own good,”<sup>158</sup> but the *Boston Herald* article illustrated that at least some in the Latino community viewed the curfew, not as protection, but as further oppression from the city and from the police, “Hispanics on the street said they want the violence to stop but also want their rights to be respected.”<sup>159</sup> Jose Martinez, who had participated in the riots, and who also expressed his views on the prejudice of the Lawrence police predicted, “The curfew won’t work. Nobody can tell us

what to do. This is supposed to be a free country. But what kind of freedom is that?”<sup>160</sup>

Edwin Berrios, 23, objected to the paternalistic tone of the curfew, telling the paper, “We’re adults, not children.”<sup>161</sup> One interviewee after the riots spoke of signs in the housing projects during the curfew that said, “Don’t lock us in our cages – We are not animals.”<sup>162</sup> Some white residents were also displeased about the curfew. One French-Canadian woman who had lived in Tower Hill for twenty years explained simply, “We all just want to get back to living our own lives.”<sup>163</sup> Another neighborhood resident, Ron Howard, 45, explained that he literally snuck out of his home to avoid the curfew. “Nobody is stopping me from going out to have a beer,” he said. “I’ve got nothing to do with this. This is stupid.”<sup>164</sup>

Not everyone was displeased with the curfew, however. Rev. James Keller of the Greater Lawrence Ecumenical Area Ministry (GLEAM), an organization that had long advocated for Latinos in Lawrence, said, “This is a time for prayer. Violence solves nothing and people should obey the authorities.”<sup>165</sup> Nunzio DiMarca, an Italian-American who spoke Spanish and spent decades involved in community service and organizing within the Latino community, told the *Boston Herald*, “At least with the curfew people will cool down a bit.”<sup>166</sup> DiMarca and Isabel Meléndez had been addressing the residents of the Merrimack Courts with a loudspeaker attached to the roof of a car, urging them in Spanish to respect the curfew and end the violence, when the police showed up to barricade off the curfew area. The *Boston Herald* reported that, “Onlookers shouted ‘Go home, Go home’ when the police showed up. But Hispanic leader Isabel Meléndez told

the crowd in Spanish, ‘We only want peace. We don’t want to see more blood in the street. Innocent people are the ones who will pay.’”<sup>167</sup>

DiMarca and Meléndez were both members of the “Yellow-Hat Brigade,” a group of community leaders who worked with the police to keep the streets clear during the curfew. Their name sprang from the special yellow caps they wore while patrolling the streets in order to identify them to the police,<sup>168</sup> but soon after the riots they named themselves the Alliance for Peace. Their cooperation with the police during the riot should not be taken as evidence of general collusion with the city in underplaying the riots. Members of the Alliance for Peace, including Isabel Meléndez, were vocal advocates for deep changes in the city, but they wanted that change to come through peaceful protest. One participant described their purpose as “to try and channel some of the frustration into other forms of protest where people would not get hurt... that’s how the Alliance for Peace emerged from the ranks of some of us who participated in the riot activity.”<sup>169</sup> In addition to the Yellow Hat Brigade, the *Boston Globe* reported that “Felix Mejia, secretary of the city’s Association of Civic Relations, said about 20 members of his organization would be on the streets during the curfew to assist anyone with an emergency.”<sup>170</sup>

During the curfew, the rumor hotline reported a few false calls from anxious callers. One caller claimed there was a “gang” blocking the entrance to Barcello’s supermarket on Lawrence street; when the police arrived, they found two kids on bikes riding away. One caller reported gangs fighting with guns and bottles, but the police found no one when they arrived. There were rumors that fighting would break out at

Essex Plaza, near the Essex Street projects, but outside the curfew zone, and police blocked off the parking lot, dispelling any cars that tried to enter.<sup>171</sup> Overall, the curfew held. A total of twenty-seven people were arrested, most for curfew violations, but the local paper also reported that two men “were caught on a Margin Street rooftop with materials for making 23 Molotov cocktails.”<sup>172</sup> The *Boston Globe* reported that the men had twelve Molotov cocktails with them in a box. Both men were white.<sup>173</sup>

The next day, things seemed back to normal. The *Eagle-Tribune* reported, “Everywhere in a city that had watched itself on national television for 48 consecutive hours, people today went about their affairs.”<sup>174</sup> The *Boston Globe* described, “The scene of the violence was quiet yesterday, but traffic was tied up along Rte. 110 bordering the area, as journalists and the curious crowded around.”<sup>175</sup> Buckley chose, however, to keep the curfew in effect, saying, “We’re going to have to take a look at it day by day.”<sup>176</sup> In the end, it remained in effect over the weekend, with an increased police presence in the area. On Monday morning, the City Council chose to lift the curfew. Alderman Johnson reported very few violations “and that people [were] coming together.” In addition to lifting the curfew, the Council allowed bars and liquor stores in the area to re-open, and ended the ban on selling gasoline in containers.<sup>177</sup> The Council noted that even though the curfew was over, the area was still in a State of Emergency, which would enable the city to maintain the expanded police presence in the neighborhood, and that the rumor center under Alderman Kevin Sullivan would continue to operate.<sup>178</sup> Buckley told the press, “We’re pleased at the way things went during the curfew... We’re delighted that

people are starting to come together to understand the area and the problems they have now.”<sup>179</sup>

There were only two incidents after the curfew was lifted on Monday, both involving, at least partially, white people from outside of Lawrence. In the first, four young Bostonians, members of the “Revolutionary Communist Youth Brigade,” had apparently heard about the rioting, and were trying to hand out “revolutionary literature” to the Latinos in the Merrimack Courts housing projects.<sup>180</sup> Latino residents of the projects apparently told them to leave, and the Boston-based Spanish-language newspaper *La Semana* reported that residents threw rocks at the pamphleteers to make them go away.<sup>181</sup> The *Boston Globe* reported that they were, “charged with inciting to riot and trespassing after they allegedly passed out pamphlets and literature warning against police oppression in the ghetto.”<sup>182</sup>

Four other men were arrested after a police officer saw their car swerve as if to hit two young Latino men walking near the corner of Oxford and Lowell streets. The passengers were all charged with possession of a Molotov cocktail and disorderly conduct, and the driver, Michael Danahy of Lawrence, was charged with operating to endanger and operating under the influence.<sup>183</sup> Two of the men arrested for possession of the firebomb and disorderly conduct were from Methuen, more suburban residents who had been drawn to Lawrence by the riots.<sup>184</sup> The *Boston Globe* asked Lawrence Police Lt. Francis J. Incropera [if] he felt these arrests signaled more disturbances to come, however, and he replied, “No, I feel as though with these arrests we're going to stop the problems... These people won't be back.”<sup>185</sup>

Indeed, it seems he was correct. Radical proselytizers from Boston and potential firebombers from Methuen were not mentioned in the local papers for a while. They were replaced, however, by other “outsiders,” as a flurry of politicians, service workers, activists, and academics from throughout the state descended on Lawrence. Almost everyone, local and “outsider” alike, was united in the idea that something had to be done to ensure that the riots did not recur, although there was little agreement as to what, exactly, that “something” was. A relative peace had returned to the streets of Lawrence, but people continued to struggle to claim (or disclaim) and interpret the riots. As one Latina Lawrencian said, “The riots have no meaning... what has meaning is what people are going to do about them.”<sup>186</sup> The next chapters will explore these contested interpretations and their impact on the city.

---

<sup>1</sup>Martín Espada, "Toque de Queda: Curfew in Lawrence," in *Trumpets from the Islands of their Eviction* (Tempe, AZ: Bilingual Press/Editorial Bilingue, 1987), 26.

<sup>2</sup>For a general overview of twentieth-century race riots see Janet L. Abu-Lughod, *Race, Space, and Riots in Chicago, New York, and Los Angeles* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007) and Marilyn S. Johnson, "Gender, Race, and Rumors: Re-examining the 1943 Race Riots," *Gender & History*, (10:2, August 1998).

<sup>3</sup>*Eagle-Tribune*, "Profile of a changing neighborhood," August 9, 1984.

<sup>4</sup>"Poverty, Bigotry – Terrible Legacy of 'Immigrant City' *Boston Herald*, August 11, 1984, 28.

<sup>5</sup>*Eagle-Tribune*, "Profile of a changing neighborhood."

<sup>6</sup>Interview with Ingrid Garcia by the author, November 2009.

<sup>7</sup>*Eagle-Tribune*, "Shannon walks through his troubled district: Communication lines need to be clear to ease tensions," August 10, 1984.

<sup>8</sup>*Eagle-Tribune*, "Shannon walks through his troubled district."

<sup>9</sup>*Eagle-Tribune*, "Shannon walks through his troubled district."

<sup>10</sup>David Churbuck, "The riot began, ended in one house: feud erupted over windshield," *Eagle-Tribune*, August 9, 1984.

<sup>11</sup>Kevin Cullen and John Impemba, "New Riot Hits Lawrence: SWAT team in action against wild mob" *Boston Herald*, August 10, 1984.

<sup>12</sup>Allan R. Andrews and Gregory Witcher, "Troopers Sent to Quell Violence in Lawrence; Firebombings, shots reported in Tower Hill Area," *Boston Globe*, August 10, 1984, <http://www.proquest.com>.

<sup>13</sup>Churbuck, "The riot began, ended in one house."

<sup>14</sup>*Eagle-Tribune*, "Shannon walks through his troubled district."

<sup>15</sup>Alan Lupo, "Lessons of the Street: What Lawrence never learned," *Boston Phoenix*, August 21, 1984.

<sup>16</sup>Gwenn Friss, "Police strategy included holding back for 2 hours," *Eagle-Tribune*, August 9, 1984.

<sup>17</sup>Cullen and Impemba, "New Riot Hits Lawrence."

<sup>18</sup>CBS news clip, August 9, 1984, VTNA.

<sup>19</sup>Churbuck, "The riot began, ended in one house."

<sup>20</sup>Interview with Ingrid Garcia by the author, November 2009.

<sup>21</sup>Churbuck, "The riot began, ended in one house."

<sup>22</sup>*Eagle-Tribune*, "Hundreds riot on city streets, firebomb homes, stone police: 6 arrested, 12 injured in 5-hour melee," August 9, 1984.

<sup>23</sup>Mary Beth Donovan, "Firefighters felt scared, deserted," *Eagle-Tribune*, August 9, 1984.

<sup>24</sup>Donovan, "Firefighters felt scared, deserted."

<sup>25</sup>Bonnie Perez, CBS news clip, August 9, 1984, VTNA. It is unclear if she was white or Latina, see note 42.

<sup>26</sup>*Eagle-Tribune*, "Hundreds riot on city streets." The names of many of the police officers and firefighters indicate that many were probably French Canadian, like many of the white rioters. Yet little ethnic solidarity was evident during the riot, most likely a result of substantial class divisions.

<sup>27</sup>*Eagle-Tribune*, "Hundreds riot on city streets."

<sup>28</sup>Friss, "Police strategy included holding back for 2 hours."

<sup>29</sup>Barney Gallagher, "The riot began with a broken windshield: when the tactical force arrived, the rioting had already ended," *Eagle-Tribune*, August 9, 1984.

<sup>30</sup>Gallagher, "The riot began with a broken windshield."

<sup>31</sup>Gallagher, "The riot began with a broken windshield."

<sup>32</sup>CBS and NBC news clips, August 9, 1984, VTNA.

<sup>33</sup>Gallagher, "The riot began with a broken windshield."

<sup>34</sup>Gallagher, "The riot began with a broken windshield;" Friss, "Police strategy included holding back for 2 hours."



- 
- <sup>35</sup> Gallagher, "The riot began with a broken windshield;" Friss, "Police strategy included holding back for 2 hours."
- <sup>36</sup> Gallagher, "The riot began with a broken windshield."
- <sup>37</sup> Gallagher, "The riot began with a broken windshield."
- <sup>38</sup> Kevin Cullen, "Victims in a Night of Madness: Senseless act turns streets to battleground," *Boston Herald*, August 10, 1984.
- <sup>39</sup> *Eagle-Tribune*, "Hundreds riot on city streets."
- <sup>40</sup> *Eagle-Tribune*, "Those caught in the middle called everywhere for help" August 9, 1984.
- <sup>41</sup> *Eagle-Tribune*, "Those caught in the middle called everywhere for help."
- <sup>42</sup> One of the main witnesses interviewed was Bonnie Perez, a woman who lived either with or in the same building as John Ball or Gary Gill and was with the white men when the young Latinos confronted them over the window. It was never mentioned whether she identified as white or Latina/Puerto Rican. In spite of her Spanish-sounding last name, her light skin combined with her thick, Boston accent suggested that she might not be Latina; perhaps her name came from a Portuguese forebear, an ethnic group that had been common in Lawrence. More important than her light skin or English fluency (something shared by many Lawrence Latinos), her relationship with the white riot instigators and her own claims that she was hit by a 14- or 15-year-old Latino boy with a bat are what seem to place her firmly on the "white side" of the riots. CBS news clip, August 9, 1984, VTNA.
- <sup>43</sup> Churbuck, "The riot began, ended in one house."
- <sup>44</sup> Susan Forrest, "A little girl saved her life," *Eagle-Tribune*, August 9, 1984; Churbuck, "The riot began, ended in one house."
- <sup>45</sup> John Impemba, "6 shot as street riot erupts in Lawrence" *Boston Herald*, August 9, 1984.
- <sup>46</sup> CBS, ABC, and NBC news clips, August 9-11, 1984, VTNA.
- <sup>47</sup> NBC news clip, August 10, 1984, VTNA.
- <sup>48</sup> Lawrence City Council Records, August 9, 1984.
- <sup>49</sup> Lawrence City Council Records, August 9, 1984.
- <sup>50</sup> Andrews and Witcher, "Troopers Sent to Quell Violence in Lawrence."
- <sup>51</sup> Lawrence City Council Records, August 9, 1984.
- <sup>52</sup> *Eagle-Tribune*, "Hundreds riot on city streets."
- <sup>53</sup> Andrews and Witcher, "Troopers Sent to Quell Violence in Lawrence."
- <sup>54</sup> Lawrence City Council Records, August 9, 1984.
- <sup>55</sup> Lawrence City Council Records, August 9, 1984.
- <sup>56</sup> Bill Cantwell, "What now for Lawrence? People must talk," *Eagle-Tribune*, August 9, 1984.
- <sup>57</sup> Lawrence City Council Records, August 9, 1984.
- <sup>58</sup> Cantwell, "What now for Lawrence?"
- <sup>59</sup> *Eagle-Tribune*, "Shannon walks through his troubled district."
- <sup>60</sup> Lawrence City Council Records, August 9, 1984.
- <sup>61</sup> Cantwell, "What now for Lawrence?"
- <sup>62</sup> Cantwell, "What now for Lawrence?"
- <sup>63</sup> *Eagle-Tribune*, "Shannon walks through his troubled district."
- <sup>64</sup> *Eagle-Tribune*, "Shannon walks through his troubled district."
- <sup>65</sup> Cantwell, "What now for Lawrence?"
- <sup>66</sup> Cantwell, "What now for Lawrence?"
- <sup>67</sup> Cantwell, "What now for Lawrence?"
- <sup>68</sup> *Eagle-Tribune*, "A carnival sideshow turns into an ugly riot" August 10, 1984.
- <sup>69</sup> ABC, CBS, and NBC news clips, August 9-12, 1984, VTNA.
- <sup>70</sup> *Eagle-Tribune*, "Police plan to clear streets after second night of rioting: 8 p.m. curfew in force tonight," August 10, 1984.
- <sup>71</sup> Pettoruto's Package Store was presumably white own based on three factors: Pettoruto is an Italian last name, the store had been in existence for a while, while Latinos were newer to the neighborhood, and Lower Tower Hill was not an area where substantial Latino-owned businesses existed yet.
- <sup>72</sup> Donovan, "Firefighters felt scared, deserted."

- 
- <sup>73</sup> *Eagle-Tribune*, "Police plan to clear streets after second night of rioting."
- <sup>74</sup> Elaine Cushman, "Does TV coverage add to riot tension?" with Yadira Betances contributing, *Eagle-Tribune*, August 10, 1984.
- <sup>75</sup> Cushman, "Does TV coverage add to riot tension?"
- <sup>76</sup> *Eagle-Tribune*, "Shannon walks through his troubled district."
- <sup>77</sup> Cushman, "Does TV coverage add to riot tension?"
- <sup>78</sup> Cushman, "Does TV coverage add to riot tension?"
- <sup>79</sup> *Eagle-Tribune*, "A carnival sideshow turns into an ugly riot."
- <sup>80</sup> *Eagle-Tribune*, "Shannon walks through his troubled district."
- <sup>81</sup> Cantwell, "What now for Lawrence?"
- <sup>82</sup> *Eagle-Tribune*, "Shannon walks through his troubled district."
- <sup>83</sup> *Eagle-Tribune*, "Shannon walks through his troubled district."
- <sup>84</sup> Andrews and Witcher, "Troopers Sent to Quell Violence in Lawrence."
- <sup>85</sup> *Eagle-Tribune*, "Prayer service fails to stop the violence," August 10, 1984.
- <sup>86</sup> *Eagle-Tribune*, "A carnival sideshow turns into an ugly riot."
- <sup>87</sup> Cullen and Impemba, "New Riot Hits Lawrence."
- <sup>88</sup> *Eagle-Tribune*, "A carnival sideshow turns into an ugly riot."
- <sup>89</sup> *New York Times*, "Massachusetts Town Rocked by Violence for a Second Night," August 10, 1984, Section A.
- <sup>90</sup> ABC, CBS, and NBC news clips, August 10, 1984, VTNA.
- <sup>91</sup> Interview with Ingrid Garcia by the author, November 2009.
- <sup>92</sup> *New York Times*, "Massachusetts Town Rocked by Violence for a Second Night."
- <sup>93</sup> Cullen and Impemba, "New Riot Hits Lawrence."
- <sup>94</sup> *Eagle-Tribune*, "Police plan to clear streets after second night of rioting."
- <sup>95</sup> Although the *New York Times* describes the white group as smaller, all other coverage describes the two groups as about evenly matched. See for example, Cullen and Impemba, "New Riot Hits Lawrence."
- <sup>96</sup> Cullen and Impemba, "New Riot Hits Lawrence."
- <sup>97</sup> Andrews and Witcher, "Troopers Sent to Quell Violence in Lawrence."
- <sup>98</sup> Andrews and Witcher, "Troopers Sent to Quell Violence in Lawrence."
- <sup>99</sup> *Eagle-Tribune*, "Police saw trouble coming weeks ago," August 10, 1984.
- <sup>100</sup> *Eagle-Tribune*, "Firefighters say police protection not enough," August 10, 1984.
- <sup>101</sup> The lawyer for the police union pointed out that the budget for the fiscal year that had ended June 30, actually had a surplus of over half a million. It is hard to account for how this could have been the case, given Lawrence's general state of perpetual budget crisis. The complete budget records for the city are missing, but the available evidence suggests that the small surplus that year had been created by the recent layoffs for the purposes of demonstrating the city government's good fiscal management, Joe Sciacca, "Police manpower inadequate: union," *Boston Herald*, August 10, 1984.
- <sup>102</sup> Donovan, "Firefighters felt scared, deserted."
- <sup>103</sup> Donovan, "Firefighters felt scared, deserted."
- <sup>104</sup> *Eagle-Tribune*, "Police plan to clear streets after second night of rioting."
- <sup>105</sup> Cullen and Impemba, "New Riot Hits Lawrence."
- <sup>106</sup> *Eagle-Tribune*, "Police plan to clear streets after second night of rioting."
- <sup>107</sup> *Eagle-Tribune*, "Police plan to clear streets after second night of rioting."
- <sup>108</sup> *Eagle-Tribune*, "A carnival sideshow turns into an ugly riot."
- <sup>109</sup> Cullen and Impemba, "New Riot Hits Lawrence."
- <sup>110</sup> *Eagle-Tribune*, "Lawrence hires 10 police officers: calls in more help from the suburbs," August 10, 1984.
- <sup>111</sup> *Eagle-Tribune*, "Police plan to clear streets after second night of rioting."
- <sup>112</sup> Joe Sciacca, "City of Anguish and Outrage: 'We all just want to get back to living our lives,'" *Boston Herald*, August 11, 1984.
- <sup>113</sup> Interview with Ingrid Garcia by the author, November 2009.
- <sup>114</sup> Cullen and Impemba, "New Riot Hits Lawrence."

- 
- <sup>115</sup> Cullen and Impemba, "New Riot Hits Lawrence."
- <sup>116</sup> *Eagle-Tribune*, August 10, 1984.
- <sup>117</sup> *Eagle-Tribune*, "Police plan to clear streets after second night of rioting."
- <sup>118</sup> Cullen and Impemba, "New Riot Hits Lawrence."
- <sup>119</sup> *Eagle-Tribune*, "Ending the riots in Lawrence," August 10, 1984, emphasis in the original.
- <sup>120</sup> *Eagle-Tribune*, "City Wonders: Who's in charge?" August 10, 1984.
- <sup>121</sup> *Eagle-Tribune*, "City Wonders: Who's in charge?"
- <sup>122</sup> This is unclear. The newspaper said Wednesday night, which would have been the 8<sup>th</sup>, but all related information indicates that it must have been the 9<sup>th</sup>.
- <sup>123</sup> *Eagle-Tribune*, "City Wonders: Who's in charge?"
- <sup>124</sup> *Eagle-Tribune*, "City Wonders: Who's in charge?"
- <sup>125</sup> *Eagle-Tribune*, "City Wonders: Who's in charge?"
- <sup>126</sup> *Eagle-Tribune*, "Police plan to clear streets after second night of rioting."
- <sup>127</sup> Andrews and Witcher, "Troopers Sent to Quell Violence in Lawrence."
- <sup>128</sup> Andrews and Witcher, "Troopers Sent to Quell Violence in Lawrence."
- <sup>129</sup> *Eagle-Tribune*, "Hundreds riot on city streets."
- <sup>130</sup> Cullen and Impemba, "New Riot Hits Lawrence."
- <sup>131</sup> Cullen and Impemba, "New Riot Hits Lawrence."
- <sup>132</sup> Espada, "Toque de Queda."
- <sup>133</sup> Lawrence City Council records, August 10, 1984.
- <sup>134</sup> Lawrence City Council records, August 10, 1984.
- <sup>135</sup> Lawrence City Council records, August 10, 1984.
- <sup>136</sup> Peggy Hernandez, "Curfew Lifted in Lawrence," *Boston Globe*, Aug 14, 1984, <http://www.proquest.com>.
- <sup>137</sup> Lawrence City Council records, August 10, 1984.
- <sup>138</sup> Lawrence City Council records, August 10, 1984.
- <sup>139</sup> *Eagle-Tribune*, "Police plan to clear streets after second night of rioting."
- <sup>140</sup> Peggy Hernandez, "Lawrence Police Enforce Curfew in Riot-Torn Areas; No Resistance to Order Reported," *Boston Globe*, Aug 11, 1984, <http://www.proquest.com>.
- <sup>141</sup> Hernandez, "Lawrence Police Enforce Curfew in Riot-Torn Areas."
- <sup>142</sup> Lawrence City Council records, August 10, 1984.
- <sup>143</sup> Hernandez, "Lawrence Police Enforce Curfew in Riot-Torn Areas."
- <sup>144</sup> Joe Sciacca, "Dusk-to-Dawn curfew in Lawrence: Top pols in plea for calm," *Boston Herald*, August 11, 1984.
- <sup>145</sup> *Eagle-Tribune*, "Police plan to clear streets after second night of rioting."
- <sup>146</sup> *Eagle-Tribune*, "Police plan to clear streets after second night of rioting."
- <sup>147</sup> Sciacca, "Dusk-to-Dawn curfew in Lawrence."
- <sup>148</sup> Lawrence City Council records, August 10, 1984.
- <sup>149</sup> Lawrence City Council records, August 10, 1984.
- <sup>150</sup> Robert Charest, "Curfew holds: 27 arrested but riot-torn area quieted: Rest of city unaffected" *Eagle-Tribune*, August 11, 1984.
- <sup>151</sup> Joe Sciacca, "Curfew keeps Lawrence quiet," *Boston Herald*, August 12, 1984.
- <sup>152</sup> Hernandez, "Lawrence Police Enforce Curfew in Riot-Torn Areas."
- <sup>153</sup> Charest, "Curfew holds."
- <sup>154</sup> Charest, "Curfew holds."
- <sup>155</sup> Hernandez, "Lawrence Police Enforce Curfew in Riot-Torn Areas."
- <sup>156</sup> Charest, "Curfew holds."
- <sup>157</sup> Sciacca, "City of Anguish and Outrage."
- <sup>158</sup> Lawrence City Council records, August 10, 1984.
- <sup>159</sup> Sciacca, "City of Anguish and Outrage."
- <sup>160</sup> Sciacca, "City of Anguish and Outrage."
- <sup>161</sup> Sciacca, "City of Anguish and Outrage."

- 
- <sup>162</sup> Joseph D. Duran, "The 1984 Riots: Lawrence, Massachusetts," (Unpublished MA Thesis, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1985), 26.
- <sup>163</sup> Sciacca, "City of Anguish and Outrage."
- <sup>164</sup> Sciacca, "Dusk-to-Dawn curfew in Lawrence."
- <sup>165</sup> Sciacca, "Dusk-to-Dawn curfew in Lawrence."
- <sup>166</sup> Sciacca, "City of Anguish and Outrage."
- <sup>167</sup> Sciacca, "City of Anguish and Outrage."
- <sup>168</sup> Sciacca, "Dusk-to-Dawn curfew in Lawrence."
- <sup>169</sup> Duran, "The 1984 Riots," 67.
- <sup>170</sup> Hernandez, "Lawrence Police Enforce Curfew in Riot-Torn Areas."
- <sup>171</sup> Charest, "Curfew holds."
- <sup>172</sup> Charest, "Curfew holds."
- <sup>173</sup> My conclusion that they were most likely white stems from the admittedly inaccurate use of surnames. Many Latinos in Lawrence had names that were not typically Latin American and many white Lawrencians had Portuguese or Italian last names that were not very different from Latino last names. In most cases, however, whether a person was white or Latino could reasonably be concluded from their name, particularly considering the very small African American population in the city. The arrested were Charles B. Taylor and Dean E. Rosinski. Hernandez, "Curfew Lifted in Lawrence."
- <sup>174</sup> Charest, "Curfew holds."
- <sup>175</sup> Hernandez, "Lawrence Police Enforce Curfew in Riot-Torn Areas."
- <sup>176</sup> Hernandez, "Lawrence Police Enforce Curfew in Riot-Torn Areas."
- <sup>177</sup> Hernandez, "Curfew Lifted in Lawrence."
- <sup>178</sup> Lawrence City Council records, August 13, 1984.
- <sup>179</sup> Hernandez, "Curfew Lifted in Lawrence."
- <sup>180</sup> Judging from names again, although this process is less accurate for Boston residents, as Boston had a substantial African-American population at this time: Rose Anne Avakian, Aine Marie Porter, Mark Brier, John Battis. Hernandez, "Curfew Lifted in Lawrence."
- <sup>181</sup> Vicente Carbona, "17 Heridos y 50 Detenidos en Disturbios Raciales de Lawrence" *La Semana*, Week 33, 1984.
- <sup>182</sup> Hernandez, "Curfew Lifted in Lawrence."
- <sup>183</sup> Hernandez, "Curfew Lifted in Lawrence."
- <sup>184</sup> Hernandez, "Curfew Lifted in Lawrence."
- <sup>185</sup> Hernandez, "Curfew Lifted in Lawrence."
- <sup>186</sup> Duran, "The 1984 Riots," 47.

## Chapter Five – Claiming and Disclaiming the 1984 Riots

*Now the Archbishop comes to Lawrence  
to say a Spanish Mass.*

*But the congregation understands  
without translation:*

*the hammering of the shoe factory,  
sweating fever of infected August,  
housing project's asylum chatter,  
dice on the sidewalk,  
saints at the window,  
two days' murky pollution of riot-smoke,  
the mayor's denials.*

- Martín Espada, from "Toque de Queda: Curfew in Lawrence"<sup>1</sup>

Even before the glass had been swept from the street, the burned-out buildings bulldozed, the curfew lifted, and the suburban police taken off notice, a debate began to rage about what had actually taken place in the Oxford Street neighborhood. This chapter will explore the competing interpretations of the riots, including conflicting views of what had caused it and what could be done to prevent it. The riots were marked immediately as an "urban problem," tied to problems like economic decay or racial tension that were considered specifically endemic to cities. As one reporter summed up, "They don't riot in the suburbs."<sup>2</sup> Almost everyone, residents, officials, and observers, agreed that the two nights of fighting indicated larger problems in the city of Lawrence, but a heated debate took place over the nature and severity of those problems, how best to address them, and whose responsibility it was to supply the necessary resources. The conflicting interpretations demonstrated clear tensions and competitions between four groups. First were city officials, who were desperate to minimize the riot, yet also eager to garner state funds to ramp up their public safety services, which had been devastated by urban economic crisis. Second, state officials wanted to press Lawrence to embrace

anti-discrimination as official policy and practice but, on the whole, did not want to supply the resources to enable systemic changes within the city. Third, within Lawrence, most white residents believed that the riots demonstrated a dramatic decline in the city, and many responded by moving out of Lawrence. Finally, most Latino residents and their allies argued that the riots were a result of exclusion and harassment, as well as the city's failed economy. They called for substantial changes in the city's housing, education services, and city government, as well as for improved economic opportunities.

As is often the case with U.S. riots, the conflict over what to call the events of August 1984 was a profound part of the conflict to determine what they meant. An MIT graduate student, Joseph Duran, who conducted extensive interviews with a variety of informants after the riots, noted that, "In the 54 interviews I conducted for this thesis, involving close to 175 people, no one word seemed to elicit greater variations among the informant responses than the word: 'riot.'"<sup>3</sup> Most residents, and the media that interviewed them, freely used the term riot, and most further insisted that the riot was fueled by racial tension that had been developing for a long time. Unlike many other urban riots, particularly those that occurred in the 1960s, there was no attempt among local activists to label the events in Lawrence an "uprising" or "rebellion."<sup>4</sup> This was perhaps a reflection of the era, as by the mid-1980s, much of the radicalism of the 1960s had been eroded. Many Latino activists did refer to the riots as a Latino "protest," but the term "protest" was used to augment and explain the "riots," not to challenge the use of the term. I follow this usage, referring to the events of August 1984 as riots, but also emphasizing that these riots were a form of protest.

Indeed, the group most invested in challenging the term “riots” was the city government. They were desperate to minimize the fighting, to make it simply a personal skirmish, a “domestic dispute,” that got slightly out of control.<sup>5</sup> The initial, publicly expressed view of the council was that the riots really didn’t reflect any larger problems in the city. Some in city government changed their opinion as the riot forced them to look more closely at the living conditions in the neighborhood and to listen to the complaints of the residents; some acknowledged that unemployment or lack of police power or poor housing conditions may have contributed. But the tune that did not change was the city government’s virtually uniform insistence that the riots were not related to race. As Mayor Buckley said, “It was an isolated incident. It wasn’t really racial.”<sup>6</sup> Public Safety Alderman Johnson, agreed, saying, “I don’t think the underlying causes are racial.”<sup>7</sup>

This denial of the racial tenor of the riots was shocking and outrageous to many residents, as well as to the non-local media. Reporters who came from out of town often had a slightly more critical perspective on Lawrence than the local paper, and they were much less likely to fall in line with official city perspectives. As the *New York Times* explained, “Most people here readily admit that the two sides harbor much anger and resentment. Only a few of Lawrence’s citizens, notably some of its elected officials, insist that the recent surge of hostility was totally unexpected.”<sup>8</sup> Joseph Duran quoted an unnamed reporter who said, “I was amazed to hear the racist barrage of comments among the rioters and the total dismissal of racial overtones by city officials...to the trained or untrained eye, the riots clearly expressed racial tensions and a cross-fire of racist

hatred.”<sup>9</sup> City officials’ vocal dismissal of the idea that the violence was related to race struck many as discordant or even dishonest.

Although a small city like Lawrence was unlikely to draw the attention of published Latino writers or thinkers, one important Puerto Rican poet and activist, Martín Espada, had lived in Boston and took the time to document and interpret the riots in the poem that introduces this chapter and the last section of the previous chapter, “*Toque de Queda*: Curfew in Lawrence.” Espada not only documented the riots and their aftermath with poetic precision, he also took a firm stand on what they meant: condemning the official denials and the attempts to gloss over the riots or concoct an official meaning of the riots that conflicted with Latinos’ own experiences, arguing “the congregation understands without translation,” before he cites the factors that contributed to the riots: “the hammering of the shoe factory; sweating fever of infected August; housing project’s asylum chatter.” Espada included “the mayor’s denials” alongside the factors that contributed to the riots. Although he was referring to the mayor’s denials after the riots, the phrase performs a double function, as it captures the official neglect that both contributed to and pervaded the riots.<sup>10</sup>

The outrage at the official denials was augmented by Lawrence’s long history of city officials making anti-Latino comments, as discussed in Chapter Three. Some sources claim that explicitly racist comments from city officials marked the city council’s discussion of how to handle the riots. Most of the city council’s meetings at this time were held in executive session, so there is no direct record of what was said. Duran, however, interviewed State Representative Kevin Blanchette who recounted events at a



city council meeting, “During the riots, I and [Congressman] Jim Shannon charged into the council and demanded they do something because the crowd was clearly out of control...people milling around...over three hundred of them...things had gotten crazy with the crowd...without intervention who knows how much they would have swelled. We witnessed an incredible meeting of the city fathers [city council] that lasted only seven minutes... we demanded they do something... call a state of emergency so the state police could be called in...several of the city [aldermen] yelled back: ‘it’s the state’s damn fault for dumping all these minorities into Lawrence’ ... ‘it’s your fault we have all this scum in the housing projects’ ... ‘why don’t you pass legislation to keep all these ‘spics’ from moving here?’ ... yes, said publically...from the same city council who, to this day, claims there were no racial overtones to the riots.”<sup>11</sup> Although these quotes are second-hand, the argument that Lawrence bore a disproportionate part of the state’s burden of housing low-income residents and that the state should do something to limit immigration, did indeed echo statements that Lawrence city officials had made publicly, even if few officials would have admitted to the use of racial slurs in 1984. One unnamed alderman was quoted by Duran as ascribing the riots to, what he perceived as a particularly Hispanic temperament, dismissing the riots as, “just an opportunity for those hot-blooded Latinos to blow off some steam... once they get it out of their system they cool off.”<sup>12</sup>

As the city government denied the racial underpinnings of the riot, the police denied the charge that long-standing racism among their officers had helped fuel the anger of the Latino rioters. In a telephone interview with the Times, Lawrence Police

Chief Joseph Tylus denied that there was any special tension between his almost entirely white police force and the Latino residents of Lawrence. Only two of the ninety-six officers on the force were Latino, however, and the U.S. Department of Justice Community Relations department had been keeping an eye on police-community relations in Lawrence for years. During the riot, several Latino Lawrencians had told the *New York Times* that the Lawrence Police had conducted public strip searches of Latinos in the Merrimack Courts housing project. Tylus claimed he had “never heard” the accusations of public strip searches and called the idea “highly improbable” and “almost ludicrous.” He dismissed the complaints with the comment, “Some of the guys you talk to around here will say almost anything.”<sup>13</sup> The Lawrence Police Chief went further and dismissed the idea that his officers might express bigotry at all. He claimed he knew of *no cases* in which police officers had used racial slurs towards Latinos at all, “We have an internal affairs officer who's very strict,” Chief Tylus said. Any officer found guilty of verbally abusing civilians “would be suspended for an appropriate time.” He added that in “99 percent” of such cases the person guilty of verbal abuse “turned out to be the civilian.”<sup>14</sup> Tylus’s mindset towards Latino complaints of police discrimination was evident in his public eagerness to blame the victim, essentially calling the project residents who spoke out against police misconduct liars and arguing that the police were the real victims. This echoes the same practices of urban police departments that had enraged African American communities for decades, and that had helped give rise to both the urban uprisings of the 1960s and to the Black Power movement. Although the goal of city officials in dismissing the allegation of racism was partly to protect Lawrence’s

reputation, in reality, it was comments like these that earned Lawrence its reputation as a racist backwater.

This victim-blaming approach was not limited to the police chief. City leaders, and even some Latino leaders, argued that it wasn't true that all Latinos were to blame for the violence, but that specifically urban Latinos from New York City were responsible. The *New York Times* reported that the president of the City Council, Anthony Silva, asserted in an interview that one reason for the city's ethnic tension and recent violence lay in the *kinds* of Latino immigrants who sometimes settled there, "They're coming to Lawrence very hardened, very tough, very street wise," Mr. Silva said.<sup>15</sup> In Silva's mind, it was not simply that the rioters were Latino, but that they were urban Latinos, "hardened" by lives of poverty and struggle. His comments reflected the reality that many Latino Lawrencians had migrated from New York City to escape violence and overcrowding there. At least one Latino community leader, Cesar Caminero, apparently agreed with Silva, telling the City Council that he had been in Lawrence for nineteen years and did not believe this violence was racial. He explained, "a lot of new people are living in the projects and some are different in cultur[e] and some probably from New York."<sup>16</sup> As Latino Lawrencians struggled against stereotypes, Caminero's goal was likely to point out that Latinos in Lawrence were a diverse group, not all of whom had been, or would choose to be, involved in fighting against white residents. In general, comments from white city officials that blamed the violence on a certain "kind" of Latino eclipsed both the participation of whites and the valid claims on the city's space and resources made by the Latino rioters. Such comments were not the same type of blatant

bias expressed by the rioters, but they were in line with the general victim-blaming that contributed to Lawrence's reputation for bigotry.

Part of the city officials' efforts to minimize the riots revolved around blaming the media for exacerbating the violence. This was a corollary of the argument that it was not racial, for something else presumably needed to explain the extremes of the riot if racial tension was taken from the equation. Buckley told reporters, "It wasn't really racial. I really think that it would have been over that [first] night if it hadn't been on TV."<sup>17</sup> He later reiterated this theme, saying "If the media hadn't come in, we could have resolved this after the first night. But some of these people, all of a sudden they see themselves in front of the camera on national news, and they perform."<sup>18</sup> Sullivan claimed that television coverage "made heroes of the perpetrators of the city's civil disturbances," and added that TV "gave them the spotlight and now they don't want to give it up."<sup>19</sup> Silva added that the mindless pursuit of fame through violence was particularly enticing given the rioters' economic background, "How often does a poor person get a chance to not just watch 'Fort Apache' on TV, but take part in it?"<sup>20</sup> This last comment, as well, as the comments about the "kind" of Latinos who rioted touches on the class bias expressed by the city officials. Although the majority of attention seems to have gone to the Latino rioters, city officials were disdainful of the poor white rioters as well. Yet, the reference to "Fort Apache," presumably the 1981 movie, *Fort Apache: The Bronx*, brings the focus back to urban Latinos, as the movie was a crime drama about a police precinct set in a decaying Puerto Rican neighborhood in the Bronx, and included a neighborhood riot over police brutality. Silva's argument was that fighting in the streets in front of TV cameras

offered poor Lawrence residents a slice of the glamour created by a popular culture fascinated with urban decay and racial violence.

City officials argued that, in addition to further exciting the rioters, the presence of the media “interfered” with the police department’s ability to control the scene and drew more onlookers.<sup>21</sup> Referring to the TV networks’ spotlights, an officer from Woburn told the *Eagle-Tribune*, “When you’re walking into that light, you can’t see anything.”<sup>22</sup> Alderman D’Agostino also discussed the role of the spotlights, saying they added a sense of drama.<sup>23</sup> After the second night of rioting, police threatened to arrest any reporters or photographers who came into the riot area.

City officials blamed the media for making the rioting seem racial and for exaggerating Lawrence’s problems overall. They were eager to portray Lawrence in a positive light. Johnson pointed out to the *New York Times* that over 45,000 people had participated in the Semana Hispana festival that summer, and “Not one incident took place.”<sup>24</sup> Even the claims of Lawrence’s poverty were exaggerated, according to officials. The *New York Times* reported, “Although city officials indicated that some of Lawrence’s Hispanic population might be poor, the director of the Economic Development Corporation, John T. Pavlenkov, said the unemployment rate for Lawrence as a whole was just 7.4 percent, or about the same as for Massachusetts.”<sup>25</sup> The state, however, disagreed; the *Boston Globe* noted a spokeswoman for the Division of Employment Security said that 7.4 percent was higher than any other city in the state, and even that rate was almost certainly an underestimate.<sup>26</sup> The rate for the state as a whole at the time was only 4.6 percent.<sup>27</sup> More importantly, Lawrence’s unemployment was *growing* and

would more than double to 15 percent by 1990, while the state level would rise only to 6.7 percent.<sup>28</sup> Yet, in spite of the reality of Lawrence's high and growing unemployment, city leaders accused the media of inventing or exaggerating Lawrence's economic struggles.

