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### “The Last And Most Difficult Barrier”: Segregation And Federal Housing Policy In The Eisenhower Administration, 1953-1960

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*“Residential segregation remains the last and  
most difficult barrier to full equality.”*

— A. Philip Randolph to Albert M. Cole, April 28, 1958, folder:  
1, box 166, Subject File 1947-1960, RG 207, National Archives II.

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## Introduction

It has been more than a generation since the Kerner Commission rendered its judgement on the riotous 1960s. Stunning then, *passé* now, the exhaustive report on urban America's defining mid-century civil disturbances pointed an accusatory finger at the nation's dominant majority. In words both familiar and forgotten, the investigative tribunal charged that "white society [was] deeply implicated in the ghetto." "White institutions created it," the Commission concluded, "white institutions maintain it, and white society condones it."<sup>i</sup>

If such complicity in the ghetto's creation and persistence seemed a daring topic for mainstream discussion in 1968, it must be noted that the subject arose, in a vastly different context, nearly a decade-and-a-half earlier in a White House discussion of housing policy. In early 1954, President Dwight David Eisenhower confronted the daunting task of rebuilding a decayed urban America in the midst of civil rights and demographic revolutions that radically altered the racial balance of our metropolitan areas. And as we now know, a deep-seated white resistance to integration and black mobility (a resistance only partially captured by white flight to the suburbs and violent mob actions in "changing" inner city neighborhoods), found its political voice at the same time. The recently elected Republican's dilemma was, consequently, more easily stated than addressed. How could the second Great Migration, increasing African American militancy, and majoritarian racial sentiment be accommodated within a single plan to revive our urban centers and strengthen the national economy?

The Eisenhower administration took a stab at it by devising the concept of "urban renewal," a program recommended by the President's Advisory Committee on Housing in late 1953 and introduced to Congress in his "Housing Message" of January 25, 1954. A draft statement of the proposal, revised and marked with marginal notes — and a comparison of that draft with the speech as finally given — offers a revealing glimpse of the chief executive's thinking, if not intentions. In addition to deleting virtually every overt reference to race or racial discrimination (this was color-blindness with a vengeance), at least one advisor informed the President of the legislation's likely impact. Succinctly packaged in two words, a presidential aide acknowledged — in language that foreshadowed the Kerner Commission's — that the administration's approach "condone[d] segregation."<sup>ii</sup> It is impossible to tell, of course, from that single, truncated observation whether Eisenhower actively advocated residential apartheid as policy or merely acquiesced in it as a necessary by-product. What is clear, however, is that after much revision, one of the few sections of the speech that remained intact was the one on "minority housing" that elicited the President's terse analysis. At the least, there is no recorded objection to the proposal, and it is manifest that the program's outcome (if not all the consequences that flowed from it) was clearly foreseen. More than merely "condoning" a new round of ghetto-building to contain an enlarged African American population, the Housing Act of 1954 — passed by Congress within weeks of the Supreme Court's Brown decision — enabled and empowered local authorities to adopt renewal plans that guaranteed continued separate and unequal development.

The process and substance of the Eisenhower administration's housing policy, then, reinforces several themes that have appeared recently in African American urban historiography. First, from this perspective, the “urban crisis” of the 1960s, did not emerge from the “liberal excesses” of that era, but has a longer, more tangled, and very different political genesis than that granted by prevailing conventional wisdom. Second, the disastrous consequences of post-World War II urban decline were not invariably the unintended results of a dominant and unfettered liberalism, but are better seen as the eminently predictable outcomes of a rightward turn in domestic policy in the 1950s. And third, if the concept of “backlash” has any meaning at all for the 1960s, it is most accurately used in reference to the civil disorders of those years rather than their aftermath.<sup>iii</sup>

### ***Eisenhower Inherits the New Deal***

There is little doubt that the Republican ascension following the November, 1952 elections placed liberalism on the defensive and challenged certain New Deal assumptions and values. In terms of housing it was not that the Democrats led the charge for a postwar policy of dispersal and integration — or even had any coherent policy at all — that had to be overcome. It was that some surviving and strategically placed bureaucrats in the aptly named Racial Relations Service (RRS) entertained notions of, and laid a foundation for, a policy of non-discrimination in federal housing programs. A potential source of political embarrassment, there also remained the possibility that the Service might frighten off the private investors so highly prized — and needed — by the administration to support redevelopment.

Growing out of a Depression-era commitment to serve minority interests when implementing remedial programs, the RRS found a home in the alphabet soup of housing agencies created during the Roosevelt and Truman administrations. Created in 1938, this group of black race relations advisors pursued a policy that sought racial “equity” into the postwar period. Including access to a “fair share” of federal benefits — ranging from the proportionate occupation of public housing units to a similar distribution of construction jobs and management positions — early RRS policy worked within the color line and accepted the “neighborhood composition rule” that prevented public projects from altering the residential *status quo*.<sup>iv</sup>

By the end of World War II, under the direction of Frank S. Horne, the RRS found the concept of “equity” malleable enough to include a proposed refusal to use government resources to support segregation. Although Horne and other RRS advisors argued against the subsidization of developments that fostered residential apartheid, their bureaucratic resistance slowed, but could not derail such projects under successive Democratic administrations. Such ultimately unavailing protests were most noticeably felt in Chicago, Detroit, Baltimore, and Birmingham as an inaugural wave of projects under the Housing Act of 1949 started down an uncertain path.<sup>v</sup>

Fighting its marginalization within the government, the RRS nonetheless retained some imagination and zeal. Indeed, the Supreme Court's 1948 ruling in the restrictive covenant cases even provided grounds for optimism while the 1951 eruption of housing-related violence in the Chicago suburb of Cicero fueled its outrage. The last years of the Truman presidency subsequently saw the RRS staff work diligently through the Housing and Home Finance Agency (HHFA) and its constituent units to expand the realm of integration and non-discrimination.<sup>vi</sup>

The HHFA's traditional deference to localism, had, heretofore, successfully avoided a national discussion of racial issues, permitted the South virtual autonomy in support of Jim Crow, and generally sustained a segregated *status quo* throughout the nation. In the early 1950s, however, hundreds of local housing authorities, dozens of cities, and a handful of states outside the South passed resolutions, ordinances, and laws condemning or banning racial discrimination in public housing or publicly-assisted developments. Race relations advisors in the HHFA and, especially, its subordinate Public Housing Administration (PHA), saw an opening and moved quickly to transmute the reflexive and traditional federal reticence to override local policy into a shield for open occupancy.<sup>vii</sup>

Calling for a "reexamination" and "reorientation" of basic policies governing race and housing, the RRS sought a prohibition on federal aid to segregated projects in the absence of affirmative legislative mandates establishing them. These internal critics sought to end the informal administrative support that had fostered segregation and now tried to use the same unspoken tactic to isolate the South. More than that, the race relations staff produced and distributed a detailed "how to" manual to assist those public housing authorities implementing "voluntary" desegregation plans. Real change, however, remained elusive as demonstrated in the subsequent white uprising in Chicago's Trumbull Park. There, attempts to integrate an historically white PWA project touched off a decade of chronic disorder. Ringing declarations of equality, even those given the weight of law, failed to move mayors, city councils, and the other local authorities that had to face the grim racial realities of the postwar period. In short, the RRS confirmed its status as a potentially subversive fifth-column within the citadel of segregation, but its lack of clout meant that results proved more symbolic than substantive.<sup>viii</sup>

The changing, chilling political climate of the 1950s cooled whatever embers remained of the movement for non-discrimination in federal housing programs. Indeed, where optimists may have hoped the fresh breeze provided by the Supreme Court's 1954 edict in Brown would reignite the push for equality, pessimists (realists?) proved more prescient in suggesting that the mere placement of "separate but equal" beyond the constitutional pale would not, by itself, mean an end to either discrimination or segregation.

The changing of the political guard consonant with the arrival of the Eisenhower administration in 1953, in fact, represented a decisive turn away from the RRS push for non-

discrimination well before the Brown decision sparked another (and distinct) wave of reaction in the housing agencies. From the appointment of a new HHFA administrator, to the reining in of Frank Horne and the RRS staff, the appointment of Eisenhower’s Advisory Committee on Housing, and the framing of urban renewal legislation, a rising conservative tide in Washington, D. C. established the political and institutional framework within which local authorities across the nation confronted postwar racial and economic challenges.

The point here is quite simple. Earlier research, especially case studies focused on single cities, tended to take relentlessly and almost exclusively local perspectives — sometimes in telling, if excruciating detail. Even the initiative for enabling national legislation in these studies seemed to bubble up from the boondocks.<sup>x</sup> Such an accounting is not so much wrong as it is incomplete. If urban renewal may be fairly viewed as a collection of locally-conceived and -implemented programs that had palpable negative consequences for poor and minority populations, it must also be seen as arising from conscious federal policy. It is the symbiotic interplay of national and local imperatives that reveals not the “perversion” of liberal initiatives or the unintended results of poorly conceived plans, but, rather, the expected and predictable translation of a broad postwar reaction into numerous local idioms. The New Deal’s reform impulse may or may not have survived the era of Joe McCarthy, and its vision of racial equality may or may not have been adequate for the task at hand; but whatever possibility existed to weaken rather than strengthen prevailing patterns of segregation was not squandered by its supporters; it was crushed by real enemies.

