Desegregating the Jim Crow North: Racial Discrimination in the Postwar Bronx and the Fight to Integrate the Castle Hill Beach Club (1953-1973)

Brian Purnell

On a brisk, bright afternoon in late March 1953, Anita Brown, a thirty-one year old housewife, left her apartment in the Bronx River Houses, boarded a city bus and traveled three miles southeast to the Castle Hill Beach Club (CHBC). She went to apply for a seasonal membership pass, which would have given her access to the club’s pools, locker areas, picnic spaces, eateries and athletic fields. If the CHBC approved Mrs. Brown’s application, she would have been the first black person admitted since the club opened its doors to the public in 1928.²

Anita Brown had acted boldly that morning. An African American attempting to integrate a predominantly white social club in the New York City in 1953 was not commonplace. Twentieth century New York is not often thought of as a city defined by its racial tensions or patterns of racial segregation.³ Still, New York’s social development throughout the first half of the twentieth century is emblematic of the forms of racial animosities in America’s northern cities that created segregated housing patterns, influenced discriminatory hiring practices and blanketed many everyday interracial interactions with discomfort and sometimes downright hostility, as occurred during Harlem’s riots in 1935 and 1943.⁴

 Those moments of violence, combined with the democratic spirit of the nation’s wartime ethos, inspired the passage of the country’s first permanent anti-discrimination legislation and the creation of the first state-level anti-discrimination oversight and investigative commission, the State Commission Against Discrimination (SCAD). Not since Reconstruction had a state acted so boldly to address racial discrimination.⁵ Still, racial bigots thrived in many postwar New York City neighborhoods and large sections of its labor market. Anita Brown’s...
story reflects these trends. "I was given an application to fill out," Brown later testified in a SCAD hearing, "and was informed that they had no vacancies at the moment." The membership staff told her that if an opening in the club became available at a later date, they would notify her and process her application. Anita Brown's neighbor, Ethel Lubarsky, who was white, arrived at the CHBC membership office the same time as Brown. Lubarsky submitted her application and paid the required $5 deposit. The staff immediately assigned her a locker number and issued a key and a temporary admissions pass. After the women chatted about what had transpired at the CHBC, Anita Brown suspected that she had been the victim of racial discrimination. On April 6, with still no word from the CHBC regarding her admission application, Anita Brown filed a complaint with SCAD against the CHBC, which set in motion a ten-year process to desegregate the club's facilities.

The history of the Castle Hill Beach Club's discrimination against blacks provides a small, but significant window through which to view the history of Jim Crow racism in the postwar North. For far too long, Americans have ignored the ways twentieth-century racism was a national, not merely a regional, phenomenon. Part of the problem has been the de jure/de facto dichotomy, which understood the South's legally enforced (de jure) racial segregation as evidence of that region's peculiar character. When viewed through the de jure paradigm, Jim Crow racism was merely another example of how the South's society was out of step with the rest of the country. On the other hand, the de facto paradigm presents discernable signs of racial segregation in public schools and residential communities in the North as a result of individuals' natural choices, not codified law. When viewed through this lens, the North's racial segregation seems benign and unfortunate, but nonetheless unavoidable in a free society where people chose their neighbors and where public school students attended neighborhood schools. According to this dichotomy, racism in the North was considered to be more subtle and insidious than racism in the South, and therefore impossible to identify and eradicate.

The de facto/de jure formula, unfortunately, obscures more social and political realities than it helps to illuminate. Racial discrimination in the North was public, visible, and intentional, and it was perpetuated through multiple aspects of everyday life. Expressions of racism certainly varied between the North and South, especially with respects to extralegal violence and public enforcement of the color line, but it is well
documented that northerners were also capable of using violence to maintain racial segregation. When it comes to the history of racial segregation and twentieth century racism in the United States, the South and the North actually had more in common than previous historians recognized. The historical reality is not that racism in the North was impossible to detect, but rather that too many people either ignored northern racism or failed to identify it when it stared them in the face.

In Anita Brown’s case against the CHBC, we can examine closely the deceptive methods that perpetuated discriminatory practices and segregated outcomes in the changing social and political milieu of the postwar Jim Crow North. Brown’s case provides further evidence of how, throughout the postwar US those who wanted to prevent racial integration efforts tactically employed anti-Communist ideology to discredit civil rights activists’ legitimacy and to justify unofficial racial segregation policies. Also apparent in the history of this case are the good faith efforts of the state to investigate and sanction blatant practices of racial discrimination. Fighting racial discrimination through state enforcement procedures, however, was a slow and arduous process. Guilty verdicts were difficult to enforce and civil rights victories often proved to be fleeting and intangible. Nevertheless, as the decade-long effort to integrate the CHBC indicates, activists often regrouped, reorganized and continued their fight. The struggle against racism in the North may be less well known than the southern civil rights movement, but its historical lessons regarding how and why racism persists in American life are no less important.

“OUR ONLY REASON FOR NOT WANTING TO ADMIT NEGROES IS WE ARE SCARED TO DEATH:” BLACKS AND WHITES IN THE POSTWAR BRONX

On April 10, 1953, SCAD investigator Henry Craft toured the CHBC facilities and interviewed club managers Robert Beiersdorfer and George Davis. Craft’s report meticulously described the club’s physical layout and its recreational facilities. His interview with the club managers also provided clear evidence that racial discrimination influenced their decision to reject Brown’s application. The report, therefore, satisfied SCAD’s rules for determining probable cause in discrimination cases and the information Craft recorded played a significant role in the official hearing, which began that December.
Each year, roughly 13,000 people (7,500 adults and 5,500 children) received CHBC membership passes, which allowed them access to the club from the third week in April through the first week in October. The CHBC grounds covered sixteen acres and contained two 200-foot long swimming pools as well as a large children’s wading pool. There were 3,780 bathhouses: cabana-styled lockers where members changed into swim gear and stored their personal items while using the pools or athletic areas. The number of athletic fields, ball courts and recreation spaces was notable: 32 handball courts, 4 squash courts, 6 soft ball diamonds and basket ball courts, all with spectator stands; 10 tennis courts, 12 ping pong tables, and boxing equipment; an area with beach chairs reserved for sunbathing, a roofed open air picnic area with tables and large grass fields with shaded lounging areas; a sand lot for children, hot and cold showers, a cafeteria that accommodated 300 people, a 40-foot bar that served beer and soft drinks, and two ice cream and soda fountain stands. Two parking lots were reserved for members and their guests. Each season, in addition to the members, over 10,000 people were issued one-day passes and gained access to the CHBC facilities. During the summer season, the CHBC employed about 100 people, 75 full-time and 25 part-time, and ran a six-day-a-week day camp for several hundred children. 12 Thousands of people in the postwar Bronx undoubtedly felt pride and personal connection for the CHBC. None of them, however, neither a seasonal member nor a one-day pass holder, had ever been African American.