In spite of the fact that the media was reporting at least some of Lawrence's struggles accurately, one opinion writer at the *Boston Globe* was sympathetic to city officials' cry of media sensationalism, "One lesson for Lawrence or any other city is: don't let trouble happen on a slow news day. The city had its moment in the media sun in August. Since Watergate, August story lists for television, radio and newspapers have been Saharas of dullness. Trouble in Lawrence was an oasis, a few Molotov cocktails bracingly refreshing. The networks had dramatic footage, the newspapers eloquent voices of outrage. The graphics of the Cable News Network were particularly revealing, showing viewers a map of southern New England. In prison- stencil letters, the word "RIOT" ran from approximately Greenwich, Conn., across Rhode Island, smothering Worcester to the flashpoint in the Merrimack Valley."<sup>29</sup> This writer, critical of the media's portrayal of all of New England under attack, noted that a television interview in a convenience store less than a mile from the riot site demonstrated that the rioting was actually limited to a small section of the city, and showed that many residents were concerned more with the city's reputation than with the riots themselves, "For all their actual contact with the televised events, the shoppers may as well have been in Topeka." The writer took this as a "lesson in media perspective" and compared it to the Boston violence around school desegregation a few years earlier "when network cameras were

trained on South Boston High School and angry scuffling with riot-helmeted police.”

During the violence in South Boston, “A Bostonian who lived a half-mile from the site received an anxious call, wondering about the violence that appeared to flood the streets of Boston. There seemed something ironic about the source of the phone call - a quiet, tree-lined ordinary street that sees a police officer only rarely - in Belfast, Northern Ireland.”<sup>30</sup> Similar to the depiction of Lawrence under siege, he argued, the media exaggerated the events in Boston to the point where even those in troubled Northern Ireland were worried. Comments such as these generally condemned the media’s fascination with the riots, yet the sensationalism did not seem to anger the riot participants, the neighborhood residents, or the community organizers, most of whom seemed grateful that the media was amplifying their complaints. Although many Lawrence residents were embarrassed by the negative attention drawn to their city, the most vocal opponents of the media were the city officials.

Beyond the role of the media, city leaders also generally agreed upon one other fact: that the riot was “not racial.” It is not exactly clear what was meant by this, because the riot certainly was racial in the sense that the two groups who were rioting were each identifying the other with racial slurs, and whites and Latinos were allying themselves with people of the same group (even if Latinos are not precisely a “race”). What the city leaders presumably meant was that racism was not the origin of the riot; people did not come out onto the street simply to express their bigotry and to hurt people who were different from them. And this is partly true; in that strict sense this was not a “race riot,”

as it was also about safety, claiming public space, achieving a voice in local politics, and above all perhaps, protesting local conditions and exclusion from local decision-making.

In this strict sense, however, no “race riot” has ever been strictly racial. Racism is never simply about race, but about preserving or contesting a set of privileges (economic, social, political) that are unequally divided along racial lines. For white people, racial violence has historically often been about preserving “a way of life” that they felt was under attack as a result of the growing number, or changing attitudes, of people of color. Indeed, the constriction of the meaning of racism to explicit bigotry is one of the major factors defining racism in the 1980s. In this strictest sense of the term, then, the city leaders were correct that the riot was not about race, as it was not a simple and random expression of bigotry. For the white rioters, it was about a quality of life in Lawrence that they felt they were losing, a loss they attributed to the Latinos in their midst, a form of scapegoating in which a racial other is used to explain all the damage done by global restructuring and a sinking economy. For the Latino rioters, it was about a quality of life (dignity, safety, employment and adequate housing) they perceived as being denied to them by racism and bigotry.

In this broad sense, then, the riot was certainly and undeniably racial, as most of the rioters, and almost all of the media onlookers agreed. The city government was a lone voice attempting to minimize the public perception of the racial stakes of the battle. Their interest in this seems to have been twofold. The first was a desire to not be seen by the rest of the country (indeed, the world, given the international attention the riot received) as parochial or anachronistic, or as a Southern town from the 1950s or 1960s. The former



mayor of Lawrence, Kansas, Marnie Argersinger, told the *Eagle-Tribune* that she watched the TV coverage of the riots with surprise, explaining, “It doesn’t usually happen in a city like Lawrence, Mass., it happens in a city like Montgomery, Alabama.”<sup>31</sup> City leaders did not want Lawrence to get the reputation of a racist backwater, fitting in more with the Jim Crow South than with contemporary New England. The North, during the Civil Rights movement, had distinguished itself from the South, priding itself rather inaccurately on the lack of racism above the Mason-Dixon line. The Civil Rights movement, particularly in the televised imagery broadcast to the North, had successfully painted bigots as ignorant throwbacks from an inglorious past. By the 1980s, explicit bigotry had been virtually eliminated from mainstream discourse, replaced by a silence around racism that made both bigotry and accusations of bigotry equally taboo. In the process of development was a coded language that referred to people of color only indirectly (“inner-city youth,” “welfare queens,” etc.). By 1984, the nation, and particularly liberal Massachusetts, took pride in having moved beyond discussions of race.

Lawrence, in the national media, beset with a crisis in race relations, appeared as both an anachronism and an anatopism, a New England city with Jim Crow-era, Southern-style race relations. Of course, this image of Lawrence as in the wrong place and time obscured the history, indeed even the recent history, of racism in New England. Although the comparison of Lawrence to southern towns known for their bigotry during the Civil Rights era sparked a real fear for many Lawrencians, media accounts were most often comparing the Lawrence riots to urban uprisings of the 1960s, most of which

actually occurred in northern or western industrial cities. But the portrayal of Lawrence as a Southern-style anachronism eclipsed this troubled history of northern cities, and more recent race riots in New England were particularly downplayed. Only one reporter mentioned the clashes between police and Puerto Ricans in Boston's South End in 1972, and that was in the progressive weekly, the *Boston Phoenix*.<sup>32</sup> Most shockingly, only one reporter referred to the riots in South Boston in 1974, in which whites had attempted to prevent the desegregation of their schools through street violence against African-American students.<sup>33</sup> The erasure of the most recent, most local, and most relevant act of racial violence in the region's history is perhaps related to the fact that, once the Lawrence riots ended, the participation of white rioters was rarely discussed. The riots were quickly transformed into Latino riots, and the anger of rioting whites, at both Latinos and at the city, was never explored. Only in the context of the erasure of white rioting could a parallel to the most recent instance of mass racist violence in Massachusetts go without notice.

This fear on the part of city leaders that Lawrence would be branded a racist backwater, however, was not ungrounded. The portrayal of Lawrence as anachronistic was indeed part of the media's approach. The *Boston Phoenix* quoted a social service worker as saying, "There is a time warp. You come up I-93, and you are not talking 30 miles away from Boston, but light years away. They turn inward here." The article claimed that even the three cities situated next to each other along the Merrimack River, Lowell, Lawrence, and Haverhill, don't communicate much with one another. "One city might fight issues that another fought years earlier. But the problems are the same."<sup>34</sup>

The city's parochialism was also part of the newspaper's charge, and the article lumped Lowell in for good measure. The *Phoenix* pointed to recent comments made by politicians in both cities and used them as evidence that business and political leaders in the small cities were less sensitive to minority concerns than big-city politicians, writing, "It's a Lawrence businessman, quoted in the *Eagle-Tribune* after the rioting, saying, 'Whatever the trash is, get it out of here... Where are the values of these people?' It is Brian Martin, mayor of Lowell, who early this year told the Lowell Sun he opposed more subsidized housing because it attracts minorities and places a burden on the school system. 'I love them,' he said of minorities. 'I've had minorities babysit for me because they need the money ... [but] let's let another community share in the responsibility... There's no reason they can't grow up in Chelmsford.'"<sup>35</sup> Although these comments are certainly damning, the idea that such attitudes no longer existed in the 1980s, or in New England, obscured the enduring legacy of northern racism. The article quoted a social-service official saying, "If you read the last two years' worth of papers here, you'd think you were in the '40s or '50s or in some obscure part of the country. You read and hear code words like 'these people' It's the tone." The blame, according to this observer, lay not in persistent New England racism, but in the parochial nature of Lawrence's small cities, "We have people with small-town attitudes working half-time at jobs running full-time cities... [Officials making comments like these] couldn't happen in Boston and that area. There's enough of a liberal veneer there so as not to say such things."<sup>36</sup> Media coverage such as this made Lawrence's struggles with racial tension

seem exceptional, and portrayed Lawrence as out-of-place in contemporary, liberal Massachusetts.

Beyond this desire to avoid being seen as ignorant and parochial, city leaders had a second, and more concrete, reason to trouble themselves about Lawrence's reputation. Attracting private industry had long been Lawrence's main redevelopment strategy; in fact it was essentially the only official redevelopment strategy aside from attracting middle-class residents, but even that often relied on attracting private developers. City leaders were confident they could revive the city's failing manufacturing economy by showing businesses the historic charm and hardworking residents of Lawrence, thus providing both jobs and a necessary boost in tax revenue. As discussed in Chapter Two, the official pursuit of a Renaissance through attracting wealth to Lawrence, rather than building the assets of those already in the city, was a longstanding vision of the city's leadership. Receiving a national reputation as a bigoted backwater town with violent, rebellious residents was overwhelmingly not a part of city leaders' vision for Lawrence. As the President of Lawrence Strategy explained, "Everyone realizes that this is a negative in the overall image of the city."<sup>37</sup>

Harold Brooks, who owned much of the land in Lawrence's Industrial Park, and who as a result, was particularly invested in drawing industry to the city, told the *Eagle-Tribune*, "The people that are over there [in the riot area] are the people that are looking for the jobs in factories. The factories are not going to want to come here if this continues."<sup>38</sup> Brooks condemned "the lack of respect for life and law and order" that he believed was evident in the riots, asking, "Where are the values of these people?" He

concluded that in the interests of attracting business to Lawrence, the forces that precipitated the riot needed to be eliminated, “The mayor should definitely 100 percent squash it.” In his view, however, it was the *residents* of the riot neighborhood that were the root of the problem, particularly their lack of concern for “law and order.” In this elite view, cleaning the city up for its renaissance was premised on the displacement of Lawrence’s poor. As Brooks bluntly declared, “Whatever the trash is, get it out of here.”<sup>39</sup>

Some residents, most often white, agreed with the official determination that the riot was not racial, sharing city officials’ belief that the international portrayal of Lawrence as beset by racial strife was an embarrassment. Some even agreed that the media was to blame, arguing, as a French-Canadian woman did, “The press has made a circus out of this. The people come up here and cause trouble just because the TV cameras are here.”<sup>40</sup> The majority of those who participated in the riots, however, viewed them as unambiguously connected to race or racism, and for those who participated in the violence in order to make their voices heard, the sensationalism of the media was likely a welcome amplification, rather than the embarrassment the city leaders decried.

**“We've become a nasty little city with nasty, atrocious things going on.”<sup>41</sup>**

A major area of contention was whether or not the riots were a rational, deliberate protest against unremedied injustice, or the irrational behavior of dangerous hooligans in an anarchic city. Clearly, those city leaders who viewed the riots as a small interpersonal matter that simply got out of hand, largely dismissed the idea that the rioters were

rational, that the riots might have been a form of protest. They were not alone in this opinion; many residents of the city, both white and Latino, also dismissed the riots as simple lawlessness. One onlooker, Jose Santiago, told the *Boston Herald*, “This is just craziness for no reason.”<sup>42</sup> Another neighborhood resident explained, “Somebody said one thing, somebody said something else and it just snowballed. Innocent people got caught in the middle.”<sup>43</sup> Ricardo Rivera told the Herald, “I’ve lived here 17 years and it’s never been this bad. Now people don’t get along with each other for stupid reasons. It’s like a combat zone.”<sup>44</sup> For some, particularly the firefighters, it was the violence against those trying to help that seemed most irrational and most disappointing. “I’m demoralized and I’m sad,” said Richard W. Fredette, deputy fire chief. He recounted that residents of the city’s poorer neighborhoods had thrown rocks and garbage at firefighters all summer, whenever firefighters had come into the neighborhood. He told the *Boston Globe*, “I’m tired of euphemisms that gloss over the problems. We’re not the friendliest little city in the United States. We’ve become a nasty little city with nasty, atrocious things going on.”<sup>45</sup> Fredette was among the many white residents of the city for whom the riots symbolized Lawrence’s precipitous decline. The attacks on firefighters signaled to some residents that many of their fellow Lawrencians had lost their moral compass.

In his interviews, Duran noticed this theme repeatedly. He wrote, “The riots are seen as the acts of ‘alienated,’ ‘disoriented,’ ‘crazy,’ citizens acting out their ‘hysteria’ because ‘they didn’t know what else to do.’”<sup>46</sup> Some of those who refused to see the riots as deliberate protest, at least recognized that living conditions in the neighborhood had brought about a level of frustration, that made violence a compelling option, but others

denied even that, seeing the rioters simply as troublemakers. After the first night of rioting, an *Eagle-Tribune* editorial argued, “Those who are inciting trouble and perpetuating it are a relative few. Most of the neighborhood wants the rioting to end and to live in peace. If leaders from the neighborhoods can emerge and work to bring that majority together and build cohesiveness, the troublemakers will be isolated. Their power to incite will be lessened and made socially unacceptable.”<sup>47</sup> The editorial further echoed the city government’s dismissal of the riots as just a result of the heat, or of boredom, “A change of atmosphere is needed. The neighborhood – the housing project – needs something other than another hot night with nothing to do but hang out. A good rainstorm would help, or a community meeting with a goal of planning good things for the future, or, even, a street dance.”<sup>48</sup> This is perhaps the most extreme expression of the dismissal of the riots’ political element. According to the editorialists, what residents of the housing project needed was not improved living conditions, or an end to discrimination, but a chance to dance!

Many residents, particularly white Lawrencians, viewed the riots as an example of the lawlessness that had taken over their city, and of the police’s inability or unwillingness to restore law and order. “The hoodlums own the street,” said Jim John, a retired mechanic who lived next to the liquor store that was looted and burned. “The cruisers backed out and let them fight it out among themselves,” he said.<sup>49</sup> He dismissed the riots as an act of lawlessness. Although he acknowledged the racial tension that had fueled the riot, he blamed alcohol and “lawless punks” for the bulk of the trouble, “I think

it was a bunch of wise guys who caused all the trouble. It may have been Spanish on one side and white on the other, but it really just came down to a bunch of wise guys.”<sup>50</sup>

Jim John and Richard Fredette were not unique in their view that Lawrence had undergone a dramatic decline. The *Eagle-Tribune* described how in the riot neighborhood, “Residents talked sadly about years past when life was more peaceful. ‘I have seen this thing building for a long time,’ said Robert Lanouette, 156 Oxford St. ‘I have lived in Lawrence since 1944 and have watched it get worse.’”<sup>51</sup> The paper quoted another white resident of the neighborhood saying, “There are a lot of good people living here... But there are gangs that do nothing but hang out and drink and smoke dope.”<sup>52</sup> To many white residents, the political element of the riots was invisible. Their main concern was that rule of law had ceased to function in their city, that “hoodlums own[ed] the street” and the police were lacking either the power or the inclination to restore order. Among the white residents interviewed by the newspapers immediately after the riots, the idea that Lawrence had recently become “a nasty little city” was widely echoed.<sup>53</sup>

**“This used to be a good city, ...but I think it’s time to move”<sup>54</sup>**

Although the riots took place within the city, they highlighted the ongoing process of white flight. For those white residents who expressed dismay over the city’s decline, one of the most common responses was the expression of plans or a desire to move or, in the case of former white residents, statements that they already had moved. During the first night of rioting, Kathy Fragola and her two children ran from their house in the riot neighborhood and fled to the police station. There, she told the *Eagle-Tribune*, “They



were breaking into houses. Throwing fire all over the street. Everybody was trying to get out. I heard a shot, a bang and saw someone fall down. I was scared for my life and I'm afraid to go back... I didn't know where to go to be safe." At the police station she asked the officers and other people going in and out of the station what she should do, and no one answered here. The paper concluded, "Ms. Fragola said she would move out of Lawrence."<sup>55</sup> Jim John, the retired mechanic quoted above explained, "I've lived here for 40 years, and it's never been this bad... I don't want to leave, but I may have to." The *Boston Herald* reported him mourning the changes in Lawrence, saying " 'This used to be a good city,' ...shaking his head slowly and sadly, 'But I think it's time to move.'"<sup>56</sup> A police officer from Salem, N.H. was part of the team called in to quell the riot. He said, "I come from Lawrence. It was such a great area 15 years ago. I just don't understand what's happened."<sup>57</sup> The *Herald* reported, "Yesterday, as a bulldozer cleared the rubble from the burned out liquor store, a 21-year old woman who did not give her name told the *Boston Herald* that she was moving out of the neighborhood, 'I'm scared to live here... Now that all this stuff has started, how are we supposed to stick up for each other?'"<sup>58</sup> Many white current and former residents viewed the riots as evidence of Lawrence's decline.

The *Eagle-Tribune* examined this flight in its consideration of the neighborhood, "Until the late 1960s, [Oxford Street] area homes were owned predominately by working-class French-Canadian families who attended Mass at St. Anne's church and sent their children to its school. Several servicemen and their families lived in subsidized housing, and the projects were rented to low-income whites and some blacks." A 35-year

resident of the neighborhood, Carmen Ralph, reminisced, “It was really nice then... We used to sit on the porch at night, and everyone knew each other so it was quite social. You could go out and not lock your door.” She and other residents told the paper that the neighborhood had “changed complexion” in the last ten years. “A lot of the people I grew up with are moving out... Some are scared. A couple of elderly people left two weeks ago because it was getting so bad. Most of the time you’re scared to go out of the house.”<sup>59</sup> The white flight from Lawrence that had begun in the postwar decades was reinforced by the accelerating urban crisis of the 1980s, as many white residents viewed the riots as a catalyst to move.

While white residents and former residents condemned the decline of the city and spoke of the necessity of moving out of Lawrence, Latino residents expressed a firm commitment to remain in the neighborhood and not be scared off. For many white residents, the outbreak of open violence confirmed their decision to leave the city, or precipitated it. None of the Latinos interviewed, however, discussed a plan to leave the city. Latino Lawrencians’ intention to remain in the city did not necessarily reflect a lack of desire to live somewhere free of Lawrence’s troubles; rather it was a result of the constrained settlement choices shared by many urban Latinos. As a young Puerto Rican mother noted after the riots, “I have nowhere else to go... I have to stay here.”<sup>60</sup> White plans to leave the city reflected the fact that many of them had or could marshal the means to move to the suburbs. They could leave Lawrence for a place without racial tension and largely without open violence, for a place without such poverty or desperation, or such political exclusion that rioting seemed the only way to be heard;

white residents of Lawrence could and did leave the city to escape Lawrence's struggles. For many of the Latino residents who fought to claim public space during the riots, however, moving to a place without open violence, poverty, or political exclusion, was more difficult, whether because of explicit housing discrimination, the disproportionate concentration of public housing in struggling urban centers, the lack of multi-family rental housing in the suburbs, or the fact that the economics of suburban overdevelopment and urban decline had placed suburban homeownership beyond the reach of most urban Latino workers.

Furthermore, for Latinos, moving to the lily-white suburbs would not bring about an end to racial tension in their lives, but would likely cause an exacerbation of it. As a Dominican teenager who had lived in Lawrence's suburbs explained, "There was more prejudice in Methuen than there is in Lawrence. Our white neighbors used to call the police if we parked our car in front of their house."<sup>61</sup> In contrast to Lawrence's reputation for bigotry, breaking the racial homogeneity in the suburbs could be even more difficult than dealing with harassment in Lawrence, where at least there was strength in numbers.

The racialized political economy of suburban exclusion encouraged Latinos to focus their struggles *within* the city, for access to city-level decision-making and street-level safety, but some white Lawrencians were also eager to point out the role of suburban overdevelopment in concentrating Latinos in the city. Eugene Declercq's opinion piece in the *Eagle-Tribune* was titled, "While suburbs duck, Lawrence flounders: Riot wasn't just urban problem." He challenged the accusations that the riots demonstrated a bigotry that was somehow unique to the city, "The Lawrence riots were a

disgrace, but don't tell me they were just Lawrence's problem." Declercq pulled no punches with his assault on the "token liberalism" of Lawrence's suburbs, "To say racism doesn't exist in Lawrence is stupid. To pretend it exists in any greater proportion in Lawrence than in ethnically homogenous suburbs is equally stupid." Taking a metropolitan view of the riots, he challenged the suburban exemption from responsibility for the region's poor, an exemption premised on a politics of local control that enabled suburbs to exclude low-income residents as a way of protecting their property values and public services. "The cherished property values of the wealthy communities that surround Lawrence are secure because of a system that isolates its poor in cities like mine." Although he did not deny the bigotry within Lawrence, he blamed suburban overdevelopment, and Latino exclusion from such development, for the tension that had erupted in the riots. Further, he questioned the naturalness of *urban concentrations* of poverty and communities of color, "Does anyone seriously think that Hispanics coming to the U.S. wouldn't rather live in Andover than in Lawrence? The success of suburban communities in seeing that low income housing is not built within their borders exacerbates the problem and forces cities like Lawrence into a vicious cycle of poverty." He concluded with what he ironically projected would be the future motto of the region, if the suburbs held sway, "give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breath [sic] free – but make sure they live in Lawrence and not near us."<sup>62</sup>

**“This is what you call an all-out war. It’s very bad, very bad for the city of Lawrence.”<sup>63</sup>**

Even many of the residents and observers who refused to acknowledge the riots as protest forcefully argued that they reflected larger issues in the neighborhood and city. In particular, many people discussed the racial tension evident in the neighborhood. Some residents and observers talked about general racial divisions and racial tension, arguing that both sides needed to communicate more and learn about each other. Some white residents talked openly about their dislike of their Hispanic neighbors, and many Latinos talked with anger about the discrimination and harassment they experienced. It is important, however, to distinguish the varied accounts that claimed the riots were about *race*, from those who claimed the riots were about *racism*. Considering that most Latinos, even if they identify with the term, do not consider Latino to be a “race,” it is unlikely that Latino Lawrencians would consider the riots to be an expression of racial pride or racial antagonism. There were many activities in Lawrence that were certainly an expression of a pan-ethnic Latino pride, the annual Semana Hispana celebration, for example, but when Latino participants in the riots discussed the violence, the theme they most often addressed was defense against racism, against the widespread exclusion and daily harassment of Latinos based on their perceived race.

I belabor this distinction, between viewing the riots as having their origins in racial divisions versus in racism, because many observers managed to describe the racial origins of the riots without mentioning racism. In these accounts, the riots occurred because a mutual racial animosity grew to a furious level (perhaps exacerbated by poverty) and was expressed through violence. Without any discussion of structural

inequality, white and Latino rioters are implicitly portrayed as equally socially positioned, and therefore equally culpable for the (presumably) mindless violence.

Even a vague emphasis on racial tension was still a challenge to official city efforts to sweep race under the rug, however. Many media accounts explicitly contrasted residents' view of racial tension with the official view of a family feud. The *Boston Globe* noted that Alderman Johnson's dismissal of the riots' racial tenor was challenged by Oxford Street residents, "Alderman Raymond Johnson, who also serves as the city's public safety director, said a domestic dispute between Hispanic and white residents on Oxford street ignited the riots. However, he said, 'I don't think the underlying causes are racial.' Residents on Oxford street said yesterday, however, that the riots were racially motivated. They said tension between Puerto Ricans and those of French-Canadian descent was behind the violence."<sup>64</sup> Residents' discussion of racial tension was invoked as a subtle rebuke to official denials.

The vague discussion of "racial tension," as opposed to racism, was part of an effort to be neutral between whites and Latinos. Most discussions of racial tension in the neighborhood and city claimed it was mutual, and blamed both sides equally. The *Boston Globe* reported, "Across Lawrence yesterday residents talked about the racial violence that has scarred part of this city of 63,000 in the past few days. Their conversations revealed what many said were long- simmering feelings of antagonism, with whites charging Hispanics demand special treatment and some Hispanics saying they have been denied a fair share of Lawrence's services and opportunities."<sup>65</sup> The same *Globe* piece also claimed, "among many Hispanics and whites alike, the seeds of racial hostility

appear to run deep.”<sup>66</sup> The Globe made sure to air the grievances of both sides, portraying racial hostility not as a means of maintaining or challenging the privileges of whiteness, but as a result of unjustified mutual dislike. One opinion piece described, “Hispanics and whites in this poor, run-down section of the city have a mutual hatred of some duration... Unprincipled thugs and bullies from both sides are without doubt involved in the disorder, as some officials claim. They should be identified and prosecuted, but they are incidental to the disease of bigotry which can not be cured unless it is properly diagnosed and treated.”<sup>67</sup> This emphasis on “*mutual* hatred,” the “unprincipled thugs and bullies *from both sides*” and the “disease of bigotry” rather than the disease of racism, reflects a specifically post-Civil Rights view of race, in which many whites presumed that society was free of racism, and therefore, any individual or group that acknowledges race or responds to it, was bigoted. Like a parent who isn’t interested in hearing stories of “who started it,” liberal media accounts that highlighted racial tension paid little mind to structural inequality, gave little credence to the idea that Latinos might have been acting in self-defense, and called on both sides to transcend racial distinctions in order to solve their problems.

This emphasis on mutual animosity may have been a perspective shared by some white residents of the neighborhood, particularly those whose poverty obscured the ways in which racial privilege still operated in their lives, and saw only the divisions it created. As one young white woman explained to CBS, the tension in the neighborhood had created fear for both sides, “You’re afraid to even look at somebody now. If they’re a different color than you, you don’t look at them. You’re afraid that they’re gonna say

something to you or throw something at you.”<sup>68</sup> This argument that white and Latino neighborhood residents suffered equally from fear of harassment may not accurately reflect the origins of the riots in systemic racial inequality, but it does point out the “on the ground” effects of such inequality: mutual fear and mistrust.

The softer, gentler version of this critique discussed not “mutual hatred” but cultural “misunderstandings.” CBS news blamed the riots on a culture “clash” in the neighborhood, arguing that it was far more devastating than the riots themselves, “pain of cuts, bruises, and burned property is not as deep as the painful clash of cultures underlying the problems here.”<sup>69</sup> The *Eagle-Tribune* described the demographic changes in the Oxford Street neighborhood, “Starting in the early 1970s, the neighborhood make-up changed from one predominate culture – French-Canadian – to several smaller ones, including Hispanic. The Rev. Walter Gaudreau of St. Anne’s Church says cultural misunderstanding may underlie the problems that exist there now. ‘People are afraid of the unknown,’ he said. ‘They don’t always understand cultures different from their own, and sometimes a lack of trust grows out of that misunderstanding.’”<sup>70</sup> Another *Eagle-Tribune* article echoes this theme, “Hispanics now make up almost 20 percent of Lawrence’s 67,000 people. And their recent arrival has created tension, brought about mainly by a lack of cultural understanding.” The article quoted Sister Regina Bernarda, who explained, “Both sides need help... There is a lack of understanding among these people... It’s sad, because they are all Christians. They have many similarities, including their poverty.”<sup>71</sup> The argument that the “recent arrival” of Hispanics had created “tension” “mainly by a lack of cultural understanding,” obscures the role played by



discrimination, bigotry, and differential access to resources in augmenting that tension. Although poverty was discussed, it was discussed as an issue that presumably should unite the two groups.

Many observers noted that whites and Latinos in Lawrence had not only shared poverty in common, but also a shared history of immigration, including a shared experience of prejudice when they arrived. The *Boston Herald* argued, “the unique history of this factory town shows that each new group of immigrants that arrived faced similar problems... [Textile mills] drew their first workforce from Irish immigrants fleeing famine. The succeeding waves of migrations put workers from Quebec, Italy, Poland and China into the crowded factories, earning Lawrence the nickname, ‘The Immigrant City.’ Harsher nicknames were given to the immigrant workers. City newspapers of the late 1800s are filled with references to ‘noisy Irish rabble,’ ‘fighting Francais’ and ‘Pigtail Laundrymen.’”<sup>72</sup> This shared history of immigration and prejudice, it was argued, also ought to unite white and Latino Lawrencians.

The regional director of the U.S. Justice Department's Community Relations Service, Martin Walsh also spoke of racial tensions, but he alluded to the stereotypes and racist misconceptions that lay at their roots, avoiding the lure of laying equal blame. The *New York Times* reported his assurances that “federal officials will work to organize meetings to iron out differences between ethnic groups, but said the tensions in Lawrence are not unique.” Walsh asserted, “This is one of the things we find happening in a number of cities where problems are allowed to continue. The danger is they just can erupt.” He argued that there was little question that the riots were racially motivated because of

taunts shouted during the violence. He alluded to the mutual grievances explored above, noting “People have some very strong concerns and they have to be addressed, whether they are true or not.”<sup>73</sup> Walsh elaborated in another article on the nature of these “true or not” concerns, “It’s a similar dynamic to what happens in lots of cities... You have ethnic whites who believe they are losing jobs, who believe people are getting favored treatment. . . . It could happen in Dorchester.”<sup>74</sup> Not only did Walsh manage to discuss the tension without completely obscuring racism, but his reference to the similar struggles occurring in Dorchester was a welcome corrective to the portrayal of Lawrence’s racism as anomalous in New England. Walsh’s comments begin to home in on the different origins of white and Latino animosity in Lawrence. White residents saw the decline of their city and *believed* it stemmed from the arrival of Latinos. While Latinos knew well that the harassment and exclusion they were experiencing came from white residents, landlords, officials, and employers.

### **“Strictly racial”**

Although many reporters tried to discuss the racism of some Lawrence whites gently, some white residents were decidedly candid about the negative attitudes they held toward Latinos. Much to the chagrin of city leaders and more liberal white residents of the city, these types of comments dramatically contributed to the reputation of Lawrence as a racist backwater. As the *Boston Globe* noted, “The underside of Lawrence’s self-image, especially in race relations, has had ample voice since Wednesday. One white man from the area of the rioting spoke yesterday of ‘sandblasting’ his Hispanic neighbors

‘just like graffiti.’”<sup>75</sup> The *New York Times* spoke to white youth in the riot neighborhood, “A few blocks up Oxford Street, across an invisible ethnic divide, a group of white youths clustered outside the Cozy Cafe, a bar favored by residents of French-Canadian descent... None of the white youths would give his name. They said the rioting had nothing to do with any family feud but was ‘strictly racial,’ and they said they hoped there would be more trouble.”<sup>76</sup> Even a minister to the neighborhood’s French-Canadian population admitted, “The French are definitely prejudiced. I don’t deny it. This whole thing is racially motivated, and the French are just as much to blame as anyone.”<sup>77</sup> For some white residents, the riots were an opportunity to vent their negative feelings towards their Latino neighbors.

The notion of the “invisible ethnic divide” mentioned above is important, as few newspapers discussed the spatial aspects of the riot, the efforts to claim and defend turf. One white resident used the concept of protecting turf to justify white rioters as acting in self-defense. Joe Levesque, 18, said, “We came out to protect our grounds, to protect what is ours. They’re [Hispanics] the ones throwing the firebombs, they’re the ones with the guns.”<sup>78</sup> This notion of self-defense based on protecting turf was deeply related to the changes in the city, although the notion that white Lawrencians were out-gunned was likely untrue, as most papers discuss firebombs and guns on both sides, and many of those arrested for possession of Molotov cocktails were white. Another white neighborhood resident also described his claim on the neighborhood. The *Eagle-Tribune* reported, “Larry Lavoie, who lives on the third floor of the same tenement was moving his valuables out [along with his girlfriend and two kids]. ‘They said this building was

next... I'm staying, though,' he said. 'I'm not letting them drive me out. I work hard and I have got a right to be here.'”<sup>79</sup>

Other white residents described, as Martin Walsh described above, the perception among many white Lawrencians that Latinos received unfair privileges, “Some, like the middle-aged white man interviewed on Essex street in the shopping area downtown, mourn the changes they say are coming to Lawrence and wish they could leave. The man, who didn’t want his name used complained, “It’s going downgrade. People who can get out are going out. . . . There’s too much one-sidedness” in favor of Hispanics.<sup>80</sup> The *New York Times* found similar feelings, “The feelings of residents against the Hispanic newcomers run remarkably high in some quarters.” A businessman in his sixties, who also chose to remain anonymous, said of the violence, “It had to come. This used to be a good city but you get all these Spanish people in here and 90 percent of them don’t work. I think they’re pushy people.” He described daily crowds of Hispanic people outside the welfare office on Lawrence Street, reasoning “You never see a white person there.”<sup>81</sup> This claim, that Lawrence whites never received welfare was, of course, as untrue as the idea that white residents had no Molotov cocktails, yet many white residents believed them and these beliefs made it easy to blame the decline of the city on its newest residents. ABC aired a clip of a radio show in which a caller claimed, “I think [Hispanics are] getting special care, more than any other group in the past.” The host disagreed, but noted, “It’s easy to blame the Hispanics. They’re the whipping boys of this community.”<sup>82</sup> The status of Latinos in Lawrence as the city’s “whipping boys” demonstrates the scapegoating of Latinos for the city’s decline. In fact, as Ramón

Borges-Méndez has argued, the exploitation of Latinos in Lawrence's declining manufacturing sector is what had enabled Lawrence's industries to remain competitive into the late 1970s.

The *Boston Globe* talked to a 75-year-old lifetime resident of Lawrence, who was herself the daughter of Lithuanian immigrants, who gave her account of "what happens" when Hispanic families move into the neighborhood, "First the storm door goes, then the window on the front door, then the bottom part of the fence when the kids kick them out." She asked rhetorically, "Who makes a slum?" and answered, "It's the people who live there." After blaming Latinos for the changes in her neighborhood, she concluded with a theme taken up by many of the children and grandchildren of immigrants who condemn the differences they perceive between their forebears and more recent migrants, "My parents came here with nothing and they made it."<sup>83</sup> Her complaints touched on two of the key narratives in white opposition to Latino settlement in Lawrence. The first, that they have been responsible for neighborhood decline, failing to keep up the properties that they rent, obscuring, of course, the legal responsibility of landlords, not tenants to maintain properties. The second is the familiar argument of the descendants of early-twentieth century immigrants, that they made it without help. Such a "boot-strap" argument obscured the massive federal largesse (particularly the New Deal, the GI Bill, and government-sponsored suburbanization) that separated the children and grandchildren of early-century immigrants from the squalor their parents and grandparents faced. Comparisons with early-century European immigrants also eclipsed

the structural changes in the U.S. economy that had dramatically affected the urban job market and worker opportunities for upward mobility.<sup>84</sup>

As much as the riots showcased the tension and conflict in Lawrence, some of the coverage displayed, intentionally or not, the substantial degree of interracial cooperation and friendship also present in the city. Clips and photos of white and Latino neighbors and friends sitting together or talking were interspersed throughout the coverage. NBC focused on a large group of white and Latino young men who had gathered the day after the second night of rioting to discuss how they could prevent another night's violence. The main representative from each side agreed to talk to all their friends and try to calm everyone down, and the camera lingered on their hands as they shook on the agreement.<sup>85</sup> NBC's coverage noted, "people who live here say relations between Hispanics and Anglos have been generally good."<sup>86</sup> Many Lawrencians were anxious to point out the examples of racial harmony and cross-cultural friendships that did indeed exist within the city. A white resident who had lived on Oxford Street for eight years said, "We never had trouble... The [Hispanic] families and us all live together. There's no racial problem."<sup>87</sup> The *Boston Herald* reported, "Halfway down Oxford Street, a little white boy named Gary and a Hispanic boy named Rafael sat together on a curbstone and said they heard all the commotion the night before but were unsure why 'the teenagers were fighting.' Asked why they were sitting alone, removed from the dozens of people who milled around the riot scene 300 yards away, Rafael giggled and said simply, 'He's my friend.'"<sup>88</sup> In a press conference, Governor Dukakis read a statement in English and Spanish that called on a presumed history of cooperation, or at least mutual tolerance, in

Lawrence, “I have a special message for the people of Lawrence. You have lived and worked and played together for years – in friendship and peace. That peace has been shattered and friendships strained but that does not have to be. It is time for the healing to begin.”<sup>89</sup> This presumed racial harmony, however true and numerous the examples may have been, was not at the forefront of most residents’ minds, particularly those Latino residents who viewed the riots as a rare opportunity to point out the massive discrimination and exclusion they faced in the city.

**“It seems the Americans have a choice about whether they will recognize us as citizens”<sup>90</sup>**

Latino residents and community leaders were the most explicit that the riots were indeed racial. In interviews with the press, and later with Joseph Duran, many explained the prejudice and harassment they frequently encountered from Lawrence whites, as well as their determination to struggle against it. One resident of the riot neighborhood described anti-Hispanic sentiment in the city, “It’s like a little drop of water that keeps hitting you in the back of your head. After a while it drives you crazy.”<sup>91</sup> The *Boston Herald* reported right after the riots, from the predominately Latino Essex housing projects, where “teenagers hung out on stoops and talked of harassment and anger.” One youth there, Luis, told them, “The white guys up by the Cozy (Cafe, a bar at the corner of Haverhill and Oxford streets) are always saying stuff... Then some Spanish kid will do something and you’ve got a fight. It doesn’t take much when you got some people who are mad. This city is really prejudiced [against Latinos].”<sup>92</sup> One Latina discussed the

absurdity of white prejudice against Latinos, arguing that it was senseless to judge a person's worth based on skin color, "We [have] different colored skin and people don't want to understand that we're all the same. You know, they just think that just because we're a little darker... that we're just, what? Worse than them?"<sup>93</sup> Another neighborhood resident said, "They don't want to know anything about us - the way we live... One day you just get tired of it all and say enough. It has always been this way as long as I've been here [four years]. It's just now that we're getting tired of it."<sup>94</sup> It is unclear if, by "they," he is referring to his white neighbors or the city government. Many Latinos in the neighborhood complained that the government had no interest in the area's housing conditions, particularly in the projects, for which the city was the landlord, so it is possible that the above quote refers to that. It is also possible, however, that he was referring to his white neighbors' refusal to be open to the Latino residents. The superintendent of Lawrence Public Schools spoke of white residents' willful ignorance of Latino cultures when he told the *Boston Globe* that many Latinos came from the Dominican Republic, Cuba and elsewhere, but many whites called anyone speaking Spanish "Puerto Rican."<sup>95</sup> One Latino told Duran, "we did not escape war when we came to the United States...we are at battle in a free land...but we fight each other needlessly and foolishly...the real enemy is our ignorance of one another...a world which has neighbor competing against neighbor and does [not] allow or reward the time it takes to learn your neighbor's name... the enemy is an impersonal world...a world without personalismo...a neighborly love."<sup>96</sup> This statement supports the idea that Lawrence



Latinos were as frustrated by the rejection from their neighbors as they were by the neglect of city officials.

Even Latino Lawrencians who lived outside the neighborhood were vocal in their condemnation of the city's racism. The *Boston Herald* reported, "For more than a century, wave after wave of immigrants have flocked to Lawrence with the hope of winning the American Dream. But the new Hispanic workers say they have found only poverty and bigotry." A Latino community organizer, Felix Mejía told the paper, "If you work, you're taking the job away from someone else. If you don't work, you're on welfare... We work, we bring checks home, they treat us like pigs."<sup>97</sup> One of the city's most prominent community leaders, Isabel Meléndez, echoed that sentiment almost exactly. Meléndez, director of Spanish programs for Lawrence's Community Action Council, told the *Boston Globe* that Latinos were weary of the prejudice that portrays them as cheap labor or welfare cheats, "If you work, you're taking the job away from someone else... If you don't work you're on welfare."<sup>98</sup> The *New York Times* discussed two local ministers who said that "'primitive views' towards Hispanic people were regularly aired on a noontime radio talk show here," and Latinos rarely had airtime to respond. One of the ministers, Rev. Benjamin Rivera, noted with irony, "I lived in the South Bronx for 22 years, and now this," referring to the oft-stated idea that Lawrence was not supposed to have big city problems such as rioting.<sup>99</sup>

The exclusion and accusations Latinos faced seemed particularly painful to Puerto Rican residents, considering the one-sided citizenship given them in 1917 by the Jones Act. One informant said, "we are disappointed that the opportunities that brought us here

are affected by the attitudes of the townspeople...many of whom have told us to go back where we came from...just like what they yelled during the riots...actually that's what I think started the riots...they assumed that we are all illegal aliens...many of us are citizens...as Puerto Ricans we have no choice about U.S. citizenship...but it seems the Americans have a choice about whether they will recognize us as citizens.”<sup>100</sup> The white rioters chanting “U.S.A., U.S.A” must have been particularly painful and absurd in this context.<sup>101</sup> Citizenship is presumed to entail full access to the privileges and responsibilities of the United States. The choice that white Lawrencians had, to either acknowledge or ignore the reality of Puerto Rican citizenship, reflects the enduring power of racism to create second-class citizens in the United States. White residents could ignore the fact that Puerto Ricans had the same legal rights as they did, were equally entitled to the city, to its jobs, to its services, and to having a voice in its decision-making.