### ***Albert M. Cole, HHFA Administrator***

The first signs of a strong rightward thrust in housing policy came within weeks of the General’s election. Almost immediately, the Eisenhower transition team found itself besieged by interested parties seeking to influence the selection of a new HHFA Administrator. As early as December, 1952, one adviser reported receiving “quite a few phone calls from people in the building and real estate fields.” Indeed, he revealed, Herbert U. Nelson, executive vice-president of the National Association of Real Estate Boards (NAREB) had “called daily for the last week.”<sup>x</sup>

A close observer of the process, developer James Rouse of Baltimore, worried about the potential impact of such self-interested lobbying and complained to Eisenhower confidante Aksel Nielsen, president of the Title Guaranty Company of Denver. “Getting rid of slums and providing decent housing for lower income families is one of the toughest domestic problems Eisenhower will face,” Rouse told Nielsen. “Unfortunately most men in the housing and housing finance industry have very little concern about slums. They are only concerned with getting rid of public housing,” he wrote.<sup>xi</sup> Senator Robert A. Taft (R-Ohio) voiced similar concerns in a communication to soon-to-be-named Attorney General Herbert Brownell. Taft believed it “important” that the new HHFA director not be a “public houser”; but he also rejected building contractors as well as any “real estate man [who would be] substantially against public housing.” Having defined what he opposed, however, Taft went no further and offered no specific candidate.<sup>xii</sup>

Refinement of the criteria for — and the process of selecting — new leadership at HHFA continued at a “roundtable” on the agency’s future sponsored by *Time* and *Life* magazines in Rye, New York. Aksel Nielsen attended the conference at Eisenhower’s request as the President-elect’s personal representative. Reporting directly to Eisenhower on what he perceived to be the “consensus of opinion” that emerged from the two-day conclave, Nielsen foreshadowed the administration’s eventual urban renewal initiative by emphasizing the rehabilitation of deteriorating areas. Such a course, Nielsen wrote, would “forestall . . . future slums” more economically “than by creating new public housing.” And through soon-to-be chief-of-staff Sherman Adams, Nielsen indicated that while he was not hostile to Rouse’s call for an administrator with a social conscience, he had other priorities. The new head of the HHFA, he advised Adams, should be “a man who has, first of all, a desire to separate the self-supporting agencies from the subsidized agencies.”<sup>xiii</sup>

In noting that difference between the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) and the Public Housing Administration (PHA), Nielsen grasped the two-tier housing policy that historian Gail Radford detected emerging from the New Deal. Moreover, the characterization and distinction, according to the recent work of David Freund, amounted to little more than a polite fiction.<sup>xiv</sup> The upper tier, represented by the FHA, involved public supports and incentives for the private market, and eased the transition to homeownership among its segregated and virtually all-white clientele. It literally created a vastly expanded housing market. The bottom rung, symbolized by the PHA, consisted of means-tested, low-cost, low-rent public housing. The only housing program, which, from its inception, provided significant benefits to non-whites, it would now become (if Nielsen approved a congenial HHFA Administrator) more segregated conceptually and isolated programmatically — key developments that preceded a racial transition that made public housing an overwhelmingly minority preserve by the end of the decade.

After consulting with Nielsen and a handful of others, Special Assistant to the President Charles F. Willis, Jr. informed Sherman Adams that the group agreed to nominate a defeated Republican congressman from Kansas, Albert M. Cole, as HHFA Administrator. Cole’s “philosophy” comported well with Nielsen’s, Willis wrote; both saw the need for departmental reorganization and both believed that “public and private housing should be separated.” It remained only for a personal meeting to “allay [Nielsen’s] fears as to [Cole’s] strength of character under pressure.” That done, the name of the former member of the House Committee on Banking and Currency went forward with the support of the home building industry.<sup>xv</sup>

Others were less pleased. The Congress of Industrial Organizations’ (CIO) Walter Reuther wrote Eisenhower to express his “deep concern” over Cole’s appointment. The union leader reviewed the nominee’s negative congressional record on “decent housing for low income families” — he had voted against the Housing Act of 1949 — and declared that “Albert Cole is not the man to direct a program in which he does not believe and which he has consistently

opposed.” The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People’s (NAACP) Clarence Mitchell expressed additional worries. During Senate confirmation hearings he urged committee members to learn “just what kind of racial policy will be followed by the housing agencies under Mr. Cole’s administration.” “Will the government of the United States,” he wondered, “continue to underwrite, support, and extend racial segregation?”<sup>xvi</sup>

The answer to Mitchell’s question, as well as a glimpse of Cole’s notion of “reorganization,” became evident within a few, short weeks. Among his earliest actions was the demotion and removal of Frank Horne as his Racial Relations Advisor. Not only did he sever the RRS’s leading advocate of non-discrimination from his position of influence, but Cole displayed his contempt for the Service by pulling the office of Racial Relations Advisor out from under civil service protection and treating it as nothing more than a patronage plum. Cole subsequently named Joseph R. Ray, a black realtor (the designation “realtor” was reserved for whites) from Louisville, Kentucky, to the post at the urgent insistence of Republican Senator John Sherman Cooper. A life-long Republican already active in organizing black voters in support of Cooper’s 1954 re-election bid, Ray’s appointment (according to Charles F. Willis) enhanced the party’s chances of “carrying the Mayoralty election in Louisville and also the next Senatorial election in Kentucky.” It also soothed the feelings of John M. Robison, Jr., a congressman “greatly disturbed” by the prospect of retaining a Democrat such as Horne. Ray was “very capable and deserving,” he wired the White House, “and his immediate appointment would be of great help to me and the Republican Party in the state of Kentucky.”<sup>xvii</sup>

Politically and philosophically, Ray could be depended upon to be the consummate “team” player. He would occasionally lobby internally for less conservative policies (as would be the case following Brown) and perhaps play the stealthy bureaucratic game well enough to make an infrequent end run around immediate superiors. But he was not a rebel who would issue any direct challenges and his loyalties lay with his patrons. Where Horne worked to bring a minority perspective to the administration, Ray seemed more comfortable translating in the opposite direction. Parsing his words carefully, he could “deny flatly that the current program calls for the Government actively entering into the construction of jim crow housing.” And while he claimed to stand for “complete integration,” he carefully articulated a practical willingness to accept the proverbial “half loaf” if forced to choose between that and “no bread at all.” The “stars,” he told one correspondent, “do not provide adequate covering for those who are in dire need of either immediate housing or better housing.”<sup>xviii</sup>

Howls of protest accompanied Horne’s relegation to an innocuous research position in “Minority Studies” and the subjection of the RRS to the “spoils system.” The National Urban League’s Lester Granger and Mary McLeod Bethune, along with others, wrote directly to the President to praise Horne’s integrity, expertise, and professionalism in directing the “highly technical” RRS in a “non-political” manner. He had served with “distinction” for 15 years, Bethune wrote, and the present housing shortage and displacement of blacks due to slum clearance made it the wrong time to “alter the delicate balance of Negro-White relations.”

Despite such appeals, Cole eased Horne out of his “policy level position” and retained him only “to utilize his unique experience” as an Assistant to the Administrator. In undermining Horne, the RRS, and the first hesitant steps toward non-discrimination, Cole quickly turned away from the personnel, institutions, and policies that tied his agency to the New Deal.<sup>xix</sup>

### ***The President's Advisory Committee on Housing***

Even as this initial Cole-Horne confrontation played itself out, the President drew upon the building, real estate, and loan industries to furnish the lion's share of representation for his Advisory Committee on Housing. Called to make basic policy recommendations and define a new approach to persistent housing problems, the Committee, Cole, and, ultimately, the President, chose to ignore the race problem that lay at the heart of their planned urban revival. From the beginning, the Administrator asked Eisenhower for his “views on broad issues so that I can do a better job with the Advisory Committee.” As Cole saw it, the “Number One policy issue” involved the questionable continuation of the public housing program. The reorganization of federal housing activities ranked second, and the emergent interest in rehabilitation (as opposed to the massive demolition associated with slum clearance) placed third on his agenda. Though such suggestions carried grave racial implications, he made no specific mention of race or segregation in his detailed request for executive guidance.<sup>xx</sup>

Determined to force the open and explicit consideration of such issues, Frank Horne — from his weakened position — met with various Advisory Committee members, including those on the FHA-VA sub-committee as well as those examining slum clearance, redevelopment, and rehabilitation under James Rouse's direction. With great care, Horne detailed in a memorandum to Cole the essential problems, policies, and specific proposals he wished to have discussed.

The difficulty in sheltering non-white families, for example, involved more than providing subsidized public housing, Horne wrote. A mushrooming middle class that could “afford good housing at economic prices” still found itself “virtually excluded from the extensive new private housing developments constructed during the last decade with FHA, VA and other forms of government assistance,” Horne charged. And all non-whites, especially the poor, stood to be damaged by their continued migration and congestion in dilapidated urban cores, their eventual “displacement from these areas” by urban renewal, and their subsequent economic exploitation. Remedial efforts to date, he asserted in an allusion to earlier Democratic missteps under Titles I and III of the Housing Act of 1949, “have been largely stalled or perverted by the lack of adequate public or private housing available to displaced families, the bulk of whom are Negroes.” No city, he concluded, “has developed a really fair and consistent program in dealing with the . . . problems of non-white families.”<sup>xxi</sup>

To address such concerns, Horne proposed, as “basic policy,” that “all land assembled, housing constructed and facilities provided through the use of federal funds, credit powers, or other assistance” be made available to “families of all races” on an equal basis. Specifically,



this meant the “full exploitation” of open land sites for non- white occupation, including a suggested “requirement” for “collateral open land development” for blacks and other minorities “whenever congested areas [of] non-whites are to be cleared.” If not explicitly a call for a policy of dispersal and integration, such directed use of vacant land represented, at the least, one of deconcentration. It also meant, for Horne, a concerted effort “to loosen up the normal mortgage investment market,” including the “elimination of race as a factor in FHA and VA underwriting” and holding FHA-VA field officers “responsible for participation of non-white families in their programs.”<sup>xxiii</sup> Finally, Horne’s suggested “reorganization” of the housing agencies pointedly called for, among other changes, an enhanced role for racial relations advisors and the RRS – particularly in making “composite reviews” of locally-implemented federal programs.<sup>xxiii</sup>

There is no evidence that Horne’s detailed analysis or vision moved either Cole or the Committee. Indeed, they may have been forced to take cognizance of the race issue, but they hardly appropriated Horne’s recommendations. Instead, in the December, 1953 report summary prepared for the President, the Committee simply announced that it was “deeply concerned with the housing problems of minorities.” In what can only be seen as a not-so-veiled rebuttal of the arguments put forth by Cole’s assistant for Minority Studies, the report denied the efficacy of legislating racial policy. “Legislation alone cannot provide needed sites,” the Committee concluded without stating why such was the case, nor could it guarantee “a flow of mortgage funds, needed new construction,” or (in an oblique reference to racial tensions) a solution of neighborhood and related problems.” Construing the issues of race and housing most narrowly, the report instead promised only “substantial improvements in the housing conditions of minority groups” and that only after its suggestions were “supplemented by changes in the attitude of private investors.”<sup>xxiv</sup> Even before Brown, the administration had made its choice between stateways and folkways.

