# Chicago Politics and Community Development: A Social Movement Perspective

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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 socioeconomically 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, ethnics—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

Washington administrative and political program after the election; and (4) some brief concluding thoughts on the future of the community development coalition.

## Economic and Political Background

The history leading up to the successful election of Harold Washington as mayor of Chicago is described in many publications; in this section I review this history, but it is not purely an objective setting out of the facts. It is also an account by a participant and is, in part, a statement of a view of this history as it was seen by me and others in the community-based and black movement at the time.[1]

In some respects my own position in this history—often peripheral to the main events but in a position to observe them—has fitted me to tell this story. I came to Chicago in 1979 from North Carolina, did doctoral work in the Northwestern University political science department, then took positions as researcher and organizer in such groups as the Illinois Council for Black Studies, the Chicago Rehab Network, and most recently the Kenwood–Oakland Community Organization (KOCO). My dissertation research was on the Task Force for Black Political Empowerment, one of the central groups in the effort to mobilize support for Harold Washington's election during the fall of 1982, and I had been one of the charter members of that coalition effort. I have also been active in coalition-building activities within the reform and progressive wings of the neighborhood empowerment movement and electoral politics. I am currently on the board of directors of the Chicago Workshop for Economic Development (a group that I helped to found), the Chicago Rehab Network, and the Neighborhood Capital Budget Group. All have been important citywide coalitions having an impact upon the course of public policy reform and the resources available to the people. The following account reflects these experiences. It is as objective as I can make it; where it seems to depart from "mainstream" interpretations of this history, I try to so indicate.

### *Economic Crisis*

The relevant history—so we believe—begins with the economy. Over several decades, major changes took place within Chicago's economy. These economic changes necessitated changes in the prevailing political system, in government policies and practices. The old political arrangement of the "machine" associated with Richard J. Daley, mayor from 1956 to 1976, and his successors (Michael Bilandic and Jane Byrne) through the 1983 election had been based upon the doling out of patronage in the form of jobs and contracts, which served to maintain personal loyalties between machine elites and their ethnic-based constituencies. This system had become increasingly inappropriate to address the needs of large numbers of African-Americans who had begun to occupy several of Chicago's neighborhoods in the period following World War I, as well as the needs of the Latinos and Asians whose numbers grew apace in the post–World War II period. In fact, the twenty years of Chicago's race relations leading up to the 1983 mayoral election were marked by a series of recurrent political confrontations, protests, and disruptions of normal patterns of urban behavior. This was due to the ever present effects of an increasingly intense urban crisis. It was essentially an economic crisis, but it manifested itself in the political arena as the heightening contradiction between declining sources of public revenues and the growing level of legitimate demands for public services and assistance.[2] In short, the ruling elites could not rule through the traditional arrangements, and vast sectors of the population grew increasingly intolerant of "business (or politics) as usual." The government thus became a contested arena of political battle.



Thus the urban crisis had several interrelated dimensions: economic, fiscal, and political. In past studies of Chicago politics many have argued the interconnectedness of these elements.[3] But what the Washington election made clear was the underlying importance of a fourth dimension—the direct mobilization of a new *social* base. Much of this new politics is non-institutionalized (i.e., movement politics or social protest politics), involving social movements and factions that arose from fundamental shifts in the city's political economy—producing a *social crisis* marked by the inability of large segments of the population to gain income adequate to support viable households. The consequences were increased crime, deterioration of major social institutions, and the breakdown in the quality of community life.

### *Black Social Base and Political Solidarity*

This crisis affected many groups, but a lot of it was specific to blacks. Historically, black people had long played an integral part in the political and economic life of the city, and this produced their political aspirations and motivations as well as their potential as a collective agency of socio-political change. First, blacks were not recent arrivals to Chicago. The town was founded by a black man, Jean Baptiste Point DuSable, and there was a permanent settlement of blacks here—albeit most were refugees

from southern slavery—at the time that Chicago was incorporated in 1837. Later, a combination of southern racist terror and repression and the industrial expansion during World War I spurred blacks to migrate to Chicago in the hope of finding stable employment, good schools, and adequate housing in a less hostile environment; and the great South Side enclaves grew at increasing rates between 1920 and the 1950s.

But the peak of Chicago's industrial expansion had been reached during the 1920s. Therefore, although the early black arrivals into Chicago were proletarianized and integrated into the production side of the industrial economy, each subsequent generation of blacks and most urban-born Afro-Chicagoans were increasingly marginalized and alienated from the production side of the local economy. By the time black immigration into the Chicago area subsided, the mostly white (ethnic-based) working class had been fully proletarianized for several generations. Their progeny fully benefited as the United States became the preeminent economic and political world power after the two global wars. While white working-class families had access to open unions and the newly consolidated Democratic machine to enhance their status as a privileged stratum within a multiracial working class, blacks were excluded from full and open access to all but a few unions and they were limited in their political participation by the machine. While blacks had limited mobility within the political machine between 1930 and 1983, white ethnics used the machine as an instrument of upward social mobility.

Thus blacks were absorbed into the industrial work force in Chicago—at all levels—at lesser rates and lower pay than were whites. It is true that as the outcome of fierce struggle through the New Deal, Square Deal, New Frontier, and Great Society periods blacks were more or less completely absorbed into the public economy, mainly on the social consumption side, and integrated into civic relations (i.e., civil rights gains, increased voter registration, the Fair Housing Act, etc.), while making gains in political office holding as their numbers increased in given political jurisdictions. But even at the beginning of the 1980s black integration into the mainstream of the urban political economy remained tediously incomplete. It was slowed by the new conservatism in U.S. politics ushered in by the Reagan administration, and by the precarious position of the vast majority of the black middle class whose income, status, and occupations were overwhelmingly tied to the welfare state and to public employment (i.e., teachers, public administrators, civil servants, government-regulated affirmative action contracts, and employment in social service programs). As recently as 1985 a survey found that more than 67 percent of black middle-class income earners were dependent on public sector jobs. Moreover, the heavy dependence of poor black families on public assistance had become a cause for national alarm, if not action.[4]

In contrast, a smaller percentage of the white middle-class and poor



whites in Chicago were tied to the public sector for employment and/or transfer payments. A higher percentage of whites derived income from the production side of the economy. This accounts for a significant amount of the conservatism on the part of whites who perceive their taxes as supporting black welfare recipients.

The black middle class had aspirations and interests similar to those of their white counterparts. On the consumption side, many middle-class blacks aped the tastes of the white middle class in order to escape their societal identification with the lifestyles of most blacks and were pained by the perceptions of the black masses held by most whites. Thus, there was not only the growing gap between most whites and most blacks but also a growing class differentiation among blacks. This reality and the relative divergence of interests among blacks along class lines had important ramifications for unifying and coalition building in the black political community.