The *Boston Globe* noted that, for some Latino Lawrencians, it was not the fighting per se that concerned them, but the anti-Hispanic accusations that accompanied the fighting. The *Globe* interviewed two shopkeepers in the city's largely Latino Arlington District, “Outside of lower Tower Hill, the violence is the topic of little immediate concern. ‘I think it was a personal thing,’ said Leo Lavanderia, a native of the Dominican Republic who owns a dry cleaning store across town in the Hispanic neighborhood of Arlington. But published comments and reports of racial slurs used during the riot angered Lavanderia. ‘The first thing we do here when we move in is we look for work,’ said Lavanderia, who has lived in Lawrence for seven years. Another

Hispanic shopkeeper agreed: 'I came from my country to find a future, to find work,' said the man, who didn't want his name used. 'I am living honestly. I am paying my taxes.'"<sup>102</sup> These comments illustrate that Latinos throughout the city were anxious to defend themselves against stereotypes of Latinos as abusers of the welfare system. Indeed, although community activists often pointed out the Catch-22 discussed above, that Latinos were judged whether they found a job or not, the charge of welfare abuse was far more prominent in Lawrence than the charge that Latinos were taking away the jobs of whites.

**“Please, we are tired of being put down”<sup>103</sup>**

Many Latinos viewed the riots themselves as a form of self-defense against racism in the city, as an expression of Latino Lawrencians commitment to struggling against the prejudice and harassment they encountered. Carlos Ruiz, president of the Latin Alliance for Political Action and Progress told the press, “The situation was long overdue. This city is well known for being racist.”<sup>104</sup> The overall impression these speakers gave was that many Latinos felt themselves engaged in a struggle, or a fight for their rights to live and work in the city, of which the riots were just one piece. A young Latino resident of the neighborhood explained on NBC news that he and other young people had rioted because they had been continually denied basic respect, “We’re tired of being put down. Please, we are tired of being put down.”<sup>105</sup> One of Duran’s informants said, “People tell us that to make it in America we have to work and study hard...we would love to have a full chance to do those things....a good and decent job and

opportunities for a good education... but I do not see those opportunities here for everybody..... What it [may] come to is that we will have to fight for these things.... and believe me, if it comes that, we will fight.”<sup>106</sup> The community leader who called for neighborly love in the quote above followed with this, “I am a realistic [woman], though, and I realize that even love must be fought for.”<sup>107</sup> She elaborated on her commitment to struggle in Lawrence, placing it in the context of the American struggle for freedom, “I am not an educated [woman] but I have learned that this country itself was built by those willing to fight for their freedom... as old as I am I will fight in whatever way is necessary to make sure my children and their children can have their rightful share of dignity and hope in Lawrence.”<sup>108</sup> By invoking her children’s children, she affirmed the commitment of many Latinos to make Lawrence a permanent home. She continued by expressing her willingness to endure violence and unrest in the city to end the suffering of Lawrence Latinos, “if it takes riots then let it take riots... we can no longer be ignored.” In one of the most dire and poetic summations of the riots, she concluded, “we are at battle in a free land” predicting “we will win...with the help of God.”<sup>109</sup> One riot participant said simply, “When somebody gets killed, that’s when they’ll listen. But I’ll keep fighting until this is settled.”<sup>110</sup> These statements reflect a clear commitment among many Latinos to embrace the riots as a collective protest.

Some Latinos made clear that this protest was reluctant. As one young Latino told ABC, “We all got families, you know? We don’t need this.” He argued that Latinos did not start the fighting, but would not allow themselves to be pushed around and harassed.<sup>111</sup> Although Latinos were willing to fight, and committed to fighting, their

ultimate goal was not to struggle against the city, but to contribute to the city, to be a full part of it. As one of Duran's informants said, "We want to be part of the total community...to contribute our culture...to raise our families...but none of this is possible if we are kept in a position of earning such low wages...if we are kept at the bottom of the pile... if we are kept poor."<sup>112</sup> Another explained, "We [Hispanics] are not opposed to America...we are here because we too believe in the freedom and the opportunity that is supposed to be what American democracy is all about...Rather than ask whether Hispanics wanted to tear down the system, you should ask whether the system is keeping its part of the bargain...whether they are practicing democracy or just talking it."<sup>113</sup> The Spanish-language, Boston-based newspaper, *La Semana* argued that Latinos needed to receive "*el apoyo necesario para acomodarse como un miembro armónica del cuerpo social de la ciudad, no como una minoría inconveniente que debe ser ignorada*" [the support necessary to situate themselves as harmonious members of the social body of the city, not as an inconvenient minority that should be ignored].<sup>114</sup> In these arguments, Latinos were portrayed as struggling for the right to contribute to the city; inclusion was necessary so that Latinos could make a better life for all of Lawrence's residents.

#### **"We are slaves to their inaction"<sup>115</sup>**

Many Latino Lawrencians blamed not only harassment from other city residents, but neglect specifically from the city government. One community leader highlighted the aspect of protest against the city by preferring the term "demonstration" to "riot." "Sure there was a big commotion...but I wouldn't call them riots... they started out as a fight

and turned into a demonstration... many of the people who got involved wanted to turn the riots into a demonstration of how these city fathers...of Lawrence...had better take care of their children.”<sup>116</sup> Dismissing the paternalism implicit in the common term “city fathers,” the informant warned, “we pay more respect to our pets than they do to our people... if they don’t take better care of their ‘children’ then some of the children are going to have to take over as city fathers.” The informant summed up “what’s wrong with this city...they call themselves the city fathers and they abuse and neglect their children.”<sup>117</sup> A resident said, “I do not understand the political system here...partly because I do not speak English and partly because when things are explained to me...about what the leaders say they are going to do...I look around and I see nothing...politicians here are masters of the words...and we are slaves to their inaction.”<sup>118</sup> Many Latinos viewed neglect from city officials as one of the main causes of the riots.

Although city officials were careful with their language after the riots, many Latinos expressed the belief that city officials harbored hidden anti-Hispanic sentiments, such as those State Representative Kevin Blanchette claimed city leaders expressed in a closed council meeting. He explained that city officials blamed the state for the presence of Latinos in the city, and asked state leaders, “why don’t you pass legislation to keep all these ‘spics’ from moving here?”<sup>119</sup> Echoing the rioters’ taunts that Latinos should “go back where [they] came from,” one Latino resident expressed his opinion that the city leaders felt the same way, and suggested with outrage, “Maybe they should put us in an envelope and mail us home.”<sup>120</sup> Another Latino resident said, “The city blames the

projects for the riots... even though they have promised to improve the projects since the riots... there is still an attitude at city hall that if they had their way they would kick all of us out of the city.”<sup>121</sup> Many Latinos echoed this sense that they were not welcome in Lawrence, that city leaders considered the very presence of Latinos an obstacle to the city’s success, and Latino Lawrencians were often mistrustful of city officials as a result.

The words of a community leader best illustrate the mistrust that many Latinos felt towards the city leaders, “You understand how important ‘confianza’ [interpersonal confidence and trust] is in ‘la politica’... when people speak to us in terms we do not understand it becomes easy for us to believe that they do not respect us [as] a people with a different view and different language and customs... We sense that the politicians mean only to intimidate us or dominate us. When they pay most attention to us is when they mean to impress us into voting for them... But we clearly understand their intention even if we do not always understand their words.” She continued, demonstrating the injustice of Latinos’ exclusion and her view that the riots were just a piece of a much larger struggle, “They do [not] mean for us to join them in city hall, they only want us to put them there... When we ask them questions as we have done in the past (with the Latin Alliance for Political Action and Progress) they ignore us or try to set us up one against the other... We asked them why they have ignored us and we are told to sit down, shut [up], or get out... Always we are told to wait... and we are made to feel that we have no place in city hall... To me this is more an act of war than the riots could ever be.”<sup>122</sup> To this community organizer, the exclusion of Latinos from city decision making was, itself,

an act of violence. Given the conditions that Latinos were forced to bear under an unresponsive city government, this statement bears a good measure of truth.

For other Latinos, particularly those who had participated in the riot, it was specifically the behavior of the police that was so infuriating. The *New York Times* reported, “The mood was very tense today in Lower Tower Hill. Dozens of young Hispanic residents and some of their parents spoke bitterly of the prejudices they said they faced from whites. They spoke of trouble finding jobs and of harassment by the Lawrence police.” An unemployed nineteen year old Puerto Rican who came to the U.S. when he was five, told the paper, “The [police] call us bad names all the time.” He added that the police were always slow to respond to calls for help “when it's from our area.”<sup>123</sup> A Latino restaurant worker in his mid-twenties stood outside the Essex projects with his baby daughter on his shoulder, explaining to the *Times*, “We've been under pressure... The police officers treat us like animals.”<sup>124</sup> He and a dozen others who gathered around asserted that the Lawrence police had subjected Latino residents to public strip searches over the previous month, when they suspected project residents might be carrying illegal drugs.<sup>125</sup> The *Boston Herald* reported Latino perceptions that police harassment continued throughout the riot itself. A Latino teenager, who admitted he was one of those fighting in the street, told the paper, “The police were in one corner protecting all the white people. They only came down to our corner to beat us up.” He and a number of other Latino youth called for equal protection, arguing that the riots resulted from frustration from years of police prejudice against Latinos. “We can't even ride a bike because they say it is stolen. We want even protection by the police.”<sup>126</sup>



Although many Latinos, particularly community leaders, viewed the riots as a struggle against the prejudice and harassment Latinos encountered in Lawrence, other Latinos, particularly those who lived in the riot neighborhood, viewed the riots as just another example of that very prejudice and harassment. The insults shouted, the rocks thrown, and the fires started by white rioters, as well as the violence of the police, were further evidence for some Latinos of the hatred their neighbors felt towards them. As one Latina resident who witnessed both nights of rioting described, “Everyone is like vampires... You can't see anyone during the daytime and everyone relaxes. Then, at night, the vampires come out for blood.”<sup>127</sup> Latinos showed the press the wounds they received from violence during the riots. A five-month old baby was the youngest victim, the son of the same woman whose broken window had catalyzed the riot. I quote the *Boston Herald* at length, because the excerpt demonstrates the anti-Hispanic fury of the crowd, and the hurt and anger of the victims:

“The baby was sleeping on the bed and the tear gas landed right outside the window. He was crying and crying and wouldn't stop. His lips turned purple.”

The fumes quickly filled the woman's first-floor apartment.

“My eyes filled with tears and I felt like I was suffocating. I couldn't breathe and I felt helpless.”

Ocasio said she ran out into the street and asked a police officer to call an ambulance. She said he told her to carry the baby out of the riot area and wait for the ambulance on the corner.

But that meant walking through an angry crowd of people who were screaming anti-Hispanic slurs.

The frightened mother handed the baby to her friend Jose Santana, 19, who ran through the crowd with little Daniel in his arms.

Santana said, “People were screaming and throwing stuff at me. If the police weren’t around, they would’ve killed me.”

The mother ran through the crowd after Santana and said she heard one policeman say, “What’s she going to do, walk the baby?”<sup>128</sup>

Ocasio and Santana voiced their anger at the anti-Latino harassment and violence they were forced to endure, including the riot as an example of that violence. Ocasio told the *Boston Herald*, “This has to stop. This is abuse. We’re not guinea pigs.” Ocasio, who was Puerto Rican, again pointed out the frustration shared by many Puerto Ricans, that white Lawrencians were not acknowledging the shared rights granted by citizenship, when she noted, “We are humans and we are Americans, too.” In her assertion, the very basic fact of Latino humanity should spare them from such degradation. Santana added, “There are so many little kids on this street just like Daniel and nobody wants them to be hurt just because they got into the middle of this.”<sup>129</sup>

These vocal assertions of Latinos’ right to live peacefully in the city, free of racist violence and harassment, echo the migration narratives of many Lawrence Latinos. As discussed in Chapter Two, many Latinos had come to Lawrence in search of a quieter, more peaceful place to raise their children, and Ocasio and Santana argued that the racism of their neighbors and the city police was denying them equal pursuit of that

tranquility. Ocasio continued, “We can’t even sleep because someone might throw a bomb in a window and our kids would get burnt... I’ve got two kids. I am not married. I live alone and I cannot defend myself.” Ocasio concluded with a strong assertion that she would not allow her family to be victimized by racism, “I don’t know why people have to be so mean. But I’ll tell you one thing, I am not going to let my baby be the victim.” Unlike many of the white residents who left the city in search of a better life for their children, Ocasio had to find a way to protect them without leaving the neighborhood. As she concluded, “I have nowhere else to go... I have to stay here.”<sup>130</sup>

Ocasio’s story demonstrates the fact that many Latinos experienced the riots not as an anti-racist protest, but as another act of harassment and abuse of Latino residents. Her story also highlights a gendered element of the struggle to claim the right to live in Lawrence safely. The rioters seem to have been overwhelmingly male, while many of those claiming that the riots were a terrorizing force were female. For some of the city’s female residents, particularly those with children, the riots may not have been seen as a chance to vent their outrage about the prejudice and harassment they encountered; rather the riots may have been seen as simply another example of racist violence in the city (of course this may have been true of some non-rioting men as well). This gendered view of the riots as a terrorizing force, rather than a chance to protest, should not preclude the possibility that some women participated in the Lawrence riots. Although all of those arrested were men, Marilyn Johnson has noted that arrest records generally substantially underestimate the participation of female rioters.<sup>131</sup> Whether white or Latina women involved themselves in the actual fighting is unknown, but many were at least involved as

the “participant/bystanders” described in Chapter Four, adding strength to the crowds.<sup>132</sup>

In addition, in Ocasio’s account of the initial conflict that precipitated the riots, she was *with* the group of young Latinos that went to confront John Ball and the others over the broken window; she was not passively being avenged.

Martín Espada shared Ocasio’s perspective that the riots were another act of violence against Latinos in Lawrence; to Espada, the riots were more an act of violence against Latinos than a Latino protest. For Espada, the mobs consisted of “white adolescents who chanted USA and flung stones at the scattering of astonished immigrants.” Latinos were “astonished” and “scattering,” not angry and demanding equality as many other accounts suggest. Yet, as Ocasio’s account confirms, for some Latinos, the riots were exactly as Espada described. His poem and Ocasio’s account demonstrate that Latino residents of the riot neighborhood were a diverse group, and while some were eager or reluctant participants in the riot, others were victims of it.<sup>133</sup>

**“Just a neighborhood brawl until the police got involved”<sup>134</sup>**

In the debate about whether or not the riots were rational or irrational, protest or “craziness,” some took a middle ground. A few Lawrencians argued that the riots began as something personal (although racial slurs are never simply personal, as they always invoke larger racial hierarchies), but that they took on a political cast once they had begun. As one observer noted, the riots were “just a neighborhood brawl until the police got involved and then they became an official riot,” as rioters expressed their anger at the police and the city.<sup>135</sup> Duran also noted this change in the riots’ focus. He wrote, “While

many observers thought the initial fight which set off the riots was not a ‘conscious political act’ on the part of those initially embattled, there was the observation that as the riots escalated ‘they took on a political dimension...both in what the rioters were saying to one another...the racial slurs...but also in how the riots were handled, and ignored, by the government officials.’”<sup>136</sup> One unemployed Latino resident said he had a friend from outside the neighborhood who tried to sneak past the blockades to participate in the riot, “‘Now’s our chance’ he told me... ; our chance to band together and make people give us some attention’... sure I joined in...what the hell...I had a few things to get off my chest about the racist [leaders] who run this city.”<sup>137</sup> Statements like these are the most substantial challenge to the idea that the riots were just personal, a family feud or a “domestic dispute.”<sup>138</sup> For at least some of the participants, the riots were explicitly an opportunity to protest racism in the city. As Virgil Perez, the city's director of affirmative action, argued, “If there hadn't been violence, there would have been some other form of protest.”<sup>139</sup>

MIT researcher Joseph Duran also found substantial evidence that the riots were a form of protest, as evidenced by what he terms their “selectivity” and “restraint.” For example, Duran claims his informants noted that state police were not subject to the same outpouring of animosity from the rioters that city police were. He continued, “Although an estimated fifteen homes were the targets of firebombing, and two commercial sites were burned, there is some indication of ‘restraint’ in that this type of attack against property did not escalate indiscriminately. In fact, numerous informants claim that the owner of one commercial establishment actually ‘paid some people to burn his place

down for the insurance...’ as one participant reported. Other observers claim that when the tavern was looted many of the original fighting factions ‘actually got together and had a few beers.’ Some attribute the looting of the tavern as the purposeful and opportunistic act of ‘drug addicts who saw this as a chance to openly steal to help support their habit.’ Others saw the burning as an attempt to ‘burn out the drug dealing,’ indicating a specific instance of a larger apparent collective thought: that the riots would somehow improve an already deplorable situation.” Although these interpretations differed, they all viewed the rioting as a rational, intentional act to “somehow improve an already deplorable situation,” rather than random madness or hysterical lawlessness.<sup>140</sup>

Duran further argued that many rioters joined in as a deliberate decision to send a message that Latinos in Lawrence were collectively “fed up with lack of access.” Duran’s informants discussed that they joined the riot as a “cry for help” or because the community’s “needs [were] not being met,” or out of “anger at the system” to name a few.<sup>141</sup> He also argues that the riots were deliberate protest, rather than irrational violence, because there was no sniper shooting against the police, “although many informants claim[ed] the number of citizen-owned handguns is quite high.” Duran argued that the lack of sniper fire indicated the rioters’ restraint, demonstrating that violence was only a means to the end of making their voices heard.<sup>142</sup>

Duran used this evidence of restraint to argue that the riot was a form of intentional protest, rather than violence for violence’s sake. His goal was to highlight the political nature of the riots. Other observers, however, described the limited scope of the riot in order to minimize it. The head of the Lawrence Chamber of Commerce wanted to

make clear that the riots did not affect the whole city; “There really wasn't any kind of motivation of anger with the city. It stayed localized. It was pressures building up right in that neighborhood,”<sup>143</sup> and “The issue was localized in that one neighborhood. There was no thought of people jumping into cars, running around the city and looting.”<sup>144</sup> The *Boston Globe* reported that a “store owner a few blocks up from the scene of the violence, said he did not know about the riots until a customer from New Hampshire told him about them the next day.”<sup>145</sup> These stories were marshaled, not to portray the rioters as restrained and rational, but to dismiss the riots as inconsequential, a small incident that was blown out of proportion.

Some argued that the riots were a protest, but took a slightly different angle in arguing that they were a demand *for* something, rather than a reaction against something. This is an important distinction, because it demonstrates that Latino activism entailed a vision for the city, not just a condemnation of it. Nunzio DiMarca, a member of the Alliance for Peace, attempted to outline that vision for NBC, before realizing perhaps, that a sound bite might have a better chance of being transmitted, and summed up, “I can tell you all in three words: better living conditions.”<sup>146</sup>

Whether an expression of heedless frustration or a deliberate act of protest, it is obvious that the riot reflected deep problems in the city of Lawrence, problems even deeper than the daily prejudice and harassment Latinos faced in the city, or the exclusion from political decision-making on the municipal level, although connected to both these things. As the media, community organizations, politicians, and scholars searched for

answers, a giant spotlight was trained on the city, revealing the devastating effects of global capitalism and a segregated metropolitan residential system.

### **Spotlight on Lawrence**

*“La violencia solo podrá desaparecer cuando se eliminen sus causas, y la pobreza es un peligroso detonante.”* [Violence will only disappear when its causes are eliminated, and poverty is a dangerous explosive.]

*-La Semana newspaper, Boston*<sup>147</sup>

The national media attention trained on Lawrence excited many residents of the riot neighborhood and community leaders, who were grateful for the attention and the amplification of their message. At the same time, the national media attention shamed city leaders and many other city residents. One resident called in to the local paper’s “Sound Off” section to complain, “It was said Lawrence was the worst or nearly the worst city in which to reside in the United States. After the riots, Lawrence is the worst city to live in on the face of the earth.”<sup>148</sup>

It refers to a consumer guide that had been released earlier in the year rating almost three hundred U.S. cities for their “livability” and putting Lawrence at the very bottom. NBC pointed out that even before the riots, “Lawrence [hadn’t] enjoyed the best of reputations.” NBC noted that Lawrence had been deserted by the textile industry decades ago and currently had “more than its share of slums.” The reporter added, for good measure, “it has also been described as looking like the back of an old radio.”<sup>149</sup> The *Boston Globe* noted that Lawrence already had an “image problem” and the national media attention that the riots drew did nothing to improve the city’s reputation. The *Globe* pointed out, “Whatever the cause of the fighting... the disturbance has become a



magnifying glass for the problems of this old, industrial city.”<sup>150</sup> The “magnifying glass” consisted of press, government, and academic attention drawn to the city, not to highlight Lawrence’s historic charm, but to explore the problems that precipitated the riot. In spite of the efforts of city leaders to blame the media for fanning the flames of unrest in Lawrence, much of the media and other attention was geared quite sympathetically towards the same goal as held by the city council: understanding the riots in order to ensure they didn’t recur. Although the attention may have exacerbated Lawrence’s bad reputation, it shined a crucial light onto the systemic problems facing the city.

The most frequently cited underlying cause of the riots was poverty. As the above quote from an editorial in the Spanish-language Boston paper, *La Semana*, argued, poverty had the power to spark violence. Many Latino community leaders and religious leaders who served the Latino community were adamant that poverty ignited the riot, not mindless bigotry. Rev. Daniel Rodriguez of the Hispanic Baptist Church argued, “it can’t be prevented. This has been building for 10 years. This is a natural result of an economic situation. We cannot have so much poverty together.”<sup>151</sup> Rodriguez does not cite just Latino poverty as the impetus, but shared poverty between white and Latino residents. Many community leaders and media observers noted that with no way to change or improve their situations, it was not surprising that many poor Lawrence residents would be overwhelmed with frustration. Isabel Meléndez said of Latino Lawrencians, “There are a lot of frustrations: lack of housing, people unprepared to join the job market, poverty.”<sup>152</sup> Frustration over economic troubles such as poverty or the lack of jobs fanned the flames of racial tension. The Globe noted, “The racial antagonisms among residents

in the Tower Hill area were most probably exacerbated by feelings of frustration and powerlessness prevalent in most economically deprived areas. It is not surprising that hatred and frustration, in the broiling heat of August, led to violent confrontation.”<sup>153</sup> One observer argued that the frustration over economic worries had deepened into desperation, for both white and Latino rioters. Douglas A. Gaudette, clinical director for emergency services at the Greater Lawrence Mental Health Center and himself a grandson of French-Canadian immigrants, said, “I think people have polarized according to their race, but that's because everyone needs a sense of belonging. I see it as a poverty issue, far more pervasively than race... I think it stems from something beyond that - it's an issue of desperation.”<sup>154</sup> In this view, the racial divisions stemmed entirely from the economic problems; for both whites and Latinos, racial identification and racial hatred were simply a way to find solace in, or make sense of, a shared economic disaster.

For other observers, it was not shared poverty, but unequal poverty that exacerbated the tensions. Although many Lawrencians were poor, observers noted that relative inequality still fueled Latino anger. Joseph Duran argued based on his interviews, “Remarkably, service bureaucrats at the state level, community residents, and local service providers perceived the social and economic conditions of racism; poverty; lack of equal opportunity in employment, education, and housing; discrimination in jobs and services; as the grievances which constituted the ‘meaning’ of the riots. In particular, relative inequality within these areas was frequently cited as a causal factor.”<sup>155</sup> He also noted that arguments that the problem was inequality “were clearly articulated in the prayer vigil conducted by sympathetic, and community-supported, clergy on the evenings

of the two nights of rioting.”<sup>156</sup> As these observers noted, poverty mattered, but it did not create racial divisions; rather, it exacerbated these differences. Poverty flowed along race lines because Latinos had unequal access to the means to ameliorate their poverty, particularly unequal access to jobs, housing, social services, and city government.

More telling than the statistics around poverty were the living conditions they created. Housing was particularly an issue for low-income Latinos. Patrick Smith, from the Immigrant City Housing Corporation told the *Boston Globe*, “The tenements of Oxford Street have long served their purpose... I wouldn’t be surprised if the tenants there were paying 70 percent of their income in rents, and a lot of it to absentee landlords.”<sup>157</sup> Although his estimate was quite high, he pointed out the important, often obscured, fact that Latinos were not finding “cheap rent” in the run-down neighborhoods they settled. The worst housing conditions, however, were reported in the housing projects, where the “absentee” landlord was the city itself. Many observers pointed out the living conditions of the housing projects, although this was most often done without discussing the housing discrimination and larger structural factors that condemned Latinos to the projects. As one project resident described, “Why should we plant flowers when cockroaches crawl through our food, when the plumbing does not work, and heating does not work?”<sup>158</sup> His argument was a vehement response to the narrative prevalent among white Lawrencians that Latinos ought to take better care of their rental properties. Even Mayor Buckley, the city official most eager to downplay the riots later admitted, “The ’84 riot involved no real racial problems. But I tell you kids, afterwards I went in to visit some Merrimack Project Apartments and my first thought was ‘Shame on

us – shame on every level of government responsible for this.’ No bathtub, no shower, no play area. 250 families crowded in. No wonder they have problems.”<sup>159</sup> Although Buckley maintained that the riots were not racial even after he was no longer in office, it is significant that even the riots’ most steadfast denier eventually came to recognize some of the larger issues that precipitated the violence. Martín Espada took an extremely critical view of the city’s housing projects, alluding that they were more like a prison, asylum, or even a zoo, referring to “the housing project where they [Latinos] are kept.”<sup>160</sup>

The *Boston Phoenix* suggested that the North Common controversy may have inflamed feelings of animosity between Latinos and the city government. As discussed in Chapter Two, community activists and the city government had long struggled over whether the city should focus on low-income or middle-income development. This struggle had played out in the battle to include low-income housing in the North Common development project, and it touched on a key difference between Latino and white official visions for the city: whether the city should work to build adequate, affordable housing for its current residents, or built higher-end housing to attract middle-income residents. Shortly before the riots, the *Eagle-Tribune* had led with the headline, “Mayor, council score victory as low income homes banned,”<sup>161</sup> after the Massachusetts Executive Office of Communities and Development told the city it could re-advertise for bids for development plans that did not include low-income housing. Alex Rodriguez, chairman of the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination argued that this decision exacerbated tensions between city officials and Latinos, the majority of those who had been cleared from the North Common area. He told the *Boston Phoenix*, “The

message to the poor people was, 'Get out. You filled up the housing here when it was slummy, and now we, the city, are going to do something with that land, and we don't need you.' You could sense the tension in Lawrence. I wasn't predicting any riot, but I've been around the block before, and I knew what the signs meant."<sup>162</sup> As discussed in Chapter Two, competing visions for the city often centered on housing, whether the city was obliged to focus its resources on improving access to quality, affordable housing for its residents, or if the city could focus its resources, instead, on attracting middle-income residents to the city. As a result of this tension the North Common controversy may indeed have played a role in the riots, even though it did not directly relate to Lower Tower Hill.

Some observers blamed Lawrence's poverty on large changes in the city's economy. The *Boston Globe* noted that Lawrence had lost nearly five hundred jobs since January, as three shoe manufacturers and a textile company closed.<sup>163</sup> Douglas A. Gaudette, clinical director for emergency services at the Greater Lawrence Mental Health Center explained, "Lawrence is a city that has undergone a transition from a fairly well-defined blue-collar, industrial city to a city where the remains of industry are present, but they're [the buildings] vacant."<sup>164</sup> The *New York Times* noted, "Most of the town's old textile mills closed down years ago. But new industries have grown up over the past decade, including electronics, food processing and clothing factories."<sup>165</sup> The Herald also noted, "Though the textile and shoe factories have faded, entry-level jobs still are available at nearby high technology firms like Wang Laboratories and Honeywell."<sup>166</sup> These high tech firms may have provided jobs for Lawrence residents, but they were

located in the suburbs, so they could provide no boost to the city's tax base. Further, these new industries did not supply the quantity of jobs that had been lost through decline of the textile industry, as the entire nation shifted to a service economy.<sup>167</sup>

A few months after the riots, in November of 1984, CBS reported on this national transition, and the decline in wages that it was precipitating. They chose Claire and Dick Sprague from Lawrence to demonstrate these larger changes in the economy. CBS announced, "It's a changing America. Dick Sprague is back to work but he makes about half as much as he did driving a truck in the teamsters union." Sprague's new job was at a "package" or liquor store, and his wife took a job tending bar to make up for the lost income. "Even as more and more Americans go back to work," the news segment noted, "Claire and Dick Sprague are at the heart of a vast change coming over the American labor force. There are jobs being created... But many of these jobs are in the service industry. For the first time in history, more Americans work in them than in manufacturing. In service jobs that tend to pay less."<sup>168</sup> As CBS noted, the transition from a manufacturing to a service was not unique to Lawrence, but Lawrence was "at the heart" of these vast changes, and was experiencing the dramatic effects.

Perhaps more important in precipitating the riots than the overall decline in manufacturing jobs was the fact that the remaining jobs in Lawrence did not afford the same opportunities to all workers. The *Boston Phoenix* noted, "Regardless of race or national origin, the largest proportion of the total Lawrence workforce is employed as machine operators, assemblers, and inspectors in area factories. That much is a fact of life in Lawrence. Yet white workers in the labor force fare considerably better than their

Hispanic counterparts: for 1979, the mean family income for whites was \$18,137; for Hispanics \$10,690. And poverty-status statistics reveal an even sharper contrast: roughly 50 percent of the ‘Spanish-origin’ population lives below the federally designated poverty level, compared to only 18 percent of the ‘white’ population.”<sup>169</sup> Although factory work was shared in Lawrence, these statistics argue that relative inequality still played a major role.

Inequality among workers in terms of income was significant, but others drew attention to the fact that inequality existed even in terms of who was able to get jobs. The overall Lawrence unemployment rate was substantial. The Globe noted, “Unemployment in June, at 7.4 percent, was higher than any other city in the state, and even that rate was almost certainly an underestimate, according to Betsy Houghteling, spokeswoman for the Division of Employment Security.”<sup>170</sup> Latino unemployment was both higher than general unemployment, and growing faster. In 1980, Lawrence’s Latino unemployment was 12 percent, much higher than the city’s overall unemployment level: 7 percent. By 1990, Lawrence’s general unemployment had grown 8 percentage points to 15 percent, while Latino unemployment had grown to a mind-blowing 25 percent. By 1984, these trends seem to have already been evident. Unemployment in the city was growing, and Latinos were bearing the brunt of the joblessness. By 1990, while one-quarter of Latinos looking for a job could not find one, white unemployment in the city was only 9 percent. The city’s was in dire economic circumstances, but those economic circumstances did not play out evenly across racial lines.

Lawrence's economic troubles were even starker when looked at through the lens of poverty, better able than unemployment numbers to capture the long-term unemployed. Again, Lawrence was at the bottom of the state, with a 20 percent poverty rate, double the statewide average and 6 percentage points higher than in nearby Lowell.<sup>171</sup> Like unemployment, Lawrence's poverty was growing, and by 1990, Lawrence's poverty rate was 28 percent. Nor did Lawrence's growing poverty play out evenly over racial lines. By 1990, nearly half of Lawrence's Latinos lived in poverty, while only 13 percent of its white residents did.<sup>172</sup> Although the papers noted that unemployment and poverty contributed to the riot, the reality was that not only high, but *growing* and *unequal* poverty and joblessness were at work. As one Latino resident summed it up, "The riots were about jobs... pure and simple... Without decent employment the residents of this city have no investment here...why not riot?"<sup>173</sup>

The racial divide in unemployment was even more severe for youth. Duran reported that white people between the ages of 16 and 19 had only an 11.3 percent unemployment rate in 1985, compared with a 35 percent unemployment rate for Latinos in the same age range.<sup>174</sup> He connected Lawrence's lack of jobs to its failing schools, noting that with a Latino drop-out rate over 50 percent and the high unemployment rate, the city had a remarkable overabundance of young people who were neither in school nor employed.<sup>175</sup> As a Hispanic parent told Duran, failing schools were responsible for both the high drop-out rate and the high unemployment rate, and therefore responsible for the frustrations of the rioting youth, "When you look at the mess the school is in... you begin to see why there were riots in Lawrence."<sup>176</sup>



Latino students made up over half the Lawrence Public School population, and teachers and administrators struggled with how to teach students who frequently returned to the Dominican Republic or Puerto Rico. The superintendant complained of a student transiency rate of 55 percent and complained that when there was racial conflict in the schools, they didn't know who the Hispanic student leaders were because Hispanic students came and went so frequently.<sup>177</sup> The school budget was in dramatic decline while student enrollment was increasing, as was the proportion of students who were Latino. The *Boston Globe* reported, "Before Proposition 2 1/2 was enacted, the school budget was \$18 million and served 7800 students, 35 percent of them minority. This past year, [Superintendent Eugene] Thayer said, the school budget was just under \$16 million and enrollment has risen to 8700. Half are minority. Classes met in book closets, gymnasiums and libraries."<sup>178</sup> This change meant a drop in per pupil spending from \$2,307 to \$1,839 in just a few years. At the time of the riots, Lawrence Public Schools were in crisis; the city had already been pressured by the state to dramatically improve its bilingual education program, and it was on the verge of implementing a desegregation plan, albeit one that critics claimed lacked Latino input and put too much of a busing burden on Latino students.<sup>179</sup> At least one Hispanic parent felt that the riots could only improve a terrible situation, and she argued that even more people would have been justified in participating. "I don't condone violence, but I think those who rioted did the city a civic service... by bringing attention to the many problems for which the city is to blame... if there are riots in the future, I wouldn't be surprised if parents, teachers, and students participated in them."<sup>180</sup>

Parallel to the argument that Lawrence had too many youth who were neither in school nor working, was the argument that the riots were caused by a lack of recreation opportunities. The parent above argued, “If the city does not provide good schools you certainly don’t think they provide jobs or recreation for kids, do you?”<sup>181</sup> Even members of the city council felt comfortable pointing out the lack of recreation options for local youth. Public Safety Alderman Johnson argued that the riots were fueled by teenagers, mostly boys, who either weren’t old enough to work or couldn’t find a job. To Johnson, the hot weather exacerbated the restlessness of the youth, “These warm nights haven’t helped... It’s just frustration of having no place to go or nothing to do. Everybody’s fuse was very very short last night.”<sup>182</sup> Normally, in the hot weather, restless teenagers could cool off in the public pool, or at least open a fire hydrant, but the city had recently cracked down on the illegal opening of hydrants, and NBC noted that neighborhood hydrants had no water.<sup>183</sup> The pool, meanwhile, had been closed for the past two years, for lack of funds. The *Boston Globe* reported, “Mayor Buckley blames the budget-cutting Proposition 2 1/2 for many of the problems. It was a lack of money, he says, that led to the closing of swimming pools two years ago.”<sup>184</sup> This quote perhaps explains why the city council and even Mayor Buckley were willing to attribute the riot to lack of recreation opportunities, because the blame could be passed on to the state.

Some observers argued that Proposition 2 ½ could be blamed for a host of Lawrence’s problems: not only lack of recreation, but paltry school funding, insufficient numbers of police and firefighters, and the absence of a contract for teachers, firefighters, and police. Others argued that the city actually had money, but it was not being

apportioned fairly. Rev. James Keller noted, “You can drive down the streets and see which (neighborhoods) get streets repaired, garbage picked up and snow removal.”<sup>185</sup> Needless to say, the predominantly poor or Latino neighborhoods were not among those served well by the city. Still others pointed out that the city might be broke, but it wouldn’t have to be, if it were more diligent about collecting property taxes. A few months before the riot, a state Revenue Department report showed that Lawrence had \$2.4 million in uncollected fees and taxes dating back to 1980, money that Buckley said after the riots the city had begun to collect.<sup>186</sup>

The city’s failure to collect a portion of the tax revenue it was due reflected two situations: the first is that Lawrence has been a city of renters throughout its history, never having more than one-third of its housing units occupied by their owners. Absentee landlords had a longstanding reputation as the scourge of the city, and it is much harder to collect money from property owners who do not live within city limits. The city’s failure, however, also highlighted Lawrence’s terrible reputation as a city of political corruption and ineptitude. State Rep. Kevin Blanchette described, “The system is rotten with patronage, it's like five little kingdoms.”<sup>187</sup> Critics focused on Lawrence’s alderman style of city governance. Unlike most cities, Lawrence had no professional administrators to head police, fire, street or other departments. Instead, the city was run by the mayor and four aldermen, all elected at-large, and each in charge of a major section of government, such as Public Safety. Each alderman was able to hire his own workers and set his own policy. No other city in Massachusetts maintained this form of government, and fewer than three percent of cities nationwide utilized it.<sup>188</sup> Lawrence had developed

legislation to transform its city government into the strong Mayor and partially district-based City Council form that was more common among late-twentieth century cities. The new form of governance would take effect in 1986, with the city's new charter, but at the time of the riots, the old charter, and the old form of government were still in effect.

Observers noted that the alderman form of government was a city structure that “promote[d] an unusual amount of patronage and favoritism in the delivery of city services, and that rob[bed] the community of the strong leadership needed to deal with poverty and unemployment and extend participation to a rapidly growing Hispanic population.”<sup>189</sup> As city services were provided by politicians, those services were delivered disproportionately to key election neighborhoods. Blanchette told the *Boston Globe*, “It's a standing joke in the city that each election year you see a brigade of street sweepers go to the precincts with the largest vote, and some parts of the city never see the street sweepers and one of those is where the riot was last week.”<sup>190</sup> In a city in which administrators were required to run for office, even Mayor Buckley would admit that there was a “probability” that patronage existed.<sup>191</sup> Further the at-large election of aldermen diluted Latino voting strength, because Latinos were concentrated in a few neighborhoods of the city, while the lack of centralized leadership made it difficult to successfully lobby the city government to address specific issues. Martin Walsh, from the US Justice Department's community relations service argued, “The fragmentation of power diffuses even further the ability of Hispanics to get things done because they have to deal with five people. . . Nobody in government gets the overall view.”<sup>192</sup> Alderman Kevin Sullivan, who would become Mayor in 1985 acknowledged that, in Lawrence, the

good jobs and lifetime appointments went to political supporters, “A good 90 percent of the people working for the City of Lawrence, except in police and fire, are politically motivated, are political appointments.” Sullivan did not believe, however, that this overwhelming system of patronage made it difficult for poor Lawrencians to have their interests represented, asserting that on the whole, “I think the poor get treated very well.”<sup>193</sup> Blanchette disagreed, arguing that “for years the City of Lawrence has been a closed shop...people are fed up with the lack of access to decision-making in city government and policy-setting... the riots broke out because they didn’t know what else to do.”<sup>194</sup> He argued that poor white Lawrencians also struggled to have their needs addressed by the city government under this system., “there is frustration with the city, both Anglos and Hispanics were feeling it... the lack of housing, city services and recreational opportunities.”<sup>195</sup>

The poor match between social service provision in the city and the needs of Latinos was not solely in city-provided programs. State-based services and services provided by non-profits were also inadequate to meet Latino needs. Those services for which the city was not directly responsible however, like health services, were still subject in some ways to city government or susceptible to the pressure of city officials. Health, housing, educational and other services were inadequate or ill-fitted to Latino needs not because they were beyond the city’s purview, but because city officials had taken no interest in using or leveraging their authority to compel service providers to tailor services to meet the needs of those they served. One Latino social worker in Lawrence was hopeful that the riots would compel city officials to become invested in

changing the social service system in the city; he told NBC that the riots would “make the political elites be aware that there is a need out there for more social programs such as education, welfare, housing, etc.”<sup>196</sup> A social worker discussed the city’s reluctance to provide adequate social services for Latinos, “Those in power in Lawrence today have a short historical memory. Their basic assertion, in opposition to Hispanics here, is that they made it in this society without welfare, bilingual education, job programs, and range of governmental benefits that we seek for immigrants today. They forget that it was the absence of many of those very programs that prevented many of their own from making it... and it was only through their incorporation into the political system that certain opportunities were opened up for them... they forget, too, the riots, protest, strikes, demonstrations, that make up a part of their history... their history is one of a struggle for fair housing, education, jobs, decent treatment...the very things they actively seek to deny Hispanics today.”<sup>197</sup> Many observers and residents agreed with this common view that the inadequate and ill-fitting social service system in Lawrence stemmed at least partially from the active effort of city officials to deny adequate social services to Latino Lawrencians, and thus discourage further immigration.