Craft’s investigation uncovered that this exclusion was achieved by design, not by accident. Beiersdorfer and Davis informed Craft that the club terminated an individual’s seasonal membership “if their actions or their behavior,” proved to be unacceptable. The membership committee, however, had no set criteria for judging a person’s fitness for membership, and it did not screen all 13,000 people who were seasonal members of the club. In the interview, Beiersdorfer then admitted to Craft that Anita Brown “was turned down” or received different treatment “because she was a Negro.” The managers then explained to Craft that, “they feared, greatly, that the admission of a Negro to the use of the facilities would result in a violent reaction by the white members of the club and the disturbance may be of such proportion that it would get out of control.” 13 Craft testified that, “Mr. Beiersdorfer said, ‘Our only reason for not wanting to admit Negroes is,’ and I put this in quotations so I would remember it very definitely, ‘we are scared to
death to admit them for fear of the untoward results which might follow their admission." Davis, perhaps having sensed that Beiersdorfer had just given Craft ample evidence to find them in violation of the antidiscrimination law, quickly told Craft that the CHBC "had no particular objection to Negroes, per se, but that they didn't dare go along with the admission of them." Neither Davis nor Beiersdorfer knew if any current members of the club were black, but Davis "assumed that since they didn't admit them they didn't have any as members."15

The club managers were selective in who they admitted, but Davis and Beiersdorfer stressed that, "there was no discrimination on the basis of creed or nationality." They swore their choices were based on a person's behavior, not their race or religion; or, if a person was already a seasonal member, unacceptable behavior (which was undefined) could result in expulsion from the club. The CHBC managers told Craft that, "If a person didn't behave themselves they would put them out" (sic).16 Membership may not have been restricted to any one group, but Craft's conversation with Davis and Beiersdorfer uncovered that, "about 80 percent of the membership was Jewish and in the remaining 20 percent, there were many Catholics, Protestants, Italians, and people of other nationalities." Davis and Beiersdorfer told Craft, "Since the law required that applicants shall not be rejected on the basis of color, they would comply" with an order by the commission to admit Anita Brown, but they would do so "with great fear that the repercussions among white clients would follow."17

It is unclear how those fears of white violence originated. By 1953, the Bronx had not experienced any outbreak of white-led violence against African Americans who were settling in great numbers in the Southwest neighborhoods of Morrisania, Mott Haven, and Hunts Point. Davis and Beiersdorfer, however, probably knew their members' minds quite well. Most likely, they were very familiar with the types of racial prejudices their members repudiated publicly, but nonetheless, practiced privately. Blacks moving to areas around the Grand Concourse, and even Blacks walking there, received a very hostile reception. There were neighborhoods in the Bronx, such as Fordham and Belmont, which, for young black men, could be physically dangerous to enter. Perhaps very few white Bronxites openly discriminated against blacks, but African Americans who lived in the postwar Bronx recall a wide range of whites' social practices regarding black people, some friendly, some indifferent, some hostile and even violent.

51
Born in 1947, Daphane Moss, whose Jamaican parents moved from Harlem to the Morrisania and Hunts Point sections of the Bronx in the late 1930s and early 1940s, remembered that in the late 1950s her community on Simpson Street near the Westchester Avenue El, was "transitioning from Irish and Jewish," to Puerto Rican. Her kindergarten class in PS 20 was "largely white with a few Puerto Ricans and one or two blacks," but within less than ten years Moss's schoolmates and her neighborhood were "all Puerto Rican, except for one little Jewish girl." Social interactions during periods of racial transition could be tense and memories of racial antagonisms lingered in the minds of black Bronxites for decades. Leroi Archible grew up in the South in the 1930s and 40s, and, during his high school years he spent summers with relatives in the Bronx. Archible remembered the public places in the Bronx where blacks were not supposed to be. "We used to go to Crotona Park," Archible narrated, "and when you get in the park, being of African American descent, sometimes when you hit the park, the cops would come, chase you out of the park." Social barriers also restricted blacks from walking freely on the Grand Concourse, the Bronx's version of Paris's Champs-Élysées, known for its luxurious art deco apartment buildings. "The only way that we used to go there," Archible remembered, "(was) if you had a shine box, and we would shine your shoes and work with somebody." Blacks who were not domestic workers or otherwise employed on the Grand Concourse might have experienced various forms of harassment from police officers and white residents. Harassment and intimidation from cops and citizens sometimes also became violent. As a child growing up in the early 1940s, Beatrice Bergland lived on Grant Avenue, two blocks East of the Grand Concourse. Her maternal grandfather was a superintendent in the area. One day, after Bergland's family had moved to a different section of the Bronx, Bergland's mother returned to her old neighborhood to visit her father. She entered the apartment and found that, "he was killed, his naked body was left, burned body on a radiator." Family members speculated that his death was due to "an interracial relationship with a Miss Bobby, a white lady there." The horrific incident left an indelible scar on Bergland and her family. After her mother, "found his naked body on a radiator... she denounced God right then and there." Such violence was extremely rare in the Bronx, but whites found other ways to express their discontent with blacks. The most common method was to
move when too many blacks or Puerto Ricans had settled in the community.\textsuperscript{18}  

Population statistics corroborate the testimonies found in countless oral history interviews, in which subjects recount that integrated Bronx neighborhoods in the 1930s, 40s, and 50s did not remain racially mixed for very long.\textsuperscript{19} In the 1940s, blacks were less than 2\% of the Bronx’s population and by 1970 they were almost quarter of the borough’s total population. White population statistics were the inverse: in the 1940s, the Bronx was almost 95\% white, and by 1970, the total white population in the borough hovered just above 50\%.\textsuperscript{20} The more blacks moved to the Bronx, the more whites moved out of the Bronx.  

Oral history testimony and statistics alone are not evidence of widespread racism. Nor is rapid change in a neighborhood’s racial or ethnic demography. In fact, other oral history testimonies highlight ways in which the Depression-era and postwar Bronx peacefully welcomed African Americans.\textsuperscript{21} Most historical treatments of the postwar Bronx privilege such narratives.\textsuperscript{22} Nonetheless, the historical memories of black Bronxites and the CHBC managers’ open admission that Anita Brown’s race was the reason they rejected her membership application point to a strong current of racial discrimination that charged the postwar Bronx’s social relations. Davis and Beiersdorfer’s fears of white violence were not totally unfounded; but the CHBC managers probably were less fearful that their white members would exhibit, “a violent reaction,” if a black person was allowed membership than they were that whites would abandon the club in droves if a black applicant was allowed membership. They either suspected, or they knew outright, that most whites in the Bronx, no different from whites in Birmingham or Biloxi, did not want to share a swimming pool with a black person.  