However, their precarious position in the social structure forced the black middle class into alliances with the black masses in defense of their status and in defense of public sector expansion of human and social services. Moreover, race and racism were constant forces contributing to black solidarity. Particularly among blacks when there was a threat of racist attack, the political community united. In 1983 there was the widespread perception that interests of importance to blacks as a whole were being threatened. Unity was possible. For a magical moment, there was the occurrence of all-class unity among blacks—with the united leadership scurrying frantically to stay out in front of the masses. This unity, initially defensive in nature, was transformed into an offensive to capture city hall through a black candidate whose campaign was fueled by an unprecedented political solidarity among blacks and supported by most Latinos and significant numbers of whites.

## *The Machine from Daley Through Byrne*

It is important to understand Mayor Richard J. Daley's role (1955–1976). On the one hand we know him as a national figure, even a folk hero, or folk antagonist, in American political literature. But as a "machine boss" he played a significant role in presiding over the political and economic transformation of Chicago from an industrial city to an urban metropolis. Under his leadership, Chicago experienced the first signs of urban crisis, as cracks appeared in the political arena resulting from the transformation of the economy. Daley continued to do business as usual, but he was also caught up in the management of crisis and he needed to figure out ways to keep his patronage base intact.

During his long reign as mayor of the city and chairman of the Cook

County Democratic party, Daley was in fact becoming more and more vulnerable with each passing election. His electoral coalition and his support base got more tenuous. This was in part because the machine only turned out as many people as it needed to win. It was also partly due to a growing antimachine vote. That antimachine vote was registered initially in several local ward elections where certain independents would win election in one term (such as in the 6th, 44th and 16th wards) only to lose in a subsequent election. They were not able to sustain or consolidate power. After Daley's death in 1976 a new independent trend was able to emerge, particularly in the Lakefront wards and the West Side predominantly black wards by 1979.

In black political terms, an understanding of the role of Daley was important in this period. By 1971 black political representation in the city council reached a point where it was proportional to the percentage of blacks in the population. Blacks were 28.1 percent of the population base in the 1970 census, and in 1971, 14 of the 50 ward aldermen (council members) were blacks. So you could say that in empirical terms blacks had "maxed-out" on their "power batting average" in terms of achieving proportional representation.[5]

The thrust of black politics shifted from participation to power politics. The antimachine sentiment gained momentum in the period after Daley's death. His demise precipitated a succession controversy that pitted the machine against the black community in a symbolic struggle of major proportions. At the center of the conflict was Alderman Wilson Frost of the 34th ward, legally in direct line to replace Daley. Frost, the mayor pro tem, was not allowed (at gunpoint) entrance into the mayor's office to assume the duties of the mayor until Daley's successor could be appointed. Blacks were incensed. As part of the compromise that made Michael Bilandic mayor for 1976–1979, Frost was offered the chair of the powerful Finance Committee of the city council, which he secretly accepted while thousands of blacks ringed city hall demanding his installation as mayor. Now the black insult level had truly "maxed-out."

Another factor was that Daley's coalition among the ethnic neighborhoods began to deteriorate. The Polish community resented the Irish lock on public patronage. But they fared better than blacks, so they were told. Daley also had other troubles. He had long been able to secure support of the unions. But there developed a split between the union bureaucratic leadership and the rank and file, particularly within locals that had large black memberships. Over the years a union leadership endorsement began to carry less political weight, while racism was the political measuring stick in union halls' relationships to city hall.

A further factor in the weakening of the machine was the growth of the same type of nationality movements among blacks, Latinos, and other



groups in Chicago that became prominent in other cities. This was consistent with that whole thrust toward community control and empowerment that came out of the Black Power movement. Residents who lived and worked in areas of the city targeted for redevelopment desired and exerted greater input over the course of economic development in their communities. They had to be convinced that development proposals were not just good for the city but were compatible with retaining the stability of their neighborhood areas.

For instance, the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) process, established under the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, became an arena of struggle. From 1974 until Daley died (and under Mayor Bilandic, who succeeded him) the Community Development Advisory Committee (CDAC) was a rubber stamp. It was mandated by the federal legislation, which required maximum feasible participation of local funding districts—the key word here being *feasible*. From the standpoint of the Daley and Bilandic regimes the CDAC process was little more than a perfunctory obligation. But by the early 1980s the CDBG budgetary, regulatory, and evaluative process had evolved into a significantly altered form with many democratic features. Under Mayor Washington it would become a peer review mechanism that effectively interacted with the city administration to set priories and make CDBG allocation decisions.

Thus, the weakening of the machine had already started under Daley, but it became very clear with Jane Byrne's election in 1979. Her maverick campaign, which ousted Bilandic, and her subsequent governance period provided new lessons. We can summarize these lessons quickly as representing four things:

First, neighborhoods provided her the basis for victory (at least, activists claimed that, whether they did so or not).

Second, there was the antimachine character of the vote. Byrne won because she was viewed as being in opposition to "business as usual." There was a real democratic sentiment within the city among alienated segments that could be mobilized into the electorate. Byrne was able to tap this sentiment, although she did not consolidate it.

Third, Byrne's election represented a palace revolt of sorts within the fragmented party that was exploitable. There was a power struggle within the machine. Almost immediately after taking office she abandoned the neighborhood agenda and closed ranks with the Vrdolyak faction of the party against George Dunne, president of the county board, and the Daley family. (It was the Daley family that had Byrne fired as commissioner of consumer affairs under Bilandic. This dismissal led to a political blood feud between the Daleys and Jane Byrne.)

Fourth, the deepening political/fiscal crisis is key to understanding Byrne. The fact is that *she had to do something*. This increased the likelihood

of the series of tactical errors in handling the crisis that sealed her doom and downfall. If they had not come in 1982, they certainly would have by 1987. She speeded up the process of her own loss of credibility by committing political blunders like destabilizing black political representation on boards and committees, and misuse of funds that were allocated under the CDBG process to go into low-income areas. She reprogrammed those funds into purchasing snow removal equipment and into paying the pension funds of teachers. This provided a rallying point for opposition on her own CDAC, which became more independent and assertive. Groups like the Rehab Network began to expose Byrne's misuse of the funds in other areas in which she had abandoned the neighborhood agenda. The Rehab Network, the Chicago 1992 Committee, and the newly formed CWED (Community Workshop for Economic Development) coalition began to popularize a critique of Byrne's development policies and practices. Meanwhile, groups like Operation PUSH, the Urban League, and Chicago Black United Communities (CBUC)—groups whose leaders had not sat collectively for years—began to meet. This coalescing of diverse black interest groups led to the formation of the Task Force for Black Political Empowerment in November 1982, following Washington's announcement of his candidacy for mayor.

## Development of Community Organizations Through the 1983 Election

The economic changes in Chicago increased the differences between the older white ethnic neighborhoods and the newer neighborhoods occupied by peoples of color. The former were ethnic based; the latter were communities based upon socioeconomic and political conditions of exclusion from the mainstream. There is the tradition of Chicago as a city of diverse neighborhoods organized around institutions of cohesion such as church, school, or union meeting hall. These traditional neighborhoods were thought to possess a positive sense of cultural (ethnic) identity. On the other hand, the new "neighborhoods" were a postindustrial, post-1960s phenomenon. These new neighborhoods were demarcated by the common condition of their residents—homogeneously black or brown, homogeneously poor and depressed, homogeneously identified by the prevalence of deteriorated housing and commercial districts and by public sector neglect.