As for its stand on public housing, the Committee’s thinking remained wishful, muddled, and contradictory. On the one hand, its recommendations — especially those liberalizing FHA operations — aimed at increasing the “private production of housing for low income families” in order to “lessen the need for direct subsidies” through public housing. Though, again, race is never explicitly mentioned, the extension of FHA services to include the “rehabilitation of obsolete structures in decaying neighborhoods” for low income families seems a clear attempt to “improve conditions” for non-whites while keeping them in place. Nowhere, moreover, does the Committee acknowledge the plight of economically competent minorities raised by Horne or the continuing impact of the FHA’s well-established and -known racially restrictive practices.<sup>xxv</sup>

Given the uncertain outcome of such attempts to make the private market “more effective” in producing housing for minorities, the Committee retained (“with certain amendments”) the public housing program established by the Housing Act of 1949. Its recommendations now clearly linked the allocation of such units to “families displaced by . . . public improvements”

and unmistakably regarded this facilitation of urban renewal as a transient necessity. It went on to conclude, therefore, that whenever “feasible”

public housing should be built at lower densities, and the design of public housing projects should conform more closely to local dwelling patterns and construction practices. This recommendation is designed to avoid the institutionalized character of public housing and to facilitate [its] . . . sale when no longer needed for low-income families.

The problem, of course, was that such a formulation failed to take into account the prevailing pattern of racial segregation, the bitter, contested, and ongoing history of project site selection, the expense of inner city land, legislated limits on construction costs, and the disproportionate racial impact of locally-controlled urban renewal developments — all of which guaranteed production of the very type of public housing the Committee hoped to avoid. Perhaps an invigorated RRS could have mitigated the consequences; but the reorganization plan detailed in the summary report did not even mention the Service.<sup>xxvi</sup>

Hardly a blueprint for social reform, the administration’s housing program had only, by its own admission, the “twin objectives of satisfying the demand of the American people for good homes and the maintenance of a sound and growing economy.” The first relied on the increased efficiency of the private sector while the second called for counter-cyclical spending to stave off the fearful prospect of another Depression. Indeed, if there was debate in the national press over the merits of the report, an apparent consensus emerged regarding the conservative impulses that guided it. Not only did urban renewal devolve responsibility back “on private business and local governments,” according to *Business Week*, but did so with the goal of “upgrading real estate and human values.”<sup>xxvii</sup>

Cole presented the report and its recommendations in a December 9, 1953 Cabinet meeting. Formal minutes as well as handwritten notes taken at the meeting indicate the President’s direct engagement in an extended discussion of urban affairs. Astoundingly, despite Frank Horne’s detailed memorandum to Cole, his briefing of the Advisory Committee itself, and the report’s explicit (if abridged) reference to it, the subject of race never came up.<sup>xxviii</sup> Eisenhower and Cole recognized, of course, that the demolition associated with renewal would reduce the supply of cheap housing and thus necessitate some measure of continued federal support for low-rent public projects in the near term. And while they did not want concentrations of subsidized units for the generic “poor” that could be “stigmatized,” the President seemed more concerned with the prospect of corruption in the public housing program and preoccupied by the thought that tenants would turn new apartments into slums through their “lack of individual care.” Certainly, he gave no indication that he appreciated the irony in the fact that federal investigators had already uncovered a serious scandal not in the PHA, but in the FHA, the upper tier housing agency to be enhanced and protected under his proposal.<sup>xxix</sup> Increasingly flexible definitions of “project costs” and maximum allowable mortgages combined with a recession-induced decline in construction costs to permit developers to

pocket the difference between inflated development estimates and actual expenses. Known as “mortgaging out,” the process produced windfall profits as well as tales of corruption and provision of favors to FHA officials who established requirements and guidelines. The President finally ordered the seizure of FHA files in April, 1954 (one month before Brown), and investigations by the FBI and a Senate committee followed. A final report issued in January 1955 confirmed that private developers, indeed, wined and dined FHA overseers while receiving inflated mortgages far in excess of land and building costs. For a quick summary, see Gail Sansbury, “Section 608: Title VI, National Housing Act,” in Willem van Vliet, ed., The Encyclopedia of Housing (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1998), 519-20. Still, despite such characterizations and blind spots, and his refusal to place race on the table for explicit discussion, he believed that urban renewal represented a “well-rounded program” that would benefit “the entire country.” Politically, the President urged supporters to “preach” that the initiative indicated a “spreading, not [a] drawing back, of Fed[eral] interest.” “Don’t,” he urged “forget the sales job.”<sup>xxx</sup>

Eisenhower himself, of course, became the “salesman-in-chief” with his “Housing Message” to Congress a month later. That address subsequently proved notable, in fact, for more than the private admission that linked his urban agenda to residential segregation. As was standard practice early in his administration, the President turned to agency heads and, in this case, HHFA staff for a working draft. Race Relations Advisor Joseph Ray, never one to dispute agency or party positions in public, nonetheless collaborated with Frank Horne and other RRS officers in the effort to get the President to acknowledge the “added housing problems faced by Negroes and other racial minorities.”<sup>xxxi</sup> Referring specifically to the white opposition and restrictions that confined blacks to congested core neighborhoods and denied financing even to the well qualified, Ray informed Cole that it would be “extremely helpful,” if not “mandatory” for the President to mention explicitly the “living space” and lending issues. He urged, moreover, the administration to use “every possible administrative resource and device” to “overcome” such unequal treatment.<sup>xxxii</sup>

Looking to discern and follow the administration’s lead on such delicate matters, Cole forwarded both a speech draft and a letter to the White House. The Administrator — in a manner suggesting the topic’s novelty — warned Maxwell M. Rabb, the Assistant to the President most often assigned to racial affairs, that the address contained a section on the problems facing minorities. And, in fact, the draft included not only the explicit admission that minorities had “the least opportunity” to “acquire good housing” but also “frank recognition” of the fact that “much of the problem stem[med] directly from discriminatory practices and attitudes which are clearly shameful.” In what proved a model of understatement, Cole noted that such language was “tentative” and that it needed to be discussed “in terms of Administration policy.” If that were not enough, Cole also placed on the table, in an attachment furnished by the NAACP’s Clarence Mitchell, suggested language from the black Republican asserting that it was “legally and morally wrong to use Federal funds in a manner that . . . extend[ed] racial segregation.”<sup>xxxiii</sup>

Whatever the extent and nature of the ensuing policy debates, the final text of the "Housing Message" omitted Mitchell's proposed statement and made no direct reference to racial discrimination, "shameful" or otherwise. Nor did it raise the "living space" issue. It did take cognizance of the constricted opportunities available for minorities, though, and promised that the "administrative policies governing the . . . several housing agencies" would be "materially strengthened and augmented in order to assure equal opportunity for all of our citizens to acquire, within their means, good and well-located homes." As the President noted in his preparation for his talk, empathetic murmurs notwithstanding, that limited approach knowingly "condon[ed] segregation."<sup>xxxiv</sup>

Cole, in a speech heralded as a major policy statement before Detroit's Economic Club on February 8, 1954, reinforced and amplified Eisenhower's essentially quantitative approach to minority housing (he would supply more of it, but on a segregated basis). In clearing slums and meeting the housing needs of the poor, Cole said, the most critical problem was "the factor of racial exclusion from the greater and better part of our housing supply." "[N]o program," he went on, "however well conceived, well financed, or comprehensive can hope to make more than indifferent progress until we open up adequate opportunities to minority families for decent housing." Ignoring "one-tenth" of the housing market, he concluded, was not only bad business but also a failure to live "up to the standards of a free economy and a democratic society." Black observers such as Clarence Mitchell, Walter White, and Robert C. Weaver remained unimpressed. Denying Cole a public commendation for his "fine words," Mitchell believed the Administrator avoided "the basic problem." Until the government adopted a "flat policy" of non-discrimination, Mitchell complained as he cited examples of officially sanctioned segregation, "we shall continue to have the Levittown, Birmingham, and Baltimore type of problem."<sup>xxxv</sup>

The talk of equal opportunity in the absence of a challenge to the color line opened the door for confused, contradictory, and even cynical responses to Eisenhower's directives. Cole, for example, in phrasing that Eisenhower would echo before Congress, spoke of "strengthen[ing] existing procedures . . . to encourage and assist fuller extension of private financing to Negroes and other minority groups, such as Puerto Ricans, Latin- and Asiatic-Americans." He found, however (and so informed the President), that enticing financial institutions to serve this "expanding and profitable housing market" was "complicated by the difficulty of obtaining adequate open land for building sites and the opposition of many white families and neighborhood organizations to the expansion of Negro families into new areas." He placed the RRS among those government agencies whose activities could be "augmented to assure the workings of our free enterprise economy," but only conceived of it as assisting "lenders, builders, city officials and community leaders to overcome the obstacles of living space, financing, marketing and neighborhood opposition." In these areas, the private sector and local authorities remained primary forces to the exclusion of Federal power.<sup>xxxvi</sup>

Joseph R. Ray's reaction to Eisenhower's message followed it by only a day and was more expansive. The mere fact that the President “took cognizance” of the special housing difficulties of minorities was itself an achievement that should not be taken for granted, he wrote. That he “committed his administration to materially strengthen and augment the administrative policies” of the housing agencies to “assure equal opportunity for all” represented a real advance. It remained only, Ray believed, for the HHFA to draw a “bill of particulars” that would outline the “concrete steps” needed to achieve the President's purposes.<sup>xxxvii</sup>

It took Frank Horne little more than a week to do so. Not above stretching Eisenhower's intent past the point of recognition, Horne read his own agenda into the President's vague pronouncements. In describing Eisenhower's “objective” (a decent home for each family, within their means and in a good location) and his “approach” (strengthening and augmenting the policies and procedures of the housing agencies), Horne accepted the President's “challenge” and saw only opportunity, not evasion. Not only should the RRS be enhanced, in his view, but racial relations advisors should be placed throughout the HHFA and its constituents (especially FHA, PHA, and the Division of Slum Clearance and Urban Redevelopment [DSCUR; later the Urban Renewal Administration]); from there, the RRS could focus “every procedure and operation” and “each and every [HHFA] employee” on meeting policy goals. And Horne, unlike the President, did not hesitate to define the latter in race-tinted terms. Among a slew of specific operating proposals (many of which dealt with the enlarged presence and role of the RRS), Horne called for greater control over FHA commitments to “achieve . . . necessary [minority] participation” as well as “a method of priority processing” in all of the constituents that would favor open land and “open occupancy” developments.<sup>xxxviii</sup> They were not measures that earned the quick support of either the Administrator or the President.