But rather than admit that in court, Robert Beiersdorfer’s testimony at the SCAD hearing emphasized how, in the past, the club’s loose screening process permitted some unsavory characters to join, which threatened to ruin the CHBC’s safe, family-friendly atmosphere. The club’s close scrutiny of Anita Brown, he maintained, was a symptom of this institutional history, not racism or bigotry.  

In the 1930s, Beiersdorfer explained, the CHBC had experienced a period when roughnecks threatened the club’s existence. But after this tumultuous period, the club “settled down,” and by the mid 1930s, a steady, regular membership emerged. Twenty years later, two or even three generations from the same family had spent their summers at the
club. Beiersdorfer proudly commented on how many of those people, "took a proprietary interest in the place. They felt they owned it." But, according to Beiersdorfer, in the late 1940s the CHBC experienced a resurgence of troublemakers. Thieves stole clothing from the bathhouses and rambunctious patrons destroyed walls and partitions within the facility. Both problems threatened the club's financial solvency: theft victims sued and repairing damages was costly. Beiersdorfer testified that, "there was a large and almost seemed to be uncontrollable people which we couldn't take care of," through the club's loose screening process. "It was thought then," Beiersdorfer concluded, "that some means of control should be set up so that we could have good directed control over people." Thus, in 1950, according to Beiersdorfer, the club became a private entity with the power to accept or reject its members. The decision to privatize the membership application process was thought to be "a good means of controlling these people," threatening the club's stability and security. "If they are members," Beiersdorfer testified, "and they knock down bath houses ... we then can just fire them out from membership and won't let them back in again." Other CHBC patrons corroborated Beiersdorfer's testimony and evoked a sense of ownership of the club. Morris Jebrock testified that he was a seasonal member of the CHBC since 1928 or 1929. He corroborated Beiersdorfer's testimony that "a strange element of people that all of a sudden came in from all over the country ... broke lockers every day," and "started to steal stuff." Out of this turmoil, "the private membership was born," Jebrock declared. In addition to monitoring behavior, the privatization effort secured the club's close community atmosphere. Abraham Steinberg, who also was a member of the pool since 1929, testified how the CHBC, its facilities and social atmosphere, had become an integral part of his entire family. He assured the hearing commissioners that "anybody that is pleasant (and) congenial" is welcome in the club. "I have spent twenty-four years at this place," Steinberg stated, "and I have raised ... my children and grandchildren there. I have a son ... who I brought to the pool when he was a tot. ... I think it is a beautiful place to raise anybody." In order to preserve their club as it had been for families like the Jebrocks and the Steinbergs, Beiersdorfer concluded, the members had to "keep a lot of undesirable people out ... so that the people could enjoy this place to themselves."
SCAD attorney Henry Spitz set out to prove that the CHBC not only discriminated against Anita Brown, but that it “discriminates against all Negroes in its admission policies and practices.”28 Walter Hopkins, lead counsel for the CHBC, argued that the beach club’s admission categories and classification as an independent corporation made it private. Thus, Spitz’s first objective was to demonstrate that the CHBC was a public accommodation and not a private club. He sought to reveal that the CHBC’s members-only policy was inconsistent with how the club presented itself to the public and a smoke screen used to hide its racially discriminatory policy.

In 1947 the CHBC changed its two admissions policy that had been in effect since 1928. The “season bath-house” category, which gave full use of the club’s facilities between April and October, was renamed “season members,” and the daily admissions option, which enabled anyone to use the facilities for one day, was rescinded. In its place, the club created daily tickets only for “guests of season members.” 29
Another step toward privatization occurred in 1951 when the CHBC ostensibly became an independent corporation. Club owners changed the name of the club from the Castle Hill Bathing Park to the Castle Hill Beach Club, Inc., and separated from the Castle Hill Estate, Inc, which had managed the facility since 1928.30 The CHBC's incorporated, not-for-profit tax-exempt status, club lawyers contented, allowed them to reject membership applications at their discretion.

Spitz offered several pieces of evidence to prove that the CHBC's private status was inconsistent with its advertising procedures and advertising practices. Four areas of evidence proved Spitz's case. First, hundreds of children who attended Castle Hill Day Camp, which operated at the CHBC and shared the club's facilities, were not required to be season members or even guests of members. The children in the camp were members of the general public and the camp operated through the CHBC as a for-profit business venture, which excluded it from being considered a private, non-profit members' only club. Second, in 1950, when the Castle Hill Estate, Inc. managed the club as a public accommodation, the Bronx Classified Telephone Directory listed "Castle Hill Bating Park" under the heading, "Bathing Beaches – Public." The following year, when the Castle Hill Beach Club, Inc. operated the club, "Castle Hill Beach Club, Inc." appeared in the same telephone directory under the same heading, "Bathing Beaches – Public." That was also true in 1952 and 1953. On top of that, in 1951, 1952, and 1953, the CHBC did not appear in the directory under the listing "Clubs," which included the name of roughly 100 private and public clubs. Third, from 1928-1950, when Castle Hill Estate managed the club, and from 1951-1953, as the Castle Hill Beach Club, Inc., the managers applied for and obtained a Public Bathing Establishment License from the License Department of the City of New York. The club's liquor license was also a standard New York State commercial beer license, which allowed the licensee to sell beer to members of the public. The New York State Liquor Authority also issued a special "club license," which allowed the licensee to restrict alcohol sales to club members and their guests, but the CHBC never applied for or received that permit. Last, the CHBC never sought recognition from the IRS as a club organized and operated for pleasure, recreation and other non-profitable purposes, which would have exempted it from paying Federal income taxes.31

Spitz had an alternative theory as to why the CHBC altered its admissions categories in 1947 and formed as an independent corporation
Afro-Americans in New York Life and History

in 1951. During those years, black people were moving to the area around the CHBC, a neighborhood called Classon Point, in larger numbers. According to Spitz, some sought admission to the club and were turned away because of the color of their skin. According to Spitz, CHBC patrons who wanted to keep out, "a lot of undesirable people" and "enjoy this place to themselves," really sought to prevent black newcomers from disrupting the racial homogeneity of their social club.

To prove this, Spitz first introduced into evidence a 1953 map of the Bronx, which highlighted the location of the CHBC and several public housing developments and temporary veterans' housing complexes in the club's vicinity. In 1941, Classon Point Gardens opened. It was the area's first public housing development and was located a little over one mile west from the CHBC. Its forty-six 2-story buildings provided housing for roughly 1,600 people. The Bronx River Houses, nine 14-story buildings with 1,245 apartments completed in 1951, were a 15-20 minute bus ride away from the CHBC. From 1946-1952, the area's open grasslands became filled with temporary housing for veterans. These prefabricated buildings roofed with sheets of corrugated metal resembled military bunkers more than two-family homes. But thousands of GIs and their families lived in these "Quonset huts" after WWII. The New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) administered two Quonset hut developments just outside the CHBC's facilities: Castle Hill Houses (which in 1960 became a complex of fourteen 12 and 20-story buildings) and Bruckner Houses. In total, Classon Point had 1,900 two-family units of temporary veterans' housing. The area also was scheduled in the 1950s to receive dozens of new public housing apartment buildings.