In these types of neighborhoods there also emerged new types of community organizations. The new community organizations were concerned



about *change, survival, and redevelopment* as opposed to the older organizations, which focused upon the preservation of the neighborhood character. The first group of neighborhood organizations appeared in the 1930s and 1940s. The second emerged during the 1960s and thereafter under the influence of the civil rights movement and its tactics of direct action.

The traditional type of neighborhood organization was improvement oriented, exclusivist and conservationist. The more recent form of organization typically emerged around the need for defense from racist attacks and for resistance to withdrawal of public services, and mobilized around demands for improvement in the standard of living and quality of life. Rather than resulting from concerns about preservation of status, the new neighborhood organizations were instruments of the community enabling it to fight back and to achieve reform. They often produced leadership with more radical or progressive orientations than their predecessors.

These organizations in the new period were characterized initially by protest. They went through several phases. An example is the Kenwood–Oakland Community Organization (KOCO), which was formed in 1965. KOCO was organized mainly around tenants and other dislocated or alienated groups whose membership was essentially tenant based. While they took up other issues like unemployment, the struggle for representation in the unions, welfare rights, and union work, they were essentially struggling to get in the system or to get more out of it. They sought reform by opening up access, shaping government policy and practice, or fighting for constituent representation on public boards and commissions.

There were many groups that fit somewhere in between KOCO and the traditional type of neighborhood organization. The Midwest Community Council (MCC), for example, was organized almost exclusively around block clubs. Block clubs tend to be conservationist. There are certain parallels between the old-style groups and MCC. A group like The Woodlawn Organization (TWO), however, is representative of community organizations that are hybrid, including both block clubs and tenants. There were also some church-based community organizations that relied less on protest and more on development initiatives.

By the end of the 1960s and through the mid-1970s, the tendency was toward self-help activities. The orientation was also toward more isolationist activities based on the nationalism that emerged in the late 1960s. Organizations began to talk about "doing-for-self" under the influence of the Nation of Islam (and to a certain extent from the Black Panther party organization) with its self-help education and breakfast programs. This represented a trend towards cultural or political autonomy and self-determination. "Black is beautiful," when translated into the social context, implied a certain kind of isolationism. "Turf" concerns became a major characteristic of that kind of community organization.

By the end of the 1970s, a shift occurred toward "developmentalism" and policy "advocacy." This shift toward power politics and away from protest was based on the reality that blacks, Latinos, and poor whites constituted the new majority in Chicago. Most community organizations found this shift acceptable. There occurred a sort of synthetic organizational development where many of the organizations either were aligned with a "protest" organization or advocacy group; or they would spin off a community development organization as Northwest Community Organization had done with Bickerdike or as KOCO had done. KOCO did the social services and advocacy work on behalf of tenant constituencies, parents, or youth. On the other side of the shop, they created a specially designed Kenwood–Oakland Development Corporation (KODC). The development corporation was under the control of the parent organization but had people on the board who brought a certain technical expertise—making possible rehabilitation and new construction projects in housing and commercial development. While they differed in style and capacity, these groups all had one thing in common: they had emerged in struggles against the local political system in some form or another. And they had some level of connection to constituents most affected by the urban crisis through their outreach efforts.

These organizations tended to be anticorporate, antiunion, antimachine, mass oriented, and the source of an emergent indigenous leadership. They became alternative paths for political leadership to emerge, particularly in the late 1970s and through the 1980s. Thus community-based organization (CBO) leaders like alderpersons Danny Davis, Ed Smith, Dorothy Tillman, Helen Schiller, Percy Giles, Marlene Carter, and Bobby Rush developed from within community struggles. They went into the institutionalized political structure. They went into the electoral arena and won election onto the city council as they defeated machine-backed incumbents, while numerous community activists went into major administrative positions within city government—particularly under Harold Washington and his successor, Eugene Sawyer.

On the other hand, most community organizations were not indigenously led, mass-led organizations. Their (indigenous) boards might enact policy. However, most were staff driven. Even among the few that were board driven, the central character of their leadership was middle class by function, orientation, accumulated experience, and training. The staff became more professionalized and bureaucratized. (This development was accelerated after 1983 through the capacity-building strategies of city administrative policymakers under Mayor Washington.)

This staff development resulted in a new complexion. On the one hand, the staff and much of the board leadership in most community organizations represented a militant, radicalized wing of the community-based



movement. But there was also the dominance of bureaucratic and legal relations that the community organizations had with their private and public sources of funding. These relations set limits upon the range of options open to most community-based actors. To be a "delegate agency" of the state was to become credentialed by the government to act on its behalf. To some extent they were constrained by these legal relations; their independence and initiative were circumscribed, limited, and therefore controlled.

Nevertheless, the community organizations of the new type were more open to coalition building, networking, and sharing and pooling resources than were the older traditional organizations. While they still adhered to the principle of mutual respect for each group's "local agenda," they were open to establishing ad hoc committees of their peers to work on single issues. An example was opposition of many activists to the so-called Chicago 21 Plan, which had been promoted by the Chicago Central Area Committee in 1971. The Chicago 21 Plan (or the "Master Plan") proposed the use of public dollars to promote massive private redevelopment of the new Loop South, West, and Northwest crescent as part of a large-scale urban renewal plan.

Such single-issue coalition building among black, brown, and white reform or progressive community-based groups remained the dominant type of associational network. In the mid-1970s networks with formal memberships began to emerge. One such group was the Chicago Rehab Network, which was formed in about 1976. Part of the impetus for it was the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974. This legislation provided resources through the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) process, for the city to delegate to certain community-based actors a role in administering city-funded programs—federally funded programs with the city as the lead agency. A number of those groups came together in 1975, and over the next couple of years they formed the Rehab Network to provide technical assistance to community-based actors doing housing rehabilitation. The other motivation on the part of the founders of the Rehab Network was the desire to provide an advocacy front, to speak for and with its affiliates rather than having the "downtown" civic organizations—with no community constituencies—speak for the neighborhoods, co-opting their agendas and brokering resources for them.

Following that successful experience with the Rehab Network, other coalitions of community-based actors and organizations began to appear. During the summer of 1982 two simultaneous coalitions emerged: The Chicago 1992 Committee and the Community Workshop on Economic Development. The 1992 Committee concentrated its efforts on opposing the proposed Chicago World's Fair and exposing it as a veiled attempt at economic development that sought to use public resources to promote massive gentrification and wholesale displacement on the Near West

and South sides. The Community Workshop on Economic Development (CWED, pronounced "see-wed") emerged in response to the Reagan-supported "enterprise zone" concept and Job Training Partnership Act. In both cases the fear among community activists was that the private sector would receive large inducements and incentive benefits without significant resources being recaptured by actors seeking control over the economic development process in their respective communities. These proposals were rejected because they were "top–down" rather than emerging on the basis of community initiative and reflecting the needs of local communities.