### ***Reorganization and Rehabilitation: The FHA Scandals and Political Context***

For all its salience, however, the race issue hardly took center stage in the political process of framing and passing new housing legislation. The administration, instead, showed far greater concern — bordering on near panic — with a series of burgeoning scandals then engulfing the private sector's favored agency, the FHA. Largely lost in the hindsight of history, the Department of Justice circulated a report in the fall of 1954 that portrayed the FHA as “riddled with corruption” and in a state of “moral and administrative disintegration.” Rumors of “maladministration” and even criminal activity in the early 1950s triggered a succession of investigations (the first ordered by the new HHFA Administrator in the spring of 1953 and a second almost exactly one year later by the U.S. Senate) that exposed the agency's lack of “integrity.” Indeed, the President, in a letter to Indiana's Homer E. Capehart, chair of the Senate Committee on Banking and Currency, labeled that panel's findings a “tragedy.” Capehart, however, went further, calling the FHA's depredations “the biggest scandal in the history of the United States.”<sup>xxxix</sup>

Problems concentrated in, but were not confined to, a pair of programs. The first was “Section 608,” an addition to the National Housing Act of 1934 designed to spur construction of rental housing for war workers. Passed in 1942, Section 608 was amended after the war to address the continuing housing shortage. Flexible definitions of “project costs” and maximum allowable mortgages combined with a decline in construction costs to permit builders to pocket the difference between inflated estimates and actual expenses. Known as “mortgaging out,” the process generated “windfall” profits for developers and “gratuities” for the FHA officials who approved estimates and made appraisals. Builders who remained unsatisfied frequently squeezed a few more dollars from the violation of “prevailing wage” provisions of the National Housing Act. Underpaying labor, with FHA approval, became routine and those who — on rare occasions — were ordered to make restitution, often did so on a fractional basis with additional cash provided by FHA sponsors. The program shut down amid complaints and rumors of fraud in 1950 after building 7,045 developments containing 465,683 units.<sup>xj</sup>

The second program exhibiting “widespread and numerous abuses” involved Title I home improvement loans. Beginning in 1949 and continuing into the Eisenhower administration, scam artists of every description took advantage of lax FHA oversight or colluded outright with agency officials to engage, according to one internal report, in the “wholesale victimization of homeowners.” Selling poor workmanship, inferior materials, and often unnecessary or non-essential repairs at grossly inflated prices, unscrupulous builders quickly learned they had little to fear from law enforcement. Under an apparently unique 1935 “agreement,” the Department of Justice surrendered to the FHA “exclusive jurisdiction over the investigation of offenses against the special criminal statutes enacted to protect the integrity of its operations,” HHFA Deputy Administrator William McKenna reported to Cole. Regular law enforcement agencies, such as the FBI, were required to forward allegations of wrongdoing to the FHA, which, presumably, would investigate itself. Not surprisingly, Administrator Cole’s initial 1953 inquiry revealed that the FBI, alone, made 163 referrals for FHA investigation in the preceding two years; only nine of those were pursued while “[h]undreds of cases from other sources were annually swallowed up in FHA’s bureaucracy.” McKenna’s report concluded that the “racketeers . . . who specialized in Title I frauds . . . were uniquely safe from Federal law enforcement.”<sup>xli</sup> The Section 608 and Title I programs were, in short, a dream for many builders and lenders, and a nightmare for thousands of tenants (whose rents had to be raised to cover inflated project costs), homeowners, and taxpayers.

McKenna — and others within the administration — subsequently concluded that the “FHA’s isolation from government control” greatly facilitated such predatory practices. The “vacuum created by the practical dissolution of Government affiliation,” McKenna wrote, “was filled by loose, informal affiliations that at times approached outside management of a nominal Government agency.” Cole therefore addressed his second policy priority in early 1954 with a plan to reorganize the HHFA. Its main feature, according to Nelson A. Rockefeller, then chair of the President’s Advisory Committee on Government Organization, included provisions to “strengthen . . . the supervisory authority of the Administrator over each of the constituent

housing agencies.” “We are in agreement with Mr. Cole and the Bureau of the Budget,” Rockefeller wrote, that the “Housing Administrator should have this strengthened authority.” Even more important, Attorney General Herbert Brownell weighed in at the White House, advising that “allegations of widespread misconduct . . . have made it clear that important changes in the organization of the Housing and Home Finance Agency are greatly needed.” “Developments prove,” he concluded, “that the preservation of authority and autonomy for constituent agencies . . . is not in the best interest of sound public administration.”<sup>xiii</sup> The Bureau of the Budget noted that the first plans for reorganization were “predicated” on “limitations” imposed by anticipated “organized [political] resistance.” By early 1954, though, the Director observed that “certain situations have arisen, with which the Attorney General and Mr. Cole are involved, and which are known to their full extent almost exclusively by them. This has led to the recommendation by the Department of Justice that any proposed reorganization could now be predicated on this background and that disclosure of these circumstances would support . . . measures going beyond those originally contemplated.” The BOB advised against committing to a specific plan until these new “circumstances” could be “fully explored.” See ? Dodge, Director, BOB to Sherman Adams, February 26, 1954, in folder: OF 25 1954 (1), box 201, Central Files, 1953-61, Official File, DDE Records.

Howls of protest from aggrieved special interests came quickly. Ignoring the scandals, the Mortgage Bankers Association of America (MBAA) and the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) brazenly threatened to oppose any reduction in FHA independence. In a lengthy missive to Sherman Adams, MBAA President W. A. Clarke railed against any attempt to give the HHFA Administrator the “blanket authority to shuffle and reshuffle the funds, functions, and personnel of the constituent agencies.” “This is the power,” he warned, “to dismantle . . . and ultimately destroy them.” NAHB President R. G. Hughes was also “exceedingly disturbed” at the prospect of any reorganization that would centralize such authority in the person of the HHFA Administrator. In language that virtually echoed Clarke’s, Hughes admonished against granting the HHFA the ability to “transfer [the] funds, personnel or functions” of its subordinate units, declaring that such a move could “eventually . . . destroy” the FHA’s “usefulness.” Reminding the White House of the “strong sentiment within this Industry for the complete abolition” of the HHFA, Hughes also noted ominously — as did Clarke — that “Republican opposition” defeated similar proposals advanced earlier by Democratic administrations.<sup>xliii</sup>

FHA Commissioner Guy T. O. Hollyday assured Sherman Adams that his long association with such industry representatives permitted him to “understand how intensely” the concerned interests felt. Indeed, as if in lockstep, Hollyday denounced efforts to arm the HHFA Administrator with the power to transfer personnel, funds, and functions among his constituents. He, too, affirmed that such prerogatives contained the “power to destroy” the FHA. Noting the “explosive character” of the issue, Hollyday also felt compelled to remind Adams of the same plan’s unsuccessful political debut in 1946. Finally, the Commissioner made explicit the threat to the President’s entire housing program, and warned that “if the plan goes

forward to Congress . . . it will almost certainly raise again this very heated controversy and may well jeopardize" the administration's proposed housing legislation.<sup>xliv</sup>

By this time, however, Hollyday's political support (not to mention his moral authority) had long since evaporated. Personally damaging to Hollyday was his sloth (whether due to arrogance or incompetence) in investigating numerous and persistent allegations of wrongdoing. In several particularly egregious cases, he failed to forward information to the Department of Justice before the statute of limitations ran out on the specific charges involved. If such leadership won the undying loyalty of much of the FHA staff — its counsel went so far as to question the President's authority to impound agency records while others, including Hollyday himself, continued to sing the praises of the convicted felon directing the "608" program — it led investigators to conclude that the agency had "lost the capacity for self-appraisal and self-criticism." More than that, Hollyday's resistance to outside "interference" was apparently emulated by FHA staffers. Senator Capehart reported receiving "little cooperation from the long time employees" in the rental program and was so disturbed by their lack of "moral fibre" that he considered wholesale dismissals. All of this left the Commissioner politically vulnerable.<sup>xlv</sup>

In April, 1954, as the administration revised its pending housing legislation in light of the FHA revelations and just weeks before the Supreme Court ruled in Brown, Cole demanded Hollyday's resignation. Choosing a successor at this delicate moment proved challenging in the extreme. Not only did the President need to find a new FHA Commissioner who could both serve the "government" and calm industry fears, but he had to contain the scandal's political damage to give his Housing Act a chance to negotiate legislative shoals. And unlike public housing, where Eisenhower voiced fears over potential corruption and entertained notions of abolition, there was never any question raised about the FHA's survival despite its documented trail of illegalities. Its popular, successful, institutionally-entrenched home mortgage insurance program alone, the McKenna report asserted, "justifi[ed] the [agency's] existence."<sup>xlvi</sup>

Not surprisingly, the administration tried to carve out a little breathing space by placing the FHA's troubles on Democratic backs. Eisenhower did so gently, but unmistakably, in a public statement that isolated 1934-1952 as "the period during which these scandals took place.." The political sparring became more frenzied as the 1954 mid-term elections approached. By early fall (with the Housing Act safely passed), the staff of the Senate Republican Policy Committee tried to capitalize on the issue and produced its own report, entitled "The Scandal of Scandals: The Incredible Story-in-Brief of the Sordid and Corrupt Federal Housing Mess of the Democratic Administration." To them, the Truman legacy consisted simply of the "most monumental scandal in the history of our government."<sup>xlvii</sup>

A more realistic, and sobering, analysis came from White House aide Charles F. Willis, Jr. in a memorandum prepared for Sherman Adams on May 17, 1954 — the day Brown was handed down and still weeks before a final vote on the housing bill. Willis noted, implicitly at least,



that despite the easy association between the timing of the FHA's systemic disregard for ethics and the law and Democratic rule, there was a close tie between key Republican constituencies and resistance to reform. With the naming of Norman Mason as FHA Commissioner, Willis recognized that those who argued against Hollyday's replacement were “motivated basically by an attempt to scuttle the whole investigation.” In Mason's defense, Willis informed Adams that the new Commissioner was “a successful businessman in the construction field” who enjoyed “the confidence and respect of all segments of industry.” This seemed all the more so following an appearance by both Cole and Mason before the NAHB board one day earlier. Their explanations of the FHA's “present state of affairs” were “well received” by a “critical and suspicious audience” and, Willis assessed, “have gone far to rebuild support . . . [for] the actions now being taken.” Perhaps his most crucial qualification, however, aside from a sterling list of personal characteristics, was that in Willis's judgment, Mason was “completely loyal to the Administration” and was “willing to make considerable sacrifices for the good of the order.”<sup>xlviii</sup>