During the late 1940s and early 1950s, CHBC patrons lounging poolside in sunbathing chairs probably surveyed the work of construction crews as over forty new 7-story public housing buildings jutted into the club's surrounding horizon. By 1954, Soundview Houses, just south of Classon Point Gardens, opened up its thirteen 7-story buildings and eventually housed just over 4,800 people. The following year, Bronxdale Houses, which was situated between Bronx River Houses and the site that would become Castle Hill Houses, opened its twenty-eight 7-story buildings and accommodated over 5,600 new residents. Unlike most of the private housing in Classon Point, these public housing developments and the temporary veterans' housing brought, in Spitz's words, "an integrated tenancy of Negroes and whites in the immediate area of the CHBC." While that fact alone does not prove that the CHBC managers and
members wanted to prevent blacks from using the facilities, Spitz argued that the timing of the club’s decisions to create new admissions categories and to become incorporated undoubtedly was connected to the CHBC’s new influx of black neighbors.

For the most part, black families living in these integrated housing developments were merely one of many groups looking to start their lives anew in postwar New York City. Taur Orange belonged to a black family that fit this mold. She grew up in the Bronxdale Houses, but her family had lived in Classon Point since the war ended. She remembered hearing stories about how her parents had lived in the Quonset Huts after her father was discharged from the Army. Her two older brothers were actually born while the family lived in the temporary housing. Eventually, hers was one of the first black families to move into the area’s newly built public housing. In the 1950s, Orange remembered that her neighbors in the Classon Point public housing projects were Italian, Jewish, African American, Puerto Rican, Filipino, and Indian. She reminisced how, “on a typical summer day or summer night, you’d see all the mothers lined up at evening watching their kids play, and it looked like something from the UN.”

While Taur Orange remembered this integrated living experience as “one of the most enriched memories and recollections I have of growing up in Bronxdale,” some whites at the CHBC probably feared interracial residential communities and interracial socialization at the club. Perhaps some CHBC patrons saw themselves as superior to African Americans, and viewed their club as a zone of white privilege. Allowing blacks to share the space would have degraded the inflated social status that came with belonging to an all-white club. Perhaps some whites at the club saw blacks as inferior and could not imagine eating with blacks in the club’s restaurant or sharing showers and toilets with blacks in the club’s locker room. Or, they may have felt a strong fear that swimming or dancing with blacks would lead to interracial dating and marriage. Unfortunately, there is no way to tell what CHBC members thought or felt about their new black neighbors and the possibility that they might share “ownership” of their club with “Negroes.” One reaction is certain, however: white club patrons found ways to keep blacks from using the facilities without hanging “Whites Only” signs or resorting to violence. There are no records of if, or when, or how many African Americans tried to access the club, but any who did probably received treatment similar to what Anita Brown experienced.
According to Spitz, some African Americans did not take this snub lightly. In 1946 or 1947, Spitz argued that, “Negroes picketed the Castle Hill Bathing Park.” He asked Beiersdorfer if he remembered that incident, but before the CHBC manager answered, Hopkins objected to the line of questioning. This enabled Spitz to put on record SCAD’s suspicion that the CHBC’s motivation for discrimination against blacks began with “the construction of the veterans emergency temporary housing … which provided housing for returning Negro veterans. … Immediately thereafter the basis for admissions was changed by the park. Then in 1951, when the Bronx River Houses opened, the very next month, this operation changed from a stock corporation to an alleged private membership corporation.” Spitz wanted the Commissioners to infer a motive for racial bias from the Club’s sudden policy changes. He also wanted Beiersdorfer to admit that, “a Negro picket line thrown around the Castle Hill Bathing Park,” in 1946 or 1947 prompted the sudden change in admission categories. The hearing officers eventually squashed this line of questioning. A picket line alone did not prove discriminatory intent, so Beiersdorfer never answered whether or not he remembered such a demonstration, or if the club’s policy changes coincided with the appearance of racially integrated Quonset huts and public housing developments. At most, Beiersdorfer admitted that he knew Castle Hill Houses and Bruckner Houses were in the immediate vicinity of the CHBC and that Bronx River Houses was a public housing complex located a fifteen-twenty minute bus ride away from the CHBC.

Beiersdorfer was silent on the club’s history with its new black neighbors, but he spoke at length about his first encounter with Anita Brown. When Anita Brown applied for membership, according to Beiersdorfer, she behaved in a questionable way, which caused him to recommend that the screening committee reject her application. Anita Brown’s suspicious behavior, not her blackness, Beiersdorfer argued, was the reason the club rejected her membership. But, despite his attempts at color blindness, the CHBC manger’s testimony revealed how Brown’s blackness had indeed prejudiced his perception of her behavior, and influenced the club’s decision to reject her membership application.

Standing in front of the CHBC offices on the afternoon of March 31, Beiersdorfer observed Anita Brown and Ethyl Lubarsky alight from the same bus. “When I saw these two ladies get off the bus,” Beiersdorfer testified, “one of them went (into the club) … and the other
did not,” which greatly puzzled him.\textsuperscript{38} Then, according to Beiersdorfer, who closely spied the scene in the reception area from his inner office, the two women did not speak to each other while they waited for assistance. When a membership secretary called Anita Brown to the counter, Beiersdorfer said Ethyl Lubarsky “sort of hung back there,” as Brown completed an application for a seasonal locker. The secretary asked Brown if she was a former member; when Brown responded she was not, the secretary explained the CHBC’s policy of holding bath houses for former members. “If we have a vacancy for you later on,” she told Brown, “we will get in touch with you.” Beiersdorfer observed that Brown then exited the office, “still not saying anything to Mrs. Lubarsky.” When the staff person waited on Lubarsky and asked if she was former member, Lubarsky apparently said that she was, “about seven or eight years ago.” The clerk approved her application, accepted her $5 deposit and assigned her a locker number in the women’s bathhouse.\textsuperscript{39}

Subsequent testimony revealed that the CHBC membership office arbitrarily enforced this preferential screening process. At the start of each new season, the membership office indeed gave preference to past members, but the policy was not to delay admission of a “new” member. The CHBC managers always accepted new members, “on their face value,” granted them a trial period in which to prove they were not thieves or rowdy characters, and, if they behaved properly, then granted the probationary member full privileges for the entire season.\textsuperscript{40}

Except, of course, if a new applicant’s face was black. As soon as Brown and Lubarsky left the CHBC office, the clerk alerted Beiersdorfer that there was a problem with those applicants. “This seems very strange,” she told Beiersdorfer, because “these two ladies came into the office and ... pretended not to know each other,” even though, according to their applications, they both lived in the same building. Beiersdorfer watched closely from the office window as Brown and Lubarsky waited for the bus. “They were standing about ten or fifteen feet apart and certainly were not talking to each other,” he noted. He could not understand why they “still pretended not to know each other... when they both came from the same address.”\textsuperscript{41} Beiersdorfer convinced himself, and testified at the SCAD hearing, that this suspicious behavior made Anita Brown unsuitable for CHBC membership.