### *Politicization*

The CBO social policy movement was converted into a political movement and steered into the electoral process through (1) broadening the base of the coalition by identifying the new allies on a mass scale, and (2) a process of agenda building and popularization of a new emerging consensus that Byrne and the machine could not/would not deliver on this agenda.[6]

Political organizing through the electoral process broadened the base of the movement. It provided the opportunity to dismantle the political machine and set the stage for social and public policy reform under the leadership of Harold Washington. Both CWED and the Chicago 1992 Committee were composed of people who were exercising leadership within the Chicago Rehab Network. However, each group was successful because it was able to attract membership and participation from a more diverse range of community groups doing development or engaged in community-specific struggles.

I cite the Rehab Network because I think it was a central forum and one of the leading agencies promoting community-based coalition building. It was a harbinger of various kinds of groups that came on the scene in the period from 1981 to 1983. It led to a proliferation of networks. Groups emerged like the Illinois Coalition Against Reagan Economics (I-CARE); and following that, during the summer of 1982, more mass-based militant groups like POWER, the People's Organization for Welfare Economic Reform. POWER was the successor to I-CARE, as a coalition of grass-roots participants. The Rehab Network/CWED model, and the I-CARE/POWER model emerged as two of the predominant types that formed in this period. They attempted to bring neighborhood-based activists across the city in black, brown and low-income white communities into the political process through policy advocacy and through electoral participation.

Groups like the Rehab Network and CWED provided forums for the exchange of experiences and ideas across race lines and across sectors of the



community. I-CARE and POWER represented more insurgent protest and were less institutionalized. While there were differences between them, I-CARE and POWER were clearly oriented more toward mass protest/resistance, while the Rehab Network and CWED represented a forum for the leadership of formally organized CBOs with specific agendas, under essentially middle-class leadership. I-CARE was also under middle-class leadership, but it had a mass base among some labor unions, public service recipients, and civil service employers. POWER represented an attempt to fuse unemployed workers and welfare recipients with community activists and progressives who had a long term interest in promoting radical social change.

POWER—at least temporarily—demonstrated what the potential for such organizational work could be when leadership was provided by a group of radicalized, militant community activists with roots in mass community struggles among poor people. POWER tended to be more democratic; I-CARE was more elitist. The I-CARE/POWER groups were composed essentially of the direct or indirect recipients of social services and neighborhood-based programs. The CWED and the Rehab Network groups were composed of public-assisted CBOs that coalesced and hired staff who provided some technical expertise.

By 1982 the more mass-based coalitions like POWER had moved to another level. They urged their constituents and activists to escape the limitations of "turfism." They were "anti-turf" organizations in the sense that black, Latino, and low-income white community constituents were encouraged to view development threats to their communities in the context of the entire city of which they were a part. They mobilized support with the argument that certain megadevelopment projects proposed by big developers and the machine, as well as antiurban federal and state policies, would be devastating for individual neighborhoods and for the overall public economy of Chicago. In this sense these groups were broad class coalitions that represented the vast majority of the city's population in contention with the policies supported by the corporate elites and their cronies in city government.

Finally, it must be made clear that middle-class professional activists penetrated and assumed important positions of leadership and influence within these citywide advocacy coalitions—of both types. These were not merely spontaneous, purposeless coalitional efforts. Moreover, the activists' associations existed prior to Harold Washington's campaign bid in 1982. In each instance the organizations were implicitly, if not explicitly, opposed to the machine in power. Many activists at the local and coalition level had been involved in antimachine electoral campaigns and pubic policy struggles over the previous 10–20 years dating back to the early 1960s. Some had been involved in struggles against Mayor Daley in 1963,

1966, and in 1968.[7] Others had opposed the city's handling of the infamous Fred Hampton–Mark Clark assassinations.[8] Most of the Chicago Rehab Network early membership had worked with each other in opposition to the redlining practices of banks and insurance companies and in the citywide resistance to the Chicago 21 Plan to redevelop the South Loop and the Near North and West Sides as gentrified middle-class communities.

## *Coalition Agenda Setting*

The Chicago Rehab Network and the Community Workshop on Economic Development both drew upon the common experiences of their diverse member groups in order to shape a neighborhood agenda, particularly around housing, land use, economic development, and resource allocation for depressed neighborhoods. The 1981/82 period in Chicago was replete with numerous protest struggles within pubic institutions as the crisis deepened. Perhaps the most significant development for our current discussion was the struggle to prevent Chicago from sponsoring a World's Fair in 1992. The World's Fair proposal entailed much more than merely an opportunity for Chicago to have a good time or to host a big party. At the core of the issues surrounding it was a plan for the economic redevelopment of the Near South Side. It was viewed by many activists as a resurrection of the old Chicago 21 Plan. It was derisively referred to as "Master Plan Number Two." It called for the redevelopment of the area from 13th Street south all the way down to 31st Street and over as far as the Pilsen community. Parts of Pilsen and Chinatown were scheduled to be razed and made into parking lots for visitors to the fair. More importantly, there were designs to build a new residential development with mini–shopping centers and malls that would have housed or employed as many as 300,000 people on the air rights over the Illinois Central Gulf Railroad tracks just south of the Loop. It would thus open the land use market to middle- and upper-income groups who desired access to the nearby Lakefront.

The city had a history of using public infrastructure resources to support private economic development: 65–80 percent of the capital improvement dollars allotted by the city had been expended within the Loop and O'Hare areas during recent administrations. What about the other 48 wards? Or what about the other 73 or 74 community areas? And who would pay for this? Under Mayor Byrne the city used its bond capacity to support Near Loop real estate development while the neighborhoods were neglected. Moreover, developers received substantial tax incentives to build projects that could have been developed without public support. Advocates of



neighborhood development wanted to see more balance and linkage in return for local city support. The first issue was whether or not community development resources should be tied up around this engine for development, which could be supported by private investment. Some questioned whether the private developers of the World's Fair should be allowed essentially to walk away with no risk while the public would bear most of the risk if the fair was not successful. Others hammered away at the notion that the World's Fair site should contribute to strengthening existing communities rather than facilitating their destruction and the displacement of existing residents and businesses. There was an operative consensus that the fair was ill designed, whether or not it should be held at all. Similarly, it was argued that other developers who used city capital development dollars should provide revenues to support housing, economic development, and job generation in the neighborhoods. Individuals and groups networking around CWED, the Chicago Jobs Council, Chicago 1992 Committee, the Rehab Network, and the Center for Neighborhood Technology began to advocate for a comprehensive urban development policy with the following key components:

a. Housing and commercial development should not displace indigenous residents and businesses.
b. Community-directed economic and housing development should secure the interests of local groups and include the input of CBOs in the planning, implementation, and benefits of private–public development ventures.
c. The city should encourage "balanced growth" between the business district and depressed neighborhoods and linkage between large developments using public resources and the need for reinvestment in the neighborhoods.
d. When developers wanted to do business with the city, they should expect to hire Chicagoans first, respect affirmative action and minority set-aside agreements, and support community-based initiatives in economic development by providing technical and financial assistance.
e. Banks and other lending institutions holding city funds or city employee pension funds should be pressured to support community-based redevelopment projects by reinvesting in depressed neighborhoods and by lending to public–private partnership ventures.
f. The city should view community-based nonprofit development organizations as legitimate partners in community redevelopment projects.
g. The city should shift a larger share of its CDBG dollars into

direct support of housing, commercial and community redevelopment initiatives, and direct staff development and capacity building among neighborhood development organizations and agencies.