The new Commissioner employed his executive powers quickly to revamp infernal FHA structure and procedure; but that was only a beginning. As Cole's Deputy Administrator advised, the “permanent remedy of the abuses in FHA programs . . . require[d] important changes in attitudes and practices, as well as in the law itself.” Congress, acting upon recommendations offered by Cole and Mason, used the Housing Act of 1954 to close many of the legal loopholes that permitted the most questionable practices. Administratively, two initiatives seemed to obviate the need for a thoroughgoing reorganization, though talk of such a shake-up continued within the administration. The creation of an independent Compliance Division for all the housing agencies tightened oversight in the first instance, and a rider attached to an Independent Agencies Appropriations Bill granted the HHFA Administrator the “full authority” to “reassign” functions, funds, and personnel so dreaded by builders and lenders in the second.<sup>xlix</sup>

Finally there were, as always, political considerations. If concerned interests could not stop the centralization of power in the HHFA, they could still influence its use. A scathing open letter to the President by editor Perry Prentice that appeared in the January, 1955 issue of *House and Home* magazine, for example, earned serious White House attention. Placed on the defensive by a publication representing “vocal segments of the mortgage financing and building industries,” Cole had to remind Presidential assistant Gabriel Hauge and Sherman Adams that his antagonists never conceded that the scrutiny of the FHA “was either necessary or desirable.” Defending his actions in writing, Cole offered a point-by-point rebuttal while reassuring the administration that the “general public” supported his reforms. “The FHA situation,” the Administrator concluded, “was intolerable by any standard of ethics.” And he had no doubt that any “weakening in the supervisory apparatus” would simply lead to new attempts to loot the program. “The dangerous political situation for the Republican Party,” Cole subsequently advised, “would be that the next time it could not honestly refuse to accept responsibility.”<sup>1</sup>

Ultimately, the FHA found itself both salvaged and protected by the new arrangement. If its autonomy were somehow compromised by its being brought more closely under the HHFA umbrella, it must be remembered that Cole's appointment as Administrator depended upon his perceived desire and ability to hold the FHA's "upper-tier," private program aloof from his agency's "subsidized" efforts in public housing. More importantly, the whole scandalous episode proved – for the entire year leading into Brown, and for months afterward – not merely a distraction, but a diversion. Despite the RRS's best efforts to place the race issue on the table, the scandals, HHFA reorganization, and the political fall-out from each would not be dislodged from their priority position on the administration's agenda. Tied as they were to the fruits of the Advisory Committee's labors and the President's legislative initiative on urban renewal then before Congress, they pre-empted the housing debate. If there had been any predisposition to consider the racial implications of that agenda – or of the pending Brown decision — it was quickly suppressed. Not only was there little or no serious preparation for the Supreme Court's overthrow of the "separate but equal doctrine," but even after the ruling was handed down the administration addressed its implications for housing only with great hesitancy and uncertainty.

### ***Brown v. Board of Education, Topeka, Kansas and the HHFA***

On the eve of the Supreme Court's epochal Brown decision, the administration thus remained officially oblivious to (even if individuals were privately aware of) the racial implications of its housing agenda. Through 1953, bitter controversies swirled about plans for slum clearance in Birmingham, Alabama and redevelopment proposals in Baltimore — projects started under the aegis of the Housing Act of 1949; and seemingly endless violence plagued the federal public housing project in Chicago's Trumbull Park. Each remained a festering sore.

As if to underscore the administration's lack of vision and concern, Max Rabb was genuinely taken aback when Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., a black Democratic congressman from New York, alluded to such issues in response to Rabb's attempt to open a political dialogue. Powell's suggestion that the executive branch might, as a sign of good faith, stop the HHFA from "giving aid to segregated housing" blindsided Rabb. "This is a brand new problem that I haven't touched at all," the President's advisor on minority affairs mused six months into Eisenhower's first term. It may, he concluded presciently, "represent an area of some difficulty."<sup>li</sup>

Only the uprising in Trumbull Park managed to attract Cole's public ire in the first two years following his appointment. In a late October address, shortly before the 1954 mid-term elections, he lashed out at the Windy City's Democratic leadership before a black audience at Virginia's Hampton Institute. The violence at the project was "totally un-American and un-Christian," Cole charged, and represented "one of the most shocking cases of bankruptcy in community responsibility the United States has ever witnessed." Citing his great reluctance to "intrude on local affairs," the Administrator nonetheless called on the mayor to end "this

defiant bigotry” and offered the assistance of his office “to ensure that no American citizen shall live in a state of siege.” Chicago’s Democrats proved ungracious enough to point out that Cole’s magnanimous election eve gesture came only in a letter delivered one day before his Hampton Institute speech and that he had “not previously communicated with us” about the rioting in Trumbull Park despite its eruption fourteen months earlier. If his political purposes seemed painfully transparent, Cole still had a serious message for his Virginia listeners. He followed his denunciation of white violence with a pointed warning against the emulation of such tactics. An “orderly approach” to social change was not the “counsel of inaction,” he advised, but was simply a more direct path to “full freedom and equality” than “the arbitrary use of the blunt instruments of force and compulsory decree.” Denying the possibility of progress through “violence and whiplash tactics,” Cole asserted that both black protest and coercive public policy were deadends.<sup>lii</sup>

Problems of housing and race subsequently continued to bedevil the administration even as its legislation wound its way through Congress. The NAACP’s Walter White raised a perennial complaint when, in April 1954, he sent a telegram to the White House excoriating FHA support for a segregated Levittown development in suburban Pennsylvania. It was, White contended, a most “arrogant . . . abuse” of public power and resources. Max Rabb responded for the administration in a seemingly cavalier fashion when he noted the overriding political concern with the ongoing investigation into FHA corruption and the pending urban renewal legislation. “These matters,” he lectured White in a “Dear Walter” letter, “must, of course, take precedence at this time.” The letter was dated May 17, 1954 — the day the Supreme Court handed down its Brown decision.<sup>liii</sup>

In many ways, Eisenhower’s handling of the Levittown issue — and builder William Levitt — in the post- Brown era captured the President’s inchoate complex of reactions (beliefs might imply too much careful consideration) on the intersection of race and housing. He could, on the one hand, think it “highly improper” for the federal government to support a development where “one man by himself could bar a race from a whole community.” The national government, “in its own acts,” he believed, should not “differentiate among people on the basis of race.” But, on the other hand, as expressed in minutes taken during an early 1955 cabinet meeting, the President “held a more reserved position in regard to ‘indirect’ activities such as loan guarantee programs for private housing.”<sup>liiv</sup> Whether such inconsistencies represented genuine ambivalence or intentionally opened a backdoor to discrimination may remain the subject of some debate. It is clear, however, that, in the President’s mind, the principle of non-discrimination would embrace only a narrowly construed public sphere — precisely that segment of housing activity targeted for reduction or eventual elimination. The private market (even that portion of it receiving public support) would remain beyond the reach of any government regulation. Such ambiguity left the administration groping for solutions and led to the appointment of ad hoc committees to study the problem and improvised (in)action.

One such revealing episode involved a close confidante's suggestion that Ike simply sit in a closed room to hear, mediate, and judge the arguments of William Levitt and Thurgood Marshall. The President's contact believed that Eisenhower's personal intervention would "shorten by 10 years the time it will take to end segregation" in housing. Expressing a willingness to cooperate, but assigning the ubiquitous Max Rabb to the task ("I think he might easily be able to do the job."), the President avoided direct engagement.<sup>lv</sup> More than that, Eisenhower had Rabb set up a meeting at which the latter joined Levitt and John Reagan "Tex" McCrary, Jr., the man who brought the idea to the table. Thurgood Marshall was nowhere to be found. Rabb reported being "quite impressed with Levitt" and expressed the belief that the developer's willingness to "open some of his houses to Negroes" and conduct a campaign of "quiet persuasion" would resolve "the whole problem." A grateful President congratulated Rabb on his "success," stated a desire to "meet Mr. Levitt," and suggested inviting him to one of Eisenhower's famous "stag dinners, along with Tex and yourself." Again, Marshall's name somehow escaped the guest list.<sup>lvi</sup>

The President's unease with blacks on a personal level, and the race issue generally, became painfully obvious in connection with the Supreme Court's action in Brown. Before the decision, he grouched that the Court had strong-armed an opinion on segregation in primary schools and the "intent of the fourteenth amendment" from his Attorney General. In so doing, the high tribunal seemed, in Eisenhower's eyes, to be "guided by some motive that is not strictly functional." After the ruling, not only did the President fail to endorse the Court's work, but — on repeated occasions — asserted his sympathy for the South, his belief in states' rights, his conclusion that the cause of integration had suffered a setback, and his determination to distance his administration and party from the decision.<sup>lvii</sup>

Whereas his public expressions of regret and misgiving following the reversal of the Plessy doctrine are well known, however, his private reservations are even more striking. In unguarded moments before Presidential assistant Arthur Larson and New York Times publisher Arthur Hays Sulzberger, for example, Eisenhower trotted out stereotypical sexual innuendos to voice his displeasure. Repulsed by the thought of "social mingling" and the notion that "a Negro should court my daughter," Eisenhower struck Larson as "neither emotionally nor intellectually in favor of combating segregation." And, in an extended meeting with Sulzberger shortly after his 1956 re-election, the President not only pressed the case that desegregation through force or law only "increased problems," but extracted from the publisher the "shamefaced" confession ("for private use only") that "even he would not want his seven- or eight-year old granddaughter to go to school with Negro boys."<sup>lviii</sup> When combined with the possibility that the edict on desegregation might extend to public and publicly-supported housing as well as schools — and industry warnings that such a development would bring the postwar building boom to a screeching halt — these administration fears gave added impetus to the rightward policy thrust. The possibility that there were political gains to be made in a panic-stricken South simply reinforced that impulse among the more calculating.<sup>lix</sup>

Operationally, this meant that HHFA Administrator Cole would “go slow” with regard to integration, assert the limits of federal authority, complete an internal purge and reorganization, and adopt a policy on minority housing that simply ignored Brown’s existence. Indeed, both the administration’s immediate and more carefully considered reactions to the Court’s handiwork reveal that Brown was less a clarion call to end racial discrimination in housing as well as education than it was a “firebell in the night” sounded to evoke the construction of new defenses.

