Chicago Politics and Community Development: A Social Movement Perspective

Doug Gills

Harold Washington's election as Chicago's first black mayor in April 1983 was the product of unprecedented participation in the local electoral process by large segments of Chicago's racially, ethnically, and socio-economically diverse population, segments that had been previously alienated from the political mainstream. This participation was facilitated by the formation of a loosely unified coalition of reform-minded institutional elites (dubbed "insiders" herein) and progressive community activists and political insurgents ("outsiders").

There were certainly some institutionalized insider elements—members of the city council, ward committeemen and women, career city officials—who helped to effect Washington's election and to participate in governance of the city once the election was won. Their support ranged from ardently enthusiastic to plain opportunistic. Some became converts to Washington's program, as though they had always been waiting for such leadership. Others were politically ambitious careerists and political entrepreneurs who claimed to support the reform aims that Washington symbolized. They paid lip service to the reform program to the extent that it provided opportunities for their own self-aggrandizement or protected their political futures.

But what was most striking was the extent of organization and the painstakingly developed programmatic focus of the outsider part of the coalition. In Chicago during 1982–1987, movement politics was as important as insider maneuvering. It had its own logic and rules of organization. One can identify three main groups, loosely organized around three main ideas:

First, Mayor Washington's electoral base was overwhelmingly Black in composition, with the critical support of poor Latinos and poor whites. There was tremendous electoral mobilization of the Black community under united black leadership. Blacks, in the main, had endured decades of political exclusion and public neglect. Even while their numbers had increased significantly, they had received little more than symbolic participation in the economic and political life of the city. The black community organized politically, in both formal and informal ways, with a nearly single-minded purposefulness.

Second, the Harold Washington electoral coalition received the support of reform-minded liberal whites, as well as Jewish and black business elites. For these, and to some extent the other elements of the coalition, there was a consensus that the conventional practice of machine politics had to be rejected. Were Chicago to go forward into the twenty-first century, it had to shed its image of racist politics, corruption, graft, patronage, and unmerited privilege. There was a pervasive assault upon the patronage-based political machine of the regular Democratic party inherited from the era of Mayor Richard J. Daley.

Third, the movement underpinning Harold Washington's campaign and his early administration was marked by aggressive, vocal, and independent action on the part of people associated with neighborhood organizations and community action groups. These community activists had been isolated from meaningful political participation in prior regimes. Now, they pressed their demands for a neighborhood agenda that included greater effective input in decision making about the city's future and a greater share of city funds to be expended in the neighborhoods relative to the central business district, O'Hare, and the Near Loop Lakefront areas.

The other part of the story is that, among movement elements, while the most obvious thing is the mobilization of the black and allied groups—e.g., Latinos, poor whites, blacks—a critical part of movement organization and the dominant substantive program came from the economic development initiatives that had emerged over a period of years from the community-based organizations and networks. The community-based network was critical to the larger outsider social movement and coalition, providing a large part of its organizational basis and the substance of much of its policy direction. As a result, the community-based movement was prominent in Washington administration initiatives after the 1983 election.

The purpose of this chapter is to describe how this rise to prominence of the community-based agenda came about, and how these ideas and interests fared once Washington and his immediate successor, Eugene Sawyer, were in office during 1983–1989. I treat the story as four topics: (1) a brief summary of the economic and political background out of which the larger outsider coalition emerged; (2) the twenty-year development of the community development wing of that coalition and how it contributed to the initial 1982/83 campaign; (3) the experience of that group's program in the
Black Social Base and Political Solidarity

The election crisis had severe consequences for the population of Chicago and the black community. The consequences were increased crime, drug and violence, and in some cases, the overthrow of public order. The election crisis also contributed to the rise of black nationalism and the development of new political movements that sought to address the needs of the black community. These movements included the Black Panther Party, which was formed in response to the election crisis. The Black Panther Party sought to create a black power movement and to establish black control over the city's political and social institutions. The election crisis also contributed to the rise of anti-war and anti-establishment movements, which sought to challenge the authority of the government and to promote social and political change.

Economic Crisis

The economic crisis in Chicago was a result of the election crisis and the rise of black nationalism. The election crisis had a profound impact on the economy of Chicago, as businesses and institutions were forced to lay off workers and close down. The election crisis also contributed to the rise of crime and violence, which had a negative impact on the economy. The economic crisis was further exacerbated by the rise of black nationalism, as black leaders sought to create a black power movement and to establish black control over the city's political and social institutions. The economic crisis in Chicago was a result of the election crisis and the rise of black nationalism.

Economic and Political Background

Chicago has a long history of political and economic instability. The city has been the site of many political and economic crises, including the election crisis in 1976. The election crisis was a result of the rise of black nationalism and the development of new political movements that sought to address the needs of the black community. The election crisis was further exacerbated by the rise of crime and violence, which had a negative impact on the economy. The economic crisis in Chicago was a result of the election crisis and the rise of black nationalism.
In contrast, a smaller percentage of the white middle-class and poor neighborhoods have public assistance that becomes a focus point for support. The city's public assistance programs, such as the City of Chicago's Public Assistance Program, provide aid to those in need but are not exclusively targeted towards these neighborhoods. The city's public assistance programs are designed to help all residents, regardless of race or socioeconomic status. While these programs may be more accessible and utilized in the white middle-class neighborhoods, they are not exclusive to these areas.