Beiersdorfer was not merely concerned with two women who ignored one another. Judging by what he did next, he probably also

60
feared that the club’s undercover Jim Crow policy had just been exposed. Many civil rights activists often used black and white decoys to uncover hidden discriminatory policies in housing, employment and public accommodations. Beiersdorfer probably suspected Brown and Lubarsky had orchestrated a similar type of investigation. Wanting confirmation that the women had masked their friendship as part of a sting operation, Beiersdorfer sent Charles Schrempf, the CHBC’s treasurer since 1951 (and for twenty years before that, its bar and cafeteria manager) to “go on the bus with (Brown and Lubarsky) and see where they were going.” Schrempf tailed the women, observed that they sat apart and did not speak for roughly three-quarters of a mile, but eventually one sat next to the other, and “they talked and laughed” until both exited the bus a few miles away from the CHBC.

The hearing commissioners then wanted to know why the CHBC managers eventually returned Lubarsky’s deposit and rejected her application. “We thought there was some kind of a conspiracy afoot” between the two women, Beiersdorfer explained. That supposed conspiracy was enough to reject Lubarsky, even after the clerk issued her a temporary pass. Nicholas Pinto, one of the three commissioners assigned to judge the hearing, asked Beiersdorfer what kind of conspiracy he believed would “mitigate against (Brown) becoming a decent, reputable member of your club?” Brown’s rejection, Beiersdorfer stated for a second time during the hearing, was based on her race, not an imagined conspiracy. “Mrs. Brown was apparently a Negro,” Beiersdorfer answered Pinto, “and we had never had any former members there as Negroes.”

With an open admission that the club discriminated against Brown because of her race, one hearing commissioner, Elmer Carter asked Beiersdorfer if two whites who lived in the same apartment building arrived together at the CHBC membership office, ignored each other, and signed admissions applications, “Would you have considered it necessary to place surveillance over one of them?” Beiersdorfer’s answer mixed confidence with confusion: At first he stated bluntly that if Carter’s hypothetical whites “had acted as nervous” as Brown and Lubarsky, the CHBC would have been equally inclined to reject them. But then he stammered about how “it was apparent that there was something wrong (with Brown and Lubarsky), the exact minute detail of it upon which we could not put our finger, but there was something apparent that there was something wrong.” Carter asked sardonically if
Beiersdorfer thought Brown and Lubarsky “were plotting to blow up the club,” to which Beiersdorfer responded, “No, we didn’t.” Beiersdorfer’s colorblind argument was shattered. On direct questioning from Commissioner Pinto as to whether or not “the fact of her color also played a dominant part in your deliberation,” Beiersdorfer could not hide his, or the club’s, racial prejudice: Brown’s color, he testified a third time, “certainly did” influence the club’s decision to reject her application.46

“COMMUNISM IS MORE THAN A POLITICAL AFFILIATION:” COLD WAR ANTI-COMMUNISM AS DEFENSE AGAINST RACIAL INTEGRATION

In light of Beiersdorfer’s open admission that the club management discriminated against Brown because of her race and Spitz’s compelling evidence that the CHBC was not a private club, CHBC attorney, Walter Hopkins, offered an alternative justification for Brown’s rejection. Hopkins tried to prove that Anita Brown was a Communist, or at the very least a member of the American Labor Party (ALP) a political organization that attempted to mobilize trade unions to support progressive, Left-leaning candidates. Either way, according to Hopkins, her suspicious political affiliation was proof that the CHBC managers were “victims of a conspiracy.” In his opening statement, Hopkins argued that Brown’s case was “a conspiracy amongst people with ulterior motives whose credibility… cannot be taken under any assent by people of ordinary intelligence.” According to Hopkins, Anita Brown and Ethyl Lubarsky were members of a Leftist syndicate that was dedicated to, “the destruction of… private beach clubs and other things under our capitalist system.” The women had no intention of becoming members of the club, Hopkins concluded. They merely went to the membership office “with a plot in mind and with a definite course of action to pursue.” To hear Hopkins tell it, Brown and Lubarsky had a hidden desire to foment revolution.47

In order to prove a conspiracy, Hopkins pried into Anita Brown’s personal life and questioned her political beliefs. At the hearing, Hopkins asked Brown if she and Ethyl Lubarsky were friends. Brown confirmed they were “close friends;” they were next-door neighbors, who visited each other and regularly played cards. Hopkins then attempted to confirm the women’s political affiliation. He asked Brown if Lubarsky belonged “to any organization of which you are a member,” and Brown responded quickly that she was not a member of any organizations.
Puzzled, Hopkins inquired if Brown was a member of the ALP or if she had registered as a member of the ALP in 1942. Brown denied these allegations and merely said that she was registered as a Democrat and that she had always voted the Democratic ticket. Abandoning this inquiry, Hopkins then asked why Brown and Lubarsky did not speak to one another when they were both at the CHBC membership office. Was she nervous when standing in line at the office, Hopkins asked? “Yes,” Brown affirmed. “You were nervous because you were trying to conceal the fact that you and Mrs. Lubarsky were close friends weren’t you,” Hopkins shot back at Brown. “No,” Brown replied. The remainder of the cross-examination reads like a transcript from a hearing before Senator Joseph McCarthy’s Subcommittee on Investigations, which became notorious in the mid-1950s for attempting to sniff out Communists in all corners of American life:

**Hopkins:** I suggest you planned to go up there (to the CHBC) and to not let those people know you (and Lubarsky) knew each other.

**Brown:** No.

**Hopkins:** Are you sure of that?

**Brown:** I am positive.

**Hopkins:** Are you a member of the Communist Party right now?

**Brown:** No.

**Hopkins:** Have you ever been a member of the Communist Party?

**Brown:** No.

**Hopkins:** Mrs. Brown, do your political beliefs and principles make things like the Castle Hill Beach Club or any other private club perfectly obnoxious?

**Brown:** How do you mean?

**Hopkins:** You don’t like private clubs.

**Brown:** Yes I do.

**Hopkins:** Haven’t you dedicated yourself publicly and privately to the abolition of private clubs?

**Brown:** No I have not.

Then, after inquiring about Brown’s age, Hopkins concludes his cross-examination by asking, “In 1943, didn’t you sign a petition petitioning that the Communist Party be restored to the ballot in New York State?” Brown replied that she did not, but Hopkins insisted, “If the name Anita Brown appears on such a petition is that not your signature?” For a sixth time, Brown denied being a Communist or supporting the abolition of private enterprises, but Hopkins was not satisfied. “You are positive?” he asked. To which Brown stated, a seventh time, “That is right. I am positive bout that.”