## *The Community-based Network in the 1983 Election*

The same forces that came together to support Jane Byrne and to defeat Michael Bilandic in 1979 were at the front lines of the movement to defeat Byrne and elect Harold Washington in 1983 and again in 1987. The associational networks with linkages into the black, brown, poor white, and liberal Lakefront communities made possible the transformation of mass social protest into a massive political mobilization inside the electoral arena.

How was this possible? On the surface it could be characterized as a black nationalist movement. But beneath this was a long-building set of forces and linkages. Many of the most active representatives of CBOs in coalitions like the Rehab Network, CWED, and the Chicago 1992 Committee on the one hand and POWER on the other were active militants in civil rights, black empowerment, and affirmative action movements among the black and Latino communities. These broad associational linkages made possible deep and extensive outreach to constituents who could be politicized and steered into the electoral arena.

When Jane Byrne refused to act on a neighborhood agenda emerging out of low-income communities, it was a rejection of the black and Latino activists who also became discouraged as a result of the racist effects of her policies with respect to nationality representation and the continuance of business as usual at city hall. When these groups and their leaders criticized her policies, she reacted viciously and revoked their public service contracts. Not only did this further incense these organizations, but it destroyed her credibility with reform-minded liberals and the media as well.

Meanwhile the community-based networks had developed an ability to work in concert. The Rehab Network demonstrated that multinational coalitions could be built on a permanent basis and could provide more than protest leadership. This kind of coalition could be proactive and develop a progressive reform agenda, particularly around housing development. CWED, which shared an overlapping constituency with the Rehab Network, differentiated itself by focusing on community economic development issues and CBO-initiated commercial development projects.

Groups like I-CARE and POWER proved that multinational coalitions



could be built by reform and progressive leadership that mobilized and organized among the masses. These groups forged unity and brought grassroots actors and other ordinary citizens into motion around substantive and politically symbolic issues of struggle important to both neighborhood-based groups and their constituents among the working poor and unemployed across the city.

Thus there was a coincidence between this reform neighborhood development agenda and the core demands of the black empowerment movement for fairness, open government, and ethical practices. When stripped of its ideological and rhetorical symbolism, the neighborhood development agenda was compatible with the short-term aims of the black and Latino empowerment movements. The neighborhood movement demanded equitable resource allocation to black and Latino communities, enforcement of affirmative action and minority set-aside mandates, access to government policymaking, to information, and to public officeholders, along with the elimination of patronage with respect to public employment, contracts, and provision of public service. One reason for this compatibility of interest was that the community development movement originated out of these nationality movements among Black and Latino community activists and developed alongside of them.

This was the case of the Task Force for Black Political Empowerment, the informal arm of the Harold Washington campaign within the black community. Some of the same actors in the community-based movement were instrumental in its formation: Nancy Jefferson, Joe Banks, Dorothy Tillman, Marian Stamps, Robert Lucas, and others played leading roles in both formations. A similar development took place among Puerto Ricans and Mexicans who formed a Latino Empowerment Task Force.

The agendas emerging within the nationality movements and within the community-based development movement among housing and economic development activists were convergent and interdependent. The basic point of convergence turned out to be the need for a reform agenda, the targeting of public policymakers for public policy changes, and the support for an alliance between the working poor and community development actors in the neighborhoods. They brought black, Latino, white, and other leaders to the table and provided a context within which a black-led empowerment movement could find legitimacy and acceptance outside the black political community. This convergence in the campaign was able to take place because a *high level of sociopolitical networking and associational linkages was in existence prior to the Washington campaign.* The movement underpinning Harold Washington was not just spontaneous, although indeed there was spontaneity at the grass-roots level and much innovativeness. That such creativeness did come out of the grassroots movement certainly charged up the campaign organization and kept

it alive. But to say that it was purely a spontaneous thing—all resistance and no plan—would be incorrect.

As early as 1981, in the black community, Harold Washington had been identified as a potential candidate; in the white community progressives like Slim Coleman had put him on their circuit, speaking to CBOs at their annual conventions. Citywide organizations did the same. So in that sense it was a deliberate effort to build a neighborhood agenda. Of course Harold Washington addressed their concerns. This agenda building culminated in the late summer of 1982 in what was called the All-Chicago Community Summer Congress, which brought activists from community organizations and independent political organizations together to unite around a neighborhood (or community-based) agenda for economic development, housing development, health care, education, etc. It had certain planks in it that were similar to most of the things that community organizations fight for today—affordable housing, affordable health care, the idea of linked development or balanced growth in terms of the city's allocation of resources.

So there was also planning by a conscious leadership element. They had gained experience in successful coalition building and positioned themselves at critical vantage points on the political landscape that represented Chicago in the 1980–1983 period. The willingness to network, reach out, and develop common agendas and resistance efforts was a positive contribution of these early, fragile coalition efforts. They survived because the local agenda was respected and the membership was tolerant of divergence from the generally accepted principles guiding local practices and because serious attempts were made to work out differences in healthy internal debate.

This movement, then, fed into the three main social bases within Harold Washington's coalition. There was the nationality vote: most blacks, a majority of Latinos, and a significant number of reform-minded whites. The Latino and progressive white vote was very critical to his election. In the primary election of 1983, the critical ingredient was progressive whites. Although Washington received 80 pecent of the black vote, 17 percent of his coalition was white, and that provided him with the margin of victory. In the general election, Latinos provided the critical margin of victory. He was able to improve from 25 percent of the Latino vote in the primary to about 65 percent of the Latino vote in the general election. Washington garnered 75 percent of the Puerto Rican vote, 62 percent of the Mexican vote, and 52 percent of the Cuban vote.

The second basis of support underpinning his coalition consisted of CBOs and community activists. The third was his ability to gain at least the nominal support of many of the locals in the Chicago Federation of Labor, and in the general election he got the nominal support of the Chicago Federation of Labor and the active support of many of the locals.



## Harold Washington in Office 1983–1987: Limitations on Reform Gains

Once in office, the Washington governance coalition found three sources of support: First was the unity of black, brown, and white forces as underscored by the presence of community activists. Community-based actors played roles not only in Washington's election organization but in the transition team; and some went on to play important roles in his administration. This set the stage for a new division of public resources in favor of a shift toward neighborhood-based expenditures—more so than in the preceding administrations.

Then there were the much publicized "council wars." These "wars" represented the initial (1983–1986) division in the 50-member city council between the weaker Washington forces and the majority bloc of white aldermen, consisting of the old guard ward bosses—or the "Vrdolyak 29," as they were called. However, the "council wars" enabled Mayor Washington to keep the community-based coalition and his primary social base—which was largely black and Latino—intact.