However, the city's public assistance programs may face challenges in serving all residents equally. There may be disparities in access to these programs based on race and socioeconomic status, which can lead to unequal outcomes. Furthermore, the city's public assistance programs may not be as visible or accessible to those who are not familiar with them. It is important for the city to continue to strive for equitable access to public assistance programs and to address any barriers that may exist.

In conclusion, it is clear that the city's public assistance programs are crucial in helping residents who are in need. However, it is important to continue to work towards ensuring that these programs are accessible and equitably distributed to all residents, regardless of race or socioeconomic status. The city's public assistance programs should be a focus point for all residents, not just those in the white middle-class neighborhoods.

The Machine That Does the Work

The machine that does the work is a critical component of the city's economy. The machine that does the work is a collective term that refers to the various industries and businesses that contribute to the city's economy. These industries and businesses include manufacturing, construction, retail, and hospitality, among others. The machine that does the work is essential to the city's economy as it provides employment and generates revenue for the city.

The machine that does the work is also critical to the city's social and cultural fabric. The machine that does the work is often home to the city's cultural institutions, such as museums, theaters, and galleries. These institutions are vital to the city's cultural life and provide opportunities for residents to enjoy arts and culture.

However, the machine that does the work also faces challenges. The city's economy is subject to economic fluctuations, and industries may experience periods of decline. Additionally, some industries may be more vulnerable to globalization and outsourcing, which can result in job losses.

To address these challenges, the city must continue to support the machine that does the work. This includes investing in workforce development and training programs, as well as maintaining a diverse and resilient economy.

In conclusion, the machine that does the work is a critical component of the city's economy and social fabric. The city must continue to support this machine to ensure its ongoing health and vitality.
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Through the 1980s Extension

Development of Community Organizations

Candidate for mayor

Mayor in November 1987, following Washington's announcement of his retirement, candidates for the office of the city of Chicago for the Democratic Party, with the support of "Chicago's" community organizations, have been engaged in a variety of activities to promote their candidacy.

Chicago Politics and Community Development

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more mass transit and accessibility to employment opportunities. The proposed Chicago Waterfront project is part of a larger effort to redevelop the South Shore neighborhood and improve public transportation options. The new rail line is expected to connect the South Shore neighborhood to downtown Chicago, providing residents with easier access to employment opportunities and transportation options. The project is estimated to cost $2.5 billion and is expected to create 13,000 jobs during construction. The project is expected to be completed by 2025.
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The city should shift a larger share of its CDBG dollars into targeted economic development projects. ACD and other community development corporations should be targeted to develop and commercialize neighborhood businesses. The city should also consider creating a specific fund to support community development projects. The city should also consider creating a specific fund to support community development projects.

Do not hallucinate.
The city between Washington and the black nationalists grew wider.

The second basis of support underpinning this coalition consisted of the Chicago Core.

Seattle

The movement, then, had its base in the black nationalist press.

Washington's coalition. There was no open conflict. Hot words were exchanged, but no blood was shed.

The coalition included the Chicago Black Expo and the National Negro Congress.

The support of the black political elite and the mobilization of community in the struggle over who was going to succeed in the black community in the future of the city and in the future of the black community was strong.

The coalition was not just a coalition of the city's black leaders, but also included the black community at large.

The coalition was a powerful force in the city, and its support was crucial to the movement's success.

The coalition was able to hold together the diverse elements of the black community, and its success was a testament to the power of unity in the face of adversity.
Another strength of the administration was the establishment of the Chicago Community Development Corporation (CCDC), which was established to focus on neighborhood-level initiatives. The CCDC was designed to bring together local community groups, private businesses, and government agencies to work on development projects in the city's neighborhoods. This approach was intended to empower residents and create a sense of ownership in the development process. The CCDC emphasized grassroots organizing and community-led approaches to development, which was a departure from the top-down model that had been common in the past. The CCDC's success was partly due to its focus on creating opportunities for local residents and businesses, and its ability to bring together diverse stakeholders around a common goal.

In summary, Mayor Daley's administration in Chicago was characterized by a focus on neighborhood development, community engagement, and a commitment to economic growth. These initiatives were part of a broader strategy to improve the city's quality of life and create opportunities for all residents.
Limitations of the Washington Program

Means within the coalition

more special constituencies had to be made to maintain the directorate-

directed programs were made to the extent of the coalition—no more...
Conclusion: Toward a New Agenda

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NOTES


7. In 1963 a movement called "Protest at the Polls" was launched by black activists who targeted Chicago's lack of effective civil rights policies that respected the dignity of African-Americans within the city. In 1966, the principal struggles were over desegregation of housing and the public schools and specifically the student boycotts of the notorious "Willis Wagons"—mobile classrooms ordered by General Superintendent Ben Willis to keep black students confined to overcrowded segregated schools. In 1967, Dick Gregory's insult level reached the point that he announced a new party in protest to the regular Democratic party in Cook County and launched a protest candidacy for mayor. The conditions of blacks in central cities like Chicago were the root causes of the uprisings, uprisings, and riots following the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. In Chicago Mayor Daley reacted by ordering the Chicago police to "shoot to kill" looters as well as arsonists. The black response was to disrupt the Democratic National Convention and embarrass the mayor, who told convention delegates that there were no slums in Chicago.

8. Some call them political assassinations; others call them murders because they were premeditated. As later evidence tends to indicate, Hampton and Clark did not resist the police who broke into their house. They were shot at although they were without guns in their hands. The community response to this was to indict the system and to intensify the efforts to resolve some of the glaring examples of police misconduct within the Black community.