63
Spitz objected to the entire line of questioning and requested that it be stricken from the official record of the hearing. "The issue," Spitz reminded the hearing commissioners, "is whether the complainant was discriminated against because of her color," a direct violation of state law, not whether or not she was a member of a particular political organization.49 Hopkins nonetheless insisted that "membership in a Party which is dedicated to the overthrow of the capitalist form of government of the United States would affect the credibility of a witness." He also insisted that, "political beliefs ... dedicated to the elimination of private rights and private institutions, such as a private beach club are, in my honest opinion, definitely good evidence ... affecting the credibility of the witness." If Hopkins was going to prove his argument that Brown and Lubarsky were engaged in a conspiracy, he demanded that their political affiliations and beliefs be entered into the record as evidence.50 When cross-examining Henry Craft, Hopkins asks the SCAD investigator if during his interview with Anita Brown he made "any attempt to find out if she was in any way connected with any subversive organization," of if Brown was part of "any unified or concerted plan by one, two or four people to bring this complaint some way before this commission." Craft responded that he did "not in this instance," nor "in the dozens of other instances where I have taken complaints," ever inquire about conspiracies or a complainant's political beliefs.51

SCAD may not have been concerned with Communists fomenting conspiracies to racially integrate beach clubs, or, for that matter, bring down private enterprises, but some members of the CHBC were wary that Communists could poison the social atmosphere of their beloved beach club. Morris Jembrock's testimony listed several infractions that resulted in a patron's expulsion from the club. In addition to stealing, vandalism and fighting, a man could be expelled for being a "peeping tom." But even in that case Jembrock noted that such a person could remain a member of the club for the duration of the season, and at the season's close, the membership committee would "make a note of it and throw them out next year."52 Jembrock also testified that a person could be expelled for "preaching or advertising or talking different Communist ideas." Commissioners Carter, perhaps unsure if he heard Jembrock correctly, incredulously stated, "You have rejected people because you heard them advocating Communism?" to which Jembrock replied, "Yes," that club managers "didn't want the children to be involved in it."53
The anti-Communist sentiment was so powerful that by the time Ethyl Lubarsky took the stand almost six weeks into the hearing, Hopkins had given up hope of proving the CHBC was a bona fide private members’ only club. Now his strategy was to prove that Anita Brown was, “the type of person that is not acceptable to the patrons of the Castle Hill Beach Club” whether the Commission, “considered (CHBC) to be a (private) club or a place of public accommodation.” His weapon against Brown was the possibility that she was a Communist or consorted with known Communists.\(^{54}\) If Hopkins could prove Lubarsky was a Communist then the club’s rejection of Brown would have had nothing to do with her race, and therefore the club would be free from any sanctions connected with the state anti-discrimination law. Perhaps sensing his clients were going to lose the decision, Hopkins may have also secretly hoped that at least one of the three hearing commissioners was an ardent anti-Communist, which, if the decision went against the club, would be enough to win the CHBC grounds for a successful appeal.

From the moment she took the stand, Lubarsky was noticeably defiant. She refused to answer questions about her employment history because she knew that the firm where she first worked “did not employ Negroes,” and Lubarsky feared that, “if (the) Castle Hill (Beach Club) were to contact this firm and discuss me with them, that they will probably not give me a reference.” Lubarsky knew that her testimony in the hearing would uncover her comfort with crossing the color line, a practice that went against her first employer’s policy. “I don’t want my future earning capacity imperiled,” she concluded.\(^{55}\) Her position irked both Hopkins and Commissioner Pinto. Hopkins was determined “that the mystery of Mrs. Lubarsky should be dispelled once and for all time.” He and Lubarsky went back and forth and argued whether or not she should answer his questions. Lubarsky, sensing that Hopkins was on a witch hunt, stated, “I will be glad to answer any questions that are pertinent” to the case, however she felt “that an effort is being made here to pry into my personal affairs, which are certainly not relevant to the question at hand... and I cannot permit it.”\(^{56}\) There were certain questions about her life that she refused to answer, which eventually prompted Commissioner Pinto to inquire, “Why do you spar with us all afternoon?”\(^{57}\)

Between the CHBC’s open admission of racial discrimination and Ethyl Lubarsky’s defiance on the witness stand, Hopkins had just about reached a breaking point. When Spitz objected to his inquire regarding
Lubarsky's membership in the American Labor Party, Hopkins let loose a tirade that shifted completely the tenor and focus of the hearing and put Communism, rather than racial discrimination, on trial. "There is no doubt," he began, "that there are certain organizations who have taken great strides to exploit the colored race in Bronx county. . . . There are certain organizations . . . which are dedicated to ending for all time all private membership clubs," and "ending anything capitalistic." Hopkins demanded that he "not be curbed" in his cross-examination of Lubarsky. He insisted that Lubarsky's "credibility, her intentions, whether she belongs to such an organization should be material not only to this Commission but to all the people of the State of New York." 58

The Commissioners, however, thought differently. They sustained each of Spitz's objections. Lubarsky did not have to answer Hopkins' questions about her past or present affiliation with the Communist Party or the Communist Political Association in Bronx County. She did not have to answer whether or not she signed a Communist Party nominating petition, which seemed to throw Hopkins into frenzy. "This witness," he exclaimed, "has been a member of subversive organizations," and he intended to prove that "these subversive organizations have exploited the Negro race." Hopkins then indicted the entire hearing, and even implied that SCAD indirectly, was serving "a Communist plot" orchestrated by Lubarsky and others. Hopkins conceded that his "is a difficult job," but "whether somebody else is utilizing this commission will go right to the meat as to whether or not there was any discrimination." 59

The Chairman of the hearing, Ward Arbury, allowed Hopkins to try and prove that a plot of some sort shaped Brown's complaint, but he questioned Hopkins's need to uncover a widespread Communist conspiracy. "Whether it is a Communist plot or a Methodist plot or Protestant," Arbury could not see how framing this as a "plot of any particular group" made Hopkins's case stronger. Hopkins's anti-Communist diatribe continued with proclamations that "the Communist Party has been dedicated to the overthrow of the government of the United States," and "the whole capitalist system." Communists naturally abhorred "private membership clubs." 60 Lubarsky, Brown and unspecified "others," Hopkins concluded, were determined to fabricate a racial discrimination case against a remote beach club in the Bronx in order foment anti-capitalist revolution. Arbury did not share Hopkins's logic. "We can't draw conclusion that the Communist Party is for or against clubs or for or against beaches," Arbury stated before he ruled
that any questions regarding political affiliation or the religious beliefs of a witness was immaterial. Hopkins could not resist having the last word on the matter: "Communism," he huffed, "is more than a political affiliation."\textsuperscript{61}