If the city was slow to provide services to Latinos, it was even slower to give them access to city jobs. More than one observer pointed out the lack of Latinos in city government, either in elected office or civil service jobs. There were no Latino elected officials in the city, and few Latino staff.<sup>198</sup> A 1977 Executive Order from Governor Dukakis required cities to comply with equal employment standards or risk forfeiting state and federal funds. The goal was that sixteen percent of Lawrence’s workforce be

Latino, equal to their proportion of the population in the 1980 census. The city was under a voluntary agreement with the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination to raise Latino hiring, because it was quite far from the sixteen percent goal. The most recent report before the riots, submitted by Virgil Perez, the city's Director of Equal Opportunity and Community Relations, showed that out of over eight hundred employees in twenty-six municipal departments, only eighteen of them were Hispanic, or two percent of the city's workforce. The *Boston Phoenix* noted that there were no Latinos among the "city's clerks, tax collectors, assessors, custodians, health-care workers, grave diggers, auto mechanics, water-department workers, librarians, assessors, purchasing agents, or engineers."<sup>199</sup> There were two Hispanic police officers, although one was leaving the force and no more than seven or eight Hispanic firefighters on force of almost two hundred. A representative of MCAD told the *Boston Phoenix* that the lack of Latinos in city jobs sent a message to the Latino community, and "nothing speaks louder than zero."<sup>200</sup> The reluctance of city officials to hire Latinos was blamed both for Latinos' sense of exclusion as well as poor relations with the police and fire department. Rev. Keller, from GLEAM, told the *Boston Globe* that, at the very least, the city could teach fire fighters and police officers some Spanish.<sup>201</sup> This would not solve the problem of the lack of Latinos hired for city positions, but it would at least facilitate improved communication between the largely white police/firefighter forces and Latino communities.

Those observers who blamed the city's form of government for its corruption and its neglect of Latinos, anticipated that things might get better with the new charter, but

most observers put the onus on Latinos to win political power in the city, and thereby force the city government to recognize them. Some observers, including some Latino community activists, many of whom had long been focused on ramping up voter registration, argued that if Latinos could overcome their ethnic divisions and apparent local political apathy, they could register enough voters to be an important voting bloc in the city, as well as groom effective leaders for a united Latino movement. Virgil Perez noted that, of the 20,000 or so Latino residents of Lawrence, only about 5,000 were eligible to vote, and of those, only 1,500 were registered. He argued that Latinos could be a powerful voting bloc in local elections, if all eligible voters voted.<sup>202</sup> Although this was most certainly true, it was not a sufficient argument for the scale of neglect facing Latinos in Lawrence. A voting bloc should not be necessary to protect against police abuse or receive adequate maintenance from the city as a landlord. Further, Latino activists had already been working for decades to increase Latino voting in the city, in the face of substantial obstacles created by the city, a struggle which eventually culminated in a successful Department of Justice lawsuit against the city for violating the Voting Rights Act in 1999, as I will discuss in the next chapter.

Some believed that it was the diversity of Latinos in Lawrence that caused their political powerlessness. Many equated Latino diversity with paralyzing Latino divisions. As the *Boston Phoenix* argued, “They came not just from Puerto Rico, but from every Latin American nation. Their variety makes for colorful lifestyles, but it does not enhance political power... In Lawrence, where Latinos hail from a score of different lands, diversity to date means no solid, recognizable core of leaders.”<sup>203</sup> Although the diversity



of Latinos in Lawrence certainly precluded any easy consensus on a common agenda or strategy, it had not stopped decades of committed Latino activism in the city, both along and across ethnic lines. As the outline of Latino activism in this and the preceding chapters illustrates, Latinos in Lawrence were not suffering from a lack of leadership, a lack of commitment, or even a lack of cross-ethnic coordination; they were suffering from substantial economic and political obstacles to their full incorporation into the city.

Amazingly, no one was killed in the 1984 riots in Lawrence. Compared with other riots throughout the century, the violence was minimal. Yet the rioting and the conversations that followed it displayed the ongoing racialized competition over access to and control of the city's space and resources. White residents blamed Latinos for the city's decline and talked of moving out of the city, breathing new life into the suburban flight that had begun in the decades after World War II. Meanwhile, Latino residents talked of fighting for their rights and their desire to be a part of the city. Latino activism centered on gaining access to decision-making power in the city, and on gaining the right to live safely in Lawrence and express themselves without fear of racist attacks. Latinos also called for the concentration of more resources in the city: more jobs, improved housing, and better services. The economic decline that had begun in the decades after World War II had accelerated, and the structural changes in the city's economy provoked widespread poverty and inadequate city services. In the face of this obvious decline, city officials worked desperately to continue their boosterism, to minimize discussions of racism and violence in the city so as not to discourage the "first-class" residents and businesses they still believed they could recruit. Most stringently, city elites worked to

mute discussions of race and racism in the city in a way that served to obscure the marginalized position of Lawrence's Latinos. State officials encouraged the city to follow the rules, but ultimately, as I will show in the next chapter, the state was not willing to fiscally support the radical changes the city required. After the riots, observers called on the state to be an ally to Latinos in Lawrence by forcing the state to end discrimination. By adopting a narrow focus on anti-discrimination, however, the state missed out on an opportunity to substantially address the larger structural problems discussed above. The next chapter will examine the short- and long-term impact of the riots on a community, city, and state level.

---

<sup>1</sup>Martín Espada, "Toque de Queda: Curfew in Lawrence," in *Trumpets from the Islands of their Eviction* (Tempe, AZ: Bilingual Press/Editorial Bilingue, 1987), 26.

<sup>2</sup>Kathie Neff, "Why Lawrence? Why this neighborhood? Why now?" *Eagle-Tribune*, August 12, 1984.

<sup>3</sup>Joseph D. Duran, "The 1984 Riots: Lawrence, Massachusetts," (Unpublished Masters Thesis, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1985), 42.

<sup>4</sup>It is possible that some residents or observers used terms such as "uprising" or "rebellion," but such terms were not present in any of the extensive interviews, even those with Latino rioters and activists who emphasized that the riots were a protest.

<sup>5</sup>Peggy Hernandez, "Lawrence Police Enforce Curfew in Riot-Torn Areas; No Resistance to Order Reported," *Boston Globe*, Aug 11, 1984, <http://www.proquest.com>; ABC news clip, August 10, 1984, VTNA. The paternalism in the view of the riots as a "domestic disturbance" is overwhelming, and it is compounded by the common reference to city officials as "city fathers."

<sup>6</sup>Timothy Clifford, "Bishop preaches peace in Lawrence," *Boston Herald*, August 13, 1984.

<sup>7</sup>Hernandez, "Lawrence Police Enforce Curfew in Riot-Torn Areas."

<sup>8</sup>Colin Campbell, "Two Nights of Rioting Bring a Curfew to Lawrence, Mass." *New York Times*, August 11, 1984, Sec. 1.

<sup>9</sup>Duran, "The 1984 Riots," 68.

<sup>10</sup>Espada, "Toque de Queda."

<sup>11</sup>Duran, "The 1984 Riots," 42.

<sup>12</sup>Duran, "The 1984 Riots," 42.

<sup>13</sup>Colin Campbell, "Hispanic Complaint Belittled in Riot-Struck Town," *New York Times*, August 12, 1984, Sec. 1.

<sup>14</sup>Campbell, "Hispanic Complaint Belittled in Riot-Struck Town."

<sup>15</sup>Campbell, "Hispanic Complaint Belittled in Riot-Struck Town."

<sup>16</sup>Lawrence City Council records, August 10, 1984.

<sup>17</sup>Clifford, "Bishop preaches peace in Lawrence."

<sup>18</sup>Robert Charest, "Curfew holds: 27 arrested but riot-torn area quieted: Rest of city unaffected" *Eagle-Tribune*, August 11, 1984.

<sup>19</sup>Hernandez, "Lawrence Police Enforce Curfew in Riot-Torn Areas."

<sup>20</sup>Joe Sciacca, "Dusk-to-Dawn curfew in Lawrence: Top pols in plea for calm," *Boston Herald*, August 11, 1984.

<sup>21</sup>Hernandez, "Lawrence Police Enforce Curfew in Riot-Torn Areas."

<sup>22</sup>Elaine Cushman, "Does TV coverage add to riot tension?" with Yadira Betances contributing, *Eagle-Tribune*, August 10, 1984.

<sup>23</sup>Cushman, "Does TV coverage add to riot tension?"

<sup>24</sup>Campbell, "Two Nights of Rioting Bring a Curfew to Lawrence, Mass."

<sup>25</sup>Betsy A. Lehman, "News Analysis; The Struggle in Lawrence: Poverty," *Boston Globe*, Aug 11, 1984, <http://www.proquest.com>.

<sup>26</sup>Campbell, "Two Nights of Rioting Bring a Curfew to Lawrence, Mass."

<sup>27</sup>July, 1984 unemployment rate for Massachusetts from Economagic.com:

<http://www.economagic.com/em-cgi/data.exe/blsla/lasst25000003>, accessed December 9, 2009.

<sup>28</sup>*United States Decennial Census*, 1990. Provincetown had over a 17 percent unemployment rate, but it was considered a town, not a city.

<sup>29</sup>*Boston Globe*, "Lawrence's Media Lesson," August 16, 1984, <http://www.proquest.com>.

<sup>30</sup>*Boston Globe*, "Lawrence's Media Lesson."

<sup>31</sup>Marnie Argersinger, quoted in Marge Sherman, "From Miami to Chicago, the talk is of Lawrence," *Eagle-Tribune*, August 12, 1984.

<sup>32</sup>Alan Lupo, "Lessons of the Street: What Lawrence never learned," *Boston Phoenix*, August 21, 1984.

For more info on the 1972 riot, see Angel A. Amy Moreno de Toro, "An Oral History of the Puerto Rican

---

Socialist Party in Boston, 1972-1978" in *The Puerto Rican Movement: Voices from the Diaspora*, Andrés Torres and José E. Velázquez, eds. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998).

<sup>33</sup> Jeanne Theoharis, "'We Saved the City': Black Struggles for Educational Equality in Boston, 1960-1976" in *Radical History Review* (Issue 81, Fall 2001, 61-93).

<sup>34</sup> Lupo, "Lessons of the Street."

<sup>35</sup> Lupo, "Lessons of the Street."

<sup>36</sup> Lupo, "Lessons of the Street."

<sup>37</sup> Vincent Manzi, Jr., quoted in Marge Sherman, "Will the rioting hurt the city's business rebirth?" *Eagle-Tribune*, August 12, 1984.

<sup>38</sup> Sherman, "Will the rioting hurt the city's business rebirth?"

<sup>39</sup> Sherman, "Will the rioting hurt the city's business rebirth?"

<sup>40</sup> Joe Sciacca, "City of Anguish and Outrage: 'We all just want to get back to living our lives,'" *Boston Herald*, August 11, 1984.

<sup>41</sup> Lehman, "News Analysis; The Struggle in Lawrence: Poverty."

<sup>42</sup> Kevin Cullen and John Impemba, "New Riot Hits Lawrence: SWAT team in action against wild mob" *Boston Herald*, August 10, 1984.

<sup>43</sup> Sciacca, "City of Anguish and Outrage."

<sup>44</sup> Sciacca, "City of Anguish and Outrage."

<sup>45</sup> Lehman, "News Analysis; The Struggle in Lawrence: Poverty."

<sup>46</sup> Duran, "The 1984 Riots," 64.

<sup>47</sup> *Eagle-Tribune*, "Ending the riots in Lawrence," August 9, 1984.

<sup>48</sup> *Eagle-Tribune*, "Ending the riots in Lawrence."

<sup>49</sup> Cullen and Impemba, "New Riot Hits Lawrence."

<sup>50</sup> *Boston Herald*, "A Tense City Explodes in Violence," August 10, 1984. The phrase "lawless punks" is not a direct quote from Jim John; the quotation marks indicate the words the article's author used to paraphrase John.

<sup>51</sup> *Eagle-Tribune*, "A carnival sideshow turns into an ugly riot" August 10, 1984.

<sup>52</sup> *Eagle-Tribune*, "A carnival sideshow turns into an ugly riot."

<sup>53</sup> Lehman, "News Analysis; The Struggle in Lawrence: Poverty."

<sup>54</sup> *Boston Herald*, "A Tense City Explodes in Violence."

<sup>55</sup> *Eagle-Tribune*, "Those caught in the middle called everywhere for help," August 9, 1984.

<sup>56</sup> *Boston Herald*, "A Tense City Explodes in Violence."

<sup>57</sup> *Eagle-Tribune*, "Lawrence hires 10 police officers: calls in more help from the suburbs," August 10, 1984.

<sup>58</sup> Sciacca, "City of Anguish and Outrage." The paper did not mention whether the woman quoted was white or Latina.

<sup>59</sup> *Eagle-Tribune*, "Profile of a changing neighborhood," August 9, 1984. The phrase "changing complexion" is not a direct quote from Carmen Ralph; the quotation marks indicate the words the article's author used to paraphrase Ralph and other neighborhood residents.

<sup>60</sup> *Boston Herald*, "Cries of tiny victim haunt tot's mother," August 11, 1984.

<sup>61</sup> The Lawrence High School/Phillips Academy Urban Studies Institute, "Growing Up Hispanic in Lawrence, Massachusetts" (Andover, MA: Urban Studies Institute, 1986), 13.

<sup>62</sup> Eugene Declercq, "While suburbs duck, Lawrence flounders: Riot wasn't just urban problem," *Eagle-Tribune*, August 12, 1984, clipping in Mayor Buckley scrapbooks, LHC.

<sup>63</sup> Cullen and Impemba, "New Riot Hits Lawrence."

<sup>64</sup> Hernandez, "Lawrence Police Enforce Curfew in Riot-Torn Areas."

<sup>65</sup> Jonathan Kaufman, "Hostility Boils Over; Lawrence Residents Talk About Ethnic Tensions Simmering for a Long Time in Riot-Torn Tower Hill Neighborhood," *Boston Globe*, August 11, 1984, <http://www.proquest.com>.

<sup>66</sup> Kaufman, "Hostility Boils Over."

<sup>67</sup> *Boston Globe*, "Confrontation in Lawrence," August 11, 1984, <http://www.proquest.com>.

<sup>68</sup> CBS news clip, August 10, 1984, VTNA

- 
- <sup>69</sup> CBS news clip, August 10, 1984, VTNA.
- <sup>70</sup> *Eagle-Tribune*, "Profile of a changing neighborhood."
- <sup>71</sup> *Boston Herald*, "A Tense City Explodes in Violence."
- <sup>72</sup> *Boston Herald*, "Poverty, Bigotry – Terrible Legacy of 'Immigrant City,'" August 11, 1984.
- <sup>73</sup> Sciacca, "Dusk-to-Dawn curfew in Lawrence."
- <sup>74</sup> Kaufman, "Hostility Boils Over."
- <sup>75</sup> Lehman, "News Analysis; The Struggle in Lawrence: Poverty."
- <sup>76</sup> Campbell, "Two Nights of Rioting Bring a Curfew to Lawrence, Mass."
- <sup>77</sup> Father Walter Gaudreau of St. Ann's Church on Haverhill Street, quoted in Kathie Neff, "Why Lawrence?"
- <sup>78</sup> Cullen and Impemba, "New Riot Hits Lawrence."
- <sup>79</sup> *Eagle-Tribune*, "A carnival sideshow turns into an ugly riot."
- <sup>80</sup> Kaufman, "Hostility Boils Over."
- <sup>81</sup> Campbell, "Two Nights of Rioting Bring a Curfew to Lawrence, Mass."
- <sup>82</sup> ABC news clip, August 10, 1984, VTNA.
- <sup>83</sup> Kaufman, "Hostility Boils Over."
- <sup>84</sup> I will discuss ways in which Latinos and their allies responded to these charges more below; for now it will suffice to sketch out the narratives invoked by white residents who blamed Latinos for the city's decline.
- <sup>85</sup> NBC news clip, August 10, 1984, VTNA.
- <sup>86</sup> NBC news clip, August 11, 1984, VTNA.
- <sup>87</sup> *Boston Herald*, "A Tense City Explodes in Violence."
- <sup>88</sup> *Boston Herald*, "A Tense City Explodes in Violence."
- <sup>89</sup> Sciacca, "Dusk-to-Dawn curfew in Lawrence."
- <sup>90</sup> Duran, "The 1984 Riots," 31, 32.
- <sup>91</sup> Kaufman, "Hostility Boils Over."
- <sup>92</sup> *Boston Herald*, "A Tense City Explodes in Violence."
- <sup>93</sup> CBS news clip, August 10, 1984, VTNA.
- <sup>94</sup> Kaufman, "Hostility Boils Over."
- <sup>95</sup> Lehman, "News Analysis; The Struggle in Lawrence: Poverty."
- <sup>96</sup> Duran, "The 1984 Riots," 90, 91.
- <sup>97</sup> *Boston Herald*, "Poverty, Bigotry."
- <sup>98</sup> Lehman, "News Analysis; The Struggle in Lawrence: Poverty."
- <sup>99</sup> Campbell, "Two Nights of Rioting Bring a Curfew to Lawrence, Mass."
- <sup>100</sup> Duran, "The 1984 Riots," 31, 32.
- <sup>101</sup> Gary Gerstle's, *Working-class Americanism* offers a compelling history of French-Canadians in Woonsocket, including their investment in their ethnic identity, and the strategic adoption of "Americanism" as a labor strategy in the 1930s. It is unfortunate that the riot coverage offers little insight into the French-Canadian community in the neighborhood, and it is unfortunate that a more detailed exploration of the claim to Americanism by French-Canadian rioters was not possible. Gary Gerstle, *Working-class Americanism: The Politics of Labor in a Textile City, 1914-1960* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).
- <sup>102</sup> Kaufman, "Hostility Boils Over."
- <sup>103</sup> NBC news clip, August 11, 1984, VTNA.
- <sup>104</sup> *Boston Herald*, "Poverty, Bigotry."
- <sup>105</sup> NBC news clip, August 11, 1984, VTNA.
- <sup>106</sup> Duran, "The 1984 Riots," 31, 32, already translated from Spanish in thesis.
- <sup>107</sup> Duran, "The 1984 Riots," 90, 91.
- <sup>108</sup> Duran, "The 1984 Riots," 90, 91.
- <sup>109</sup> Duran, "The 1984 Riots," 90, 91.
- <sup>110</sup> Sciacca, "City of Anguish and Outrage."
- <sup>111</sup> ABC news clip, August 10, 1984, VTNA.

- 
- <sup>112</sup> Duran, "The 1984 Riots," 31, 32.
- <sup>113</sup> Duran, "The 1984 Riots," 74.
- <sup>114</sup> *La Semana*, "Los Disturbios Raciales de Lawrence," Week 33, 1984.
- <sup>115</sup> Duran, "The 1984 Riots," 91.
- <sup>116</sup> Duran, "The 1984 Riots," 46.
- <sup>117</sup> Duran, "The 1984 Riots," 46.
- <sup>118</sup> Duran, "The 1984 Riots," 91.
- <sup>119</sup> Duran, "The 1984 Riots," 42.
- <sup>120</sup> Sciacca, "Dusk-to-Dawn curfew in Lawrence."
- <sup>121</sup> Duran, "The 1984 Riots," 24.
- <sup>122</sup> Duran, "The 1984 Riots," 90, 91.
- <sup>123</sup> Campbell, "Two Nights of Rioting Bring a Curfew to Lawrence, Mass."
- <sup>124</sup> Campbell, "Two Nights of Rioting Bring a Curfew to Lawrence, Mass."
- <sup>125</sup> Campbell, "Two Nights of Rioting Bring a Curfew to Lawrence, Mass."
- <sup>126</sup> Sciacca, "City of Anguish and Outrage."
- <sup>127</sup> Hernandez, "Lawrence Police Enforce Curfew in Riot-Torn Areas."
- <sup>128</sup> *Boston Herald*, "Cries of tiny victim haunt tot's mother."
- <sup>129</sup> *Boston Herald*, "Cries of tiny victim haunt tot's mother."
- <sup>130</sup> *Boston Herald*, "Cries of tiny victim haunt tot's mother."
- <sup>131</sup> Marilynn S. Johnson, "Gender, Race, and Rumors: Re-examining the 1943 Race Riots," *Gender & History*, (10:2, August 1998, 252–277).
- <sup>132</sup> Ingrid Garcia indicated that she was out watching during the riots, Bonnie Perez was involved to some degree, putting out fires and bringing people to the hospital, and newspaper accounts occasionally refer to other women present at the riots, even if they are not depicted as engaging in violence.
- <sup>133</sup> Espada, "Toque de Queda: Curfew in Lawrence," in *Trumpets from the Islands of their Eviction*.
- <sup>134</sup> Duran, "The 1984 Riots," 47.
- <sup>135</sup> Duran, "The 1984 Riots," 47.
- <sup>136</sup> Duran, "The 1984 Riots," 66.
- <sup>137</sup> Duran, "The 1984 Riots," 46.
- <sup>138</sup> Hernandez, "Lawrence Police Enforce Curfew in Riot-Torn Areas;" ABC news clip, August 10, 1984, VTNA.
- <sup>139</sup> Chris Chinlund and Ray Richard, "Lawrence's Charter for Trouble; Critics Say Form of City Government Fosters the Inequalities that Led to Violence," *Boston Globe*, August 23, 1984, <http://www.proquest.com>.
- <sup>140</sup> Duran, "The 1984 Riots," 67, 68.
- <sup>141</sup> Duran, "The 1984 Riots," 64.
- <sup>142</sup> Duran, "The 1984 Riots," 74.
- <sup>143</sup> Lehman, "News Analysis; The Struggle in Lawrence: Poverty."
- <sup>144</sup> Kaufman, "Hostility Boils Over."
- <sup>145</sup> Kaufman, "Hostility Boils Over."
- <sup>146</sup> NBC news clip, August 11, 1984, VTNA.
- <sup>147</sup> *La Semana*, "Los Disturbios Raciales de Lawrence" Week 33, 1984.
- <sup>148</sup> *Eagle-Tribune*, "Sound Off Special," August 10, 1984.
- <sup>149</sup> NBC news clip, August 10, 1984, VTNA.
- <sup>150</sup> Lehman, "News Analysis; The Struggle in Lawrence: Poverty."
- <sup>151</sup> *Eagle-Tribune*, "Prayer service fails to stop the violence," August 10, 1984.
- <sup>152</sup> Campbell, "Two Nights of Rioting Bring a Curfew to Lawrence, Mass."
- <sup>153</sup> *Boston Globe*, "Confrontation in Lawrence."
- <sup>154</sup> Lehman, "News Analysis; The Struggle in Lawrence: Poverty."
- <sup>155</sup> Duran, "The 1984 Riots," 74.
- <sup>156</sup> Duran, "The 1984 Riots," 74.

- 
- <sup>157</sup> Peggy Hernandez, "Curfew Lifted in Lawrence," *Boston Globe*, Aug 14, 1984, <http://www.proquest.com>.
- <sup>158</sup> Duran, "The 1984 Riots," 26.
- <sup>159</sup> Urban Studies Institute, "Growing Up Hispanic," 28.
- <sup>160</sup> Espada, "Toque de Queda."
- <sup>161</sup> Annemargaret Connolly, "Mayor, council score victory as low income homes banned," *Eagle-Tribune*, August 1, 1984.
- <sup>162</sup> Lupo, "Lessons of the Street."
- <sup>163</sup> Lehman, "News Analysis; The Struggle in Lawrence: Poverty."
- <sup>164</sup> Lehman, "News Analysis; The Struggle in Lawrence: Poverty."
- <sup>165</sup> Campbell, "Two Nights of Rioting Bring a Curfew to Lawrence, Mass."
- <sup>166</sup> *Boston Herald*, "Poverty, Bigotry."
- <sup>167</sup> Latinos in the regional labor force are discussed in much greater detail in Chapter Two.
- <sup>168</sup> CBS news clip, November 2, 1984, VTNA.
- <sup>169</sup> Michael Matza, "Down in the Valley: New Immigrants, same old story," *Boston Phoenix*, August 21, 1984.
- <sup>170</sup> Lehman, "News Analysis; The Struggle in Lawrence: Poverty."
- <sup>171</sup> Lehman, "News Analysis; The Struggle in Lawrence: Poverty."
- <sup>172</sup> *United States Decennial Census*, 1990.
- <sup>173</sup> Duran, "The 1984 Riots," 27.
- <sup>174</sup> Duran, "The 1984 Riots," 27.
- <sup>175</sup> Duran, "The 1984 Riots," 19, 27.
- <sup>176</sup> Duran, "The 1984 Riots," 24.
- <sup>177</sup> Lehman, "News Analysis; The Struggle in Lawrence: Poverty."
- <sup>178</sup> Lehman, "News Analysis; The Struggle in Lawrence: Poverty."
- <sup>179</sup> Massachusetts Commission on Hispanic Affairs, "Hispanics in Massachusetts: A Progress Report" (Boston, Massachusetts: Massachusetts Commission on Hispanic Affairs, 1985), 18.
- <sup>180</sup> Duran, "The 1984 Riots," 24.
- <sup>181</sup> Duran, "The 1984 Riots," 24.
- <sup>182</sup> *Eagle-Tribune*, "Police plan to clear streets after second night of rioting: 8 p.m. curfew in force tonight," August 10, 1984.
- <sup>183</sup> NBC news clip, August 9, 1984, VTNA.
- <sup>184</sup> Chinlund and Richard, "Lawrence's Charter for Trouble."
- <sup>185</sup> Chinlund and Richard, "Lawrence's Charter for Trouble."
- <sup>186</sup> Chinlund and Richard, "Lawrence's Charter for Trouble."
- <sup>187</sup> Chinlund and Richard, "Lawrence's Charter for Trouble."
- <sup>188</sup> Chinlund and Richard, "Lawrence's Charter for Trouble."
- <sup>189</sup> Chinlund and Richard, "Lawrence's Charter for Trouble."
- <sup>190</sup> Chinlund and Richard, "Lawrence's Charter for Trouble."
- <sup>191</sup> Chinlund and Richard, "Lawrence's Charter for Trouble."
- <sup>192</sup> Chinlund and Richard, "Lawrence's Charter for Trouble."
- <sup>193</sup> Chinlund and Richard, "Lawrence's Charter for Trouble."
- <sup>194</sup> Duran, "The 1984 Riots," 42.
- <sup>195</sup> Chinlund and Richard, "Lawrence's Charter for Trouble."
- <sup>196</sup> NBC news clip, August 11, 1984, VTNA.
- <sup>197</sup> Duran, "The 1984 Riots," 36.
- <sup>198</sup> *Boston Herald*, "Poverty, Bigotry."
- <sup>199</sup> Matza, "Down in the Valley."
- <sup>200</sup> Matza, "Down in the Valley."
- <sup>201</sup> Chinlund and Richard, "Lawrence's Charter for Trouble."
- <sup>202</sup> Chinlund and Richard, "Lawrence's Charter for Trouble."
- <sup>203</sup> Lupo, "Lessons of the Street."

## **Chapter Six –After the Riots: Latino Inclusion into a Failing City, 1984-2000**

In 1992, the Immigrant City was in flames. Particularly during the summer months, the waves of arson were at their height and fires blazed nightly in Lawrence, Massachusetts, lighting up the small city's skyline of crumbling clock towers and abandoned brick mills. The frequent fires sometimes drew spectators from the surrounding suburbs (otherwise rare visitors to the troubled city) and firefighters cracked jokes about how spectators should bring hot dogs, while frustrated city residents complained to each other about the slow response of the fire department. The city in flames was an apt symbol of the continuing disinvestment and devastation in Lawrence. Eight years after the riots, the city's crisis seemed only to have deepened, although the struggles that plagued Lawrence by the 1990s had lost much of their explicitly racial character.

This chapter will examine the short- and long-term impact of the riots, as well as the continuing trajectory of growing, yet hard-won, Latino power in a city with increasingly less power vis-à-vis the region and state, a city that increasingly lacked the resources to address its myriad economic and social problems. With Lawrence in a state of profound economic crisis, the struggle for Latino inclusion into the city was exacerbated by many whites' desire to scapegoat Latinos, to blame them for the struggles of the city. In many ways, white resentment of the city's Latinos grew in the time immediately after the riots, and this chapter will explore that backlash as well. Although the riots were not exactly a turning point in Lawrence's history, they marked, in many ways, an ascent for Latino political power in the city. Over the next decade and a half,



Latino organizers would successfully fight to bring Latino activism into the electoral arena, and gain representation in city government. At the same time, the regional and state response to the riots demonstrated the dramatic decline in urban political power in the state. As the suburbs successfully blocked a more equitable distribution of the burden of caring for the state's poor, the city's economic decline accelerated, along with its educational and other service infrastructure. Although Latinos would, through decades of activism, eventually come to have a political voice in the city, by that time the city had little power, and even less money, to address the problems facing the Latino community.

It is significant that the riots were an expression of the frustration that both white and Latino Lawrencians were feeling in the face of the city's struggles. Most major media and academic responses to the riot adopted the premise that the riots had been *Latino* riots. In the debates about how to prevent a recurrence of the violence, the word "community" came to refer solely to the Latino community and its needs. This erasure of the white rioting was profound. A Boston Phoenix article compared the Lawrence riots to the disturbances "12 years ago when police clashed with Latinos in Boston's South End , and 17 years ago when blacks rioted in Roxbury and Dorchester,"<sup>1</sup> reaching right past when white Bostonians had rioted against school desegregation just ten years earlier. Forgotten was the fact that white Lawrencians had also rioted, in equal numbers to Latinos, that they were also protesting, and that it takes something larger than simply racial ill-will to bring about violence in the streets. The structural changes and deteriorating quality of life in Lawrence--its failing economy, rising crime, inadequate schools and police force, and closed-shop political system--affected *all* residents of the

city. With attention focused on discrimination, many of the proposed solutions focused solely on anti-discrimination, an important goal but one that would not address the multitude of pressing needs facing the city. In the decade and a half after the riot, Latinos in Lawrence grew increasingly successful in eliminating racial inequality in the city. Greater inclusion, however, came to have less and less meaning as white flight accelerated, and the line that separated the haves from the have-nots expanded to surround the city as a whole. This new bifurcation, distinguishing the decaying city from its prosperous suburbs, prevented remaining Lawrence residents of all races from receiving the economic opportunities they needed and the educational and public safety services they deserved.

### **Changes in the city after the riots**

In response to the riots, a number of organizational changes came about in the city itself. City leaders committed themselves to improving communication between City Hall and the community, while state officials committed themselves to sharp oversight of city hiring to ensure anti-discrimination protocol was fully followed. Latino community leaders who came to the fore during the riots gained local and state-level recognition, as well as a renewed commitment to struggle on behalf of the Latino community in Lawrence. Specifically, the Alliance for Peace was formed out of community leaders who came together to calm people during the riots, and continued to engage in community advocacy after the riot ended. In the Lower Tower Hill neighborhood, city officials established a recreation center in the Oxford Street area and opened a Neighborhood

Housing Services office. In the city as a whole, Ramón Borges-Méndez noted that, “In the aftermath of the riots, the city responded to the plight of Latinos with a number of policy measures that marked the beginning of a more open - although uneasy - sociopolitical relationship between Latinos and Anglos.” The city created a Human Rights Commission to facilitate improved communication between city officials and the community, and increased its efforts to hire Latinos in municipal jobs like public administration and public safety.<sup>2</sup> After the riots, official neglect of Lawrence’s Latino community was impossible.<sup>3</sup> While these efforts did not eliminate racism in the city, the riots and the changes that they precipitated placed the Latino community firmly on the city agenda and served notice to the city’s white residents that prejudice and harassment would not go unanswered. The riots made clear that the Latinos who were settling in the city were willing to fight for their right to live, work, and raise their children in Lawrence.

Religious leaders were some of the first to reach out to the city’s Latino community in an effort to heal the breach in the wake of the riot. The day after the riots ended, Lawrence clergy appeared on local cable television “to call for peace and unity” and to announce that Archbishop Bernard F. Law would say a special mass at St. Mary’s Church in Lawrence on Sunday.<sup>4</sup> The local paper described Law as an experienced peace-maker, noting “Law, who helped ease racial tensions in Mississippi as a priest, has been in constant touch with Lawrence priests, asking them for updates on the violence and urging them to go to the neighborhood and talk to people there. The archbishop, who speaks Spanish, will concelebrate the Mass with a dozen local priests.”<sup>5</sup> Nearly 1,000

people showed up for the Archbishop's two-hour mass, given in English, Spanish, and French. The *Eagle-Tribune* quoted him as saying, "We have to be at peace with each other. If we don't leave this church and live out the implications of what we do here, we will be hypocrites."<sup>6</sup> He told the congregation, "We are one," and asked members of different ethnic groups to stand up to rounds applause. In a city whose public discourse had been filled for days with diversity as the source of Lawrence's tension, Law took the unusual step of celebrating the city's diversity, "What a blessing it is, what a strength it is. How much weaker this community would be if it would suddenly find itself bereft of any single group."<sup>7</sup> The archbishop's speech characterized a sincere desire for unity and cooperation present among many white and Latino Lawrencians. A white woman standing with a Latino family outside the church called the riots "the best thing that ever happened to Lawrence... because it brought us all together."<sup>8</sup> Although Archbishop Law did not stay long in Lawrence, he directed local clergy to provide the social infrastructure to address the community's struggles, and local churches announced they would hold a series of meetings about how best to help the city.<sup>9</sup>

Another organization was moving quickly on a similar path. The so-called "Yellow Hat Brigade," discussed in the last chapter, lost no time mobilizing after the riots. They named themselves the Alliance for Peace and began a two-pronged approach, attempting to put gentle pressure on the City Council to be responsive to the community needs being articulated during and after the riots, and working to channel the anger of the riots into peaceful protest, encouraging Latinos, particularly in the housing projects, to speak out and demand changes from the city government, but not through violence. The

City Council boasted of their relationship with the Alliance for Peace, using it as evidence of their willingness to engage with the community over issues such as housing conditions and Latino feelings of exclusion from city government. As the Mayor announced when the council declared a state of emergency, “Today we have formed an alliance with a number of community leaders who will be in the neighborhood following this press conference to meet and talk with residents. It is through this type of communication that we believe the immediate problems can be alleviated and the foundation for an open and productive future can be achieved from all our citizens.”<sup>10</sup> In the months after the riots, the Alliance for Peace became the official bridge between the Latino community and the city.

Although the Alliance was made up of both white and Latino residents of the city, it was profoundly geared towards supporting and representing the needs of the Latino community. Two of the main leaders of the group, Isabel Meléndez and Nunzio DiMarca were long-term organizers in the Latino community. As mentioned earlier, Meléndez directed the Spanish Program at the Greater Lawrence Community Action Council. Although the Alliance for Peace worked with the city and with police to help enforce the curfew, they expected the council’s reciprocal cooperation in addressing the needs of the Latino community. Meléndez said the Alliance had knowledge of the problems facing the Latino community, but needed communication with the city in order for those problems to be addressed. DiMarca asked, “the door is open, will it be closed again?”<sup>11</sup> Council records indicate that a long discussion was held by citizen groups arguing that “peace in

Lawrence may be short lived if city officials don't act quickly on housing, communication and other neighborhood problems.”<sup>12</sup>

This call for “communication” came from all sides in the city. Community leaders demanded it, the editors at the recommended it, and the city council promised it. For those who attributed the riots to cultural misunderstandings, communication was viewed as the ultimate answer; if the violence stemmed from mutual ignorance, the neighbors just needed to get to know each other. Others, like the Alliance for Peace, recognized that communication was just the beginning and could not, on its own, stop the violence. They demanded not only that lines of communication between the Latino community and the city council stay open, but that the city council *act* on the information. Just a few days after the riot, when no concrete plans had yet been made to address their concerns, the Alliance publicly chastised the council. Meléndez explained, “that when the crisis happened, the Hispanic Leaders all came and gave opinions, but nothing ever happened.”<sup>13</sup> The Mayor “assured the members of the alliance for peace groups that the City [had] plans to look into the management and finances of the City’s Housing Authority and to establish a human relations commission to act as a [liason] between the neighborhood and City officials.”<sup>14</sup> The next day, in the *Boston Herald*, Meléndez was quoted as warning city leaders, “You think everything is quiet. It’s not, so we have to move quickly.”<sup>15</sup>

Although slow to make concrete changes, city leaders publically agreed with the Alliance for Peace that more communication was needed, announcing, “Today’s meeting has amplified the need for communication amongst the various groups – city leaders,

community leaders, law enforcement officials and neighborhood residents.” Noticeably absent from the council’s list of who should be at the table were representatives of the state or federal government. This reflected a deep tension within the city, as officials were desperately reliant on state and federal funds, but resisted and resented state and federal input. As Buckley said, “We have been offered assistance from a number of sources including state and federal officials, but feel that this problem is one which must be addressed by the leaders and citizens of Lawrence.”<sup>16</sup> Indeed, the *Boston Globe* reported that Governor Dukakis, U.S. Senators Paul Tsongas and Edward M. Kennedy, U.S. Representative James Shannon, and Roman Catholic Archbishop Bernard Law volunteered to go to the riot area to speak to residents and bring some calm, but the mayor turned them down.<sup>17</sup> A few days later, however, the mayor told the press that the city would proceed with a federally-funded housing rehabilitation project in the Tower Hill area.<sup>18</sup> Further, Public Safety Alderman Johnson announced that the city would apply for about \$200,000 in state aid to cover police overtime, repair four rock-damaged police cruisers and replace the city’s depleted tear gas supplies. Johnson said the city also will try to reimburse businesses for damage to their properties and for loss of business during the curfew, “We think we’ll need \$200,000... It could be more, or less, but we definitely need it. We can’t absorb expenses like that.”<sup>19</sup> The city needed state and federal funds, but was eager to decide how to allocate them without state or federal interference.

Initially, it seemed like the state might share city officials’ desire to address the riot locally. After the second night of rioting, Governor Dukakis gave a press conference at which he read a prepared statement in both English and Spanish. The *Boston Herald*

reported that Dukakis had no present plans to visit Lawrence or to add to the State Police units already sent to back up city police. The governor said he is “determined to see law and order prevail,” adding that, “This is not the time to figure out what happened...there will be plenty of time to analyze the situation...The important thing is to restore law and order and stability.” His statements echoed those of Lawrence’s City Council, especially when he added that “the problems have got to be solved by the community itself. They can’t be solved by the mayor or in the State House.”<sup>20</sup>

With the national spotlight the riots brought to the city, this freedom from oversight was short-lived. Not only did all of Lawrence’s state legislators have an opinion on the riots, as well as an investment in helping to solve the city’s problems; not only was the state legislature unlikely to grant funds to Lawrence without specific instructions on how they could be spent, but the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination wanted to freeze funds to the city entirely until the city rectified its abysmal minority hiring record. The federal government was no less engaged. The U.S. Department of Justice Community Relations service announced that, even before the riots, Lawrence had been placed on a “critical list” of cities in which race riots were most likely to occur. The Department told the *Boston Globe* that “the appraisal was based on a number of ‘warning signs,’ including regular complaints of harassment and discrimination officials received from Hispanic residents.”<sup>21</sup> Although they were clear that this was an internal document, and that city leaders had not known of this designation, they noted that they had met with some city agencies,<sup>22</sup> and they also expressed their belief that these warning signs should have been recognizable to city leaders. A representative told the *Boston*



*Globe*, “given the climate there, the fact that very few Hispanics are represented in key decision-making positions, the lack of housing, the poor communication between residents and police - those are the ingredients that have been there, and they have been overlooked (by city officials).”<sup>23</sup> One official told the *Boston Globe* that the Community Relations department had tried years ago to address the tension and exclusion that had helped precipitate the riot by arranging talks between the city government and Latino community leaders, but that the talks had fallen apart, because the Latino leadership “felt the city wasn’t exhibiting good faith.”<sup>24</sup> The Mayor insisted he had not been previously aware of the extent of the Justice Department’s concern.<sup>25</sup>

Many observers argued that the federal and state governments ought to force the city to end its discrimination against Latinos and to encourage their equal participation in city government. One opinion piece argued, “If the local [politicians] in the [Merrimack] valley can’t or won’t hit the streets and deal with the Latinos and broker with the white ethnics, then the state must do it for them. The state can withhold moneys from communities that don’t address the needs of their poor and minorities.”<sup>26</sup> This emphasis on state funds gets at the crux of what the city truly needed from the state. Although anti-discrimination oversight from groups like MCAD or the Department of Justice proved central to ensuring the growth of Latino political power in the state, addressing the deep social problems that precipitated the riots would require an infusion of funding into the city.