Third, within this unity-from-below, Washington was able to maintain the support of the black political elites and machine veterans—particularly black city council members and party committeemen and -women—because he had carried their wards. Washington outpolled each of the black machine aldermen and made possible the election of a number of antimachine candidates.[9]

Inside of this development we witnessed a certain fragmentation beginning in 1983. The first signs of division appeared very early in the black community in the struggle over who was going to succeed Washington in his vacated seat in the first congressional district. Lu Palmer was supported by the nationalists in the black community. They saw it as very important, symbolically, to be able to name the successor to Harold. But fragmentation was evident in that not less than eight candidates campaigned for the seat. Each claimed to be a staunch supporter of Washington's reform agenda. Washington endorsed Charles Hayes, a noted labor leader, who easily defeated Palmer in a low-turnout election and subsequent runoff.

The rift between Washington and the black nationalists then grew wider. It became apparent within the nationalist forces in the Task Force for Black Political Empowerment (e.g., in their concern over Lu Palmer's failed congressional bid and over the inability of nationalists to cash in on their support for Harold Washington and win primacy for the "black nationalist agenda"). Unity continued to unravel around issues of black–Latino middle-class access to scarce public sector jobs and contracts. The split was couched in nationalist terms, however.

## *What Washington Delivered*

For the most part, Washington's administration made major steps toward delivery on the neighborhood agenda. This was necessary, but it was insufficient for addressing the tremendous substantive problems facing the low-income communities in the city. Moreover, Washington was surrounded by numerous persons at all levels of influence in government—formal and informal—who did not share his agenda of concerns nor that of the neighborhood development interests. Yet, these five years were dramatically distinctive from any period of city government in Chicago's history.

I think that the Washington victory and the consolidation of his administration resulted in the institutionalization of a new base of power in opposition to the machine. It is not clear if it functioned any differently, but it was not the machine as we knew it. In fact, I remember Washington speaking at a rally in front of Daley Plaza during the 1983 campaign, when he said that "The machine, as we now know it, is dead." At subsequent times he would speak of the machine and patronage in the same terms. Most people only focused on the fact that the machine was dead, as opposed to the notion that only the machine *as we knew it* was dead.

The need to institutionalize a base of power is something that is central to American politics and to any regime. Even if we assume that patronage is dead, you need to have a political organization that functions in the same way. If privilege is dead, then what is the incentive for political involvement—unless there are some direct or indirect payoffs? Perhaps a new morality that transcends the politics of individualism is required.[10]

The CBO provided an excellent alternative form for that. It did not provide direct patronage, but it was possible to build up a patronage-type army, a machine army, without the individual (privilege) payoff. It was possible to use the new neighborhood agenda as a framework within which access was given to neighborhood-based actors without the corruption that is associated with the under-the-table deals of the previous ward bosses. KOCO, for example, had its staff increased by four or five people in a five-year period; and other organizations emerged and had city-funded staff positions. The city did substantially increase its delegate agencies. The shift in spending from downtown to the neighborhoods represented a shift in resources allocation. It assumed that the bureaucracy could function better to deliver services if it were at the street level. So we witnessed the expansion of a street-level bureaucracy without a street level government (i.e., democracy). About $13 million of CDBG funding for staff positions were taken out of the city government and put in the neighborhood agencies. That represented a change to the extent that neighborhood-based organizations were in control of staff people who were supposed to



be delivering the services to the constituencies in the neighborhoods. Presumably, this would lead to better service and more direct accountability.[11]

Yet some would have questioned whether or not that was a critical improvement. If the effect was to have better control at the local level over people who were providing services, then this change was a significant gain only if it led to more effective service delivery. But the effect was merely to contain and control the community activists through co-optation, then we had made a tragic mistake. The effect in either case seemed to reduce the independence of CBOs.

There were a number of more immediate results for the neighborhood organizations as well. *We got greater access to decision making*, implementation and evaluation, and just plain old information. It was now possible to find out what was happening in the city to a far greater extent (with respect to city expenditures and city planning) than ever happened before. It made sense from a community activist standpoint to be able to walk into Harold's office (to some folks this was the ultimate example of access). It made sense to be able to pick up the phone and talk to the commissioner of economic development, as opposed to having to write a letter, and maybe you would get an answer to in two weeks, and maybe you would get a meeting in two months.

There was *more equitable resource distribution* across Chicago. Partnerships were created where public sector resources were used to leverage private sector investments of benefit to low-income individuals and families. CBOs were treated less like junior partners (if they had been treated as partners at all) and more like legitimate participants in the development process. This administration increased the opportunity of CBOs to bring resources to the table. The more they had resources similar to what developers were looking for, the more they were treated as equal partners in the process.

There was *more budgetary scrutiny*. For the first time we had a series of public hearings around all the major city budgets. That meant something from the standpoint of neighborhoods having input into the budgetary process. This included the CDBG and the corporate budget. And a similar process was beginning to emerge around the capital budget, the capital plan for infrastructure development, although that piece had not been consolidated when Washington died. There were some efforts underway under the Sawyer administration and within the city council under the newly formed Capital Development Committee that had been set up by Washington. Its purpose was to take a look—just as was done with the CDBG budget—to see if there was a way to set up criteria that would lead to more equitable distribution of capital resources to all the neighborhoods of the city.

Another strength of the administration was the establishment of *more*

*representative government*. A key point here is not only that it was more democratic in terms of proportional representation of nationalities in the city council and on boards and commissions but also that there was greater inclusion of other previously excluded elements of the population. We began to see a more diverse coalition in governance than at any other time in Chicago's history.

Washington appointed people with strong neighborhood backgrounds and orientations to important positions of policymaking in his government. They had a great deal of influence in subsequent governmental neighborhood policy and strategic planning. It was radical for some people that some side streets would get snowplowed in the winter time—side streets, that is, that never got plowed before. I lived on one of those streets, and I was shocked beyond belief to see a snowplow come down my South Side street in the winter of 1984. It was outside of my experience—I couldn't imagine what that sound was. The streets got plowed on the South Side of Chicago! It was great! Some streets even got paved on the South Side of Chicago! The streets also got paved on those WPA (Works Project Administration) streets in some of the white ethnic neighborhoods, and that made a difference in Washington's image for whites in the city as well.

In attempts to reach out to all Chicago, Harold Washington moved his coalition onto a broader base. It also made it more conservative, as he included more constituents. Had Mayor Washington's tenure continued, it is conceivable that his administration would have made an even greater shift toward conservatism. By the very nature of the governance process, as more divergent elements were included into the support of the administration, more practical compromises had to be made to maintain the divergent elements within the coalition.

## *Limitations of the Washington Program*

There was also a downside for the community organizations: to some extent and for some time there was a *loss of independence and initiative among CBOs*. We took coalition building for granted. We operated as if all that we had to do was to proclaim movement politics or profess to be a supporter of black–Latino or black–white unity and . . . Presto!—we got instant unity!—when our experience had been that solidarity is forged in struggle and then debated and tested in battle.

Community activists clamored for access. They demanded inclusion. When you have this thrust you risk a compromise of independence and initiative at the same time. You may be mesmerized by "palace intrigue," or sometimes you got tied into downtown politics. This did occur. It happened to the extent that some people overly identified with city hall, to the point where they said, "*We* are in power, *we* run it."