**A VICTORY IN THE NORTHERN CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT**

Ultimately, the hearing commissioners disagreed with Hopkins. Two commissioners, Ward Arbury and Elmer Carter, ruled in favor of Anita Brown. Arbury wrote that Hopkins "failed to prove" the existence of a conspiracy designed to "entrap the respondent." He also dismissed the CHBC's claim that it was a private beach club. The CHBC was indeed a "place of public accommodation," and it was bound to follow the state's anti-discrimination law, which it violated when the club rejected Brown's application "because of her color." Elmer Carter concurred with Arbury's ruling. In his decision, he upbraided the CHBC for its blatant discrimination policy and poor attempts to cover up such practices. "There was no other reason which could account for (Brown's) rejection," he wrote "since she was neither a peeping Tom, morally depraved nor guilty of unsocial acts," and these were the only legitimate reasons the club gave for disapproving an application or terminating membership privileges. "What other explanation did (the) respondent offer for the complainant's rejection?" Carter rhetorically asked. He reiterated the club's defense - "the astounding fact that (Brown and Lubarsky) did not act in a friendly manner at the (CHBC) and in the street immediately following their departure" - to emphasize its absurdity. Carter also denounced Hopkins's argument that Brown "was part of a communistic plot to destroy private clubs." He saw through the club's deception and concluded that, "the orbit of speculation which characterized," the CHBC's defense, "points to the inescapable conclusion that it was an act of discrimination based on race and color."\textsuperscript{62}

Carter, however, went beyond the details of Brown's case and rebuked the insidiousness of the CHBC' privatization scheme, the sole purpose of which was to perpetuate racial discrimination. "The persistence of discrimination has been a disturbing social phenomenon," in New York State, he wrote, despite citizens' efforts to "banish," "eliminate and prevent" it through law. The CHBC's privatization plans were nothing more than "methods devised to indulge in discriminatory practices," that masked discriminatory intent. Instead of opening its
doors to black members, the CHBC desired "to give the legal aura of privacy to an operation which is in reality distinctly public."\(^63\) Such schemes, which enabled people to discriminate quietly and covertly against blacks, were the hallmarks of racism in the postwar Jim Crow North. Such racial segregation oftentimes may have been a private affair, but the effects were powerful and public. In the case of the CHBC, two SCAD commissioners found that black citizens were barred from a public place that brought enjoyment and a cohesive sense of community to thousands of Bronxites. Anita Brown’s experience indicates that in the North, discriminatory practices could be just as malicious, and the resultant segregation, just as widespread as what occurred in the Jim Crow South.

One SCAD hearing commissioner, Nicholas Pinto, disagreed with the majority's ruling. His dissenting opinion found that the CHBC was indeed a private club and therefore not regulated by the state law against discrimination. Perhaps sensing that the other two commissioners had ruled based on their conscious and not objective reason, Pinto’s dissent concluded that, "sympathy and suspicion cannot be substituted for testimony and proof." In his reading of the laws that protected private, membership-based clubs, the CHBC was free to deny entrance to anyone for any reason, including skin color.\(^64\) Pinto’s dissent provided the CHBC firm grounds on which to appeal SCAD’s decision, which it did. The State Supreme Court heard the CHBC’s appeal and ruled against it. The court ordered the CHBC to comply with SCAD’s original ruling to desegregate the facilities, however, several years later the club remained racially segregated.

"WHY SHOULD WE BE RESTRICTED FROM THERE BECAUSE OF OUR COLOR?" – THE STRUGGLE TO INTEGRATE THE CHBC CONTINUES, 1960-1973

In July 1961, Carl Strachan, an African American who lived in Classon Point, reported the CHBC's continued discriminatory practices to New York Governor Nelson Rockefeller. "Here in your own state," Strachan told Rockefeller, "race discrimination exist(s) at my next door neighbor, the Castle Hill Beach Club." He reported that "a gentlemen’s mutual agreement ... among the Castle Hill Beach Club members and the owners” excluded African Americans and Puerto Ricans from admittance to the pool and recreational facilities." Nearly a decade after Brown’s victory, the CHBC was well known throughout the Bronx as a
“private sanctuary,” one that strictly maintained a Jim Crow color line against people who were not white.63

Unfortunately, the historical record does not indicate whether or not Anita Brown actually became a member of the CHBC. Evidence hints that she and Lubarsky had acted as discrimination “testers” in an effort to uncover an unspoken Jim Crow facility in the Southeast Bronx. Such tests were not, in and of themselves, illegal. They do, however, reveal a potential tactical weakness that northern racial integration groups, which employed “sandwich testers,” may have failed to address: in the event of a victory, as in Anita Brown’s case, if a critical mass of black people was not prepared to cross the color line, the successful desegregation effort would have been in vain. Since it seems that Brown and other blacks were not prepared to desegregate the club, the CHBC continued its racial segregation practices. Thus, by the early 1960s, there still were no black members at the CHBC, and no chance for local blacks or Puerto Ricans to enjoy the facilities.

The problem also may have been that the CHBC revised its admissions policy in such a way that it effectively barred blacks while at the same time it gave off the impression of being open to the general public. SCAD investigated and ruled on discrimination cases, but when it uncovered a guilty individual or organization, SCAD lacked the personnel and resources to ensure full compliance with its rulings. Apparently, but the 1960s, the CHBC altered its membership policies yet again so that newcomers to the club needed a current member to sponsor their season admission. Without an existing member willing to cross the color line, blacks and Puerto Ricans stood little chance of accessing the club.

Wherever the fault, either with civil rights activists’ poor planning, the CHBC’s duplicitous noncompliance with the SCAD ruling, or SCAD’s ineffective enforcement powers, Carl Strachan and another African American resident of Classon Point, James Foster, started their case against the CHBC in 1961 at the same place Anita Brown began in 1953. James Foster’s was the first black family to own a home adjacent to the CHBC. His wife, Gertrude Foster, recalled that when the family first moved to the neighborhood in 1960, her husband took one look at the CHBC and said, “That’s the first place I’m going to integrate.” The recreation facilities were very attractive to a young couple with four small children. “Why should we be restricted from there because of our
color," James Foster retorted when his wife suggested they not bother with a club that clearly did not welcome African Americans.66

Strachan’s letter to Rockefeller expressed a similar sense of civic entitlement. "Negroes and Puerto Ricans happen to be neighbors to this beach club and they too share in the taxes, property assessments and improvements of the area," he fumed. Why then should, "we be excluded from admittance to these recreational facilities?" The problem went beyond a question of civic equality and a desire for equal access to tax supported public facilities. Blacks and Puerto Ricans had become a significant part of the Classon Point population by the 1960s. Of all the Bronx neighborhoods that were over 90% white, Classon Point had the highest number African Americans (8.2% in 1957).67 According to Strachan, black residents’ exclusion from the club gave them no avenue through which to address their grievances, which went included the ways some of the club members used common space throughout the neighborhood. He wrote,