As a form of Latino protest, then, the riots must be considered a relative success, as the violence combined with the articulation of community needs by Latino organizers

made clear how pressing the issues were that Latino Lawrencians faced. The refusal of the state legislature to commit sufficient money to have a real impact on Lawrence's social and economic problems, however, spoke volumes about Lawrence's lack of state political power. The state legislature passed two bills to aid Lawrence in preventing future riots. The original riot aid package was for \$5.5 million dollars, including \$3.5 million for social, educational, police and other services in Lawrence. In December, Representative Kevin Blanchette asked for unanimous consent to introduce one of the bills before a proposed debate, a courtesy usually granted for local-interest bills. Rep. Robert B. Ambler (D-Weymouth), objected, however, and the consideration of the bill was put off indefinitely, as the legislative session drew to a close. Blanchette told the *Boston Globe* that he asked Ambler, "What about the Lawrence bills?" and that Ambler allegedly replied with a "string of expletives." Ambler later denied cursing, but said he opposed the bill because, "my community and other communities would have to give up (local-aid) money." Ambler acknowledged that the Legislature had approved emergency aid for communities such as Lynn and Peabody after fires, but he argued that the Lawrence aid went beyond the disturbance itself. Ambler added that he did not think Lawrence's social problems were more severe than other communities, claiming "There's a lot of cities that have a lot of Hispanics, a lot of problems."<sup>27</sup>

Weymouth, the suburban town south of Boston that Ambler represented, had 55,000 residents in 1980, 319 of whom were Hispanic, or about half of one percent. The median household income in 1979 was \$52,470, substantially higher than Lawrence's \$32,227, and it had only a 6.8 percent poverty rate, compared with Lawrence's 19.3

percent. By 1989, a few years after the riots, Lawrence's poverty rate had quadrupled to 27.5 percent, while Weymouth's had declined to only 4.1 percent.<sup>28</sup> Weymouth had successfully managed to keep "urban" problems out of its backyard, and Weymouth's representative refused to recognize them as shared, state problems. Most importantly, he refused to sacrifice local aid to his thriving town in order to bear the burden of concentrated urban poverty. Although Weymouth was not one of Lawrence's immediate suburbs, Ambler's successful effort to block funds for Lawrence demonstrates the rise in the 1980s of what Kevin Kruse and Thomas Sugrue have called the "agenda" of suburbanites, an informal confluence of political priorities that was gaining prominence across the nation. The suburban political agenda concentrated substantial political will on suburban concerns and rejected suburban responsibility for what were considered urban problems.<sup>29</sup> Having benefitted from decades of federal aid and soaring property values based on exclusions along race and class lines, suburban residents and politicians around the nation were challenging the use of tax dollars to address problems in the inner cities.

The state legislature approved an amendment that Ambler had proposed, an amendment that gutted the main riot aid bill proposed by Lawrence's legislators, stripping the bill of many of the key measures most Latino Lawrencians believed were necessary. The original bill proposed by Lawrence's state Senator Patricia McGovern and Rep. Kevin Blanchette (with others) allocated \$400,000 for the city for operating costs from the riot, as well as \$200,000 to improve the city's management capacity and efficiency, both of which were allowed to stand, as well as allocations for public safety which were cut but revived in another bill. The rest of the bill, however, was not so

lucky. A \$50,000 appropriation for the Division of Community Development “for contracts with organizations for the purpose of undertaking a program of services for Hispanic persons in the greater Lawrence area whose incomes are below the federal poverty line,” was cut by Ambler’s amendment.<sup>30</sup> So too was a \$100,000 appropriation for the Department of Social Services for adolescents in the city including “counseling and outreach activities to reduce tension between youths of the various neighborhoods,” \$200,000 for mental health community services, \$75,000 for programs in the high school, \$750,000 to provide in-service training to Lawrence school teachers including “cultural and language familiarization instruction,” \$500,000 for “updated textbooks and supplies,” and finally a proposal to establish a housing court in the city. All were cut from the final bill by Ambler’s amendment. The second riot aid bill successfully provided public safety departments in the city with a full million dollars to upgrade police and fire departments sufficiently to prevent a future riot as well as funds for the Lawrence Housing Authority. In the final version of the two riot aid bills, the state ultimately supported the city’s need for riot gear, but not for cultural sensitivity training, textbooks, or youth outreach to reduce interethnic tension.<sup>31</sup>

In spite of the continuous rhetoric that emphasized helping Lawrence’s Hispanics, challenging their exclusion from politics and correcting the underlying economic problems, the \$2.6 million dollar aid package that the State Legislature eventually approved was slated largely for fixing the damage the city incurred during the riots and increasing the police’s ability to respond to future riots by modernizing their equipment. There was some money slated for repairs and recreation programs in the housing projects,

but nothing that truly addressed the shambles of municipal social and educational services or the poverty of the city's Latino community. Latino residents were outraged. "We are talking about helping Hispanics here and the state is giving the police riot gear," complained one resident, "is that a double message or what?" Another said, "They want to shower down kids this summer with water to cool them off...and shoot their parents with shotguns to shut them up if they try to protest again." In the context of this "double message," residents questioned whether the city and state really had Latino interests at heart. "Are [we] supposed to feel like the city and the state cares for us just because we going [to] get a few basketball courts?... While the police prepare for another riot?... and the fire department can use their new truck to put it out?" This Latino resident concluded that the emphasis on containing Latino violence was profoundly misdirected, "it is disgraceful that so much attention is placed on the fear that Hispanics will riot again...instead they should help us prepare for jobs...help improve our schools." Latino residents also called on the state to make the city more responsive to Latino needs, "the state should force the city to pay attention to us or else there will be more riots and this time people could get killed."<sup>32</sup> Yet the state legislature was unwilling to make that investment in solving "urban" problems.

Reliant on external funds, and with both the state and federal government offering their opinions on racial politics in Lawrence, city leaders could not expect a completely free hand in addressing the city's problems. Ultimately, however, Lawrence's leaders could take solace in the fact that state and federal officials had much more in common with them (in terms of race and class, but more importantly, in terms of politics and

ideology) than with poor Latinos in Lawrence's housing projects. The city was forced by the state and federal government to practice some degree of inclusion, but was spared the more radical transformations the community was demanding. As the *Boston Phoenix* pointed out, with Lawrence's reliance on external funding, the state and federal government had a huge role to play in enforcing equal opportunity in Lawrence; it was a role, however, that they often abdicated, "the feds and the state must force the city to play right – no more grants until you make your programs responsive to the needs of these people. Too often, the state and federal governments roll over and say, well, we understand."<sup>33</sup> Beyond direct competition with its suburbs for industrial, retail, and property tax bases, Lawrence's crisis was exacerbated by the rise of a suburban agenda on the state level that restricted the type of aid necessary to address Lawrence's devastated housing, educational, and public safety services.

The efforts of the city to fix up the housing projects with state funds is a powerful example of the ways in which the riots were effective Latino activism, but how major changes in the city were ultimately hamstrung by a suburban agenda. One project resident described the projects and his neighbors' outrage at the city's neglect, as well as responding to white residents' accusations that Latinos didn't take care of their homes. "Why should we plant flowers when cockroaches crawl through our food, when the plumbing does not work, and heating does not work?" he said. "That's why you saw the signs during the riots (the curfew that prohibited people from leaving the projects)... the signs said: 'Don't lock us in our cages – We are not animals'... but if you lived here you would see that they are cages... and the riots rattled the cages... and you know what

happens then... the people react as if they were being treated like animals.” He questioned whether, without the riots, “would [the city] be spending a dime to fix [the projects] up?”<sup>34</sup> These comments get at the crux of the state response to the riots: although the funding was long overdue, insufficient, and mis-prioritized, without the riots, the problems in Lawrence might have been ignored indefinitely. Throughout Lawrence’s history, the city’s Latino residents had been accused of political apathy, yet the riots must be considered a successful example of Latino activism, as this claim on Lawrence’s space and resources had a more profound and immediate effect on city and state government services than any voter registration campaign could have achieved. The riots gave weight and immediacy to complaints about conditions in Lawrence that had been ignored for decades.

### **Social Services**

Although state aid to Lawrence was only a drop in the bucket of what was needed, the social service system in Lawrence did get a significant boost. In addition to the direct riot aid package to the city, the Executive Offices of Communities and Development, and Human Services also put together a \$1.4 million package for an overhaul to Lawrence’s social service system, called the “Lawrence Initiative.” Most of it was designed to upgrade existing social services, but \$33,000 was given to Inquilinos Boricuas en Acción (a Boston-based, Puerto Rican, Community Development Corporation with a history of successful grassroots advocacy in Boston’s South End), to develop a new, multi-faceted Latino social service agency in Lawrence, named Centro Panamericano.<sup>35</sup> In perspective,

\$33,000 was not a substantial investment (even in 1984 dollars), and from its inception, Centro Panamericano was forced to grapple with fundraising, leaving the fledgling organization skeptical of its ability to engage in the kind of advocacy and policy work the community was hoping for.<sup>36</sup> It was, however the first social service agency in the city explicitly tailored to and run by the Latino community, and it was a step in the right direction towards creating a social service network in Lawrence that could meet the needs of the city's Latino residents. Other social services agencies, whether as a response to the needs so vocally expressed during and after the riot, or to compete with Centro for funds, began to ramp up their bilingual services and their outreach to Latinos. This change in the city's social service system would become increasingly important as the manufacturing economy further deteriorated, because the social service infrastructure was to become a key part of the city's economy in the decades to come.

Jorge Santiago, the first Executive Director for Centro Panamericano, who ran the organization for thirteen years, echoed the claims made after the riots that the human services system in Lawrence was profoundly ill-fitted to the needs of the city's Latinos. He described the social service landscape when he came to the city after the riots, arguing that traditional social service organizations in the city "had a lot of Latinos on the caseload, had very few Latinos in professional positions, staff positions. And if the state wanted more Latino staff, these agencies responded by saying, 'then give us additional resources.' They didn't want to shift the internal structure of the organization to accommodate this new client pool." Santiago argued that this refusal to tailor services to Latinos or to hire Latinos to help provide services had been longstanding among many of



the city's social service organizations, "Historically, Latinos have been used in this community to garner ... funds and grant money... once they got the grants, they hardly ever gave any services to their Latino constituents at all." At the time of the riots, social service organizations in Lawrence had large Latino client bases, but weren't tailoring their services to meet Latino needs. Santiago elaborated, "Nor were they willing to train staff, Latinos, hire staff and train them to fill these important roles." Centro Panamericano was the first organization in Lawrence with the both the goal and the means to systematically train local Latinos to be bilingual and bicultural service providers.<sup>37</sup>

Over the next few years, inter-agency competition for clients and funding then pressured other, more traditional, and overwhelmingly white-run organizations to prioritize hiring bilingual and bicultural staff. Within a few years, Centro Panamericano was no longer providing services that were distinct from other human services agencies in Lawrence, as bilingual and bicultural service provision had become the new norm in the city, thanks to the pressure exerted by the riots and the standards set by Centro Panamericano. As Santiago recalled, "I think we forced them [other service providers] to a large extent, especially initially, to change their practices. A lot of them wound up hiring my staff out from under me."<sup>38</sup> Although this loss of trained staff to other organizations proved frustrating for Centro Panamericano, the mainstream turn toward bilingual and bicultural service provision not only provided more inclusive services, but also opened up substantial opportunities for employment for Lawrence Latinos, particularly for women. By 2000, only about a quarter of Lawrencians were still

employed in manufacturing, while over forty percent were employed in service jobs, with half of those jobs in education, health or other social services. The creation of a bilingual and bicultural service infrastructure was particularly significant for Latinas, as by 2000, over half of the city's employed Latinas worked in services, with the majority of them in education, health, or other social services.<sup>39</sup> One scholar has even argued that the social service infrastructure has been a key path to power for many Latino community and political leaders in Lawrence, although many rose to prominence through leadership in Latino social clubs, as well.<sup>40</sup> For the purposes of this chapter, it is most essential to note the origins of the bilingual and bicultural service system in Centro Panamericano, a tangible byproduct of the riots. The role of the riots in catalyzing the growth of bilingual and bicultural social services in the city demonstrates that such a well-tailored service infrastructure was not an inevitable corollary of Latino population growth, rather an outgrowth of decades of activism, including the riots, geared towards making public and private services accountable to the Latino community.

**“The armpit of the Northeast:” Lawrence’s post-riot decline in regional perspective<sup>41</sup>**

In the years after the riots, the economic situation of Latinos throughout Massachusetts declined. The “Massachusetts Miracle” that had brought about a massive boom in the state economy largely bypassed Latinos,<sup>42</sup> and the recession that followed hit Latinos particularly hard. A 1993 Hispanic-American Advisory Commission report warned that (adjusted for inflation) the median household income for Latinos in

Massachusetts declined forty percent in the 1980s. Compared with white Massachusetts' residents, this income decline was stark; while Latino households earned 49 cents to every dollar earned by whites in 1979, the report estimated that it had fallen to only 25 cents per dollar earned by white households in 1987! The findings were equally grim when Latinos in Massachusetts were compared with Latinos across the nation, as Massachusetts had the highest Latino poverty rate in the country, thirty-seven percent of Latinos in Massachusetts lived in poverty in 1989, compared to a nationwide Latino average of twenty-five percent. Massachusetts also had the highest rate of Latino unemployment, the report argued. This extreme poverty and unemployment compared with Latinos throughout the rest of the nation did not stem from the alleged "unskilled" nature of Massachusetts' Latinos, as the report also emphasized that Massachusetts' Latinos had a higher educational attainment than the national average.<sup>43</sup>

Lawrence's history suggests that the overwhelmingly urban concentration of Massachusetts' Latinos combined with stark urban decline in the 1980s may partly account for the extremes of Latino poverty in the state. Edwin Meléndez explained in 1993 that Latinos were concentrated in the state's cities, and urban residence was correlated to poverty regardless of race. Although he did not examine data for the 1980s, he noted that in the 1970s, poverty rates for white city residents increased substantially, in a similar fashion to Latino city residents, in dramatic contrast to whites who did not live in cities. Although Meléndez argued that the main cause of Latino poverty was the concentration of Latinos in the declining industry of non-durable goods manufacturing, he noted that the compounding effect of geographic concentration could not be

dismissed.<sup>44</sup> The shocking rates of Latino poverty in Massachusetts' cities were not just about being Latino, but about being *urban* Latino.

Complete census data for 1990 were not available at the time that Meléndez was analyzing the role of urban concentration in Latino poverty.<sup>45</sup> Had Meléndez had access to the complete 1990 census data, he might have given even more weight to the role of Latino concentration in cities marked by urban disinvestment, as many city economies in Massachusetts (with the arguable exception of Boston) declined markedly during the 1980s, a pattern demonstrated with painful clarity in Lawrence. Kim Stevenson studied the evolution of Lawrence's economy between 1980 and 1990 in relation to its surrounding region, uncovering not just a struggling city but "the growing spatial polarization and isolation of poverty in Lawrence relative to the surrounding region."<sup>46</sup> Her emphasis on the "growing" nature of intrametropolitan inequality is important; although the origins of Lawrence's crisis harkened back to changes in the metropolitan political economy in the decades after World War II, it was not until the 1980s and early 1990s that the divergent paths of city and suburb came to full fruition. Between 1980 and 1990, Lawrence's importance in the regional economy declined precipitously. From nearly 30 percent of the region's jobs in 1980, Lawrence's share of regional jobs declined to only 20 percent by 1990. Andover was the new employment powerhouse in the region, with 21.2 percent of the region's jobs by 1990. Although Lawrence's decline has often been attributed to the flight of manufacturing to the South or overseas, it is significant that Andover gained nearly 3,000 jobs in the manufacturing sector in this decade.

Continued successful suburban competition for manufacturing played a substantial role in Lawrence's growing economic decline.<sup>47</sup>

In the years after the riots, the growing gap of between Lawrence and its suburbs was evident in housing as well. The Urban Studies Institute, a joint research venture between Phillips Academy in Andover and Lawrence High School, published a report on Lawrence's housing crisis in 1988, with a focus on the shocking inequality evident between Lawrence and its suburbs. In 1988, Essex County families needed a \$62,400 yearly income to buy and sustain an average-priced, single-family home in the area, an income far exceeding that of most Lawrence residents. But even this average obscured the urban/suburban housing gap. In 1984, the average cost of a home in Lawrence was \$57,250, and still far out of reach of most urban workers. In Andover, however, the average home then cost \$152,320, and had grown to \$268,000 by 1989, and availability of rental housing in the suburbs was scarce. Reflecting on the low rate of home ownership in Lawrence, Lloyd described that her students were shocked at the economic impact of suburban homeownership compared to urban tenancy in Greater Lawrence, "They saw that homeowners get farther ahead and the nonowners get farther behind."<sup>48</sup> Indeed, the role of home ownership in generating wealth was substantial. It was not simply that wealthy people moved to the suburbs, but that moving to the suburbs made people wealthier, both in terms of the increased job and education opportunities available to suburban families over time and because of the wealth generated by owning one's home (especially considering home appreciation in Greater Lawrence in the late twentieth century). In 1989, eighty percent of Methuen homeowners lived in houses they

would not have been able to buy at their current incomes.<sup>49</sup> The “housing bubble” of the late 1980s was partly responsible, but even over a longer time scale, the dramatic increase in suburban home values exceeded the (still substantial) rise in suburban income. In 1980, the average home value in Andover, North Andover, and Methuen was only 2.6 times the median annual household income in these suburbs. By 2000, it had grown to 3.8 times the median annual household income.<sup>50</sup>

**“The center of decay for everything:” The acceleration of urban crisis in the 1990s<sup>51</sup>**

*“During the 1980s and 1990, Lawrence, Massachusetts was known throughout the nation as the arson capital of the country, the auto-fraud capital of the country, and a place where business went to die.”*

*-The Valley Patriot<sup>52</sup>*

The increasing concentration of economic crisis within the city provoked a social crisis in Lawrence by the early 1990s. Hundreds of arson fires ravaged the city: 100 in 1991, 150 in 1992, 102 in 1993, and at least 65 in 1994.<sup>53</sup> A state fire captain called Lawrence “the arson capital of the world” for the roughly 150 arsons that tore through the predominantly Latino Arlington District in 1992.<sup>54</sup> As the *Boston Globe* described, “In the earliest, darkest hours of the morning, throughout the poorest sections of the city, buildings are burning with mind-numbing regularity, the flames searing the psyche of a community where poverty is already a way of life. On Bromfield Street, in the predominantly Hispanic Arlington Mill district, there are three litter-strewn lots where, just a few months ago, three-decker homes once sat. Owners have abandoned buildings, while many of those who remain have abandoned hope, as they look down their street

and see only scorched wood and boarded windows.”<sup>55</sup> The *Boston Globe* noted that sections of the city, “have begun to look like an urban war zone, with charred and vandalized vacant buildings on almost every street corner.”<sup>56</sup> Arsons were not the only fires ravaging the city, as accidental fires were also common as well as dangerous in the dense city. In the fall of 1992, the *Boston Herald* noted that, in addition to the 140 arsons the city had experienced so far that year, 250 other fires had also set the city ablaze.

The impact of these fires on the Latino residents in the Arlington District was profound. As one Latina described, “You never know when your home is going to be on fire. You get up at 2 or 3 in the morning and the street is filled with fire trucks. You never know if you are next.”<sup>57</sup> The quiet, tranquil city that many Latinos hoped to find in Lawrence was going up in smoke, the remains being bull-dozed or left to decay. A Latina resident of Oxford street, where the 1984 riots took place, lived near a vacant house that had been set ablaze ten times over the past two years. She described, “I’m in constant fear of the fires.”<sup>58</sup> As the remaining whites left the Oxford street neighborhood after the riots, Latinos had little to fear from racial tension in their neighborhood; yet the flight from the city left such economic devastation that the fear of racist harassment was replaced by a fear of their homes burning to the ground.

The community organizing that had enabled Latinos to overcome earlier resistance to their settlement in the city was still at work, however, challenging the idea that Lawrence was an “urban war zone.” In November 1992, 400 residents and community leaders marched on the Common in solidarity with fire victims with signs declaring, “*No Mas Apatía*” [no more apathy] and “United in Hope.” In spite of

Lawrence's struggles, marchers asserted that the future of the city rested in unity (presumably both unity among the city's Latinos and unity between Latino and white Lawrencians), and this view held strong in the face of urban crisis. Speakers at the arson rally vowed that the city would live up to its reputation, not as the arson capital of the country but as "the city that would not die."<sup>59</sup>

Police Chief Allen Cole explained the relationship between the arson and the city's economic decline. Lawrence contained hundreds of abandoned buildings, and he explained, "Owners are just walking away from them."<sup>60</sup> Once the buildings were abandoned, the understaffed Lawrence police and fire department had little control over what happened in the buildings. The city had an operational budget of \$3.2 million the year before, and had been unable to even send out property tax bills. Mayor Sullivan explained, "We are down about 43 positions in the Fire Department, and I just laid off about 10 policemen."<sup>61</sup> By the summer of 1993, the Fire Department had half the number of firefighters as it had in the early 1980s, although the city's population had grown substantially. Fire Chief Richard Shafer blamed the diminished investigative power of the Fire Department and the city for the waves of arson. When the city decided not to use scarce resources to investigate fires in vacant buildings in 1991, "a flicker erupted into flames." Chief Shafer argued, "When a vacant building burned up, obviously it was arson and the feeling was that it wasn't worth investigating. So when the fires started and no one was arrested, people got the feeling that they could light a fire and there was no chance of getting caught."<sup>62</sup> Even when the arsonist was known, diminished resources in the city to investigate the fires made arson difficult to prosecute as the burden of proof



was high. One state trooper commented, “There were no consequences so it was totally out of control. If you were going to a fire in Lawrence, you might as well take a hotdog.” This joke about the burning of Lawrence being entertainment, a carnivalesque spectacle to be observed and enjoyed was cruel but true, as during the arson peak in the summer of 1992, fire watchers or “sparks” from outside the city crowded along with residents in front of burning buildings on weekend nights.

Indeed, city officials claimed that arson for profit was rare, as very few of the owners of torched buildings actually maintained insurance policies.<sup>63</sup> Although this seems plausible considering the city’s remarkable financial distress, some buildings were indeed burned by their owners, or by those the owners hired. The *Boston Globe* reported that arsonists were paid for their work frequently enough for there to be a “going rate” for the task. One 27-year old man who claimed to have set four fires compared the “work” of arson to the other economic activities available to him in the devastated city. “You’re out on the corner and you’re stealing purses and selling baking powder and making \$40 bucks a day, and someone comes up and offers you \$400 to burn a place which’ll take two minutes, and I say, ‘What time should I be there’... You offer me \$10,000 and, boom, boom, I’ll burn the... Police Department.”<sup>64</sup> In spite of official and media accounts that blamed local unruly Latinos for torching their own neighborhoods for spite or for thrills,<sup>65</sup> comments such as these demonstrate that there were clearly people with resources willing to invest those resources in burning Lawrence buildings. Regardless, few of the torched buildings were owner-occupied, as the owner-occupancy rate in North Lawrence, where most of the fires occurred was only 24 percent (North Lawrence was

estimated to be approximately 75 percent Latino by 1993). Unsurprisingly, members of the Latino-majority, largely renter population, were not always surprised by the decision of some absentee building owners to set their property ablaze rather than repair and rent it. After a house on Warren Street was burned, neighbors believed strongly that it had been the owner. One Latino resident told the *Boston Globe* that the owner would return to burn the two buildings adjacent to the torched one, as they belonged to him as well, “Don’t worry, he’ll be back to burn the rest,” he said. “He can’t sell them so what else would he do with them?” Officials acknowledged that at least some of the arsons were landlord insurance schemes, but no building owners were indicted until October of 1993, when two Derry, New Hampshire men were accused of burning an apartment building one owned on Butler Street in Lawrence, by dousing it with paint thinner and setting it ablaze. It is significant, of course, that the Lawrence property owner/arsonists lived, not in Lawrence, but in a nearby suburb (Derry is a short drive up Interstate 93 from Salem, New Hampshire). Whether arson-for-profit was frequent or rare, it demonstrates the impact that disinvestment in Lawrence had on the city, and on the Latino residents who lived in fear of their homes going up in flames.

Not only were the fires rooted in the city’s economic decline, but they contributed to its economic crisis as well, as banks and insurance companies hesitated to provide mortgages or policies for homes in Lawrence.<sup>66</sup> Of course, for city elites, a main concern was that the fires would hamper the city’s ability to attract the “first-class” tenants it had been trying (mostly unsuccessfully) to recruit for decades. Mayor Sullivan explained, “The fire publicity starts going national, and the business people start getting wary. Those

companies that are needed to expand the tax base become reluctant to locate here. The ability to deal with the problem becomes diminished. You depend on growth to fight the fires and tear down buildings.”<sup>67</sup> As with the riots, city elites were not always clear whether it was the city’s real troubles or its sensationalized reputation in the media that kept the business community at bay. At the very least, the city’s bad reputation had the potential to live on long after the troubles eased. Although the arson rate improved over the years, particularly thanks to an Arson Task Force that was eventually established, the *Boston Herald* still referred to Lawrence’s “national image as a firebug capital” as late as 1995.<sup>68</sup>

In addition to its national image as arson center, Lawrence was named the nation’s auto theft capital in 1990 by the National Insurance Crime Bureau after 3,356 cars were stolen in the city that year. That is an average of nearly ten cars a night in a city that is no more than seven square miles.<sup>69</sup> A Lawrence police sergeant complained that “the majority of kids stealing cars are under the age of 16,” making them difficult to prosecute. The sergeant tied the rising car theft directly to the inadequacy of work, school, and recreational activities available for young Lawrencians, “You’ve got a high unemployment rate here. You’ve got a lot of kids with nothing to do, so a lot of them are spending their time going out stealing cars – sometimes selling the parts.” Lawrence’s suburbs, however, were not immune from this “urban” problem. Car theft in North Andover in 1990 was up fifty-one percent from the year before, a fact that the North Andover police chief attributed to the town’s proximity to Lawrence. Meanwhile, Methuen instituted a decal program in which residents could authorize police to stop the

car and check the drivers ID without cause between the hours of 1 and 5 a.m., the prime time for auto theft.<sup>70</sup> The acceleration of urban crisis in Lawrence in the 1990s was so extreme, and the resources that the city could marshal so meager, that rather than be placed in state receivership, like Chelsea, the *Boston Herald* reported that former mayor Kevin Sullivan suggested that Lawrence be annexed to its surrounding suburbs (a plan that, unsurprisingly, was not adopted by those suburbs.)<sup>71</sup>

### **White entrenchment**

Although the riots marked a dramatic upswing in Latino political activism in the city, there was also a serious re-entrenchment of white racism after the riots. This white backlash took two forms: both renewed white flight and renewed resistance to Latino settlement in the city. As the city suffered from widespread decline, however, and as Latinos had the political strength to ensure that explicit discrimination was no longer acceptable, the renewed resistance to Latino settlement in the city after the riots most often took the form of coded scapegoating of Latinos for the city's economic woes. More importantly in the face of growing concentrated poverty in Lawrence, its suburbs evinced a growing refusal, evident in the earlier debate over the riot aid bill, to share the responsibility of caring for the region's poor.

As discussed earlier, between 1940 and 1980, Lawrence had lost forty percent of its white population, before Latinos became a substantial proportion of the city. This early white flight, encouraged by the pull of the suburbs, exploded in the 1980s as white rejection of Lawrence's growing Latino presence fueled an unprecedented exodus of

white residents. Although the total population of the city actually increased in the 1980s, from 63,000 to 70,000, the white population of the city decreased from 52,000 to 38,000 for a loss of 14,000 residents. In other words, 25 percent of the white people in Lawrence in 1980 had left the city by 1990. This would average out to a four-person family leaving the tiny city almost every day during this decade. Given the narrative examples in the last chapter of white residents whose decision to leave the city was spurred by the riots, it is very possible that the bulk of this exodus occurred in the latter half of the decade. Between 1990 and 2000, although slightly fewer than 14,000 white people left, this amounted to 36 percent, or more than one third, of the remaining white population leaving the city between 1990 and 2000.

Within Lawrence, it seems that popular anti-Latino sentiment and tension actually grew after the riots. The surface calm in the Oxford Street neighborhood after the riot masked an underlying current that one Latina resident described simply as “kinda tense.” She recalled, “If you walked down the street, people looked at you funny... It was calm, but you knew if somebody said something bad it would probably start all over again.”<sup>72</sup> As could be predicted from the plans to leave the city expressed by white neighborhood residents, the Oxford Street neighborhood had become predominantly Latino within a few years after the riot.<sup>73</sup> In addition to this tension and white flight, it seems that employment discrimination may have increased after the riot as well. One unemployed Latino reported, “I do not like to think it is discrimination but since the riots people seem afraid to hire us... Others [employers] have told me plain to my face that I should go back where I came from.”<sup>74</sup> It is very possible that the riots served to change the local

image of Latinos among white employers from a docile labor force to urban insurgents. Whether from increased discrimination or the ongoing processes of deindustrialization and suburbanization, Latino unemployment in the city reached nearly twenty-five percent by 1990.

The white backlash against Latino settlement in the city after the riots was perhaps most evident in the election of former-Alderman Kevin Sullivan in 1985. Sullivan ran for mayor on a coded anti-Latino campaign of “giving the city back to those who built it.”<sup>75</sup> In 1988, longtime Latino-community activist, Nunzio DiMarca, summed up an attitude towards Mayor Sullivan that seems to have been common among the city’s Latino activists. He told the *Eagle-Tribune*, “I still have many disagreements with Mayor Sullivan’s views, who I believe got elected as mayor of Lawrence by being anti-Hispanic.”<sup>76</sup> Foremost among those disagreements was the mayor’s discussion of welfare reform, which DiMarca and a number of Latino organizers decried as “littered with racial innuendos.”<sup>77</sup> In Lawrence, after the riots, however, explicit anti-Latino commentary was no longer acceptable, hence the accusations of “racial innuendos” and coded references to the city’s Latinos, as well as the widespread argument that the Mayor’s welfare reform program was unfairly designed to target Latinos, an accusation he vehemently denied.

Although Mayor Sullivan denied that his broad welfare reform campaign was directed against Latinos, he often explicitly discussed his belief that Lawrence had become a “welfare magnet.” He argued that welfare reform was necessary because, “People are coming to Lawrence and Massachusetts in general from all over the world to get on public assistance.”<sup>78</sup> In this sense, in spite of the Mayor’s protestations, welfare

reform was explicitly geared towards discouraging Latino settlement in the city. Rather than attribute the situation of impoverished single mothers to structural factors that Latinos encountered in Lawrence (like unemployment, low wages, discrimination in housing and employment, or a miserable education system), city leaders and residents declared that Latinos must come to Lawrence *because* of the welfare the city provided. Indeed, rumors circulated of a sign in Puerto Rico that read “Come to Lawrence for welfare.”<sup>79</sup> The *Boston Globe* quoted Sullivan as saying that migrants come to the city for its social service system and “use poverty as a disguise to get hold of the system” as he initiated his pointed campaign to uncover supposed welfare fraud.<sup>80</sup> In 1989, Sullivan initiated a controversial plan to revoke the benefit cards (including Medicaid and Food Stamps) of anyone arrested for selling drugs, although the blatant illegality of denying people welfare without due process eventually brought a stop to the illegal seizure.<sup>81</sup>

The widespread belief that Latinos came to Lawrence for its welfare system was challenged by comparative numbers released during the state’s welfare reform debate. In 1993, it was clear that Massachusetts gave about the same amount to AFDC recipients as New York did (\$579 and \$577, respectively, for a single mother with two children), and both states gave far less than generous states like Alaska and Vermont.<sup>82</sup> Given that most of the early migrants to Lawrence were secondary migrants, and that most kin networks would enable migration to New York as easily as to Lawrence, welfare does not seem to be the missing piece of why Latinos chose Lawrence. This similarity in welfare benefits between Massachusetts and New York did not stop city leaders from arguing that Massachusetts welfare benefits created a “welfare magnet.”<sup>83</sup>

Although interstate inequality of welfare benefits could not account for Latino migration to Lawrence, intrametropolitan inequality could. The profound disparity in the availability of public housing and multi-family rental housing has already been discussed. The mayor of one secondary city even alleged that the state intentionally concentrated migrants within the cities. Lynn mayor, Albert DiVirgilio, argued, “The state, in order to protect the suburbs that control the vast majority of elected officials and bureaucracies, keeps sending poor people and immigrants towards the same areas to keep the situation secluded.”<sup>84</sup> Some opponents of the welfare cuts argued that the concentration of jobs in the region’s suburbs made commuting to low-wage jobs unaffordable. A Lawrence resident wrote a letter to the editor of the *Eagle-Tribune* that argued, “there is nothing shameful about resorting to welfare when you are up against it financially. That is why it was established, and it was paid for by you and me.” One welfare advocate explained, “Working is fine, but who will provide the transportation to jobs, few of which are in Lawrence. I go five miles to my job and a taxi costs \$12 one way. No buses are available.”<sup>85</sup> Isabel Meléndez noted in 1988 that she had recently brought a group of Latina women down to the Marriot Hotel in Andover to interview for jobs. She explained that some of the women could have been hired, but they had no way of getting to work.<sup>86</sup> The employment statistics of women who began working after welfare reform confirm this pattern. Although the majority of welfare recipients lived in Lawrence, of the 780 women who had found jobs in the year since the reforms had taken effect, only thirty-one percent of them had found work in the city Lawrence, while thirty-seven percent had found work in either Andover, North Andover, or Methuen.<sup>87</sup>



When local efforts to stop presumed welfare abuse in the late 1980s were unsuccessful, city leaders became vocal advocates for state-level reforms. The welfare restructuring that was eventually implemented by Massachusetts in 1995 was profoundly influenced by Greater Lawrence politicians and was, in turn, a powerful force in the national reforms legislated a year later in the “Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act” of 1996 that “end[ed] welfare as we know it.”<sup>88</sup> This national movement for welfare reform was a part of the broader turn towards conservatism in the 1980s and 1990s, as popular support for the welfare state eroded. Given its centrality in Massachusetts reform, Lawrence by extension played a key and hidden role in national welfare reform. A *USA Today* article in 1995 highlighted both Lawrence’s role in the Massachusetts reforms and the national attention that the Massachusetts’ experiment was garnering, calling Lawrence “the new ground zero” in the national battle for welfare reform.<sup>89</sup> Commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance, Claire McIntire, claimed that “The whole idea of welfare reform really began in Lawrence.”<sup>90</sup> Given the key role that Massachusetts reform played in the national debate, it is useful to explore its origins in Greater Lawrence’s political economy and fears of Latino immigration.

Although the drive for Lawrence welfare reform may have gotten underway with Mayor Kevin Sullivan, it found its fullest expression under another Lawrence Mayor, Mary Claire Kennedy. Republican Governor William Weld, a major force behind the state’s reform, called Mayor Kennedy “my tutor on welfare reform.”<sup>91</sup> She was particularly persuaded of the damage welfare had done to cities like Lawrence, “If our

cities are ever going to turn themselves around, we need a welfare program that's temporary in nature, not a way of life. What we have are third generation families who have never worked.”<sup>92</sup> The use of the term “third generation” was most likely not intended as an explicit reference to immigrants and their descendants, but the overlap in language is significant. In the coded language of the 1990s, welfare families in Lawrence generally were presumed to be Latino, as the frequent debates about the city and state as welfare “magnets” for immigrants illustrated. Mayor Kennedy was a particularly vocal advocate for state-level reforms, but she was not alone in her support for reform among Lawrence elites; in the same article, the President of Lawrence’s Chamber of Commerce optimistically predicted that welfare reform was “going to bring stability back to Lawrence.”<sup>93</sup>

Lawrence elites’ enthusiasm for welfare reform was echoed across the Commonwealth. Ultimately, the “key architects” Massachusetts welfare reform, however, were three suburban Democrats, two of whom hailed from Greater Lawrence: James P. Jajuga, D-Methuen, John D. O’Brien, Jr. D-Andover, and Therese Murray D-Plymouth.<sup>94</sup> The important role of legislators from Lawrence’s nearest suburban neighbors in welfare reform was not surprising in the context of intrametropolitan polarization that had developed over the past few decades. Not only did Democratic legislators from Andover and Methuen shape the punitive Massachusetts welfare reform, they also pushed for the pioneering program to uncover welfare fraud by requiring all recipients to be fingerprinted, a program first tested in Lawrence and Springfield in 1996.<sup>95</sup> State senator John D. O’Brien, a Democrat from Andover specifically referenced unequal urban

development as the historical process responsible for urban economic decline, although the solution of welfare reform seems more punitive than palliative, “For people in the city of Lawrence, who aren’t going to get megaplexes and who aren’t going to get Central Arteries, this is the major issue: a small city that is overburdened with social programs that no longer work.”<sup>96</sup> To this Andover legislator, it had already been determined that the factors responsible for suburban wealth (sites of mass consumption and highways) would not be available to Lawrence. The best the state could offer Lawrence was a dramatic cut in its welfare rolls, most of which were funded through state and federal money in the first place.

It is not insignificant that legislators from Lawrence’s suburbs were the key force behind the state law, as welfare reform was a logical extension of the suburban push to disclaim responsibility for “urban problems” like poverty and unemployment. The liberal reputation of Massachusetts should not obscure the fact that it was at the vanguard of this erosion of collective support for cities. As *USA Today* described, “Just as Massachusetts has been regarded as a liberal laboratory for social planning, it is now a leader in the backlash assailing decades of welfare policies.”<sup>97</sup> Massachusetts Governor William Weld boasted that the Massachusetts law “scream[ed] for individual responsibility,” and Massachusetts officials celebrated that the state’s caseload dropped by 1,000 families before the law even went into effect.<sup>98</sup> As one North Andover resident asked in a letter to “all the welfare mothers who feel that their children deserve a decent life”: “Would you please provide this without any assistance from my taxes?”<sup>99</sup> The suburban rejection of responsibility for urban problems found a natural expression in state welfare reform.

The 1995 Massachusetts welfare reform required able-bodied recipients with children six and over to either work or provide twenty hours of community service each week. It also imposed a two-year limit for benefits within any five year period. After negotiating with the federal government, the state compromised and allowed the two years to begin only after the recipients youngest child has reached two years of age. The two-year limit would also be suspended for up to a year in any county with extended unemployment of ten percent or more. Particularly challenging for recipients who engaged in transnational child-rearing, benefits could be cut if children failed to attend school for a set number of days each year. Teen parents had to either stay at home or live in state-run group homes to remain welfare eligible. The reforms also eliminated the \$90 per month increase for children added to the family while on welfare, and required unmarried mothers to name the fathers of their children so state could pursue men for support.<sup>100</sup>

The “innuendos” that connected welfare reform and Latino migration in Lawrence had not dissolved by the time the debate reached the state level. Among the first proposals was a welfare reform bill passed by the state Senate that limited migrants’ benefits to whatever they would have received in their home states, including Puerto Rico. Although the bill did not become law, one of the sponsors of the bill defended the need for this measure, which would have dramatically cut benefits for Puerto Rican residents of the state, by saying that “glossy brochures have been distributed in Puerto Rico outlining our benefits and urging people to come here.”<sup>101</sup> After the passage of comprehensive reform in 1995, the state’s welfare commissioner James Gallant managed

to reference and re-invoke the specter of the state's Latinization by discussing the role of reform in dissuading immigration. After the governor boasted of 1,000 families dropped from the welfare rolls, the commissioner added, "Just the talk of welfare reform has had a great impact on people deciding not to come to Massachusetts."<sup>102</sup> In a single sentence, the problems of Latino communities in Massachusetts were obscured, and Latino communities in Massachusetts *became* the problem. The problem was not that the people here were *poor*, but that the poor people were *here*; the goal was not to help them escape poverty, but to discourage them from coming to Massachusetts. Just a little more than a decade after the riots, when the clarion call was to infuse state money into Lawrence in order to solve the poverty problems of Latinos, the goal had become to curtail the flow of state money into cities like Lawrence, in order to discourage a substantial Latino population from settling there.