### ***The Internal Debate***

Once rendered, the Brown decision sparked a flurry of self-examination among the housing agencies that consumed the spring and summer of 1954. Indeed, it took only eleven days for J. W. Follin, Director of the Division of Slum Clearance and Urban Redevelopment (DSCUR – an HHFA constituent created under the Housing Act of 1949, it served as predecessor to the Urban Renewal Administration [URA]) to provide Administrator Cole a searching memorandum exploring the potential impact of the “recent Supreme Court rulings on segregation.”<sup>lx</sup> Focused on his own department’s operations, Follin nonetheless captured the larger problem facing the administration. “The repudiation . . . of the ‘separate but equal’ doctrine in the school cases and the Court’s affirmance of the fundamental principle that under the constitution there is but one class of citizens enjoying equal rights and privileges . . . have made it necessary that we reexamine our policies pertaining to racial matters,” he wrote.<sup>lxi</sup>

From there, Follin raised a host of questions posed by the ruling for the slum clearance and urban redevelopment programs. It seemed “fairly clear” to him that access to “public facilities, such as schools, recreational facilities, parks, playgrounds and other public improvements” now had to be provided “without restrictions based on race or color.” After that, things got more complex. Follin posited a continuum of public participation in HHFA projects that corresponded to a similar sliding scale of exposure to Brown’s strictures. Speaking of plans then being implemented under the redevelopment Title I of the Housing Act of 1949, he felt that - - while segregation could not be made mandatory — public facilities that received no direct subsidy or financial assistance provided a less than compelling case for the imposition of non-discrimination requirements. And, as Follin noted, private facilities on federally-aided redevelopment sites presented yet another problem. He saw nothing in Brown to suggest that privately-owned and -operated accommodations had to be made available to tenants without discrimination — even if entrepreneurial developers relied upon public powers and funds to assemble the land. “The mere fact,” he reasoned for Cole, “that the Federal Government has made federal aid available to local public agency . . . is not in itself sufficient ground for imposing upon private redevelopers the obligation to use . . . privately-owned and privately-operated property upon a non-segregated basis.”<sup>lxii</sup>

Even Follin’s grudging, conditional, and limited application of the Brown ruling to his own agency was not without detractors who claimed he had been too accommodating. HHFA General Counsel B. T. Fitzpatrick advised Administrator Cole that the “Court expressly limited

its overruling of the Plessy v. Ferguson 'separate but equal' rule to the field of public education" and that, in his view, even the constrained flexibility suggested by DSCUR's director seemed excessive. More important, though, were actions that spoke louder than words.<sup>lxiii</sup> Within weeks of the Court's ruling, Norman P. Mason, the FHA's Acting Commissioner, responded to Cole's request for information on "the proportion of FHA applications intended for minority groups" by equivocating. They had tried for the last two years to "work out a method of collecting [racial] information," he informed Cole, but remained dissatisfied with its reliability. On June 8, despite his protestations that the agency served all "without regard to race, color, creed, or national origin," Mason questioned the very "desirability" of collecting such data. Indeed, less than two weeks later, the Commissioner ordered the FHA Division of Research and Statistics to stop summarizing "data on applications or loans . . . for racial minorities." The directive meant the effective abandonment of longstanding efforts to develop more "refined and valid information" on minority group participation.<sup>lxiv</sup>

Racial Relations advisors attached to the HHFA and FHA immediately saw the implications of such willful ignorance. Even Cole's appointee, Joseph Ray, rejected Mason's bland assurances that everyone enjoyed equal access to FHA facilities. It was, Ray noted, a "regrettable fact that builders and sponsors of FHA-aided housing do not conform to this stated policy." The gathering of data on minority applications, as well as "commitments issued, starts, and completions," Ray argued, "would appear to be imperative." "Without such information, he asked, how can FHA or anyone know or gauge accomplishments or operating results?" George W. Snowden echoed that analysis, claiming that racial reports allowed the Commissioner to establish "some 'benchmark' for determining the effectiveness of his program, especially at the local level." The now-banned data summaries, according to Snowden, had represented "the basic and essential core" of "FHA policy on minority group housing."<sup>lxv</sup>

An abundance of legal caution and constituent reticence, then, provided the backdrop for more serious efforts by the RRS, and Frank Horne in particular, to place the HHFA and all of its programs within Brown's purview. Before the end of June, Horne – from his internal exile in Minority Studies – framed and passed on to Cole a memorandum detailing his "Observations regarding [the] implications of [the] decisions of the U. S. Supreme Court for HHFA Programs and Policies." Offering Cole the "minority group viewpoint," Horne celebrated the overthrow of the "fallacious concept of 'separate but equal'" and the Court's abandonment of that "dualism as inconsistent with the American way of life." Taking rhetorical advantage of the decade's dominant mood, Horne also informed Cole that the "opportunity is here for this administration to remove all restrictions from the housing market and restore it to the free, open competition which is our tradition and strength."<sup>lxvi</sup>

Though he was no lawyer (actually an optometrist by training and a college president by trade), much of the rest of Horne's memorandum consisted of nearly a dozen different legal arguments designed to counter those of Follin, Fitzpatrick, and others. At the center was

Horne’s contention that the Court had expressly supported the Plessy doctrine in education for more than half-a-century before overturning it; in contrast, the theory of “separate but equal” had never been applied “to the ownership and use of real property.” Now that its constitutionality had been stripped away, it seemed ludicrous to argue for its extension into the realm of housing. Buttressed by Supreme Court decisions prohibiting racial zoning (Buchanan v. Warley, 1917) and the enforcement of racially restrictive covenants (Shelley v. Kraemer, 1948), Horne reaffirmed the Court’s hostility toward state action intended “to restrict the use and ownership of real property on account of race.” As for private developers, their use of federal funds and powers under urban renewal to construct housing from which minorities could be excluded was, he argued, the equivalent of zoning neighborhoods by race and thus an end run around “what has been denied to state action by the U. S. Supreme Court.”<sup>lxvii</sup>

Horne capped his presentation by quoting liberally from the school decisions themselves, the Department of Justice’s amicus briefs in the covenant cases, section 42 of the U. S. Code, and the President’s frequently stated intention to distance the federal government from any direct programmatic association with “discrimination or segregation based solely on race.” It was also clear, however, that he understood that the mere assertion of ideals would not be enough. Indeed, Horne wrote, the PHA’s continued application of the Plessy principle to federally subsidized public housing rested ‘upon no sound legal theory’ but remained supported by the pillar of “political expediency.” Horne’s subsequent recommendation called for a “comprehensive review of the administrative policies of all programs under the jurisdiction of the HHFA.” “Wherever the federal government is clearly involved,’ he concluded, “in land assembly or the planning, development, and marketing of housing,” the “Fourteenth Amendment, the Civil Rights Act of 1866 and the U. S. Code should be fully enforced.”<sup>lxviii</sup>

Joseph R. Ray prodded Cole further in mid-July with a written request to bring HHFA programs “into line with the public policy underlying the . . . Supreme Court decisions.” Recommending a thoroughgoing policy of non-discrimination in all federally-aided projects (whether public or private), Ray claimed the suggested departure represented the “joint thinking and conscience” of the RRS, Minority Studies, and the racial relations personnel in DSCUR, PHA, and FHA.<sup>lxix</sup> Administrator Cole seemingly moved to act on the request on August 3, 1954 when he convened an exploratory meeting that brought together staff attorneys and minority representatives, including Horne and Ray. Following that gathering — and a week of individual consultations — the latter drew up memoranda suggesting significant policy revisions.

“An Approach to Racial Policy in the Housing and Home Finance Agency” emerged from Horne’s office in Minority Studies. In words that echoed the previously circulated “Observations” and the oft-quoted U. S. Code, the memo asserted that “the basic racial policy question” was “whether or not non-white families are to be afforded the same rights to the ownership and use of real property as white families.” If answered affirmatively, there would be no need for special “minority group housing programs.” If not, Horne submitted, the only

alternative would be federal promotion of equal opportunity through targeted, race-specific programs. Enforcement of such a policy would be “expensive and cumbersome,” he concluded, and fifteen years of experience taught him “the practical impossibility of attaining substantial equality of opportunity through special devices.” He fell back, consequently, on the rhetoric of the marketplace, as he did before, asserting that the “only acceptable role of the federal government in the field of housing” involved the “stimulation of a free, open, competitive housing market and the progressive removal of all restrictions upon real property beyond those demanded by the Constitution.”<sup>lxx</sup>

“An Approach” concluded with a list of proposals aimed at each of the major HHFA constituent agencies. Horne, first of all, called upon the PHA to strictly enforce legislatively-mandated tenant selection priorities “without regard to race.” He recommended next that DSCUR (and the soon-to-be created URA) have a “contractual requirement” that all developments built on land “assembled through federal grants or loans” be made accessible “without regard to race.” Finally, he demanded “the elimination of race as any factor whatsoever” in FHA underwriting as well as a “contractual requirement” that all FHA housing be made “available to all families on the same basis.”<sup>lxxi</sup>

Ray’s effort borrowed considerable language from Horne’s earlier rhetorical forays, though he devoted more time to hurling the administration’s principled pronouncements back at the Administrator and the President. His concluding policy recommendation was simple and direct. “All residential properties and related facilities,” he wrote, “developed or marketed through the use of federal funds, insurance, guaranty or other federal authority or powers are to be rented or sold . . . without regard to race, religion, national origin, or political affiliation.” Both public and private developments built upon land assembled by federal grants and powers would be included. Ray called, simply, for “the operation of a free market, open to unrestricted competition from all qualified bidders.”<sup>lxxii</sup>

Joseph Guandolo, an advisor to Follin and DSCUR’s Associate General Counsel, continued the legal sparring in rebuttal. The suggestion, embodied in both the Horne and Ray proposals, that “contractual requirements be imposed” to make all FHA and DSCUR-assisted housing available “without regard to race” remained objectionable, he advised Follin. It involved, first of all, a “major extension of Federal authority” despite the congressional refusal to attach any such measure to the recently considered Housing Act of 1954, he wrote. Guandolo also questioned the relevance of Brown to the housing program (“The factual situations . . . are not analogous,”) and the projected practical effect of enacting such a new policy. It would only, he believed, “impede the disposition of project land in certain localities.”<sup>lxxiii</sup> In the end, however, the debate over housing policy turned not on the weightiest legal arguments, but on the “political expediency” detected earlier by both Horne and Ray.