Every Saturday, Sunday, Holiday and even weekdays these beach club members and owners blockade our driveways and crosswalks with their cars. We make telephone calls to our precinct for patrol cars to ticket these violators (but) our requests are ignored... These car blockades subject us to injustices by non-access to our garages and our children’s lives (are) endangered at the blockaded crosswalks.68

Two years later, Strachan and Foster’s complaint had made its way through the SCAD bureaucracy. This time, according to James Foster’s wife, Gertrude, her husband’s fight against the CHBC was not wasted. She remembered that throughout the mid-1960s and 1970s she took her young sons to the pool for swimming lessons and sent them to the CHBC Day Camp. Gertrude and James Foster also took advantage of the club’s facilities in the summertime. Some white women moved to another section of the locker room when Gertrude Foster entered to change into her swimming wear, or shower after she used the pool; and the club security guard consistently demanded to see the Foster boys’ club identification, even though he routinely admitted other white teenagers without inspecting their credentials. But Foster did not let those uncomfortable moments deter her from enjoying her neighborhood beach club, and she used the discriminatory experiences to teach her sons that they should always demand their full citizenship rights.69
The Fosters’ determination for equal access to the CHBC was part of a struggle that had begun at least ten years earlier when Anita Brown filed her complaint with SCAD against the beach club. If Spitz’s guess is true, African Americans fight to integrate the CHBC may have even started in the late-1940s. In either case, ten years of effort to integrate the CHBC had slowly chipped away at a stubbornly resistant outpost of segregation in the Jim Crow North. Finally, sometime in the mid-1960s, after over thirty-five years of operating as a racially segregated public club, black Bronxites had forced the Castle Hill Beach Club to overcome its entrenched practices of racial discrimination. As evidenced in the previous photograph, by 1973, a new generation of white children would invariably spend their summers at the CHBC with black playmates and, perhaps, grow up seeing them as equals rather than strangers.
Endnotes

1 Brian Purnell is Assistant Professor of African & African American Studies, Fordham University and Co-Research Director of the Bronx African American History Project. Funding for this article’s research was made possible through a grant from the New York State Archives Partnership Trust’s Larry Hackman Research Residency Program.


3 Part of that perception is due to the absence of high levels of violence that rocked other American cities in the opening decades of the twentieth century. New York’s pre-WWII history is also colored with the intellectual traditions of the Harlem Renaissance, West Village bohemianism, Leftist and labor radicalism, all of which fashioned interracial social relations that issued powerful indictments against America’s Jim Crow color line. See Mark Naison, Communists in Harlem During the Depression (University of Illinois Press, 1983); David Levering Lewis, When Harlem was in Vogue (Knopf, 1981)

York City’s Black Population at the Turn of the Twentieth Century,” Journal of Urban History (31:6), 799-819


Civil Rights Movement in New York City,” *Afro-Americans in New York Life and History* (July 2007).


13 CP-3236-53 Transcript, December 14, 1953, pp 133-135

14 Op. Cit. p. 135

15 Ibid.

16 Op. Cit. p. 150

17 Ibid., pp 225-226.

18 Bronx African American History Project (BAAHP) interviews with Daphne Moss (April 19, 2005); Leroi Archible (January 26, 2004); Beatrice Bergland & Harriet Waites (October 25, 2004), Bronx County Historical Society, BAAHP oral history transcripts. Hereafter cited as BAAHP with interviewee name (date of interview)

19 Two such testimonies are Rosemary Brown’s and Dana Driskell’s: When asked about the racial composition of her neighbors in her new apartment building, located on Prospect Avenue and 168th Street, Brown remembered that in 1940, “when we moved in” the building and the block were racially mixed,
“but within a year it was not.” By the time she finished JHS 40 in the early 1940s, she remembered that “there were no white families” on her block. Driskell grew up about eight blocks from where Rosemary Brown’s family had moved twenty years earlier. By the late 1950s, Morrisania showed no signs of being a racially mixed neighborhood. “It was kind of the central black neighborhood in the Bronx,” Driskell recalled. “There were a lot of Latino, predominantly Puerto Rican, neighbors, but not that many whites.” BAAHP with Rosemary Brown (April, 21, 2005); BAAHP with Dana Driskell (no date)


21 For examples of such narratives see, BAAHP with Elias Karmon (no date); BAAHP with Cyril Byron (October 9, 2006); BAAHP with Vincent Harding with Clara Lee Irobunda and Carmen Givan (March 28, 2005)


24 CP-3236-53 Transcript, December 17, 1953, pp 407-409

25 CP-3236-53 Transcript, December 21, 1953, 599-610

26 Op. Cit., p. 633, 646

75
27 CP-3236-53 Transcript, December 17, 1953, p 411


29 “Decision, Findings and Conclusion,” Case CP-3236-53, p. 14

30 Op. Cit. p. 18


32 For information on Quonset huts in the Bronx, see Bronx County Historical Society, Vertical File, “Quonset Huts;” and Bill Twomey, “Castle Hill’s Post-WWII Housing, Bronx Times Reporter (November 20, 1997), p. 40. Information on public housing in the Bronx, such as the development’s size and year it opened, can be accessed at the following web site: http://gis.nyc.gov/nych/im/NychaStart.do? For population statistics on Classon Point, see The Neighborhood Council of Greater New York Bureau of Community Statistical Services Research Department, Bronx Communities: Population Characteristics and Neighborhood Social Resources (1959), Op. Cit.


34 BAAHP with Taur Orange (November 30, 2005)

35 Ibid.

36 CP-3236-53 Transcript, December 17, 1953, pp 328-329


38 Beiersdorfer’s description of seeing Brown and Lubarsky the day they applied for CHBC season passes is in CP-3236-53 Transcript, December 17, 1953, pp 434-443

39 Ibid.

40 “Decision, Findings and Conclusion,” Case CP-3236-53, pp. 14-158

41 CP-3236-53 Transcript, December 17, 1953, pp 434-443

42 Jessie Davidson, a member of the Bronx branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) in the 1950s and 60s,
remembered organizing “sandwich tests” to win apartments on the notoriously segregated Grand Concourse for black tenants. See, BAAHP with Jessie Davidson (no date).

43 CP-3236-53 Transcript, December 17, 1953, pp 440


47 CP-3236-53 Transcript, December 14, 1953, pp 11-12

48 Op. Cit., pp 100-121

49 Op. Cit. p. 128


52 CP-3236-53 Transcript, December 21, 1953, p. 607


54 CP-3236-53 Transcript, February 1, 1954, pp. 805-806

55 Op. Cit. p. 802


57 Op. Cit., p. 814

58 Op. Cit., pp. 841-842

59 Op. Cit., pp. 844


66 See BAAHP with Gertrude Foster (February 13, 2007)


69 See BAAHP with Gertrude Foster (February 13, 2007) and with Dennis Coleman (February 23, 2006).