Many scholars have noted that the creation and perpetuation of certain racialized stereotypes around public assistance in the late 1980s and early 1990s enabled massive welfare reform. These stereotypes were particularly rampant in Massachusetts, as the media turned a critical eye on "welfare abuse" in Lawrence. One study of the impact of welfare reform on Latina women in Lawrence described the myths about poor women that were supported by politicians and the media in Massachusetts, that they were "dependent," "lacking in motivation," and "welfare cheaters."<sup>103</sup> The authors conclude that these negative stereotypes about poor women, but also specifically about poor Latina women in Lawrence, were what enabled the punitive welfare reforms in Massachusetts in 1995. They note that when public assistance was perceived simply as a safety net for

those in poverty, it was politically impossible to muster sufficient public opposition for reform. When politicians and the media, however, concentrated on the cost of, and problems with, the welfare system specifically in impoverished, heavily-Latino cities like Lawrence, they successfully created a racialized image of rampant welfare abuse. “Once the movement of local and state economic and political leaders in the mid-1980s successfully localized welfare to communities of color, there developed the ‘problem of welfare fraud,’ and reform was able to garner widespread white support.”<sup>104</sup> The belief that welfare utilization was localized in cities like Lawrence and confined to women of color, mitigated the public interest in ensuring that reform was enacted in such a way as to preserve the basic rights of welfare recipients, enabling the punitive aspects of reform.<sup>105</sup>

It would be overblown to argue that the debate that led to national welfare reform *began* in Lawrence, as discussions about public responsibility for the poor have existed since time immemorial. Indeed, the kind of victim blaming prevalent in this debate, which obscures structural inequality and alleges the moral failing of the poor, has its antecedents in the antebellum moral reform movements. Events and policy in this small city, however, did play a significant role in shaping the national debate and subsequent legislation. Although the racist, mythologized image of an African-American “welfare queen” dominated the national welfare reform debate, the centrality of early reform efforts in Lawrence suggest that beliefs about, and struggles against, Latino poverty in the Northeast also played a central role in shaping welfare reform.<sup>106</sup> This is underscored by the fact that the immigration reform bill that was also passed in 1996 betrayed a

similar emphasis on personal responsibility in its title: the awkwardly named Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA). The connection between welfare reform and immigration reform remains understudied, yet there is much to suggest the importance of Latino migration in shaping the national turn away from the welfare state and towards an idea of “personal responsibility” that effectively criminalized poverty (whether in the Third World or in U.S. cities). The fact that the drive for national welfare reform was partly anchored in the anxiety of Lawrence city leaders over Latino welfare recipients, demonstrates the centrality of concerns about immigration to the breakdown of the welfare state in the late twentieth century.<sup>107</sup>

In the years after the riots, in the context of a growing Latino community and increasing poverty, the refusal of Lawrence elites to embrace Latinos as full and equal members of the community had a devastating impact on the city. Disenfranchisement and neglect of the Latino population was a huge part of what fueled the riot, but there are other examples of how the city’s refusal to recognize Latinos as full and equal members affected its economy. For better or worse, welfare was one of the few avenues through which capital flowed into the city of Lawrence. In 1993, the *Eagle-Tribune* noted “In Lawrence alone, the so-called ‘misery industry’ of non-profit social service agencies providing services to welfare recipients is worth close to \$90 million a year... The \$4 billion a year Massachusetts welfare system is also a cash machine for local nursing homes, doctors, lawyers, landlords – even funeral homes and taxi drivers... Landlords [in Lawrence], for example, earned \$4.8 million in rental subsidies for welfare families last year.”<sup>108</sup> Welfare was an obvious aid to business for the doctors, lawyers, landlords,

funeral homes, and taxis the paper listed. Non-profit social service agencies were “economic engines” in the city, providing jobs as well as services, and the welfare system helped pay property taxes in the form of rental subsidies to landlords.<sup>109</sup> The paper noted that all together, the Lawrence area welfare office spent over \$300 million a year, 50 million more than the combined annual municipal budgets of the four towns and cities that made up Greater Lawrence.<sup>110</sup> Rather than reform the welfare industry to make it a better engine for economic growth while providing necessary services for the city’s poor, city leaders worked to remove Lawrencians from the roles, limiting one of the few sources of capital into a cash-strapped city, in the belief that welfare reform would stop the migration of lower-class Latinos into the city.

Welfare was not the only example, however, of how the failure to prioritize the needs of Latino Lawrencians, and their continued exclusion from full participation, negatively impacted the city. Low wages, job insecurity, and high unemployment made Lawrence the poorest city in the state in the 1990s, and one of the poorest in the nation.<sup>111</sup> Low owner-occupancy rates in housing based on these low wages and high unemployment enabled the proliferation of apartments owned by absentee landlords, many of whom criminally neglected their properties, leading to the high rates of arson in the 1990s and the public health nightmare of lead poisoning, as well as undercutting the city’s property tax base. Terrible, underfunded schools, particularly in terms of bilingual programs, led to high drop-out rates in the city (sixty percent in the late 1980s<sup>112</sup>), most likely exacerbating the city’s trouble with gangs and youth violence. Lawrence’s poverty and its reputation for corruption, crime, and racial tension stalled its elite renewal efforts



for decades, obstructing the recruitment of “first-class” business and residential tenants.<sup>113</sup>

Latinos were frustrated by this situation, in which they were denied full participation in shaping the city but also blamed for its problems. As one Latino resident explained the desire for inclusion, “We want to be part of the total community...to contribute our culture...to raise our families...but none of this is possible if we are kept in a position of earning such low wages...if we are kept at the bottom of the pile... if we are kept poor.”<sup>114</sup> The exclusion of Latinos from decision-making power in the city dramatically limited their power to contribute to the growth and success of the city. Latinos were forced to stand by and watch, as white politicians struggled to carry the heavy load of running a city in crisis, rather than being able to help carry the burden. Or worse than just watching, Latino Lawrencians were forced to fight for the very right to help carry that heavy load, rather than having the opportunity to devote their energy and initiative to solving Lawrence’s problems.

Not only did exclusion of Latinos dramatically lessen the strong hands and minds available to contribute to solving Lawrence’s problems, it also impacted state funding to the city. City leaders wanted to minimize Lawrence’s racial problems in order to preserve the city’s reputation and attract new development to the city, yet one Latino state official who visited Lawrence insisted that only by addressing its racial problems could the city hope for renewal. “This city is ready to boom, ready to build. And it’ll go that way, but only if it’s equitable. Share! You’ve got to share. We’ve been trying to send that message to them for years. What’s so hard? Share! Share! The refusal to share leads to the state

denying funds. That, in turn, retards the potential for developments, and sooner or later, you get the fires. You lose your tax potential. And it costs you millions of dollars.”<sup>115</sup>

Latinos argued that if Lawrence officials insisted on disenfranchising Latino Lawrencians, their hopes for rebirth were slim.

Refusing to accept that Latinos were in the city to stay and refusing to design city services to fit their needs (rather than hoping or planning for their eventual displacement by middle-income whites) further undermined city services. One City Councilor accused the city government of purposely keeping municipal programs in shambles in order to discourage Latino settlement, “The mayor has no commitment to quality education, I think because of the large percentage of Hispanic student population. He treats the schools like he does the housing projects... he does not want to make either too attractive to increased inflow of Hispanics.”<sup>116</sup> Whether the neglect was indeed intended to discourage further migration to the city, the result was a school system that was unfit for any students, not only Latinos. One group of Latino parents offered this insight, “[The] typical response we have received when we have voiced our concerns to the school principals and teachers is that we need to understand the schools are bad for everyone and we should not be so upset because they are not discriminating.” The idea that Latinos should not be complaining, because the inadequacy of their children’s education was not based on race must have been cold comfort. The fact that the city’s public education services had declined to such an extreme that even white children were not receiving quality educations marks the degree to which an anti-discrimination strategy would ultimately be insufficient to transform Lawrence. The Latino parents’ group was wanted

more sweeping changes in the city than just ending discrimination, “[School officials] seem to think just because we are Hispanics that the only concern we have is discrimination. They do not take into account that we are no different than other parents when it comes to a quality education for our kids.” Without schools that addressed the needs of all students, they argued “none of our kids have prayer of a chance to survive or excel.”<sup>117</sup> This group of parents wanted to transform the school system to make it work for everyone, not just gain equal access to a failing system.

The battles that Lawrence faced in the 1990s were generally discussed without reference to race. Much of the media was in line with the long-time thinking of city leaders that crime was caused by criminals and poverty was to be redressed through personal responsibility. Lawrence’s struggles in the 1990s were with arson, car theft, and drugs. One hundred and fifty buildings were burned by arson in 1992, yet the metropolitan political economy that kept Lawrence’s owner-occupancy rate around thirty percent for decades and that had refused to fund satisfactory oversight of absentee landlords was elided. Lawrence was known as the car-theft capital of the country, yet the metropolitan political economy that had substantial numbers of employed Lawrencians traveling outside of Lawrence for work, without paying many of them wages that would enable the purchase and maintenance of a car, was not considered a factor. Lawrence was also widely known as a drug hub, and its young Latino population was blamed (as were their parents) for drug sales in Lawrence, while the vast suburban New England marketplace where most of those drugs were consumed was not considered.

By the 1990s, explicit racialization of politics was now taboo even in Lawrence (partially out of fear of the national reputation for bigotry the city gained during the riots), and the struggle for the city's resources was coded along other lines, such as age. The demographics of the city in the 1990s, however, with its large population of elderly whites and relatively young population of Latinos, ensured that even when the debate was ostensibly about something other than race, it was also about how white and Latino residents would share Lawrence's resources. As the elderly were a powerful voting bloc in Lawrence, the city's priorities often reflected their concerns, and the allocation of Lawrence's meager resources was too rarely directed at services for its youth.

The city's economic decline and its refusal to prioritize its young residents were reflected in the accelerating decline of its public schools. The most dramatic demographic change in Lawrence after the riots was the loss of white children from Lawrence's public schools. White families continued to leave the city in unprecedented numbers and many of those who remained sent their children to parochial schools. In 1984, at the time of the riots, just over half of Lawrence Public School students were Latino. By 1991, nearly three quarters were.<sup>118</sup> It is impossible to tell if this proportional loss of white students from the public schools was a direct response to the riots, which many white Lawrencians described as the final provocation to move, or simply a result of the steadily increasing Latino population. It was perhaps encouraged by the desegregation plan which was put into effect less than a month after the riots, although many critics described the plan as weak and placing most of the burden on Latinos.<sup>119</sup> With nearly three quarters of the public school population Latino by 1991, and the district dramatically underfunded, no

meaningful desegregation plan could possibly be put into effect within the city. Lawrence public schools were in shambles. In 1990, Lawrence's per pupil expenditure was only \$4098 (unadjusted), almost twenty percent less than the state average of \$4972. Further, more than twenty percent of the city's students had abandoned the public school system in favor of parochial schools. In the context of declining federal and state aid in the early 1990s, Lawrence's public schools were on the verge of an even more serious decline. A 1991 report of Lawrence public schools noted that the inadequate school budget was taking dramatic tolls on the schools, "In Lawrence, 17 percent of all elementary classes have more than 30 students, with many in the high 30's and one grade 8 class with 43. At the High School one Anatomy and Physiology class had 48 students, students must use two editions of the textbook, and because this is a lab class no hands on instruction will take place, the instructor will use demonstrations only." The report continued to discuss the conditions of the classrooms in Lawrence's school buildings:

almost every school is old and in need of repair, and there are spaces used for classrooms which were never intended to be, including closets used for speech therapy and guidance counseling. Students sweep out classrooms every day. Almost every building reports problems with rats, mice, cockroaches and even bats, yet the city has no pest control contract... In Lawrence, many of the classrooms are quite small and overcrowding can take place with just 20-25 students. At the Anatomy class I just mentioned, 6 students did not have desks and had to sit on stools at the rear of the class.

In addition to the structural decline, the public school curriculum had been gutted. Presumably extraneous courses had already been eliminated by 1991, including “Industrial Arts, art, music, foreign language, library, English as a Second Language support, physical education, nutrition, family and student health, [and] college prep courses especially those for bilingual populations.” Not only did the school budget affect class size and course offerings, but there were a dramatic lack of resources for students as well, including textbooks which had been reduced nearly half. There was a “freeze” on supplies and materials after one week of school, and the report noted that “Both Chelsea and Lawrence are soliciting (“begging” as one principal noted) used books from more wealthy school districts.”<sup>120</sup> Although the decline of the public schools partially reflected official city priorities (the 1991 report argued that Lawrence’s tax burden was too low), Lawrence’s situation was shared by cities across the state whose tax bases had been undermined by decades of suburbanization and deindustrialization. The intrametropolitan inequality firmly established by the early 1990s left Lawrence in a position of relative powerlessness, “begging” resources from the surrounding suburbs. By 1997, the situation had deteriorated even further; Lawrence High School had lost its accreditation and was being run by the state.

The bilingual education program, which had been hard won by Latino activism in the city, was equally in shambles. In particular, the layoffs of teacher aides resulted in the city schools being in non-compliance with rules on both bilingual and special education class sizes and student/teacher ratios. A full seventy percent of the bilingual classes in Lawrence were in non-compliance, and twenty percent of the special education classes.<sup>121</sup>

Such extreme non-compliance with bilingual education guidelines demonstrates that the city was still reluctant to invest in its Latino students. In light of the city's economic crisis, it seems that the cost of bilingual education particularly caught the attention/resentment of cash-strapped white officials. In the mid-1980s, Mayor Sullivan allegedly complained to the City Council that the city should not have to fund bilingual education because "minorities can't even speak their own language."<sup>122</sup> The 1991 Department of Education report confirmed that the cuts in aid to urban school budgets demonstrated a continued resistance to bilingual education on a school and community level in Lawrence. "One of the most disturbing results of the cuts," the report noted, "has been increased evidence of tensions and prejudice between regular education and special education and bilingual staff and within communities, because of the perception that burgeoning immigrant populations and the alleged high costs of bilingual and special education are responsible for the budget crisis." It must have been particularly painful for Lawrence Latinos that the bilingual programs they had fought so hard for were simultaneously both underfunded to the point of being profoundly inadequate educational programs and blamed for the general lack of educational resources in the city.

Unsurprisingly, the suburban public schools were not suffering from such decline. Suburban students living just blocks away from the Lawrence border were receiving a quality education relative to Lawrence students. The two, very separate and very unequal school systems that the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision had been designed to abolish had been re-established along urban/suburban lines. The new racial geography of the postwar U.S. ensured that race need not be mentioned as the reason for Latino

exclusion from an education comparable to white suburban students. The Supreme Court had come down squarely in support of this new school segregation in 1974. In seeming contradiction to its decision with *Brown* twenty years earlier, the Court ruled in *Milliken v. Bradley* that suburbs were not compelled to participate in metropolitan desegregation plans that crossed municipal boundaries. The case involved the plan to desegregate fifty-three school districts in metropolitan Detroit, that paradigmatic example of metropolitan segregation which had an overwhelmingly African American urban population and an overwhelmingly white suburban population. The Court ruled that there was no evidence of intentional segregation based on race and reinforced the importance of local school control. As a result of this precedent, levels of segregation that would likely have been unconstitutional had they occurred within a single city, were federally sanctioned along the new color line of urban/suburban boundaries. In 1991, a Department of Education report noted that “school choice” programs had made no significant impact on improving the schools in Lawrence, because schools in the surrounding suburbs had elected not to participate.<sup>123</sup>

Lawrence leaders were still trying to address this intrametropolitan inequality by spreading out the region’s poor. As late as 1999, Lawrence elites were still trying with little success to compel the surrounding suburbs to assume their share of housing low- and middle-income Merrimack Valley residents. As Lawrence Housing Authority President David DiFillipo said, “Low-income people are not unique to Lawrence... The social problems of the poor are not exclusive to Lawrence. Our neighbor towns have some responsibilities here.” The city, which was providing subsidized housing for one



out of every ten residents, went public with a plan to buy land and build more affordable housing; instead of building it within city limits, however, it planned on building it in Andover, North Andover, and Methuen. The suburbs quickly put pressure on Lawrence to drop the idea, claiming that Lawrence had no right to force affordable housing development on them. What might seem like an excellent compromise, Lawrence would buy the land and pay for the development of affordable housing, while all the suburbs had to do was allow the housing within its borders, was clearly not perceived that way by the suburbs. They agreed to discuss affordable housing issues and work together on a solution, but Andover Town Manager Buzz Stapczynski made clear that such a solution did not involve "talking about building affordable housing in Andover or North Andover or Methuen. We all agreed that the best kind of affordable housing is scattered-site, owned housing." It is not clear how this proposal to help make existing housing more affordable for people to buy played out, since home ownership programs often cannot reach the truly low-income, such as those living in subsidized housing in Lawrence.<sup>124</sup>

Part of what this dissertation is trying to argue is that the problems Latinos have faced in Lawrence stem largely from lack of resources. Given the wealth evident in the United States, in Massachusetts, and in the Merrimack Valley, and given that the vast majority of adults in Lawrence worked hard, at least when jobs were available, it is clear that the lack of resources for Lawrence's Latino community was a problem of unequal distribution. For Latinos in Lawrence, the first step was to win a fair division of resources within the city. But, even when that goal was substantially achieved, they still needed to contend with the fact that the city itself did not receive its share of the state's resources.

This reality was concealed by private market rhetoric that obscured the path of capital out of the city and highlighted the infusion of capital into the city through state aid. The money that flowed out of the city in the form of rent and consumption at suburban retail establishments, and in the form of the productive labor that Lawrence residents performed in suburban factories and service industries, was invisible in the discourse of Lawrence's dependence on outside aid. The reliance of the economy of the suburbs on the labor and consumption of Lawrence residents, including its Latino residents, and the mutual interdependence of the metropolitan region, was invisible. The "sweat equity" that Lawrence residents contributed to suburban public schools (through their labor in suburban industry) was not the subject of discourse and debate as was the infusion of government aid into Lawrence's public schools. And so the image of a pathetic, dependent Lawrence was loudly put forth in the media, while the origins of its counterpart--the wealthy, independent, and above all charitable (whether voluntarily or through taxes) suburb--were never questioned.

This intrametropolitan inequality was particularly obvious in Lawrence's history simply because the struggle for equal power *within* the city was so successful. In spite of the nadir of Lawrence's economic and social problems in the early 1990s, Latino assertions of their right to the city began to bear fruit in terms of both their uncontested right to the city's public spaces and their involvement in city politics. Although observers of Lawrence in the 1990s have emphasized the growing Latino electoral power,<sup>125</sup> this involvement in official city politics did not preclude the type of quotidian contestations over public space and the struggle to make a home in the city that I have discussed in

early chapters. *Semana Hispana* continued to draw tens of thousands of Latinos from throughout the region to pack Lawrence's North Common and fill its narrow streets. National origin groups had individual parades on different nights of the festival, with a pan-ethnic celebration on the weekend. Throughout the week of the festival, music filled the air, as cars crawled through the streets, proudly displaying Puerto Rican or Dominican or other national flags and honking their horns, forming "unofficial parades" along with flag-waving pedestrians. Performers included a mix of local and international artists. In 1993, for example, the merengue star Johnny Ventura performed, and in 1996 the festival included the Dominican singer Angela Carrasco, Cuban base player and singer Danny Rojo, as well as a local act named Inner City Karate Club, among others. The festival also continued to register new voters, over 400 in 1996.<sup>126</sup>

In addition to maintaining its emphasis on Latino political empowerment, the festival also maintained its dual focus on unity within the Latino community and bridge-building with white Lawrencians. Festival organizers wanted *Semana Hispana* both to celebrate and share a pan-ethnic Latino culture, as well as to showcase Latino culture in the hope that such a celebration could serve as a neutral bridge-building event with white residents of the city.<sup>127</sup> The tagline for the event in 1998 (and many other years) was *¡Juntos en Armonia!* [Together in Harmony] alluding to this dual goal: unity among Latinos, but also unity among Lawrencians, between white residents and Latinos.<sup>128</sup> Although the festival was designed partially to reach out to the city's white residents and its atmosphere was overwhelmingly festive, with remarkably few instances of trouble,<sup>129</sup> it seems that few white Lawrencians attended the exciting event in the heart of the city, a

fact bemoaned by one organizer in 1997, “*Normalmente lo que hemos escuchado es que los anglos dicen que los latinos son muy bullosos y que si van al festival, sienten miedo de ser agredidos.*” [Generally what we have heard is that whites say Latinos are too rowdy and if they go to the festival, they’re afraid they’ll be victimized.]<sup>130</sup>

The growing Latino presence in the city was not only evident during the festival. In the decade and a half after the riots, Latino-owned businesses grew slowly along the main downtown retail strip of Essex Street (Latino-owned businesses by the 1990s were more prevalent along Broadway, and some remained in the original Newbury Street area). The Latino *presence* along Essex Street, however, grew even faster than the growth of Latino-run businesses, as Latino Lawrencians, many of whom did not own cars, walked downtown to shop or stroll along Essex Street. The public presence of Latinos downtown, however, seems to have contributed to white perceptions of Lawrence’s decline. A 1991 report on Latino-owned businesses in the city surveyed business-owners, shoppers, and strollers on Essex Street. While Latinos described the street generally as “nice,” “clean” or “a good place to walk,” white respondents generally derided Essex Street. They expressed their discomfort with or fear of “unsavory looking individuals,” saying the “street is mostly filled with dubious looking characters,” “groups of men hanging around,” or “druggies in high powered sports cars.” The survey asked people on Essex Street if they feared for their safety, and while only 18 percent of Latinos surveyed said they feared for their safety, nearly half of the “non-Hispanics” were afraid. One explained, “I’m afraid of being attacked. It’s depressing all the homeless and poor beggars looking in the trash. All there is are Spanish stores.” This abrupt jump between

the frightening and “depressing” aspects of downtown Lawrence and the presence of Latino-run businesses was not uncommon. For many white Lawrencians, the presence of Latinos was clear evidence of the decline of the city. One respondent explained that the growing Latinization of the downtown made him or her dislike Essex Street, “To be quite honest, I do not like feeling like a foreigner in my own country. On Essex Street you are surrounded by Spanish stores, signs, music, and people speaking Spanish.” This respondent argued that many others shared this feeling and as a result, downtown Lawrence had no hope of a renaissance; the respondent “[didn’t] see how Essex Street could attract more customers.” This racialized perception of the city’s decline demonstrates the associations many white Lawrencians made between the presence of Latinos and the growth of crime and urban decay. It also demonstrates, however, the remarkable transition the city had gone through over the past two decades, from a Latino minority that was often excluded from the city’s retail sector, to an overwhelming presence in Lawrence’s downtown, a downtown that was beginning to be shaped by their needs and preferences. Although in 1991, Latinos were still marginal in the political system of the city, decades of quotidian assertions of their right to the city had incontrovertibly won Latinos a home in the city’s public spaces.<sup>131</sup>

In addition to this undeniable public presence, decades of Latino political activism geared towards increasing Latino representation in city government finally began to bear fruit in the 1990s in terms of electoral strength and the election of Latino political candidates. Although a few Latinos had served in appointed positions in city government in the 1980s, such as the position of Director of Equal Opportunity and Community

Relations held by Virgil Perez at the time of the riots, appointed posts were most often held by, as one scholar described, “Latinos from smaller, nonthreatening power bases (Chilean, Mexican American, and Venezuelan backgrounds).”<sup>132</sup> In 1991, however, Lawrence *elected* its first Latino office-holder, Ralph Carrero, the first Dominican politician elected in Massachusetts.<sup>133</sup> Carrero won a seat on the School Committee, all of which was elected at-large. Two years later, José Santiago was elected to City Council on a district seat. Santiago was later elected State Representative in 1998, after redistricting created a legislative district where seventy percent of eligible voters were Latino. With this strong voter base and with a growing local Latino media infrastructure, particularly Dalia Díaz’s newspaper *Rumbo*, Santiago was not only able to win, but to win by explicitly challenging the established power structure’s neglect of problems facing the community.<sup>134</sup>

Santiago’s victory was made possible through committed voter registration drives by Latino activists and their allies, who had increased the proportion of Latino registered voters from twelve percent in 1991 to one third by 1998. Yet the persistent lack of political power in the city was not just related to relatively low voter registration. A successful Department of Justice lawsuit in 1999 confirmed that city officials in Lawrence had illegally restricted the practice and impact of Latino voting in the city. The lawsuit had been initiated by citizen complaints centered around three main issues evident in the 1998 elections and earlier: “districts and at-large seats may have been created or used to weaken voting power of the Hispanic population, not all election materials were provided in Spanish (required when a city has more than 5 percent of a

given language group), and the city had failed to provide sufficient Hispanic poll workers and an environment conducive to voting for Hispanics.” Although the city had an unofficial Latino-majority already by the 1998 election, only 53 out of 250 poll workers were Latino. In addition, Latino activists alleged that among those counting the ballots at the time of Santiago’s election run were members of his opponent’s campaign. There were widespread stories of Latino voters being illegally asked to show ID at the polls, as well as being denied help or information when they tried to vote.<sup>135</sup> Of course, official disenfranchisement was not the only force restraining Latino political participation, as quotidian acts of exclusion still existed; one Dominican candidate recalled walking the streets in 1991 while running for office and encountering small, homemade “Spiks go home” signs.<sup>136</sup> With the success of the Voting Rights lawsuit, however, Latino politics in the city got an enormous boost. The 1999 city election not only kept Carrero on the School Committee, it also brought a number of new Latino office-holders into city government. Nilka Álvarez, Julia Silverio (whose oral history is included in Chapter Two) and Marcos Devers were all elected to City Council. Not only did the City Council now suddenly have a substantial number of Latino members, but Latino office holders in the city now included a mix of Puerto Ricans and Dominicans, men and women.<sup>137</sup>

Although a dramatic assertion of the right to live and express themselves in the city was central to Latinos winning their right to Lawrence’s public spaces, the growing electoral strength of Latinos in the city was premised on “bridge-building” with the city’s white residents. The overwhelming emphasis of successful Latino candidates in Lawrence was on improving the city of Lawrence for everyone. This bridge-building

ideology allowed many Latino candidates to win support from both the white and Latino population of the city. The first Latino elected to public office in the city, Dominican Ralph Carrero, noted that he could not have won without substantial white support for his candidacy. Ramón Borges-Méndez noted that Carrero's campaign and victory rested upon developing a wide political and social platform that demonstrated that all Latinos and Anglos could find common ground on certain issues."<sup>138</sup> As Carrero explained his landmark victory, "My candidacy and campaign were run very strategically in that this was going to be a campaign of bridging a community."<sup>139</sup> This emphasis on bridge-building was evident in Julia Silverio's vision for the city as well. She hoped "to make the city of Lawrence into a model city where all races and ethnicit[ies] can live together, learn to tolerate each other, respect each other, and learn from each other."<sup>140</sup> As Silverio's words demonstrated, Latino bridge-building politics were not premised on assimilation or an erasure of Latino identity; rather Latino activists and their allies realized that if Latinos were given equal access to political participation, Lawrence was in a special position to demonstrate to the world the potential inherent in a bicultural city.

Although the drive for equal power in the city was not complete, Lawrence Latinos were able to have a far greater impact and influence on the social, political, cultural, and economic life of Lawrence than they could possibly have achieved in a city like New York. The fact that even with such power *over* the city, massive problems still remained, simply highlights the *relative powerlessness of the city in regional terms*. Even with a completely Latino City Council, Lawrence could not have transformed its economy completely, as Lawrence was a subordinate partner in a regional economy.



Even with a Latino mayor, the city could not mandate that the suburbs share their immense wealth, in spite of the role of city residents in creating it.

As Latino equality and political power in Lawrence grew, while the power to address the real problems facing Latino Lawrencians stagnated or even declined, it became clear that Latino inclusion into the city would not be sufficient. The economy of Lawrence was in such a state of shock, the arson and crime waves so devastating, and the educational and public safety services of the city in such shambles, that an end to discrimination and exclusion alone -- while essential for Latinos -- could bring no large-scale improvement in their communities. *Inclusion* into a failing city would not be sufficient, and Latino activists began to emphasize their argument that they were essential to Lawrence's *transformation* and rebirth. Rather than stagnate or decline as a marginal player in the regional and state political economy, Latinos in Lawrence embraced a transnational view in which Lawrence Latinos were major economic and political players. Using transnational and bicultural strategies, Latino activists and their allies worked to transform and re-invigorate Lawrence's economy, as well as its housing and neighborhoods, its education and social service systems, and its city government.

- 
- <sup>1</sup> Alan Lupo, "Lessons of the Street: What Lawrence never learned," *Boston Phoenix*, August 21, 1984.
- <sup>2</sup> Ramón Borges-Méndez, "Urban and Regional Restructuring And Barrio Formation In Massachusetts: The Cases Of Lowell, Lawrence And Holyoke," (Unpublished PhD dissertation, MIT, 1994).
- <sup>3</sup> This does not, however, mean that the changes were immediate. Full inclusion was still years away. Although the city initiated some changes, the official response was weak and undermined even further by the election of Kevin Sullivan in 1985. A year after the riots, after a series of hearings throughout the state held by the Massachusetts Commission on Hispanic Affairs, the Commission concluded that very little had changed, "It should be noted that the Lawrence public hearing was the most emotional of all those held by the Commission. The Hispanic spokespeople conveyed a sense of overwhelming frustration, most of which was directed at the city administration." Some of the same complaints voiced during and after the riots were echoed in the hearing, "City officials' apathy and insensitivity towards the Latino community was voiced by various presenters. It was stated that the lack of representation of Hispanics in municipal government, including police and fire departments, reduces the opportunity for Latinos to contribute to and feel part of the City of Lawrence. Tensions between police officers and Hispanics are in part due to the lack of Hispanic or at least bilingual officers. Many also pointed out that the city government has done nothing after the riots of last summer; an attitude of 'business as usual' prevails now that the attention and interest of the media and state officials has dwindled." Yet the momentum among Latino organizations was still building, and within a few years, Latinos would finally break through their exclusion from Lawrence political power. Massachusetts Commission on Hispanic Affairs, "Hispanics in Massachusetts: A Progress Report," December 1985.
- <sup>4</sup> Peggy Hernandez, "Lawrence Police Enforce Curfew in Riot-Torn Areas; No Resistance to Order Reported," *Boston Globe*, Aug 11, 1984, <http://www.proquest.com>.
- <sup>5</sup> Joe Sciacca, "Curfew keeps Lawrence quiet," *Boston Herald*, August 12, 1984.
- <sup>6</sup> Timothy Clifford, "Bishop preaches peace in Lawrence," *Boston Herald*, August 13, 1984.
- <sup>7</sup> Clifford, "Bishop preaches peace in Lawrence."
- <sup>8</sup> CBS, August 12, 1984, VTNA.
- <sup>9</sup> Peggy Hernandez, "Curfew Lifted in Lawrence," *Boston Globe*, Aug 14, 1984, <http://www.proquest.com>.
- <sup>10</sup> Lawrence City Council records, August 10, 1984.
- <sup>11</sup> Lawrence City Council records, August 14, 1984.
- <sup>12</sup> Lawrence City Council records, August 14, 1984.
- <sup>13</sup> Lawrence City Council records, August 14, 1984.
- <sup>14</sup> Lawrence City Council records, August 14, 1984.
- <sup>15</sup> Andrew Gully, "Mayor vows to help riot area," *Boston Herald*, August 15, 1984.
- <sup>16</sup> Lawrence City Council records, August 10, 1984.
- <sup>17</sup> Hernandez, "Lawrence Police Enforce Curfew in Riot-Torn Areas."
- <sup>18</sup> Hernandez, "Curfew Lifted in Lawrence."
- <sup>19</sup> Hernandez, "Curfew Lifted in Lawrence."
- <sup>20</sup> Joe Sciacca, "Dusk-to-Dawn curfew in Lawrence: Top pols in plea for calm," *Boston Herald*, August 11, 1984.
- <sup>21</sup> Hernandez, "Curfew Lifted in Lawrence."
- <sup>22</sup> Lawrence City Council records, August 14, 1984.
- <sup>23</sup> Hernandez, "Curfew Lifted in Lawrence."
- <sup>24</sup> *The New York Times*, "U.S. Official Says Town Had Clues to Unrest," August 13, 1984.
- <sup>25</sup> *The New York Times*, "U.S. Official Says Town Had Clues to Unrest."
- <sup>26</sup> Lupo, "Lessons of the Street."
- <sup>27</sup> Kenneth J. Cooper, "Dispute Erupts over Lawrence Riot Aid; Legislator Charges Leadership Stonewalling," *Boston Globe*, Dec 12, 1984, <http://www.proquest.com>.
- <sup>28</sup> U.S. Census data from the State of the Cities Data System, <http://socds.huduser.org>, adjusted to 2005 dollars.

---

<sup>29</sup> Kevin M. Kruse and Thomas J. Sugrue, "Introduction: The New Suburban History," in *The New Suburban History*, Kevin M. Kruse and Thomas J. Sugrue (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006).

<sup>30</sup> The proposed bill had also given the Division of Community Development permission to contract directly with the Greater Lawrence Community Action Council in this section that was cut by the Ambler amendments.

<sup>31</sup> *Massachusetts Session Laws*, Acts 1984, Chapter 429, "An Act Providing Funds For Emergency Remedial Measures To Prevent Civil Disorders In The City Of Lawrence," and its accompanying legislative packet in the Massachusetts Archives, and Acts 1984, Chapter 435 "An Act Relative To The Alleviation Of The Financial Burden Imposed On The City Of Lawrence By The Civil Disturbances Of Nineteen Hundred And Eighty Four." Full texts of the Acts are available on-line through the SLOM at <http://archives.lib.state.ma.us/handle/123456789/2>.

<sup>32</sup> *Massachusetts Session Laws*, Acts 1984, Chapter 435, "An Act Relative to the Alleviation of the Financial Burden Imposed on the City of Lawrence by the Civil Disturbances of Nineteen Hundred and Eighty Four" and Chapter 429, "An Act Providing Funds for Emergency Remedial Measures to Prevent Civil Disorders in the City of Lawrence," 1984; Joseph D. Duran, "The 1984 Riots: Lawrence, Massachusetts," (Unpublished Masters Thesis, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1985), 55, 56.

<sup>33</sup> Lupo, "Lessons of the Street."

<sup>34</sup> Duran, "The 1984 Riots," 26.

<sup>35</sup> IBA was a Puerto Rican community organization that had been pivotal in protests in Boston's South End in 1969, and that had successfully campaigned for community-controlled public housing in the Villa Victoria project. See Angel A. Amy Moreno de Toro, "An Oral History of the Puerto Rican Socialist Party in Boston, 1972-1978" in *The Puerto Rican Movement: Voices from the Diaspora*, Andrés Torres and José E. Velázquez, Eds. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998).

<sup>36</sup> Duran, "The 1984 Riots," 102-107.

<sup>37</sup> Centro Panamericano was a direct recipient of a number of state contracts, interview with Jorge Santiago by author, November, 2009. It is very possible that the early success of the organization was due in part to the Gateway Cities Program, a funding program established by Lawrence state senator Patricia McGovern in 1986 (when she was Chair of the Massachusetts Senate Ways and Means Committee). Gateway Cities provided funding directly to cities with substantial immigrant populations and community organizations within such cities. Although the program only existed for a few years, it gave a dramatic boost to immigrant social services throughout the state. For more information, see Boston Globe articles from 1986 to 1989, such as *Boston Globe*, "Aid to be Sought for Gateway Cities," May 8, 1986.

<sup>38</sup> Interview with Jorge Santiago by author, November, 2009.

<sup>39</sup> U.S. Census data from the State of the Cities Data System, <http://socds.huduser.org>.

<sup>40</sup> William A. Lindeke, "Latino Political Succession and Incorporation: Lawrence," and Ramona Hernández and Glenn Jacobs, "Beyond Homeland Politics: Dominicans in Massachusetts," both in *Latino Politics in Massachusetts: Struggles, Strategies, and Prospects*, Carol Hardy-Fanta and Jeffrey Gerson, eds. (New York and London: Routledge, 2002).

<sup>41</sup> The Lawrence High School/Phillips Academy Urban Studies Institute, "The Family Housing Crisis in Greater Lawrence: A Backgrounder for Concerned Citizens," 1988. The report noted that Lawrence had the reputation of being "the armpit of the Northeast."

<sup>42</sup> Edwin Meléndez, "Latino Poverty and Economic Development in Massachusetts, in *Latino Poverty and Economic Development in Massachusetts*, edited by Edwin Meléndez and Miren Uriarte (Boston: Mauricio Gastón Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy, 1993); for general information on the "Massachusetts Miracle," see David R. Lampe, *The Massachusetts Miracle: High Technology and Economic Revitalization* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT press, 1988).

<sup>43</sup> Massachusetts Hispanic-American Advisory Commission, "Final Report," September 1993. The remarkable rate of Latino unemployment in Lawrence, and indeed, often the poverty, low wages, and unemployment of immigrants in general in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, was often attributed to the "unskilled" nature of those looking for jobs. As Evelyn Nakano Glenn has argued, however, this distinction between "skilled" and "unskilled" laborers often masks racial inequality, as the determination of a "skilled" worker is a profoundly racialized and gendered social construct, often related more to formal education than skill.

The division between “skilled” and “unskilled” workers involves a wage gap that is simply inexplicable and unjustifiable in terms of real differences in job responsibilities, and mobility between the two nearly impossible without investing substantial time and money outside of the workforce in formal education.<sup>43</sup> As discussed in Chapter Two, many Lawrence Latinos had substantial skills, including many with professional training, and often still had trouble finding work. Indeed, in Lawrence, the idea that Latinos received low wages or could not find jobs because most of them lacked marketable skills could be challenged by the frequent examples of former professionals forced to take menial jobs on account of a U.S. refusal to recognize their credentials. Often what migrants lacked was not training itself, but a certificate from a U.S. educational institution. A profound example of this was the Dominican Consul Julio César Correa. Born in La Vega, Dominican Republic, he received a degree in electrical engineering from the Universidad Autónoma de Santo Domingo. While working in the technology and machinery section of the Dominican Department of Agriculture, he also taught electrical engineering at the Universidad Tecnológica del Cibao and other institutions. When he arrived in Lawrence, however, he was compelled to take a job as a machine operator at Malden Mills, eventually working his way up to technical supervisor, before resigning to be Consul. The *Eagle-Tribune* noted that his case was not unusual, “Like many foreign professionals whose practice is not recognized here, Mr. Correa was forced to take a more menial job.” If even a former university professor in electrical engineering was reliant on entry-level manufacturing jobs in Lawrence, it is no surprise that competition for jobs was so fierce. Evelyn Nakano Glenn, “From Servitude to Service Work: Historical Continuities in the Racial Division of Paid Reproductive Labor,” in *Unequal Sisters: A Multicultural Reader in U.S. Women's History*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, Vicki Ruíz and Ellen Carol DuBois, eds. (New York: Routledge, 2000); Hernán Rozemberg, “Consul knows politics of 2 lands” *Eagle-Tribune*, November 18, 1996.

<sup>44</sup> Edwin Meléndez, “Latino Poverty and Economic Development in Massachusetts, in *Latino Poverty and Economic Development in Massachusetts*, edited by Edwin Meléndez and Miren Uriarte (Boston: Mauricio Gastón Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy, 1993).

<sup>45</sup> Although the essay was published in 1993, it seems that it must have been written earlier, as Meléndez explicitly notes that family income and median earnings data from the 1990 census had not yet been released, Edwin Meléndez, “Latino Poverty and Economic Development in Massachusetts, in *Latino Poverty and Economic Development in Massachusetts*, edited by Edwin Meléndez and Miren Uriarte (Boston: Mauricio Gastón Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy, 1993), 21.

<sup>46</sup> Kim Stevenson, “A Spatial Analysis of Socioeconomic and Demographic Change in the Lower Merrimack Valley and Lawrence, MA, 1980-1990,” (Unpublished Masters thesis, MIT, 1992).

<sup>47</sup> Stevenson, “A Spatial Analysis of Socioeconomic and Demographic Change in the Lower Merrimack Valley and Lawrence, MA, 1980-1990.” Stevenson’s definition of region is broader than mine, including the entire Lower Merrimack Valley, or Lawrence, Andover, North Andover, Haverhill, Methuen, Newburyport, Amesbury, Salisbury, Georgetown, Rowley, Groveland, Merrimac, Newbury, West Newbury, and Boxford. None of the last five municipalities had more than 1% of the region’s jobs.