Second (and a parallel to the first point) is that *the movement was coopted* to the extent that such thoughts prevailed as "we can't do anything to embarrass the mayor" or "we put him there so we have to support him."

Co-optation also happened in a third way: many of our *important fighters in the trenches went to city hall*. It's not that they couldn't go to city hall to work or to serve that's at issue. The fact is that once they arrived there to serve, they quit communicating and listening to the neighborhood anymore. Or their relationship to the neighborhood became one of expediency, as opposed to being a serious and honest relationship that was built on prior experience and practice and could be sustained. This becomes an important lesson in terms of how to do progressive government work and maintain a positive progressive orientation. Some of our friends in government have to learn how to do that better.

## *Reflections*

Why did these shortcomings occur? Why weren't they corrected? Part of the problem—and what we learned during 1983–1987—was that Harold Washington operated under severe constraints. Many of us had an uninformed view of big city mayors. We did not fully understand how much a black, progressive mayor would be limited by his constitutional role but also by the political economy in which he functioned. First, *racism persisted* under the Washington administration. We saw that in the "council wars." We saw it in the 1987 and 1989 elections. The adverse reaction of party leadership was dramatic and enduring, and was a source for racial polarization and a cause for maintenance of political narrow-mindedness within the electorate. The media continuously cast the Washington administration in a negative light and contributed to reinforcement of racial polarization.

Independent of racism, there was the *bureaucracy*, a complex web of relations, procedures, and regulatory functions that provided continuity but impeded innovation. Under Washington, not only was there a half-century-old entrenched bureaucracy, there was the patronage-laden city government that resisted innovation because change was perceived as not in the patronage workers' interest.

A third constraint was the relationship of local government to the county, other taxing bodies, and other legislative bodies at the state and federal levels. This was most significant—perhaps more than most people realize. Washington's push for an urban agenda was hampered by the Republican control at the state and federal level.

Some people looked to Harold Washington to provide an immediate relief for substantive conditions outside of his control like jobs or more

affordable housing. At best, he could set the tone and encourage model programs.

And there is the question of the relationship of city hall to the banking community on LaSalle Street. It is very significant that the leading bankers went in to see Harold and shake hands with him, as opposed to picking up the phone. They did so to let him know that they could shut down the city. And that is important for any radical or progressive to understand about the urban political economy—that the banks rule the government, the mayor only *manages* it. It is significant that one of Washington's first acts (like Jane Byrne before him and Sawyer after him) was to go to the bond houses in New York in order to assure Wall Street (and LaSalle Street) that there was no problem in Chicago that could not be made manageable, that the city was bankable, and that an environment favorable to business and investment in the city was being maintained. Without these assurances the city's ability to borrow money at favorable interest rates or to sell bonds would be seriously jeopardized.

Apart from these constraints, other limitations on the gains many expected from Washington in office only became apparent after his death, in the way his governing coalition splintered and accentuated the fragmentation that had already begun. It unraveled most profoundly with the disintegration of the Washington coalition in the city council. First, the black council members with the weakest links to the progressive reform movement began to engage in acts of individual political opportunism. Feeling that they had nothing to fear from a fragmented reform movement without the powerful persona of Washington, some black council members immediately went out to cut deals with the old guard while ostensibly supporting Acting Mayor Eugene Sawyer. It is clear that they abandoned the reform agenda. Others were less daring even though they might have been tempted. These divisions had a major impact upon subsequent political developments in city politics.

Several other black and Latino council members appeared to have abandoned the reform agenda, if not the respective black and Latino nationality-specific agendas of their community in 1989, though it was not clear whether their newly formed alignments with the rejuvenated machine would enhance their political futures.

The missing factor, which had been present in 1983, was the mobilizing base that had been provided by the CBOs. How did we lose this? This question hangs over us now. It is clear that by 1987 Harold Washington was funding a number of organizations that differed markedly from the original CBO constituency: neighborhood retail and industrial retention organizations are examples. Many of these did not meet CDBG guidelines for low-income eligibility. The coalition was weaker as a result in 1987. Thus, community based participation was perhaps the most problematic aspect of the Washington administration.



*Washington embraced the most salient aspects of the community-directed development framework.* One current irony is that a result of Harold Washington's positive response to the neighborhood development agenda was that it placed a cap on the insurgent-oriented energies emanating from CBOs and the community development movement. But part of the problem was in our own organization and tactics. We had no organization that could maintain some discipline, an organization where people felt they had a reference group they could relate to as a source of strength. We met at lunch and we struggled around things, but there was no overarching political and organizational unity. Everyone was free to be as freewheeling and irresponsible as he or she wanted to be. On the other hand, we became so immersed in day-to-day tasks that we lost sight of the forest and the horizon.

We *did not prepare new leadership* at the grass-roots level. The source of strength of Chicago's neighborhoods is the fact that indigenous leaders emerged and matured. They articulated issues on behalf of their constituencies and there was some level of accountability, in some form—block clubs, organizations, tenant unions, welfare recipients organizations, and the like. And there was a flowering of leadership in the campaign period when new actors surfaced and in the early governance period when new voices began to be heard in pubic policy. But those voices are now old voices in the sense that no new indigenous leadership emerged in 1983–1989.

Finally, there is the question of *factionalization of the leadership*, and the reemergence of top–down leadership. This is the carryover from the Washington period, in the sense that self-proclaimed community leaders speak for the low-income communities of Chicago or the affordable housing community without consultation or accountability to their constituents. It is just assumed that these leaders came out of a neighborhood context. Given the fact that there is no organization that can force accountability, they become self-proclaimed. The surprising thing is that the most prominent figures doing this were not Johnny-come-latelies. They were veterans of movement politics who should have known that movements are products of hard work and are most successful when there is clarity of collective thought and strategy based upon hard critical thinking.

## Conclusion: Toward a New Agenda

I think that there are important implications of the Washington administration at both the local and the national level. The Washington victory and subsequent governance period represented a magic moment of

international importance. To say that is to say there was something beautiful about it and something that brought the dead to life. People who had been dead since the 1960s, not in a physical sense but emotionally, spiritually dead, came alive! I saw and worked with winos who put on ties and picked up their pens and clipboards and walked precincts during the Harold Washington campaign. Harold was correct when he said, "You go out of the city, you go out of the country, you go out of the continent and people will say, 'How's Harold? What's happening in Chicago?' "

There is still the sense today that people look to Chicago for innovation in terms of progressive politics and on economic development issues. The Chicago Rehab Network served as a model for other cities on how coalitions can be put together on a multinational, multiracial basis. The same thing is true with CWED. It had gained national reputation as a center of the community economic development movement. That's important, and we don't have to mention the Jesse Jackson experience at all.

Win or lose, Chicago has facilitated that sense of movement around the country among blacks and Latinos; call it coalition politics or call it the "Rainbow." More importantly, in our analysis the Rainbow has better prospects for staying alive and building at the local level than it has nationally, until the development of linkages between national and local constituencies.

But in Chicago we have fragmentation in black politics. The current crisis in political leadership in the electoral arena is only one manifestation of that. It poses grave problems for the "new democratic coalition," the so-called Rainbow.