Even before he had called for the early August conclave of housing officials and race relations advisors, Cole suggested — and obtained — a meeting at the White House on July 16, 1954.



Cole and Assistant Administrators Neal Hardy and William A. Ulman attended for the HHFA; Commissioners Charles E. Slusser and Norman P. Mason represented the PHA and FHA, respectively. Associate Counsel to the President Max Rabb stood in for the administration, and while Sherman Adams received an invitation to lunch with the group, his direct participation is not clear. In notifying Eisenhower’s chief-of-staff of the “conference on minority housing,” Rabb now conceded that such a discussion was “long overdue.” “Next to the scandals in FHA,” he confessed, “this is probably the biggest problem in housing for the Administration.” Shortly after its conclusion, Rabb penned a memo to Adams that characterized the meeting as “very successful” in “outlining a long-range program that will eventually redound very definitely to the benefit of the Administration.” The sensitivity of the issue remained manifest, however, as Rabb cautioned against even a “relatively innocuous” press release. The President’s housing bill, after all, still awaited final action in conference.<sup>lxxiv</sup> The subsequent internal deliberations of the racial relations personnel had, therefore, no discernible impact on policy.

The solution struck upon in the White House involved a call for yet another meeting, this time later in the fall. Cole proposed a national conference on minority housing problems that would focus not only on federal policy, but also on the roles of industry and private citizens as well. Expecting heavy business participation, Rabb said the agenda would include deliberations on “specific methods by which we can best implement the President’s policy that the new and important benefits of the Housing Act of 1954 shall be used for the advantage and opportunity of all citizens regardless of race.”<sup>lxxv</sup>

### ***Cole’s Conference***

The call apparently originated with the Urban League’s Lester Granger. Barely a month after Brown (and a month before the July 16 gathering), Granger forwarded a letter and a memorandum to the President asking for “White House leadership in arranging a conference that will bring together building, lending, and real estate interests in an effort to solve” what Max Rabb called a “very explosive issue.” As Granger phrased it, housing remained the “only commodity in America” whose acquisition was “limited by race.”<sup>lxxvi</sup> With this correspondence dumped into his lap, the Administrator responded with a call for a meeting that would “air fully and freely the problems confronting the Minority element . . . in attaining reasonable and fair housing.” To short-circuit any contemplated talk of integration, Cole announced preemptively that he expected that “certain extremist elements” would “be dissatisfied with anything other than open occupancy.” Indeed, after questioning the radicals’ “sincere spirit” and their “desire to accomplish the maximum presently attainable,” Cole “confidently anticipated” that the meeting’s accomplishments would outweigh the “points of serious opposition.”<sup>lxxvii</sup>

Too indelicate for at least some in the White House, one staffer counseled that the publicity for the conference should “avoid reference to Mr. Cole’s view.” Discomfited more by the Administrator’s lack of tact than the substance of his opinions, the advisor suggested that any

“public expression” of Cole’s disdain for open occupancy “can only lead to criticism,” as would the allegation that “these extremists are not sincere.” In the end, however, Sherman Adams approved the conference proposal and hoped that the meeting would prove “a primary step in formulating a sound basis for our thinking on the subject.” He still felt compelled, though, to remind Cole “that this meeting is entirely advisory to you,” and to protect the President by distancing Eisenhower from the proceedings. “It would be . . . premature,” Adams told Cole, “to make any commitment or otherwise indicate that the specific findings of the Conference are to be submitted” to the White House.<sup>lxviii</sup>

Held December 9-10, 1954, the HHFA Minority Housing Conference elicited two proposals from the industry representatives in attendance. The first came from insurance companies that promised to seek loans for those denied access to credit on racial grounds. The second emanated from the National Association of Home Builders. They offered to set aside 10% of new housing construction for minorities “if suitable sites” could be found. It was, predictably, all the private sector could offer. Cole himself provided nothing further save for a stinging rebuke of black lending institutions for, as he saw it, their culpability in the failure of African Americans to purchase real property.<sup>lxix</sup>

Negative reactions came swiftly. “The quota idea of the Home Builders has appalling consequences,” Walter White told Attorney General Herbert R. Brownell, “especially because it is so similar to the South African Government’s program of building separate communities for colored people.” “I strongly urge,” White implored Brownell, “that action be taken by you to halt government participation in the practice of extending racial segregation in housing.” The overwhelming rejection of the set-aside by minority groups proved so strong it prompted one FHA racial relations advisor to suggest the elimination of local office housing goals for minorities. These groups exhibited “considerable skepticism,” he wrote, insofar as “quotas, percentages, and goals” were concerned. Indeed, in the hands of the Eisenhower administration, they seemed to mean little more than a “continuation of segregated or ‘ghetto’ housing.”<sup>lxxx</sup>

### ***Administrator Cole, Racial Policy, and Urban Renewal***

From the President’s special Housing Message to Congress in January to the HHFA Administrator’s conference in December, the Eisenhower administration grappled with the intertwined problems of race and housing throughout 1954. The mid-year decision in Brown provided the pivot around which its vision and proposals turned. Before the Supreme Court invalidated the principle of “separate but equal,” Cole rejected the notion of “special program[s]” for minorities. Refusing to consider desegregation a legitimate goal of federal policy, he asserted the

firm belief that we will best reach the objective of providing adequate housing for our Negro and other non-white citizens by administering the Federal Government’s housing activities so that these citizens . . . have equal

opportunity to buy or rent good housing. If we were to attempt to develop a special program for the benefit of minority groups, we should be recommending . . . class legislation — legislation which . . . could tend to perpetuate rather than cure the un-American prejudices which disadvantage our minority group families.<sup>lxxxix</sup>

Opting, in effect, for a less than Plessy standard of “separate and adequate,” Cole saw no need for a race-specific government agenda. He proved more than willing, however (as Horne had pointed out), to entertain continued public support for private initiatives that did just that. Rejecting the RRS call for contractually-mandated non-discrimination, Cole (as evidenced by the character of his December conference and its recommendations) found special, racially-targeted programs and an increasingly blurred and questionable distinction separating “private” action from “public” useful in addressing minority housing needs within the framework of segregation. If nominated as Administrator in large part because of his perceived ability to make that distinction, his constancy in maintaining it under rapidly changing circumstances answered Aksel Nielsen’s doubts about his ability to withstand “pressure.”

The fevered in-house discussions over the relevance of Brown to the HHFA and its constituents, and Cole’s December conference, served as a prelude to the January 28, 1955 Cabinet meeting at which the President reviewed his housing policy. The Attorney General placed the issue on the table as part of a report on “the various significant steps taken by the administration to eliminate racial segregation and discrimination.”<sup>lxxxix</sup> Whereas the meeting’s formal minutes recorded Eisenhower’s expressed concerns regarding Levittown, his belief that the federal government should not itself be directly involved in discriminatory activity, and his willingness to countenance federal support for private conduct producing segregated results, handwritten notes taken at the same time are even more revealing.

In presenting his report, the Attorney General characterized the housing issue as “very touchy” and suggested that “a group of us should talk this over” informally. It was at that point that the President affirmed his belief that “where the Federal Government has jurisdic[tion] we simply cannot differentiate among people based on race or color.” But, he quickly added, “when it comes to something else – aiding in getting a mortgage or bond,” there the federal connection becomes “more tenuous & I’m not so certain.” “Where the Federal G[overnment] builds, there we do have to be concerned.,” Eisenhower concluded. “But in private housing, [it] is a different story.” The Attorney General jumped on the distinction with alacrity: “I think we can get that line established,” he concurred.<sup>lxxxiii</sup>

Max Rabb, perhaps responding to Walter White’s protestations, noted that “pressure (was) developing” over the housing issue, “just like the schools.” Rabb also felt compelled, given the President’s willingness to accept federal support for discriminatory private enterprises, to raise the controversy over Levittown, Pennsylvania. There, Rabb told the Cabinet, “a whole city” was involved, “not just a section.” Eisenhower took a “deep interest” in Rabb’s comments,

and voiced his misgivings about vesting such restrictive powers in an individual. But, once again, the follow-up consisted of Rabb's eventual meeting with William Levitt and Tex McCreary (sans Thurgood Marshall) and Levitt's apparent invitation to socialize with the President. Harold Stassen helped bring the housing discussion to a close by warning that black leaders such as Walter White "ought to recognize the dangers of pressing too fast," and asserting the need to "expose the Commies stirring up trouble."<sup>lxxxiv</sup>

Shortly thereafter, Ray tried to bypass Cole and suggest a suitable policy statement directly to the Oval Office by routing it through Charles F. Willis, Jr., the Assistant to the Assistant to the President. More sedate than anything that had issued forth from Frank Horne's pen, Ray asked that the Administration pursue "social gains" only at "a tempo supportable by the American people as a whole and by their communities." The White House should, Ray suggested, "encourage . . . full and immediate production of housing for all American citizens," and do so in such a manner "as to eventually eliminate segregation or unfair economic or social discrimination." Finally, Ray wrote, it should be the policy of this Administration, "to provide immediate relief from sub-standard housing conditions" and refuse to permit "any discrimination among American citizens as to their absolute entitlement to live with equal social, educational and economic advantages." Willis promptly handed the statement – given to him in confidence by Ray – over to Cole for his reaction. The Administrator made short reference to a committee recently appointed by Sherman Adams to look into housing policy (in line with the Attorney General's earlier suggestion), and told Willis "nothing should be done" with Ray's statement. There the matter rested.<sup>lxxxv</sup>

### ***The Public Face of "Reform"***

Cole maintained, therefore, the Administration's public face on housing policy, special committees notwithstanding. As such, he was charged with both articulating and enforcing the President's agenda. This he did through a series of speeches, public appearances, press conferences, and letters (particularly to members of Congress). And it was through just such means that he explained the nature (and racial consequences) of urban renewal, staked out an ideological position that enabled him – despite growing public restiveness – to "establish the line" desired by the President and the Attorney General separating the "public" and "private" spheres, and offered a critique of the call for non-discrimination emanating from the RRS.