<sup>48</sup> Andrew Dabilis, “Housing Study An Education In Itself,” *Boston Globe*, July 10, 1989, <http://proquest.com>.

<sup>49</sup> Urban Studies Institute, “The Family Housing Crisis in Greater Lawrence.”

<sup>50</sup> *United States Decennial Census*, 1980 and 2000.

<sup>51</sup> *Boston Globe*, “In Lawrence, Hope Going Up in Smoke: 70 Arson Cases Paralyze City Racked By Poverty,” May 29, 1992, <http://infoweb1.newbank.com>.

<sup>52</sup> Paula Porten and Tom Duggan, “The Revival of Lawrence, Massachusetts,” *Valley Patriot*, March, 2006. <http://www.tommyduggan.com/VP030806lawrence.html>, accessed June 29, 2007.

<sup>53</sup> Joe Heaney, “Gang-related arson plagues city,” *Boston Herald*, August 9, 1994. <http://infoweb1.newsbank.com>.

<sup>54</sup> Jill Harmacinski, “Lawrence adopts new law to protect neighborhoods from blight,” *Eagle-Tribune*, March 6, 2008, <http://eagletribune.com>.

<sup>55</sup> *Boston Globe*, “In Lawrence, Hope Going Up in Smoke.”

<sup>56</sup> *Boston Globe*, “Lawrence Drug Gangs Add Arson to Arsenal,” April 20, 1992, <http://infoweb1.newsbank.com>.

- 
- <sup>57</sup> *Boston Globe*, "In Lawrence, Hope Going Up in Smoke."
- <sup>58</sup> *Boston Globe*, "Lawrence Drug Gangs Add Arson to Arsenals."
- <sup>59</sup> *Boston Herald*, "Lawrence Residents Unite to Battle Arson," November 2, 1992, <http://infoweb1.newsbank.com>; Uncle Dudley, "City that wouldn't die," *Boston Sunday Globe*, December 11, 1960. Reprint in LPLA.
- <sup>60</sup> *Boston Globe*, "In Lawrence, Hope Going Up in Smoke."
- <sup>61</sup> *Boston Globe*, "In Lawrence, Hope Going Up in Smoke."
- <sup>62</sup> Sally Jacobs, "Fires in Lawrence Evoke Fear of New Arson Outbreak," *Boston Globe*, June 25, 1993, <http://infoweb1.newsbank.com>.
- <sup>63</sup> *Boston Herald*, "Lawrence Declares State of Emergency and Seeks Help from National Guard," September 25, 1992, <http://infoweb1.newsbank.com>.
- <sup>64</sup> Jacobs, "Fires in Lawrence Evoke Fear of New Arson Outbreak."
- <sup>65</sup> The *Boston Globe* used the term "certain elements" to describe wayward Latino residents burning their own neighborhoods, and media and officials often suggested that gangs were mainly responsible for the arson. Jacobs, "Fires in Lawrence Evoke Fear of New Arson Outbreak."
- <sup>66</sup> *Boston Globe*, "In Lawrence, Hope Going Up in Smoke."
- <sup>67</sup> *Boston Globe*, "In Lawrence, Hope Going Up in Smoke."
- <sup>68</sup> Paul Sullivan, "Lawrence Arson Task Force earns international honor," *Boston Herald*, September 18, 1995. <http://infoweb1.newsbank.com>.
- <sup>69</sup> *Boston Herald*, "Auto Insurance Fraud," September 28, 1992. <http://infoweb1.newsbank.com>.
- <sup>70</sup> *Boston Globe*, "Car Theft a Growth Industry," May 19, 1991. <http://infoweb1.newsbank.com>.
- <sup>71</sup> David Weber, "Thugs kill defenseless 7-year old in robbery," *Boston Herald*, September 13, 1994, <http://infoweb1.newsbank.com>.
- <sup>72</sup> Interview with Ingrid Garcia by author, November 2009.
- <sup>73</sup> Interview with Ingrid Garcia by author, November 2009.
- <sup>74</sup> Duran, "The 1984 Riots," 28.
- <sup>75</sup> Lindeke, "Latino Political Succession and Incorporation," 75.
- <sup>76</sup> Susan Forrest, "Hispanics join fraud fight," *Eagle-Tribune*, February 7, 1989.
- <sup>77</sup> Forrest, "Hispanics join fraud fight."
- <sup>78</sup> Charles Stein, "Lawrence case study: A struggle of the poor," *Boston Globe*, June 24, 1988.
- <sup>79</sup> Kathie Neff, "Lawrence and Hispanics: a close-up look" *Eagle-Tribune*, April 22, 1984.
- <sup>80</sup> *Boston Globe*, August 13<sup>th</sup>, 1989.
- <sup>81</sup> NBC, August 14, 1989, VTNA.
- <sup>82</sup> John Gill "The 'Misery Industry': Welfare culture blossoms as rest of Lawrence suffers," *Eagle-Tribune*, September 22, 1993.
- <sup>83</sup> Susan Forrest, "Welfare benefits can act as magnet, studies say," *Eagle-Tribune*, Feb 25, 1990.
- <sup>84</sup> Forrest, "Welfare benefits can act as magnet."
- <sup>85</sup> George O'Brien, letter to the editor, "Welfare should not be shameful," *Eagle-Tribune* February 20, 1994, O'Brien noted that he was a Lawrence resident.
- <sup>86</sup> Stein, "Lawrence case study."
- <sup>87</sup> M. Brenda Smith, "Off Welfare and making money," *Eagle-Tribune*, September 22, 1996. It is interesting to note, also, that the average wage received was \$7.01, and only 24 percent worked in manufacturing.
- <sup>88</sup> President Bill Clinton's promise in his State of the Union address, 1993.
- <sup>89</sup> John Larrabee, "Community braces for a lifestyle overhaul," *USA TODAY* March 13, 1995.
- <sup>90</sup> Smith, "Off Welfare and making money."
- <sup>91</sup> John Gill, "Welfare reform to make city healthy," *Eagle-Tribune*, February 12, 1995.
- <sup>92</sup> Larrabee, "Community braces for a lifestyle overhaul."
- <sup>93</sup> Larrabee, "Community braces for a lifestyle overhaul."
- <sup>94</sup> John Gill, "Clinton OKs Bay State's welfare plan," *Eagle-Tribune*, September 4, 1995.
- <sup>95</sup> *Eagle-Tribune*, "Welfare fingerprinting begins," April 13, 1996.
- <sup>96</sup> Gill, "Welfare reform to make city healthy."

- 
- <sup>97</sup> Larrabee, "Community braces for a lifestyle overhaul."
- <sup>98</sup> Larrabee, "Community braces for a lifestyle overhaul."
- <sup>99</sup> Esther Bornstein, letter to editor, "Go to work to give your children all they deserve," *Eagle-Tribune*, May 7, 1995. Bornstein noted that she was a North Andover resident.
- <sup>100</sup> Gill, "Clinton OKs Bay State's welfare plan."
- <sup>101</sup> Quote from David Locke, in John Gill, "Workfare, boot camp plans OK'd," *Eagle-Tribune*, June 14, 1991.
- <sup>102</sup> Larrabee, "Community braces for a lifestyle overhaul."
- <sup>103</sup> Jennings, James and Jorge Santiago, "Welfare Reform and 'Welfare to Work' as Non-Sequitur: A Case Study of the Experiences of Latina Women in Massachusetts." *Journal of Poverty*, 2004: 24.
- <sup>104</sup> Jennings and Santiago, "Welfare Reform and 'Welfare to Work' as Non-Sequitur."
- <sup>105</sup> Jennings and Santiago, "Welfare Reform and 'Welfare to Work' as Non-Sequitur."
- <sup>106</sup> Although the image of a "welfare queen" originated with Ronald Reagan's speeches during his 1976 presidential campaign, it proliferated in the media over the next two decades, taking on a decidedly racial cast. For more information on the term's origins, see *New York Times*, "'Welfare Queen' Becomes Issue in Reagan Campaign," February 15, 1976, <http://proquest.com>.
- <sup>107</sup> For a discussion of the relationship between welfare and immigration in the first half of the twentieth century, see Cybelle Fox, "The Boundaries of Social Citizenship: Race, Immigration and the American Welfare State, 1900-1950," (Unpublished PhD Dissertation, Harvard University, 2007).
- <sup>108</sup> Gill, "The 'Misery Industry.'"
- <sup>109</sup> Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers, "Community health Centers as Economic Engines: An Overview of their Impact on Massachusetts Communities and Families," October, 2003.
- <sup>110</sup> Gill, "The 'Misery Industry.'"
- <sup>111</sup> Lindeke, "Latino Political Succession and Incorporation," 76.
- <sup>112</sup> Lindeke, "Latino Political Succession and Incorporation," 76.
- <sup>113</sup> E. Denis Walsh & Associates. *Action Plan Lawrence Massachusetts: The Renovation and Reuse of Upper Story Space in a Block of Downtown Commercial Buildings* (Prepared for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Department of Community Affairs, Building Reuse Project), 36.
- <sup>114</sup> Duran, "The 1984 Riots," 31, 32.
- <sup>115</sup> The name of the official quoted was not given, Lupo, "Lessons of the Street."
- <sup>116</sup> Duran, "The 1984 Riots," 23.
- <sup>117</sup> Duran, "The 1984 Riots," 22.
- <sup>118</sup> Edward Hardy, "Hispanic enrollment is up this year at parochial schools: Two thirds live in Lawrence," *Eagle-Tribune*, December 3, 1984; *Eagle-Tribune*, "Parents involved in their children's schools" September 22, 1992.
- <sup>119</sup> Massachusetts Commission on Hispanic Affairs, "Hispanics in Massachusetts: A Progress Report," December 1985.
- <sup>120</sup> Massachusetts Department of Education, "Report on the Condition of the Public Schools in Holyoke, Lawrence, Brockton, and Chelsea," October 15, 1991. The reliance of Lawrence on hand-me-down textbooks was reminiscent of the Jim Crow South when African American schools got the cast-off books from neighboring white schools.
- <sup>121</sup> Massachusetts Department of Education, "Report on the Condition of the Public Schools in Holyoke, Lawrence, Brockton, and Chelsea."
- <sup>122</sup> Quote from an unnamed school administrator in Duran, "The 1984 Riots," 21.
- <sup>123</sup> Massachusetts Department of Education, "Report on the Condition of the Public Schools in Holyoke, Lawrence, Brockton, and Chelsea."
- <sup>124</sup> Yvonne Abraham and Caroline Louise Cole, "Lawrence heeds neighbors on housing," *Boston Globe*, March 7, 1999.
- <sup>125</sup> See Lindeke, "Latino Political Succession and Incorporation."
- <sup>126</sup> Hermán Rozemberg, "Festival's success questioned," *Eagle-Tribune*, July 28, 1996; *Eagle-Tribune*, "Dancing, singing chase away rain" June 21, 1993; Yadira A. Betances, "18<sup>th</sup> Hispanic Week kicks off tomorrow," *Eagle-Tribune*, June 14, 1996..

---

<sup>127</sup> For example, see Jaime Crespo, "Common comes alive with sounds and tastes of cultures," *Eagle-Tribune*, June 21, 1998.

<sup>128</sup> The program for the 20<sup>th</sup> *Semana Hispana* in June, 1998, LHC archives. It is unclear if this tagline was in place in all earlier celebrations.

<sup>129</sup> Media coverage on *Semana Hispana* in the 1990s is filled with quotes from local police about how, in spite of the massive noise generated by the festival, instances of crime or violence were remarkably rare.

<sup>130</sup> Antonio López, quoted in Hernán Rozemberg, "Antonio López: Semana Hispana volverá a la cultura," *¡Fiesta!* by the *Eagle-Tribune*, undated at LHC archives, most likely 1997.

<sup>131</sup> Kim Stevenson, "Hispanic and Minority Owned Businesses in Lawrence, Massachusetts: A Market Study of Essex Street and Downtown Lawrence," prepared for the Lawrence Community Development Department, October, 1991.

<sup>132</sup> Lindeke, "Latino Political Succession and Incorporation," 79.

<sup>133</sup> Hernández and Jacobs, "Beyond Homeland Politics," 294.

<sup>134</sup> Lindeke, "Latino Political Succession and Incorporation," 89.

<sup>135</sup> Lindeke, "Latino Political Succession and Incorporation," 90.

<sup>136</sup> Marcos Devers, quoted in Hernández and Jacobs, "Beyond Homeland Politics."

<sup>137</sup> Lindeke, "Latino Political Succession and Incorporation," 91.

<sup>138</sup> Borges-Méndez, "Urban And Regional Restructuring And *Barrio* Formation In Massachusetts," 240.

<sup>139</sup> Ralph Carrero, quoted in Borges-Méndez, "Urban And Regional Restructuring And *Barrio* Formation In Massachusetts," 240.

<sup>140</sup> Hernández and Jacobs, "Beyond Homeland Politics."

## **Conclusion –Transnational Lawrence and the New Global Cities**

In 2010, the website [urbandictionary.com](http://urbandictionary.com) defined “Lawtown” (a common slang term for Lawrence) as “the center of [the] Latin Universe in all of New England.” Other definitions given included “the name of the home of the 1984 Riots,” and “concentration of Dominicans outside of New York.”<sup>1</sup> Not only do these definitions highlight the importance that Lawrence has assumed in Latino New England, they also demonstrate the centrality of both urban struggles and Latino settlement to the city. The urban crisis that came to define Lawrence by the 1980s was set in motion by suburbanization during the decades after World War II. Residential, industrial, and retail flight devastated the city’s economy and its tax base. While suburbanization brought substantial upward mobility to many former Lawrence residents, manufacturers in the city turned to low-wage Latino labor in the 1960s in order to remain competitive in a rapidly globalizing economy. When these manufacturing jobs largely evaporated in the late 1970s, some Latinos managed to gain positions in suburban manufacturing, and others transitioned into scarce service and retail jobs, but many more suffered from the city’s outrageous unemployment and poverty rates.

The dearth of economic opportunities in Lawrence during the decades of peak Latino settlement demonstrates that the decision to settle in Lawrence was not motivated by strictly economic concerns. Migrants’ search for a better life (occurring in the context of the myriad obstacles to Latino settlement in the suburbs) encouraged many to consider Lawrence a *relatively* good, although not ideal, settlement site, particularly in comparison with New York City. The decision to settle in Lawrence, however, also required



overcoming the substantial white resistance to the formation of a Latino community in the city, particularly in the 1970s and 1980s. In organized and spontaneous acts, Latinos claimed their right to make a home in the city and to be included in its decision making.

The 1984 riots between white and Latino Lawrencians were a spectacular example of this racialized contestation over Lawrence's space and resources. The riots demonstrated white resistance to the changes they saw in the city, and their turn to both violence and "white flight" in response to the city's decline (for which they blamed Latinos). The riots also demonstrated Latinos' commitment to claiming the city, to carving out in Lawrence a place where they could live, work, and raise their families in safety and tranquility. Yet the responses to the riots illustrated the myriad obstacles to that goal: recalcitrant city official who refused to acknowledge the marginal position of Lawrence's Latinos or their own contribution to that marginalization; an urban economy devastated by decades of suburban (and global) competition to the point where it could no longer provide adequate services to its residents and where poverty had become a new norm; and a state government dominated by suburban interests that, while nominally committed to anti-discrimination, was unwilling to commit the resources necessary to substantially address "urban problems," or to acknowledge the intrametropolitan inequality that undergirded Lawrence's struggles. With these hurdles to overcome, the growth of Latino power in the city was protracted, and the city's economic decline only worsened after the riots. Even as Latinos "won" the city, the city came to be at the mercy of state and federal governments that were increasingly rejecting responsibility for the struggles plaguing cities across the nation.

As starkly demonstrated in Greater Lawrence, the postwar era of facilitated urban-to-suburban mobility had largely come to an end by the 1980s, as decades of restricted suburban development had brought suburban property values far out of line with urban wages. So too had ended federal investment in solving the “urban problems” created by decades of urban disinvestment, as by the 1980s federal and state governments were firmly under the influence of a suburban political agenda. The urban crisis of the 1960s, mainly concentrated in former industrial centers in the Northeast and Midwest, was not resolved by the 1980s; rather by the 1980s, racialized patterns of urban disinvestment and conflict had deepened and spread to low-tier and Sunbelt cities. In Lawrence, and throughout the nation, decades of activism eventually won communities of color substantial urban political power and dominance in urban public cultures, but the post-1980 metropolitan political economy left this new urban leadership bereft of the economic resources and political power necessary to bring about large-scale changes in U.S. cities.

### **Lawrence as a Latino City**

With the city of Lawrence devastated by decades of urban crisis, even the hard-won political power of Latinos in the city was not sufficient to address its economic devastation, and the failure of its educational, public safety, and other city services. After half a century of suburbanization, Lawrence’s position in the Merrimack Valley and in the state of Massachusetts was marginal and with neither resources nor clout, Lawrence could not meaningfully address its social and economic problems regardless of who was

in power. Latinos had long argued that their exclusion from the city's government and marginalization in the city's economy prevented them from being able to fully contribute to the struggle of all Lawrencians to save their city. Latinos in Lawrence realized that simple inclusion into the city in its current incarnation would only mean a seat on a sinking ship. Latinos instead worked for a transformation in the city: an economy based on transnational businesses and bilingual, bicultural<sup>2</sup> service provision in the public, private, and non-profit spheres; city services designed to improve the neighborhoods and increase home ownership opportunities for the people who were already in the city (rather than the long-awaited middle-class residents who had yet to respond to the call/incentives long offered by city officials); an accountable, bilingual and bicultural city government; and a celebration of the city's Latino culture, rather than the expectation that Lawrence would not and should not stay Latino for long.

This transnational, bicultural approach transformed and re-invigorated the city, and it re-situated Lawrence as a powerful player in international politics, instead of a marginal charity case in state politics. Rather than accept their position at the bottom of the pile in the Merrimack Valley and Massachusetts, Lawrence Latinos sculpted for themselves a position vis-à-vis the Caribbean that was marked by relative wealth and definite political influence. In addition, by the late 1990s, when it became obvious that the city was clearly transitioning to a Latino majority, the argument that Latinos were the only hope for the long-awaited Lawrence "renaissance," began to gain purchase even with city leadership. The practice of excluding Lawrence's Latinos was supplanted by a practice of "bridge building" between the city's white and Latino communities.

White acceptance of the Latino community as a viable path to Lawrence's revitalization began with the growth of Latino-owned businesses in the 1990s. As Latino community leader Eduardo Crespo argued, "The mere number [of Hispanics] has created an obvious marketplace... We buy cars, we buy clothes, we rent, we own, we borrow... Hispanics are bringing Lawrence back to life... If we would, hypothetically, leave the city, this would be a ghost town."<sup>3</sup> With the flight of industry and retail to the suburbs, Crespo's assertion that Latinos brought life to the city, and were indeed, its *major market*, was incontrovertible. Even Mayor Sullivan acknowledged in 1991 that almost three-fourths of the new businesses that opened in the last five years were Latino-owned, citing car dealerships, insurance companies, groceries and appliance stores. Crespo tied this growth of Latino-owned businesses explicitly to urban flight, saying "Hispanics are replacing traditional establishments that no longer believe in the city."<sup>4</sup>

Latino business ownership grew over the years, as did the faith of city leaders. In 1996, the *Eagle-Tribune* reported the results of a Census Bureau study of Hispanic business ownership. The study compared business ownership and revenue between 1987 and 1992 and the article -- entitled "Hispanic businesses boom" -- noted with excitement that the number of Hispanic businesses in Lawrence had more than doubled during those five years. This dramatic growth rate significantly exceeded the national growth rate, which was itself substantial. Hispanic-owned businesses by 1992 had come to represent nearly one in seven businesses in the city, and city officials enthused over the potential role of Hispanic-owned businesses in the city's immanent revitalization. When this study was released in 1996, Mayor Mary Claire Kennedy, not always known for her enthusiasm

about the city's Latino population, declared, "I along with others have been saying that the future of Lawrence, our economy and the downtown depends on the ability of the Hispanic population to be entrepreneurial, participate in the economy and climb in the economy... If we're going to continue to grow and prosper, it's going to be because Hispanic-owned businesses continue to grow." This official proclamation that the fate of the city rested in the hands of Latino entrepreneurs was a remarkable turn-around from earlier policies designed to displace and exclude Latinos from the city.

By 1992 Hispanic-owned businesses represented 14.1 percent of the city's businesses. They generated only 1.6 percent of the city's business revenue, however, and that revenue had actually declined over the previous five years in the state's economic downturn. If the future of Lawrence really rested on Hispanic-owned businesses whose revenue was dramatically declining, and who only generated 1.6 percent of the city's total business revenue, the future of the city looked bleak indeed. Clearly, the obstacles to Lawrence achieving its potential as a Latino economic enclave had not yet been cleared. At the same time, the proliferation of Latino-owned businesses in the context of substantial economic decline throughout the rest of the city precipitated an important change: it began to convince city elites that they needed to work with the Latino community to bring about a renaissance in the city, rather than awaiting their eventual displacement.<sup>5</sup>

Nelson I. Quintero, executive director of the Lawrence Minority Business Council, voiced his expectation that the dramatic increase in Hispanic-owned businesses would continue. "I think you're going to see the numbers continue to rise as the years go

by. The numbers of people that make up our community are rising. We're getting an influx of immigrants who are well-educated and have a good foundation for running a business." He also argued that the growth of Latino businesses would bring about a growth in community service and local politics, "Once you establish yourself here, have a mortgage, send kids to school and run a business, it's just natural to progress to that next level and say, 'I have to be involved. I have to have a stake in my community.'"<sup>6</sup> As Quintero's comments demonstrate, the rise of Latino-owned businesses did not occur in a vacuum, rather they were part of the economic engine and service infrastructure that the longstanding Latino demand for relevant services had brought into being. By 1997, the rise in Latino-owned businesses was substantial. From 298 in 1992, Latino-owned business in Lawrence had more than doubled to 622, and after adjusting for inflation, the average per-business revenue had increased almost thirty percent! As the end of the twentieth century neared, Latino-owned businesses were clearly coming into their own in the city.<sup>7</sup>

Aside from Latino entrepreneurs who created an economic niche by providing transnational services and local services in Spanish, other jobs opened as well. As the Latino community grew, some Latinos organized to demand services in Spanish, while others silently demonstrated a need for services in Spanish by collectively providing such services informally. Business owners began to recognize the potential loss of profit if they refused to provide services in Spanish, and a new crop of jobs began to open up. In doctors' offices and health centers, in schools, in city hall and in the courts, in banks and shops, jobs for Spanish-speaking interpreters and/or representatives multiplied. This

transition to a bilingual workforce in many of the city's businesses, government, and social service agencies was clear by the mid-90s. The *Eagle-Tribune* described how local business owners considered "Bilingual workers, from secretaries to receptionists and administrative assistants, [to be] the cogs that keep the wheels of many Greater Lawrence businesses going" as the clientele became increasingly Latino.<sup>8</sup> James V. Miragliotta, a lawyer on Common Street confessed, "I don't know how a lawyer could function without a bilingual secretary. I think it's absolutely indispensable." His secretary, Carmen Falcon, said that "Do you speak Spanish?" was usually the first thing that people calling the office asked her.<sup>9</sup> This demand for Spanish-speaking employees was one of the many ways in which the growth of the enclave in Lawrence was self-reinforcing. Although the manufacturing jobs that initially enabled migration to Lawrence declined dramatically at the same time that migration was increasing, the growing Latino population in the city created its own labor demand. I want to emphasize, however, that numbers alone could not create this change. There was a need for services in Spanish long before those services were provided, and this dissertation demonstrates sufficient examples of business-owners who went seemingly against their own economic interest by refusing to serve Latinos, and of government agencies that went seemingly against their public responsibility by refusing to provide services in Spanish. It was both the growth in numbers *and* the activism of the Latino community that created these jobs, the bridge services between the white institutional world and Lawrence's Latino community.

The transnational orientation of many Lawrence Latinos, including continued travel and communication with the islands, was significantly responsible for persistence

of bilingualism and biculturalism in the city. Although school administrators complained that they could not teach children who disappeared to the Dominican Republic for months each year, such frequent and prolonged trips gave students another, also important, education, allowing them to grow up fluently bilingual and fluent in the cultural modes of their parents' or grandparents' homeland. One interviewee explained that after she moved to Lawrence when she was seven years old, she alternated two years in Lawrence with two years in the Dominican Republic for the duration of her education, before graduating from Lawrence High. She credits this transnational education with her ability to speak, read, and write both languages fluently. When I asked her if she needed to be bilingual to work her current job, she replied that virtually all jobs in Lawrence required employees to be bilingual, "Oh yes, I'm thinking if you work in Lawrence you have to be [bilingual]." <sup>10</sup> Without bilingualism and biculturalism, the city would not have been able to continue to serve newly arrived Spanish-speaking immigrants. As the bicultural service economy became so central to Lawrence's overall economy, it is important to note that transnationalism was a huge part of what enabled Lawrence-born youth to staff the service industry in Lawrence.

Transnationalism was nothing new, however. Latinos in Lawrence had been writing and calling home, sending money and gifts home, traveling home, and moving home since migration to Lawrence began. Although many white Greater Lawrence residents may have imagined Latino Lawrencians as welfare recipients, from a transnational perspective, it was the complete opposite: Lawrence Latinos were *philanthropists*, sending money and other aid to their home countries, particularly in



times of crisis, like when hurricanes struck. This aid was not only for crises, however, but contributed substantially to island economies. When asked whether Lawrence was important and well-known in the Dominican Republic, Dominican Consul Julio César Correa replied, “The city of Lawrence is widely recognized all throughout the island, but especially so in the region of El Cibao, from where most emigrate. Most important is the economic connection – most Dominicans here left family back in the island and constantly send money back to support them. This money is money that contributes to the economy of the island.”<sup>11</sup>

It will come as no surprise to scholars of immigration that Latinos in Lawrence played a key role in the economies of their home countries, yet given the pervasive stereotype of Lawrence Latinos as those who *receive* aid, their transnational generosity is important to note. Perhaps more important for the city, itself, however, was the fact that these transnational economic activities were key to the growth of many Latino-owned businesses. As mentioned above, by the late 1990s, even city officials were coming to recognize that Latino-owned businesses were necessary for the future of the city’s economy. As discussed above, many of these businesses were successful because they provided bilingual and bicultural services that many white-owned businesses initially refused or were unable to provide. In addition, though, many Latino-owned businesses were based on transnational economic activities, such as money transfers, travel agencies, and shipping companies. Transnationalism did not just involve sending money out of Lawrence, it was substantially responsible for reinvigorating the downtown business district.

Not only were Lawrence's Latinos important to island economies, they were important in island politics as well. Ramón Borges-Méndez noted that his interaction with high level Dominican politicians did not occur in the Dominican Republic or even in Boston; "as a matter of fact, I've met two of the former presidents of the Dominican Republic and the acting President of the Dominican Republic in *Lawrence*."<sup>12</sup> Julio César Correa had taught electrical engineering in a University in the Dominican Republic, but had been forced to accept work as a machine operator at Malden Mills when he arrived in Lawrence, although he maintained his connection with the Partido de la Liberación Dominicana (PLD). When Leonel Fernández was elected President in the Dominican Republic in 1996, he named Correa as Dominican Consul in Boston, and Correa left his job at Malden Mills to accept the post.<sup>13</sup> Consul Correa is a stunning example of how a person's marginal economic or political position in the United States was no indication of their potential importance in island politics. Another example was a Dominican barber from Essex Street, Carlos Jose Cepeda, who won a seat in the Dominican congress in 1995. He had joined the PLD in 1980 and had been a member of the Lawrence chapter since he arrived in the city nine years earlier. While working as a barber in downtown Lawrence, he was simultaneously building his political career in the Dominican Republic. Cepeda had been elected in the Salceda Province (now called the Hermanas Mirabal province), near Santiago, which contained the villages of Salceda, Tenares, and Villa Tapia. His remarkable success in the Dominican election was directly attributable to transnationalism, as the *Eagle-Tribune* claimed that 60 percent of Greater Lawrence Dominicans came from that province, particularly Tenares. He noted that local, Lawrence

support had been key to his success and he planned to work on behalf of both his Dominican constituents on the island, as well as his Lawrence supporters, explaining that his supporters in Lawrence “now have a representative and even if they are here, they can come to me for any problems of needs in their towns back home which I can help solve there.”<sup>14</sup>

This interest in homeland politics was not divorced from local concerns. As Lawrence resident and Dominican Consul Julio César Correa explained, improving circumstances in the Dominican Republic and improving the image of the Dominican Republic in the U.S. imagination was key to improving the image of Lawrence Latinos, “We have to start building up a new international image of our country, especially on the diplomatic end. And as a local resident, this affects our image in the city of Lawrence.”<sup>15</sup> As residents of a transnational city, Lawrence Latinos were invested in both local and homeland politics, and were aware that the two were connected. Correa and his party, the PLD, encouraged both transnational and local political participation, and cited the recent dual citizenship law that had been passed by the Dominican Republic as part of that process. The leader of the PLD, Leonel Fernandez was no stranger to transnationalism, as he had spent his childhood in New York City, before returning to the Dominican Republic. As Correa explained, “The first step is for all Dominicans to become U.S. citizens so they can vote and share rights all citizens here have at their reach – this should be easier now more than ever with the new law passed recently which allows for dual U.S.-Dominican citizenship. Also, we encourage and sponsor English classes at our party headquarters so people understand the process better.”<sup>16</sup> The Lawrence office of the PLD

had indeed been involved in local advocacy and service provision since its inception. The transnational orientation of many Lawrence Latinos not only enabled them to contribute to the politics and economy of their home islands, but encouraged a deeper engagement in Lawrence and the U.S. as well.<sup>17</sup>

The Latinization of Lawrence's public culture was undoubtedly a result of decades of Latino struggles to claim the city as home. Yet it was also inextricably tied to the city's relative decline in the metropolitan (and global) political economy. Although cities throughout the Northeast and Midwest saw their power wane, nowhere was this process as thorough as in low-tier cities like Lawrence. As one researcher on Lawrence's urban crisis noted, the struggles of high-tier cities did not map cleanly onto smaller cities. "The literature [on urban crisis] describes conditions of growing concentrated poverty in large, central cities where the ghetto poor live segregated from, but in close proximity to, thriving commercial districts (like Wall Street and Boston's Financial district) and old established or newly gentrified residential neighborhoods (like the Upper East and now West Side of New York or Boston's Back Bay). Although large segments of these cities suffer from severe and growing poverty and economic decline, many also have segments of their economies that are strong, specifically their financial and producer services industries. In the case of Lawrence, no segment of the economy is particularly vital. In addition, Lawrence has no opulent commercial districts or gentrified residential areas." This lack of any real economic backbone in the city by 1990 was part of what enabled Latino-owned businesses and a bilingual and bicultural service economy to become so profoundly central to the city as a whole. At the same time, however, it left the city still

struggling economically, as small business and social services (mostly dependent on state and federal funding) were not lucrative enough to enable Lawrence's self-sufficiency. As Stevenson concluded in the early 1990s, instead of patterns of neighborhood disinvestment within the city, as occurred in major metropolitan centers such as New York and Boston, "the pattern of ghettoization taking place is best described as one in which the entire city is rapidly becoming an urban ghetto relative to the surrounding municipalities."<sup>18</sup> This severe and unmitigated disinvestment, Borges-Méndez has argued, is what allowed an ethnic enclave in Lawrence to flourish, as by the 1990s essentially the only problem faced by Latino residents, social groups, community organizations, and businesses was a lack of capital in the city, not the competition and displacement posed by effective gentrification. Latino settlement in Lawrence occurred in the context of severe economic decline that impacted the city as a whole, not just Latino neighborhoods. As a result, the Latinization of Lawrence had a broad and substantial impact on the city as a whole.

### **The New Global Cities?**

*Less the picture of Lawrence writhing beneath the boot of global capitalists become too oppressive, let me remind the reader that these limited pages cannot do justice to the actual City: to the mellow glow of the red brick mill buildings in late afternoon sunlight, the enormous tree-covered Common in the center of town, the freshly-roasted chicken at Pollo Típico, the intensely flavored almond bars at Tripoli Bakery; to the Public Library, brimming with younger Lawrence residents reading and socializing daily, and the numerous churches, from stately grey stone bastions of Catholicism to Pentecostal storefronts with hand-painted lettering. Ethnic businesses, restaurants, and clubs line North and South Broadway, Essex, Jackson, and South Union Streets. Twenty-four languages were spoken in the City in 1990, among them Spanish, Arabic, Mon-Khmer, Vietnamese, French, and Italian. A one-time baker to the late King Hussein of Jordan sells pistachio-filled pastries on Newbury Street, and the Vice Consul of the Dominican*

*Republic in Boston has a restaurant on Essex Street. But more than all these things, it is the people that give the City its stubborn and compelling vitality.*

- Jessica Andors, Lawrence community organizer, 1999

In spite of the above description of Lawrence's cosmopolitanism, the application of the term "global city" to a place like Lawrence will undoubtedly inspire some skepticism. Not only is Lawrence clearly and obviously not an important command center for global capitalism, it is no longer even considered a city according to the most recent census definitions. (Although Lawrence's population has been growing since 1980, the more rapid urbanization across the country has raised the bar on the population and other criteria necessary to be considered a "central city"). Yet scholars such as Michael Peter Smith and Aviva Chomsky have challenged this top-down definition of a global city, calling instead for an emphasis on the overlapping presence of multiple transnational flows, forces, and networks. This transnationalism "from below" is an even more critical element of the new globalized urbanism than the presence of transnational corporations or international financial institutions.<sup>19</sup> Viewed through this lens, low-tier cities like Lawrence are paradigmatic "global cities" as their small size and their combined history of thorough disinvestment and massive immigration have resulted in their being completely transformed (economically, socially, culturally, politically, demographically, linguistically) by the global changes of the late twentieth century.

Rather than a static definition of global cities, I argue for a historical definition that examines the processes transforming the city, rather than the existence of specific set of "global city" criteria in a given moment. As Peter Marcuse has rightly pointed out, virtually every city in the world has been affected by post-1970 trends in globalization:

the increasing mobility of capital (particularly the relative ease of relocating production in search of lower costs); the transition to a service-dominated economy; increasing migration; and technological innovations that have dramatically facilitated communication and travel. As a result of their participation in these processes, virtually all cities qualify as, what Marcuse terms, “globalizing” cities, not in the sense that they will all arrive at “Global City” status, with high-rise skyscrapers and corporate offices, but in the sense that they are all in the process of being transformed by globalization. Although Lawrence is no “Global City” with capital (letters), as it is not at the top-tier among cities in terms of population or in terms of economic importance, it is most certainly a global city in the literal sense, a city whose population, economy, and culture are nearly completely attributable to post-1970 processes of globalization.<sup>20</sup> Lawrence, and other low-tier global cities, are not only firmly ensconced within these globalizing trends, they are actually at the forefront of global urban organization because of the completeness with which older models of urban organization (particularly industrialism, downtown retail, and the inclusion of middle-class residence) have been abandoned.

The inclusion of low-tier global cities within the purview of global city research demonstrates that some elements considered constitutive of globalized urbanism are not universal, but contingent; gentrification and corporate investment, namely, have been virtually absent in Lawrence. These presumably essential parts of globalized urbanism have never had a foothold in this incontrovertibly global city. Of course, I am not arguing that they have not *impacted* the city. As I have argued, gentrification in New York City seems to have been central to the development of Lawrence’s Latino population, while

corporate decision-making has been a key part of disinvestment in Lawrence (like the decision of Sears to abandon its downtown Essex Street location in favor of the Methuen Mall). Yet these processes of globalization have moved unevenly through the metropolitan landscape, influenced by local, state, and national factors that both predated and paralleled the processes of globalization, encouraging some of the key characteristics of globalized urbanism to locate occasionally in the suburbs (professional residences and some corporate headquarters, particularly along Rt. 128), or often to concentrate only in major metropolitan centers (posh retail establishments and financial control centers). Although virtually all cities have been affected by post-1970 globalization, globalized urbanism has been uneven, affecting different cities in different ways. The fact that Lawrence is deeply enmeshed in the processes of globalization, yet does not share all the features that characterize high-tier “Global Cities,” is a call for scholars to disaggregate the characteristics of globalized urbanism in order to understand that factors that have influenced its uneven transformation.<sup>21</sup>

As a small, Latino-majority city, suffering from dramatic symptoms of “urban crisis,” Lawrence is not anomalous. A 2002 report announced that, as of the 2000 census, fifty-four percent of U.S. Latinos lived in suburbs.<sup>22</sup> However, the official definition of a suburb is immensely complicated, and cities, like Lawrence, with less than 100,000 residents, in which many residents commute out of the city to work, are often included in these suburban counts. As such, these types of studies are not adequate for any qualitative analysis of Latino residential patterns. Many of the “suburbs” in which Latino concentration was the highest in 2000 were actually small cities (like Lawrence) in the



Los Angeles or New York City metropolitan areas. In California, examples of these “suburbs” might be Maywood or Bell Gardens, each with less than 100,000 residents, both dense (with two or three times the population density of the city of Los Angeles itself), economically struggling areas, in which over ninety percent of the population was Latino, almost one quarter living under the poverty line, and approximately seventy percent living in rental housing. The New York metropolitan area had West New York and Union City, each with less than 100,000 residents, approximately eighty percent of whom were Latino, with almost twice the population density of New York City, one fifth of their residents below the poverty line, and eighty percent of residents in rental housing. These examples are a far cry from the wealthy, spacious, tree-lined communities, where most people own their own homes, which the word “suburb” conjures in the popular imagination. The dramatic poverty and population density of these small, Latino-majority cities cries out for an urban history framework that can account for the clear evidence of urban economic decline that preceded and has accompanied Latino settlement in these cities.

As the California examples demonstrate, the parallel developments of immigration and “urban crisis” that led to a concentration of Latinos in Lawrence were not exclusive to the Northeast and Midwest. The complicated history of metropolitan political economies has encouraged the growth of Latino-majority cities across the country. In Southern California, for example, as Victor M. Valle and Rodolfo D. Torres argue in *Latino Metropolis*, industry, developers, and municipal governments worked together to shape Greater Los Angeles neighborhoods in the late twentieth century,

carving out municipal boundaries in ways that put development-friendly politicians in control of vast areas of land and resources, while limiting residential development in those new incorporated “cities” (technically suburbs by the census standards). The result was the development of single-use cities like Vernon or City of Industry in which thousands of Latinos worked, but could not live, and therefore could not vote. In this manner, industrial and service jobs became concentrated in specific urban and suburban areas, places where residence was prohibited by zoning laws or discouraged by a lack of multifamily rental housing. This style of development concentrated Latino residence within some cities, while concentrating industry and retail in others. As a result, the small cities that developed substantial Latino populations were, like Lawrence, marginal in their regional economy, and therefore also politically weak.

Within New England, Chelsea, Massachusetts has also developed a Latino majority as of the most recent ACS data, another city long known for its economic struggles and deindustrialization. Central Falls, Rhode Island, an even smaller ex-mill city will likely also have a Latino majority when the next set of data on cities with less than 50,000 residents is released.<sup>23</sup> Aviva Chomsky has noted the impact of transnational migration and global capital on Salem, Massachusetts in her essay “Salem as a Global City.”<sup>24</sup> Lowell, Massachusetts has one of the highest proportion of Cambodians in the country, and even small Lewiston, Maine has developed a sizeable population of Somali refugees.<sup>25</sup> Many refugees who chose Lewiston had originally been settled near Atlanta in Georgia, but they were unsatisfied with the schools and the crime in their new home. As one Somali migrant explained, “The elders in Atlanta sat down and said, ‘This is not

working for us; we have to do *sahan*,” the traditional practice where scouts research better living conditions for the community elsewhere. Using the internet, Atlanta’s Somalis learned about Maine’s low crime and good schools and also learned that Lewiston was safer and had more available public housing than Maine’s largest city, Portland. Beginning in 2001, hundreds of Somalis began arriving in Lewiston each year. Their reasons for choosing Lewiston were similar to the reasons many Latinos chose Lawrence. As one new resident explained, “We can walk to the grocery store; we can let the kids play in the playground... We’re used to small towns. And we like being together, so we follow each other.” Word about the small Maine city travelled to Atlanta, New Orleans, Nashville, even to refugee camps in Kenya. Like Lawrence, Lewiston was an ex-mill city that was experiencing population decline, and also like Lawrence, Somalis in Lewiston experienced substantial resistance from some white residents and officials. The mayor wrote an open letter to the Somali community in 2002, asking them to discourage further migration to the city, saying, “We have been overwhelmed and have responded valiantly... Now we need breathing room. Our city is maxed out financially, physically and emotionally,” and one resident admitted to throwing a frozen pigs head into a mosque. Yet, in spite of this resistance, Somalis are reinvigorating the city.<sup>26</sup> Other examples abound; few of these cities have over 100,000 residents, yet all have been radically transformed by immigration in the past years.