A sense of conflict, competitiveness and rivalry also exists between blacks and Latinos. Jane Byrne tried to play off blacks and Latinos in 1980–1982, but unsuccessfully. This happened again in the fragmentation of the coalition around the "Washington 26" after 1987, and later in the split between progressive Latino aldermen—with Luis Gutierrez, on one side, and Jesús García and Raymond Figureroa, on the other. This was not good for the progressive movement in Chicago.

Now, what's the road forward? In the midst of the current crisis, I think that there are several things we need to do. First is this notion of a *mass organization*. In other words, bottom–up politics. The KOCOs, the MCCs, the Lawndale People's Planning Action are good. They are necessary but not sufficient. *We need a mass organization that can take up substantive issues on the basis of a mass common program.* Community organizations are limited: they are dependent upon external sources of funding. We need to encourage and build self-standing, independent mass organizations. Both are necessary and neither is sufficient. Existing community groups have by necessity had to form coalitions. What we need is a monolithic organization, a unifying homogeneous mass organization that



can raise up a standard of struggle around class-based issues facing the vast numbers of citizens.

Why is this imperative? It is doubtful that traditional party organizations and candidates making their routine campaign appeals will continue to excite the vast majority of poor people. They will not be believable. Only an organization with mass leadership can move beyond the reform agenda.

Second, *we need independence and initiative in the movement.* We've lost some of that, and until we regain it, regardless of who is elected mayor, we are at a loss without it. Until we do this we will compromise the progressive character of our politics, whoever gets to be mayor. Harold was less effective because he didn't have a strong independent movement. He *was* the movement! He was the movement personified in city hall—to the extent that we said, "We don't want to embarrass the Mayor," and "Let's not initiate anything until we check with city hall." And so we checked—privately or publicly—with city hall in order to find out what we ought to be doing. We did this without coming up with our own initiatives.

If that initiative had been there we could have clarified the lines between who *runs* and who really *rules* Chicago. If this had been happening, then LaSalle Street would not have been able to bulldog Harold into making compromises that were not in the best interests of the city. Washington would have been able to say: "My hands are tied; my constituents are saying this is what I should do."

## NOTES

1. My dissertation is on the Task Force for Black Political Empowerment, one of the central groups in the effort to mobilize support for Harold Washington's election during the fall of 1982. The Task Force has been treated by Abdul Alkalimat and myself in other publications: in Rod Bush, ed., *The New Black Vote* (San Francisco: Synthesis Publications, 1984); and Alkalimat and Gills, *The Task Force for Black Political Empowerment: Beyond the Crisis in Black Power in Chicago* (Chicago: TCB Publications, 1989).
See also Paul Kleppner, *Chicago Divided: The Making of a Black Mayor* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1985); Melvin Holli and Paul Green, eds., *The Making of the Mayor, Chicago 1983* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1984); also Holli and Green, eds., *Bashing Chicago Traditions: Harold Washington's Last Campaign, Chicago 1987* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1989); Samuel K. Gove and Louis H. Masotti, eds., *After Daley: Chicago Politics in Transition* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1982), especially chapters by Rakove and Preston; and William J. Grimshaw, *Black Politics in Chicago: The Quest for*

*Leadership, 1939–1979* (Chicago: Department of Political Science, Illinois Institute of Technology, 1980); and Dempsey J. Travis, *"Harold," The People's Mayor: The Authorized Biography of Harold Washington* (Chicago: Urban Research Press, 1989). At the national level see Manning Marable, *Black American Politics* (New York: Shocken Books, 1985); Michael Preston et al., *The New Black Politics: The Search for Political Power* (New York: Longmans, 1987).

2. See James O'Connor, *The Meaning of Crisis: A Theoretical Introduction* (Cambridge, Mass.: Basil Blackwell, 1987); T. Robert Gurr and Desmond King, *The State and the City* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987); Roger Friedland, *Power and Crisis in the City* (New York: Schocken Books, 1983); and Terry N. Clark and Lorna C. Ferguson, *City Money* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983).

3. Clark and Ferguson, *City Money*; Larry Bennett, Gregory Squires, Kathleen McCourt, and Phillip Nyden, *Chicago: Race, Class, and the Response to Urban Decline* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987); and Abdul Alkalimat and Douglas Gills, *Harold Washington and the Crisis in Black Power* (Chicago: Twenty-first Century Books, 1988).

4. Daniel Fusfeld and Timothy Bates, *The Political Economy of the Urban Ghetto* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1984); William J. Wilson, *The Declining Significance of Race* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978); also Wilson's *The Truly Disadvantaged* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

5. Alkalimat and Gills, *Harold Washington*, pp. 126–131; also Michael B. Preston, "Black Politics in the Post-Daley Era," in S. Gove and L. Massotti, eds., *Politics in Chicago After Daley* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981).

6. See Alkalimat and Gills, *Harold Washington*; also Melvin Holli and Paul Green, *The Making of a Black Mayor* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1984).

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 rebellions, 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 that was to indict the system and to intensify the efforts to resolve some of the glaring examples of police misconduct within the Black community.



9. These included Rush (2nd ward), Hutchinson (9th), Beavers (7th), Langford (16th), Tillman (3rd), W. Davis (28th), and Smith (27th). In the redistricted special ward elections of 1986, Gutierrez, Soliz, García, and Figueroa all won election along with Carter (15th) and Giles (37th), providing Washington with a new majority in the city council.

10. The idea that the community-based network was a potential *organizational* as opposed to ideological alternative to the machine was current in Chicago—as a rhetorical point in the press and from members of the "Vrdolyak 29" during the "council wars" period. Kari Moe and I discussed whether it might be a real possibility at that time. There is a whole body of Marxist and left popular literature that argues that collective goods redistribution and collective interests within constituencies can serve to motivate political activism without regard to personal material incentives. The people who supported Harold Washington as volunteers were not paid, were not promised jobs. They believed in the agenda. The issue is that there must be a political organization that functions like a party to get out the vote, to register voters, to canvass voters, to nominate and promote candidates to bear their standard. The return to such participation need not be privatized or individualized. The beauty of the Washington period was that a whole sector of the population derived symbolic and collective benefits from his victory. Thus a new politics was made possible even if some of his supporters didn't agree with it. Recall that as soon as Washington died it was the black aldermen in the city council and black committee members in the predominantly black wards who swung into motion, initiating deals and making overtures to restore the old politics of patronage—Chicago's greatest tradition of the past 60 years.

11. Community activists within the Chicago Rehab Network such as Bob Lucas, Nancy Jefferson, Slim Coleman, and Maureen Hellwig argued forcefully that the city should delegate its neighborhood service functions to nonprofit community-based groups who could be certified as legitimate contractors. In 1982, under Mayor Byrne, there were less than 50 such agencies receiving CDBG contracts. By 1987 there were nearly 350 agencies who were receiving contracts to provide various neighborhood services on behalf of the city. During Mayor Washington's first budget in 1983, he reprogrammed some $13 million to nonprofit agencies—away from the Departments of Housing, Human Services, and Economic Development into community-based "delegate agencies."