Of course, cities with long histories of immigration are not newly transnational (as the title of this dissertation might imply); what *is* new is the prominence that these low-tier cities are taking on in transnational flows of capital, people, and information as

major metropolitan centers, like New York City, gentrify, and the proportion of migrants settling there declines. Although low-tier global cities lack some critical aspects of globalized urbanism, such as control of global finances, they are still nodes in *both* transnational economic and migration networks. Indeed, the fact that low-tier cities are not prominent in global financial management is precisely what differentiates them from high-tier cities; major metropolitan centers, such as New York City or Los Angeles built global financial management as the new backbone of their economies after they deindustrialized, while cities such as Lawrence and Salem lack that backbone, and as a result the transnational economic links *forged by migrants* have become much more crucial to the city's postindustrial economy as a whole. I hope that this study of Lawrence will encourage scholars of transnationalism and global cities to consider small, low-tier cities and to develop new criteria that does not lump such cities in with suburbs. Many of these cities have a unique and profound reliance on the transnational economy (and on the transnational flow of people, culture, and ideas) given their relative powerlessness on a state and federal level and, often, given the relative absence of any other economic backbone.

As the steady growth of media and academic interest in small cities over the past few years demonstrates, Lawrence's size is no obstacle to its centrality in demonstrating the combined impact of the two most important processes to transform cities in the last half century: immigration and urban crisis. Indeed, not only has the combined impact of these two processes been essential in shaping low-tier cities throughout the Northeast, but these processes have actually been proportionally greater and more thorough (and

therefore enacted a more obvious transformation) in small cities than in large ones. As a result of the disproportionate impact of white flight and immigration on low-tier cities, they are the obvious sites through which to explore urban crisis, rather than large cities that successfully managed the transition from a manufacturing to a service economy. They are also a prime site to explore immigration, rather than large cities, where, with the exception of Miami, immigrant and Latino communities have generally been outnumbered by long-standing native-born (both white and African American) populations. Although no one would argue that immigrant and native-born Latino communities have been important in the history of a city like New York, at this point in time, it is only in small cities that Latinos have managed so completely to dominate public life, and it is only these small cities that are overwhelmingly dependent on Latinos for their continued vitality.

### **Lawrence in the 21<sup>st</sup> century**

In November 2009, Lawrence, Massachusetts made history as it became the first city in the state to elect a Latino mayor. Latinos in Lawrence, nearly a quarter of the city's population,<sup>27</sup> had struggled for decades to gain political representation in the city in the face of substantial white resistance. In this context, the election of Dominican-American Willie Lantigua was nothing short of a triumph. The *Boston Globe* reported, "even before unofficial returns had been released, hundreds gathered at city hall to celebrate the apparent election of Lantigua. Chanting 'Si se pudo,' or 'Yes, we did,' a crowd of hundreds -- some dancing and crying -- gathered in the city hall lobby."<sup>28</sup> This

emotional moment was the culmination of several historical developments; the most obvious was the history of political activism and community organizing by Lawrence Latinos and their allies in the face of decades of neglect and disenfranchisement by the city government. Without such activism, Latinos could have remained in the city but not *of* the city indefinitely, contributing to Lawrence, but having no official power to help direct its future. Lantigua's victory also underscored the prominence of new immigration, which had radically transformed this small city.

Yet Lantigua's election shows the other side of urban Latino political power as well. Lantigua inherited a \$24.5 million shortfall from the previous city leaders, including Mayor Michael Sullivan, and a city suffering from decades of urban crisis.<sup>29</sup> State legislators passed a "bailout" for Lawrence in February of 2010 designed to enable the city to borrow \$35 million over two years from private sources, but the bailout also gave a state overseer authority over the city's spending. By May 2010, the police and fire chiefs were told to prepare for layoffs. Police Chief John Romero, the city's first Latino chief, feared that layoffs would bring about a resurgence in the crime and arson of the early 1990s, predicting that if substantial layoffs of police and firefighters were enacted as part of the solution to the city's economic troubles, "All the things that have worked for us to reduce crime would be gone."<sup>30</sup> Although Latinos finally had substantial power within Lawrence, the metropolitan political economy was not designed to enable the city's economic self-sufficiency, and the prevailing perception among state lawmakers was that Lawrence could not self-govern and needed state oversight. Although decades of activism had won Latinos political power within the city, Lawrence's economic struggles

put the city at the mercy of a state government that was far less responsive to Latino self-determination, and unlikely to address the intrametropolitan inequality at the root of the city's economic decline.

- 
- <sup>1</sup> Urban Dictionary, <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=lawtown>, accessed February 13, 2010. Urban Dictionary is a user-created dictionary, in a similar vein to Wikipedia.
- <sup>2</sup> Given the diversity of Latino nationalities, this is truly multiculturalism, but I use the term bicultural because I don't want to inaccurately imply that this diversity extended to a large-scale embrace of African-American, African, or Asian cultures.
- <sup>3</sup> Efrain Hernandez Jr. and Adrian Walker, "Hispanic gains don't translate into power," *Boston Globe*, March 24, 1991.
- <sup>4</sup> *Philadelphia Inquirer*, "In New England, Hispanics have an increasing impact," April 21, 1991.
- <sup>5</sup> Ken Johnson, "Hispanic businesses boom" *Eagle-Tribune*, July 10, 1996.
- <sup>6</sup> Johnson, "Hispanic businesses boom."
- <sup>7</sup> *U.S. Economic Census*, "Survey of Minority-Owned Business Enterprises," 1997.
- <sup>8</sup> Al Lara, "Spanish-speaking secretaries earn special recognition" *Eagle-Tribune*, April 28, 1995.
- <sup>9</sup> Lara, "Spanish-speaking secretaries earn special recognition."
- <sup>10</sup> Interview with Ingrid Garcia by author, November, 2009.
- <sup>11</sup> Hernán Rozemberg, "Consul knows politics of 2 lands," *Eagle-Tribune*, November 18, 1996.
- <sup>12</sup> Ramón Borges-Méndez, quoted in a transcript of his presentation at the "Forgotten Cities" seminar series on October 27, 2004, hosted by the Department of Urban Studies and Planning at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Transcript archived with the Department of Urban Studies and Planning, and quote used with permission from the speaker.
- <sup>13</sup> Rozemberg, "Consul knows politics of 2 lands."
- <sup>14</sup> *Eagle-Tribune*, "Barber helps relatives help family back home," March 11, 1995. The engagement of Dominicans in the U.S. in homeland politics was facilitated by two new laws in the 1990s, the first, in 1994, allowing dual citizenship, and the second, in 1997, allowing Dominicans abroad to vote in homeland elections.
- <sup>15</sup> Rozemberg, "Consul knows politics of 2 lands."
- <sup>16</sup> Rozemberg, "Consul knows politics of 2 lands."
- <sup>17</sup> Although Dominicans have been overrepresented in the small business sector of Lawrence's economy and dominate accounts of transnational political activity, Puerto Ricans have been a major force in the construction of the bilingual and bicultural service economy, and neither group has monopolized a specific form of transnational or bilingual/bicultural activity, hence the continued emphasis on "Latino."
- <sup>18</sup> Kim Stevenson, "A Spatial Analysis of Socioeconomic and Demographic Change in the Lower Merrimack Valley and Lawrence, MA, 1980-1990," (Unpublished Masters thesis, MIT, 1992), 86.
- <sup>19</sup> See Michael Peter Smith, *Transnational Urbanism: Locating Globalization* (Malden, MA, USA, and Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing, 2001); Michael Peter Smith and Luis Eduardo Guarnizo, *Transnationalism from Below* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1998); and Aviva Chomsky, *Linked Labor Histories: New England, Colombia, and the Making of a Global Working Class* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008).
- <sup>20</sup> Lawrence's history of immigration and deindustrialization encourages us to consider 1960 a more compelling date for the origins of these processes.
- <sup>21</sup> Peter Marcuse, "Space in the Globalizing City," in *The Global Cities Reader*, Neil Brenner and Roger Keil, eds. (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2006), 366. See also Peter Marcuse and Ronald Van Kempen, eds., *Globalizing Cities: A New Spatial Order* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2000).
- <sup>22</sup> Robert Suro and Audrey Singer, "Latino Growth in Metropolitan America: Changing Patterns, New Locations," Brookings Institution, July 2002.
- <sup>23</sup> Central Falls was near 50 percent Latino at the last decennial census, but data of cities its size was not gathered for the 2005-2008 American Community Survey.
- <sup>24</sup> Aviva Chomsky, "Salem as a Global City, 1850-2004," in *Salem: Place, Myth and Memory*, Dane Morrison and Nancy Lusignan Schultz, eds. (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2004).



---

<sup>25</sup> Philip Nadeau, "The Somalis of Lewiston: Community Impacts of Rapid Immigrant Movement into a Small Homogeneous Maine City," (conference paper, Brown University Center for the Study of Race and Ethnicity, August 14, 2003)

<http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Sociology/faculty/silver/immigneng/pubs/nadeau.pdf>.

<sup>26</sup> Maggie Jones, "The New Yankees," *Mother Jones*, March/April 2004,

<http://motherjones.com/politics/2004/03/new-yankees>, accessed March 19, 2010; Roger D. McGrath, "The Great Somali Welfare Hunt," *The American Conservative*, November 18, 2002,

<http://www.amconmag.com/article/2002/nov/18/00010>, accessed March 19, 2010. Phil Nadeau has also presented extensively about Somalis in Lewiston.

<sup>27</sup> All statistics here from the 2005-2008 American Community Survey or 2000 U.S. Census unless otherwise noted.

<sup>28</sup> Erica Noonan and Kathleen Conti, "Lawrence Elects State's First Latino Mayor" *Boston Globe*, November 3, 2009.

<sup>29</sup> Michael Sullivan is former mayor Kevin Sullivan's younger brother, a Republican who had beaten Isabel Meléndez in 2001 when she had been the first Latino to win the Democratic mayoral primary in the city.

<sup>30</sup> John M. Guilfoil, "Lawrence police, fire departments may face 70 Layoffs," *Boston Globe*, May 11, 2010, [www.boston.com](http://www.boston.com), accessed May 11, 2010.

## **Bibliography**

### **Oral History Interviews**

Daniel O'Neill, interviewed by Thomas Mofford, 1979, LHC.  
Isabel Meléndez, interviewed by Margaret Hart, 1988, LHC.  
- interviewed by the author, 2010.  
Father John J. Lamond, interviewed by Jeanne Schinto, 1992, LHC.  
Gloria Fernandez, interviewed by Margaret Hart, 1993, LHC.  
Carolina DeJesus, interviewed by Joan Kelley, 1995, LHC.  
Yamilis Maracayo, interviewed by Joan Kelley, 1995, LHC.  
Maria Ruiz, interviewed by Sandra DeVita, 1997, LHC.  
Maria Teresa Narganes, interviewed by Yadira Betances, 1997, LHC.  
Mercedes Johnson, interviewed by Yadira Betances, 1997, LHC.  
Morella Lombardi, interviewed by Yadira Betances, 1997, LHC.  
Ester Aparicio, interviewed by Sandra De Vita, 1997, LHC.  
Dalia Díaz, interviewed by Sandra DeVita, 1997, LHC.  
Ana A. Pichardo, interviewed by her daughter, Euclida Pichardo, 1998, LHC.  
Fernando Nolberto, interviewed by Rodney Nolberto, 1998, LHC.  
Lourdez Muñoz, interviewed by Marilenin Vásquez, 1998, LHC.  
Silvia Mejía, interviewed by Rosemary Blessington, 2000, LHC.  
Lucy Ortolaza Mane, interviewed by Joan Kelley, 2001, LHC.  
Julia Silverio, interviewed by Joan Kelley, September 2002, LHC.  
Daniel Rivera, interviewed by Joan Kelley, 2003, LHC.  
Eric Spindler, interviewed by the author, 2006.  
Marta Montes Rentas, interviewed by Rosiland Pestrana, 2007, LHC.  
Francisco Urena, interviewed by Joan Kelley, 2007, LHC.  
Ana Reyes Cardenas, interviewed by Joan Kelley, 2008, LHC.  
Rev. Jorge Reyes, interviewed by Joan Kelley, 2008, LHC.  
Armand Hyatt, interviewed by the author, 2009.  
Jorge Santiago, interviewed by the author, November 2009.  
Ingrid Garcia, interviewed by author, November 2009.

### **Newspapers and Periodicals**

*The Boston Globe*  
*The Boston Herald*  
*The Boston Phoenix*  
*Business Week*  
*El Diario/La Prensa*  
*The Eagle-Tribune (The Lawrence Eagle-Tribune)*  
*Journal of Greater Lawrence*  
*The Lewiston Daily Sun*  
*El Mundo*  
*The New York Times*  
*Rumbo*

*La Semana*  
*Siglo21*  
*Today in Greater Lawrence*  
*USA Today*  
*U.S. News and World Report*  
*The Valley Patriot*

### **Archive Collections**

Immigrant City Archives, Lawrence History Center, Lawrence, Massachusetts  
Massachusetts Archives, Boston, Massachusetts  
Special Collections, Lawrence Public Library, Lawrence, Massachusetts  
Vanderbilt Television News Archives, Nashville, Tennessee  
Special Collections, State Library of Massachusetts  
Archived Council Records, Office of the City Clerk, Lawrence, Massachusetts  
Immigrant City Community Housing Corporation, Personal Collection of Armand Hyatt, Lawrence, Massachusetts  
AT&T Archives and History Center, Warren, New Jersey

### **Books, Essays, and Articles**

- Abelmann, Nancy and John Lie, *Blue Dreams: Korean Americans and the Los Angeles Riots*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997.
- Abu-Lughod, Janet L., *Race, Space, and Riots in Chicago, New York, and Los Angeles*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- Acuña, Rodolfo F., *A Community Under Siege: A Chronicle of Chicanos East of the Los Angeles River, 1945-1975*. Los Angeles: UCLA Chicano Studies Research Center, 1984.
- Aparicio, Frances R., "Exposed Bodies: Media and U.S. Puerto Ricans in Public Space," in *None of the Above: Puerto Ricans in the Global Era*, Frances Negrón-Muntaner, ed. New York: Pgrave MacMillan, 2007: 165-182.
- Asher, Robert and Charles Stephenson, eds., *Labor Divided: Race and Ethnicity in United States Labor Struggles, 1835-1960*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990.
- Austin, Joe, *Taking the Train: How Graffiti Art Became an Urban Crisis in New York City*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2001.
- Avila, Eric, *Popular Culture in the Age of White Flight: Fear and Fantasy in Suburban Los Angeles*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006.
- Baily, Samuel L., *Immigrants in the Land of Promise: Italians in Buenos Aires and New*

- York City, 1870-1914*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999.
- Baldwin, Davarian L., *Chicago's New Negroes: Modernity, the Great Migration, and Black Urban Life*. Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2007.
- Bao, Xiaolin and Roger Daniels, *Holding Up More Than Half the Sky: Chinese Women Garment Workers in New York City, 1948-1992*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001.
- Biondi, Martha, *To Stand and Fight: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Postwar New York City*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003.
- Bodnar, John, *The Transplanted: A History of Immigrants in Urban America*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985.
- Brenner, Neil and Roger Keil, eds., *The Global Cities Reader*. Abingdon, Oxon, UK: Routledge, 2006.
- Buff, Rachel, *Immigration and the Political Economy of Home: West Indian Brooklyn and American Indian Minneapolis, 1945-1992*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001.
- Cameron, Ardis, *Radicals of the Worst Sort: Laboring Women in Lawrence, Massachusetts, 1860-1912*. Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1995.
- Chomsky, Aviva, *Linked Labor Histories: New England, Colombia, and the Making of a Global Working Class*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008.
- "Salem as a Global City, 1850-2004," in *Salem: Place, Myth and Memory*, Dane Morrison and Nancy Lusignan Schultz, eds. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2004.
- Chudacoff, Howard P. and Judith E. Smith, *The Evolution of American Urban Society* (6<sup>th</sup> edition). Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2004.
- Cohen, Lizabeth, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America*. (New York: Random House, 2003).
- *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
- Cole, Donald B., *Immigrant City: Lawrence, Massachusetts, 1845-1921*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1963.
- Dávila, Arlene, *Barrio Dreams: Puerto Ricans, Latinos, and the Neoliberal City*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004.

- Davis, Mike, *Magical Urbanism: Latinos Reinvent the U.S. City*. London and New York: Verso, 2000.
- *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles*. London and New York: Verso, 2006.
- DeGenova, Nicholas and Ana Y. Ramos-Zayas, *Latino Crossings: Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and the Politics of Race and Citizenship*. New York and London: Routledge, 2003.
- Duany, Jorge, *The Puerto Rican Nation on the Move: Identities on the Island and in the United States*. Durham, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2002.
- Espada, Martín, *Trumpets from the Islands of their Eviction*. Tempe, AZ: Bilingual Press/Editorial Bilingue, 1987.
- Fernández, Johanna, "The Young Lords and the Postwar City: Notes on the Geographical and Structural Reconfigurations of Contemporary Urban Life," in *African American Urban History Since World War II*, Kenneth L. Kusmer and Joe W. Trotter, eds. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009: 60-82.
- Fisher, Robert, *Let the People Decide: Neighborhood Organizing in America*. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1994.
- Flores, Juan, *The Diaspora Strikes Back: Caribeño Tales of Learning and Turning*. New York: Routledge, 2009.
- *From Bomba to Hip-Hop: Puerto Rican Culture and Latino Identity*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2000.
- Foner, Nancy, *From Ellis Island to JFK: New York's Two Great Waves of Immigration*. New Haven: Yale University Press; New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2000.
- Fong, Timothy P., *The First Suburban Chinatown: The Remaking of Monterey Park, California*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994.
- Freund, David M. P., *Colored Property: State Policy and White Racial Politics in Suburban America*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2007.
- Gabaccia, Donna, "Is Everywhere Nowhere?: Nomads, Nations, and the Immigrant Paradigm of United States History." *Journal of American History*, December 1999: 1115-1134.
- Gamm, Gerald, *Urban Exodus: Why the Jews Left Boston and the Catholics Stayed*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999.

- Georges, Eugenia, *The Making of a Transnational Community: Migration, Development, and Cultural Change in the Dominican Republic*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1990.
- Gerstle, Gary, *Working-class Americanism: The Politics of Labor in a Textile City, 1914-1960*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.
- Gillette, Howard Jr., *Camden After the Fall: Decline and Renewal in a Post-Industrial City*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2005.
- Grasmuck, Sherri and Patricia R. Pessar, *Between Two Islands: Dominican International Migration*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991.
- Greenberg, Cheryl Lynn, *Troubling the Waters: Black-Jewish Relations in the American Century*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006.
- Handlin, Oscar, *The Uprooted: The Epic Story of the Great Migrations that Made the American People*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1951.
- Hardy-Fanta, Carol, *Latina Politics, Latino Politics: Gender, Culture, and Political Participation in Boston*. Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 1993.
- Hardy-Fanta, Carol and Jeffrey Gerson, eds., *Latino Politics in Massachusetts: Struggles, Strategies, and Prospects*. New York and London: Routledge, 2002.
- Harrison, Bennett and Barry Bluestone, *The Great U-Turn: Corporate Restructuring and the Polarizing of America*. New York: HarperCollins, 1990.
- Haslip-Viera, Gabriel and Sherrie L. Bayer, eds., *Latinos in New York: Communities in Transition*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1996.
- Hendricks, Glenn, *The Dominican Diaspora: From the Dominican Republic to New York City-Villagers in Transition*. New York: Teachers College Press, 1974.
- Hernández, Ramona, *The Mobility of Labor Under Advanced Capitalism: Dominican Migration to the United States*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2002.
- Hernández, Ramona and Glenn Jacobs, "Beyond Homeland Politics: Dominicans in Massachusetts" in *Latino Politics in Massachusetts: Struggles, Strategies, and Prospects*, Carol Hardy-Fanta and Jeffrey Gerson, eds. New York and London: Routledge, 2002: 277-296.
- Hoffnung-Gaskof, Jesse, *A Tale of Two Cities: Santo Domingo and New York after 1950*.

- Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008.
- Jackson, Kenneth, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987.
- Jacobson, Matthew Frye, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998.
- *Roots Too: White Ethnic Revival in Post-Civil Rights America*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006.
- Jennings, James and Jorge Santiago, "Welfare Reform and 'Welfare to Work' as Non-Sequitur: A Case Study of the Experiences of Latina Women in Massachusetts." *Journal of Poverty*, 2004.
- Johnson, Marilyn S., "Gender, Race, and Rumors: Re-examining the 1943 Race Riots." *Gender & History* 10:2, August 1998.
- *Street Justice: A History of Police Violence in New York City*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2003.
- Joseph, Peniel E., *Waiting until the Midnight Hour: A Narrative History of Black Power in America*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2006.
- Kelley, Robin D. G., *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2002.
- *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class*. New York: The Free Press, 1994.
- Klor de Alva, Jorge, Earl Shorris, and Cornel West, "Our Next Race Question: The Uneasiness between Blacks and Latinos," in *The Latino Studies Reader: Culture, Economy, and Society*, Antonia Darder and Rodolfo D. Torres, eds. Malden, MA, USA and Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing, 1998: 180-190.
- Kruse, Kevin Michael, *White Flight: Atlanta and the Making of Modern Conservatism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005.
- Kruse, Kevin M. and Thomas J. Sugrue, eds., *The New Suburban History*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006.
- Kusmer, Kenneth L. and Joe W. Trotter, eds., *African American Urban History Since World War II*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009.
- Laó-Montes, Agustín and Arlene Dávila, eds. *Mambo Montage: The Latinization of New York*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2001.

- Lampe, David R., *The Massachusetts Miracle: High Technology and Economic Revitalization*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT press, 1988.
- Lefebvre, Henri, *The Production of Space*, translated by Donald Nicholson-Smith. Oxford, UK; Cambridge, USA: Blackwell, 1991.
- Levitt, Peggy, *The Transnational Villagers*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001.
- Lewis, Oscar, *La Vida: A Puerto Rican Family in the Culture of Poverty - San Juan and New York*. New York: Random House, 1966.
- Lindeke, William A., "Latino Political Succession and Incorporation: Lawrence," in *Latino Politics in Massachusetts: Struggles, Strategies, and Prospects*, Carol Hardy-Fanta and Jeffrey Gerson, eds. New York and London: Routledge, 2002: 73-98.
- Marcuse, Peter, "Space in the Globalizing City," in *The Global Cities Reader*, Neil Brenner and Roger Keil, eds. Abingdon, Oxon, UK: Routledge, 2006.
- Marcuse, Peter and Ronald Van Kempen, eds., *Globalizing Cities: A New Spatial Order*. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2000.
- Meléndez, Edwin, "Latino Poverty and Economic Development in Massachusetts," in *Latino Poverty and Economic Development in Massachusetts*, Edwin Meléndez and Miren Uriarte, eds. Boston: Mauricio Gastón Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy, 1993: 15-37.
- Meléndez, Edwin and Miren Uriarte, eds., *Latino Poverty and Economic Development in Massachusetts*. Boston: Mauricio Gastón Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy, 1993.
- Millman, Joel, *The Other Americans: How Immigrants Renew our Country, our Economy, and our Values*. New York: Viking, 1997.
- Moreno de Toro, Angel A. Amy, "An Oral History of the Puerto Rican Socialist Party in Boston, 1972-1978" in *The Puerto Rican Movement: Voices from the Diaspora*, Andrés Torres and José E. Velázquez, eds. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998: 246-259.
- Mumford, Kevin, *Newark: A History of Race, Rights, and Riots in America*. New York and London: New York University Press, 2007.
- Nakano Glenn, Evelyn, "From Servitude to Service Work: Historical Continuities in the



- Racial Division of Paid Reproductive Labor,” in *Unequal Sisters: A Multicultural Reader in U.S. Women's History*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, Vicki Ruíz and Ellen Carol DuBois, eds. New York: Routledge, 2000.
- Negrón-Muntaner, Frances, ed., *None of the Above: Puerto Ricans in the Global Era*. New York: Pgrave MacMillan, 2007.
- Ngai, Mae M., *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004.
- Ong, Aihwa, *Buddha is Hiding: Refugees, Citizenship, the New America*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003.
- Pagán, Eduardo Obregón, *Murder at the Sleepy Lagoon: Zoot Suits, Race, and Riot in Wartime L.A.* Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2003.
- Pérez, Gina M., *The Near Northwest Side Story: Migration, Displacement, & Puerto Rican Families*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004.
- Portes, Alejandro and Alex Stepick, *City On the Edge: The Transformation of Miami*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994.
- Prashad, Vijay, *Everybody was Kung Fu Fighting: Afro-Asian Connections and the Myth of Cultural Purity*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2001.
- Pulido, Laura, *Black, Brown, Yellow, and Left: Radical Activism in Los Angeles*. Berkeley: University of California Press; 2006.
- Ramos-Zayas, Ana Y., *National Performances: The Politics of Class, Race, and Space in Puerto Rican Chicago*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003.
- Reimers, David M., *Other Immigrants: The Global Origins of the American People*. New York: New York University Press, 2005.
- Ricourt, Milagros and Ruby Danta, *Hispanas de Queens: Latino Panethnicity in a New York City Neighborhood*. Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2003.
- Romo, Ricardo, *East Los Angeles: History of a Barrio*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983.
- Sagás, Ernesto and Sintia E. Molina, eds., *Dominican Migration: Transnational Perspectives*. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2004.
- Sánchez, George J., *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in*

- Chicano Los Angeles, 1900-1945*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.
- Sánchez Korrol, Virginia E., *From Colonia to Community: The History of Puerto Ricans in New York City, 1917-1948*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1983.
- Sassen, Saskia, *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001.
- *Globalization and its Discontents: Essays on the New Mobility of People and Money*. New York: The New Press, 1998.
- Schinto, Jeanne, *Huddle Fever: Living in the Immigrant City*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1995.
- Schuetz, Jenny, "Guarding the Town Walls: Mechanisms and Motives for Restricting Multifamily Housing in Massachusetts." *Real Estate Economics* 36.3 (2008), from *Academic OneFile*, [http://find.galegroup.com.proxy.bc.edu/gtx/start.do?prodId=AONE&userGroupName=mmlin\\_m\\_bostcoll](http://find.galegroup.com.proxy.bc.edu/gtx/start.do?prodId=AONE&userGroupName=mmlin_m_bostcoll) (accessed January 4, 2010).
- Self, Robert O., *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland*. Princeton, NY: Princeton University Press, 2003.
- Seligman, Amanda I., *Block by Block: Neighborhoods and Public Policy on Chicago's West Side*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.
- Singh, Nikhil Pal, *Black is a Country: Race and the Unfinished Struggle for Democracy*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004.
- Smith, Michael Peter, *Transnational Urbanism: Locating Globalization*. Malden, MA, USA, and Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing, 2001.
- Smith, Michael Peter and Luis Eduardo Guarnizo, eds., *Transnationalism from Below*. New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1998.
- Stepick, Alex et al, *This Land is Our Land: Immigrants and Power in Miami*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003.
- Sugrue, Thomas J., *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*. Princeton, NY: Princeton University Press, 1996.
- Theoharis, Jeanne, "'We Saved the City': Black Struggles for Educational Equality in Boston, 1960-1976." *Radical History Review* 81, Fall 2001: 61-93.
- Theoharis, Jeanne and Komozi Woodard, eds., *Freedom North: Black Freedom Struggles*

- Outside the South, 1940-1980*. New York: Palgrave-MacMillan, 2003.
- Thompson, Heather Ann, *Whose Detroit? Politics, Labor, and Race in a Modern American City*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001.
- Torres, Andrés, ed., *Latinos in New England*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006.
- Torres, Andrés and José E. Velázquez, eds. *The Puerto Rican Movement: Voices from the Diaspora*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998.
- Valle, Victor M. and Rodolfo D. Torres, *Latino Metropolis*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000.
- Vecoli, Rudolph, "Anthony Capraro and the Lawrence Strike of 1919," *Labor Divided: Race and Ethnicity in United States Labor Struggles, 1835-1960*, Robert Asher and Charles Stephenson, eds. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990: 267-282.
- Võ, Linda Trinh, *Mobilizing an Asian American Community*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2004.
- Waters, Mary, *Black Identities: West Indian Immigrant Dreams and American Realities*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999.
- Whalen, Carmen Teresa, "Citizens and Workers: African Americans and Puerto Ricans in Philadelphia's Regional Economy Since World War II," in *African American Urban History Since World War II*, Kenneth L. Kusmer and Joe W. Trotter, eds. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009: 98-122.
- *From Puerto Rico to Philadelphia: Puerto Rican Workers and Postwar Economies*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001.
- Whalen, Carmen Teresa and Víctor Vázquez-Hernández, eds., *The Puerto Rican Diaspora: Historical Perspectives*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2005.
- Wiese, Andrew, *Places of Their Own: African American Suburbanization in the Twentieth Century*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004.
- Young, Cynthia Ann, *Soul Power: Culture, Radicalism, and the Making of a U.S. Third World Left*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2006.
- Unpublished Theses, Dissertations, and Papers**
- Andors, Jessica, "City and Island: Dominicans In Lawrence: Transnational Community

- Formation in a Globalizing World.” Unpublished Master Thesis, MIT, 1999.
- Borges-Méndez, Ramón, “Urban and Regional Restructuring and *Barrio* Formation in Massachusetts: The Cases of Lowell, Lawrence and Holyoke.” Unpublished PhD dissertation, MIT, 1994.
- Brewer-Garcia, Eric, “What’s happening to my neighborhood? Lessons learned about civic engagement from case studies of community development initiatives.” Unpublished Masters thesis, MIT, 2008.
- Cheigh, Brian C., “The Urban Economic Development Impacts of Ethnic Entrepreneurship: A Case Study of Dominican Entrepreneurs in Lawrence, Massachusetts.” Unpublished Masters thesis, MIT, 2005.
- Clark, Heather, “Redeveloping Lawrence, Massachusetts’ Historic Mill District: Insights into adaptive reuse in untested residential markets.” Unpublished Masters thesis, 2004.
- Delgado, Manuel E., “Spicket River Greenway Project, Lawrence, MA: Teaching & learning design with the community.” Unpublished Masters thesis, 2001.
- Duran, Joseph D., “The 1984 Riots: Lawrence, Massachusetts.” Unpublished Masters Thesis, MIT, 1985.
- Gonzalez, Antonio Francisco, “Building Partnerships: Public Schools as Catalysts for Community Development.” Unpublished Masters thesis, MIT, 2002.
- Fox, Cybelle, “The Boundaries of Social Citizenship: Race, Immigration and the American Welfare State, 1900-1950.” Unpublished PhD Dissertation, Harvard University, 2007.
- Fraser, Madeline C., “From needs to action: Community organizing at Heritage Common, Lawrence, Massachusetts.” Unpublished Masters thesis, MIT, 2000.
- Kotelchuck, Tamar, “Less-skilled workers & the high-technology economy: a regional jobs strategy for Lawrence, MA.” Unpublished Masters thesis, MIT, 1999.
- Mahon, Cathleen A., “Building an enclave: The experience of micro-lending in Lawrence, Massachusetts.” Unpublished Masters thesis, MIT, 1995.
- Morales, Julio Jr., “Puerto Rican Poverty and the Migration to Elsewhere: Waltham Massachusetts: A Case Study.” Unpublished PhD Dissertation, Brandeis University, 1979.

Nadeau, Philip, "The Somalis of Lewiston: Community Impacts of Rapid Immigrant Movement into a Small Homogeneous Maine City." Conference paper, Brown University Center for the Study of Race and Ethnicity, August 14, 2003, <http://www.brown.edu/Departments/Sociology/faculty/silver/immigneng/pubs/nadeau.pdf>.

Piore, Michael Joseph, "The Role of Immigration in Industrial Growth: A Case Study of the Origins and Character of Puerto Rican Migration to Boston," May 1973.

Rodger, Katherine K., "The Importance of Cultural Models in Adult Basic Education: A Study to Define the Cultural Models Held By Dominicans Living in the Immigrant City." Unpublished PhD Dissertation, University of Massachusetts at Lowell, 2002.

Rothrock, Laura, "Business Improvement Districts: An Effective Revitalization Tool for Massachusetts' Forgotten Cities." Unpublished Masters thesis, MIT, 2008.

Ryan, Andrea, "Not My Brother's Keeper: Ethnic Individualism, Civic Capitalism, and the Reinvention of Community in an Old Mill City." Unpublished PhD dissertation, Boston University, 2007.

Smith, Carol Joan, "Women, Work, and Use of Government Benefits: A Case Study of Hispanic Women Workers in New York's Garment Industry." Unpublished Thesis, Adelphi University, 1980.

Stelson, Aaron, Mobility in Ethnic Enclaves in Lawrence, Massachusetts. Unpublished Masters thesis, MIT, 2007.

Stevenson, Kim, "A Spatial Analysis of Socioeconomic and Demographic Change in the Lower Merrimack Valley and Lawrence, MA, 1980-1990." Unpublished Master Thesis, MIT, 1992.

Wu, Cindy C., "Building Community Assets through Individual Development Accounts: Growing a Strategic Network in Lawrence, Massachusetts." Unpublished Masters thesis, MIT, 2007.

## **Reports**

Fox, Radhika and Miriam Axel-Lute, "To Be Strong Again: Renewing the Promise in Smaller Industrial Cities." PolicyLink, 2008.

Hispanic-American Advisory Commission, "Final Report. Massachusetts, September 20, 1993.

Hoyt, Lorlene and A. Leroux, "Voices from Forgotten Cities: Innovative Revitalization

- Coalitions in America's Older Small Cities." New York: PolicyLink, 2007.
- Jones, Charles, "Latinos in Lawrence, Massachusetts." Mauricio Gastón Institute for Latino Community Development and Public Policy, January 2003.
- Lawrence High School/Phillips Academy Urban Studies Institute, "Growing Up Hispanic in Lawrence," 1986.
- "The Family Housing Crisis in Greater Lawrence: A Backgrounder for Concerned Citizens," 1988.
- Liebke, James F. & Associates, "An Analysis and Recommended Program for the Central Business District: Lawrence Massachusetts," 1957.
- Marzán, Gilbert, Andrés Torres, and Andrew Luecke, "Puerto Rican Outmigration from New York City, 1995-2000." Policy Report from the Centro de Estudios Puertorriqueños at Hunter College (CUNY), 2008.
- Massachusetts Advisory Committee to the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights and the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination, "Rt. 128: Boston's Road To Segregation," 1975.
- Massachusetts Bureau of Health Statistics, Research and Evaluation, "A Profile of Health Among Lawrence/Lowell Adults, 1997 – 1999." Massachusetts Department of Public Health, March 2002.
- Massachusetts Commission on Hispanic Affairs, "Hispanics in Massachusetts: A Demographic Analysis," August 1986.
- Massachusetts Commission on Hispanic Affairs, "Hispanics in Massachusetts: A Progress Report," December 1985.
- Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination, "Report on Civil Disorders: Could it Happen Here?" 1992.
- Massachusetts Criminal Justice Training Council, "Management Survey of the Police Department of the City of Lawrence, Massachusetts: Report to Massachusetts Criminal Justice Training Council." June 1985.
- Massachusetts Department of Education, "Report on the Condition of the Public Schools in Holyoke, Lawrence, Brockton, and Chelsea," October 15, 1991.
- Massachusetts Hispanic-American Advisory Commission, "Final Report," September 1993.

Massachusetts League of Community Health Centers, "Community health Centers as Economic Engines: An Overview of their Impact on Massachusetts Communities and Families," October, 2003.

Massachusetts State Auditor, "State Auditor's Report on the Riverfront Urban Renewal Project Developed by the Lawrence Redevelopment Authority." 1998.

Massachusetts State Office of Affirmative Action, Commonwealth of Massachusetts, "Report of the Hispanic Task Force," 1985.

Merrimack Valley Planning Commission, "Chapter 774 (the anti-snob zoning law): its impact on the MVPC region," March 31, 1976, SLoM.

Regional/Urban Design Assistance Team, "Lawrence R/UDAT." Boston Society of Architects, July 1990.

Rubin, Laurie and Susan Forward, "Systemic Discrimination in the Private Rental Market." MCAD, 1983.

Santiago, Jorge and James Jennings, eds., "The Making of Community: Latinos in Lawrence, Massachusetts." 2005.

Siegal, Beth and Andy Waxman, "Third-Tier Cities: Adjusting to the New Economy." U.S. Economic Development Administration, 2001.

Singer, Audrey, "The Rise of New Immigrant Gateways." Brookings Institution, February 2004.

Stevenson, Kim, "Hispanic and Minority Owned Businesses in Lawrence, Massachusetts: A Market Study of Essex Street and Downtown Lawrence," prepared for the Lawrence Community Development Department, October, 1991.

Suro, Robert and Audrey Singer, "Latino Growth in Metropolitan America: Changing Patterns, New Locations." Brookings Institution, July 2002.

Walsh, E. Denis & Associates, "Action Plan Lawrence Massachusetts: The Renovation and Reuse of Upper Story Space in a Block of Downtown Commercial Buildings" prepared for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Department of Community Affairs, Building Reuse Project, 1978.

### **Press Conferences and Presentations**

Ramon Borges-Mendez, transcript from "Forgotten Cities" seminar presentation, October

27, 2004. Series hosted by the Department of Urban Studies and Planning at the MIT. Transcript archived with the Department of Urban Studies and Planning, and quotes used with permission from the speaker.

Isabel Meléndez, press conference on December 14, 2003, transcript from <http://www.notilatino.com/id9.htm>, accessed October 27, 2009.

### **Audio and Video**

Compiled DVD of television news clips from Vanderbilt Television News Archives:

CBS, Thursday Aug 09, 1984 (Massachusetts / Rioting 01:30)  
NBC, Thursday Aug 09, 1984 (Massachusetts / Rioting 02:00)  
NBC, Friday Aug 10, 1984 (Massachusetts / Rioting 02:00)  
CBS, Friday Aug 10, 1984 (Massachusetts / Rioting 02:00)  
ABC, Friday Aug 10, 1984 (Massachusetts / Rioting 02:20)  
CBS, Saturday Aug 11, 1984 (Massachusetts / Rioting 02:10)  
NBC, Saturday Aug 11, 1984 (Massachusetts / Rioting 02:10)  
CBS, Sunday Aug 12, 1984 (Massachusetts / Rioting 02:10)  
CBS, Friday Nov 02, 1984 (Economy / Unemployment 01:50)  
NBC, Monday Aug 14, 1989 (Lawrence, Massachusetts / Drug War / Welfare 03:20)  
NBC, Monday May 25, 1992 (Lawrence, Massachusetts / Arson 01:50)  
ABC, Tuesday Dec 22, 1992 (Lawrence, Massachusetts / Crime Fight 01:50)  
ABC, Sunday Feb 12, 1995 (Welfare Reform / Massachusetts / Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Program 05:20)

*Chavez Ravine*, videocassette, directed by Jordan Mechner. Los Angeles: Tiny Projects, 2003.

“Hispanic Community Celebration” audio tape, June 16, 1982, LHC.

### **Websites**

Bureau of Labor Statistics, <http://data.bls.gov>

Bureau of Labor Statistics, historical inflation calculator  
<http://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/cpicalc.pl>

City of Lawrence, Massachusetts, official website,  
<http://www.ci.lawrence.ma.us/Pages/index>

Economagic, <http://www.economagic.com>

Queen City Massachusetts, “Catablog” for Lawrence Public Library Special Collections,  
<http://queencityma.wordpress.com/>



Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center,  
[http://www.massbudget.org/documentsearch/findDocument?doc\\_id=621&dse\\_id=561](http://www.massbudget.org/documentsearch/findDocument?doc_id=621&dse_id=561)

Massachusetts Session Laws, Acts and Resolves, SLoM, 1960 – 1996,  
<http://archives.lib.state.ma.us/handle/123456789/2>

United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, State of the Cities online  
database, <http://socds.huduser.org/>

Urban Dictionary, <http://www.urbandictionary.com/>