The signing of the Housing Act of 1954 on August 2 and the rapid establishment of the Urban Renewal Administration shortly thereafter lent a sense of urgency to the conjoined problems of housing and race. Cole's inflated expectations for the private sector (amply demonstrated by his year-end conference) and subsequent Cabinet debate gave evidence of growing administration concern, but failed to resolve the issue. What had emerged, however, from the President's Advisory Committee, his "Housing Message," and the extended post-Brown debate over policy, was the establishment of "certain broad principles governing the formulation and administration of housing programs in a free enterprise economy," according to the Administrator. First among these was the organic nature of HHFA revitalization plans. Urban

renewal was not, Cole had to confess, “specifically designed for minority assistance,” though he hoped it would have such a “practical effect.” The administration had fashioned its programs, he informed New York Senator Herbert H. Lehman, “so that they serve the interests of the individual, the group, the community, and the whole economy,” thus instantly transforming aid to the poor and non-white into a mere by-product of an incentive-laden building program. It was the only effective way, Cole believed, to marshal the requisite political support.<sup>lxxxvi</sup>

The second of the “broad principles” articulated by Cole involved the philosophical commitment to limiting the reach and power of the federal government. His expressed desire to “create new standard housing and to improve access to the existing supply of good housing for racial minorities” was, therefore, tempered by his willingness to use only what he qualified as “appropriate” influences. The “proper role” of the national state, he tutored Lehman, consisted merely of “encouragement, guidance, and support of the effort of community leadership, industry, and the consumer.”<sup>lxxxvii</sup> Indeed, as he further explained to Representative Charles C. Diggs, Jr., a black Michigan Democrat, the Congress – despite repeated opportunities – provided no authorization, no clear mandate that would enable the executive branch to administratively impose a policy of non-discrimination. This meant, he concluded, that there was “no machinery” on the federal level that could “compel builders or owners of property” to adhere to any such standard.<sup>lxxxviii</sup> Finally, Cole maintained, the very nature of the race issue militated against the use of “one size fits all” directives from Washington, D. C. It was, he asserted in a letter to Connecticut’s Republican Senator Prescott Bush, a “peculiarly local” problem. Writing less than a year after Emmet Till’s Mississippi lynching, Cole noted further that racial practices were “deeply rooted in local traditions, institutions, and emotions.” In this context, however, he left off any additional reference to the futility of violence or “whiplash tactics.” He admonished simply that “we should rely heavily on local responsibility and local wisdom” in handling racial matters.<sup>lxxxix</sup>

Cole also revealed – particularly in response to critics of his racial policies – the key values and assumptions that governed his thoughts on any proposed remedies. In fashioning a reply, for example, to Philadelphia Mayor Joseph S. Clark’s call for an end to discrimination in federal housing programs, Cole expressed “serious reservation as to the effectiveness” of any proposal that would condition aid on the acceptance of such a new policy. Advocates, he contended, have never advanced a “workable system of enforcement.” And there were practical difficulties beyond such complaints. The prohibition of discrimination would, Cole asserted, make it difficult to develop many sites in the North, and be the death knell of such programs in the South. Participation in PHA, FHA, and urban renewal projects was, of course voluntary, and local authorities in the impoverished nether region made no secret of the fact that they would deny aid to the neediest Americans before they would accept it on terms not of their own choosing. If holding the housing needs of poor African Americans hostage to demands for continued segregation were not enough, there was always the prospect of another dreaded Depression. Cole remained convinced that burdensome regulations encompassing mandates

for non-discrimination would result in a “sharp cutback in the rate of housing production,” and thus retard efforts to eliminate the backlog of housing demand even as it threatened a “severe impact on our economy.” In the end, though, the Administrator took his cues from the President and quoted approvingly Eisenhower’s stated approach to school desegregation.

“If ever there was a time,” the President counseled,

when we must be patient without being complacent, when we must be understanding of other peoples’ deep emotions, as well as our own, this is it. Extremists on neither side are going to help this situation, and we can only believe that the good sense, the common sense of Americans will bring this thing along,

The “length of time” it would take to satisfactorily resolve the matter, he dissembled, “I am not even going to talk about.”<sup>xc</sup>

What did all of this actually mean in terms of policy? For each of the major constituent agencies it meant, most notably, the persistence of pre-Brown practices. Cole continued, for example, to speak of the PHA’s “equitable provision” of low-rent public housing to the “eligible families of all races” as the basis of that agency’s operations. Apportioned to each group according to “the approximate volume and urgency of their respective needs,” Cole referred to the distribution of PHA benefits as though it represented some achievement. In fact, the “equity policy” dated back to the New Deal and the 1930s; seen originally as a pioneering victory for civil rights forces, Frank Horne (who had helped implement it) had been trying to push beyond it for a decade-and-a-half. Its only new feature involved the expressed willingness to deny public housing to white families as punishment to those communities that “neglect[ed] the needs of their racial minorities.”<sup>xcii</sup>

The FHA went a bit farther than the PHA, announcing a new emphasis on the production of minority housing, but the verbiage and press releases far outdistanced performance. The Administrator played up two such announcements in particular; the first, coming shortly after Brown in July, 1954, notified the National Association of Home Builders of his intention to “reinforce FHA support of housing for minorities.” The second, in March, 1955, urged the directors of FHA field offices to be “even more forceful” in making “the adequate housing of minorities a program of prime importance.” The upper-tier, “private” housing program however, changed little. The effect of the initial announcement could be measured by the nature of the NAHB’s 10% “quota” proposal for “suitable sites” – the organization had, after all, nearly half-a-year to contemplate the FHA’s “new” mode of operation before making the widely ridiculed offer at Cole’s conference on minority housing. As for the Administrator’s renewed exhortations early the next year, it must be remembered that they came even as the FHA, in the wake of Brown, ceased assembling racial data and RRS personnel in the field offices expressed real fear that targeted programs might well be used against minority interests.<sup>xciii</sup>

It was the embryonic urban renewal program that presented the real challenge insofar as creating new racial policy was concerned. True, DSCUR's replacement by the URA did involve the adoption of some established, well-worn practices from the pre-Brown era. Problems of displacement, relocation, and living space for non-whites had developed with the implementation of slum clearance under the Housing Act of 1949 and led Democratic HHFA Administrator Raymond Foley to institute certain new “procedures” just before Eisenhower's inauguration. Cole subsequently identified the previous administration's guarantees of suitable compensatory accommodations and consultation with representative minority leadership as central to his racial policy. Both conditions had to be met before any renewal project would be permitted to reduce “the supply of housing available to minorities.”<sup>xci</sup>

The Housing Act of 1954, however, generated new realities. Chief among them was the Administrator's newfound willingness not to grudgingly accept, but openly embrace, public housing; along with the PHA's transformation – in all but name – into a “minority” program, it could be counted among the key changes wrought by the law. Despite some of the rhetoric that surrounded it, urban renewal was not a narrowly targeted social reform that funneled aid to the poor and the non-white. Cole, in fact, knew better than anyone that — as he put it in a letter to the Chair of the Council of Economic Advisors — the “basic purpose of . . . urban renewal is the improvement and renewal of the total community so that it can best serve the requirements of our expanding urban economy.” Indeed, the broad scope and organic nature of the renewal proposal made Cole appear more inconsistent than was the case. He correctly predicted, for example, that the 1954 Act would “reappraise, reorient, and broaden the concept of Federal housing policies.” The goal was not merely to shelter those caught temporarily in unfortunate economic circumstances, but to rebuild a decayed metropolitan America from the inside out, strengthen the national economy, and accommodate (contain) a rapidly growing non-white population without threatening the growth or value of white-dominated suburbs. And the key to the whole operation that linked the fortunes of races, classes, and neighborhoods was the provision of just enough public housing to relocate the inner city residents who had to be moved before building could begin.<sup>xcii</sup>

Given the persistence of near-universal housing shortages, the need for at least some public housing to facilitate urban renewal was manifest. The densely-packed occupants of distressed inner-city neighborhoods had to be relocated somewhere for the land to be cleared. Renewal thus became the primary rationale for public housing — and, for Cole, the only rationale. In calling for 35,000 new public housing units in each of the next four years, the Eisenhower administration reduced substantially the demand for 810,000 units associated with the Housing Act of 1949. If the larger number still smacked of redistributionist reform, the smaller could be embraced for utilitarian reasons. Cole acknowledged that the administration's request was “less than the probable total need” but enough “to make possible major progress in the clearing of slums and in rehousing the lowest income groups.” Public housing was now a “key element” in the overall revitalization plan, and the case for it, according to Cole, was “compelling.” “Federally-assisted public housing provides the only present means that most

cities have for rehousing the lowest income families," he told businessmen. Renewal could not proceed without it.<sup>xcv</sup>

The linkage between renewal, relocation, and public housing could be found explicitly in the Housing Act itself; and the URA cemented their connection, in turn, to racial issues and policy administratively. As Cole explained to Senator Bush, the "small program authorized" under the Housing Act of 1954 "was based entirely upon the needs of families displaced by slum clearance and other governmental action." More than that, Cole reasoned, "[s]ince racial minorities constitute a high proportion of slum dwellers, these circumstances orient the low-rent program to serve their needs." Clearly, PHA operations were being turned over to service renewal and an increasingly poor black clientele. Interestingly, official encouragement to "admit tenants without regard to racial considerations" here combined with the concentrated demolition of African American neighborhoods and a "first preference" for the displaced to deny "equity" to poor whites. Finally, the HHFA prioritized the allocation of public housing units among cities based upon their relative "relocation needs" and the desire "to provide a greater degree of racial equity in the housing supply for lower-income families" – an administrative decision that funneled a disproportionate share of "lower-tier" units to black families.<sup>xcvi</sup> Increasingly, FHA and PHA housing came to represent not just perceived "private" and "public" programs, but white, suburban and black, inner-city ones as well.

The racial litmus test for urban renewal, however, came with the proviso that each project must have a "workable plan" approved by the URA to be eligible for assistance. Here was a potential source of federal leverage on local authorities, one that Frank Horne and the RRS had hoped to apply in a serious manner. Indeed, Horne, in particular, voiced warnings (if not demands) early on when the Housing Act of 1954 existed as mere conceptualization and not legislation. In placing his agenda before the President's Advisory Committee in 1953, for example, he had called for the relocation of non-whites on outlying vacant land, and went so far as to ask for mandated "collateral open land development[s]" whenever non-whites were displaced from densely-packed urban core areas. And, aside from his usual call for a contractually required policy of non-discrimination, he suggested a beefed-up RRS that would be involved in the planning process from the beginning and undertake searching "composite reviews" of each aspect of every renewal program. Furthermore, in response to the President's "Housing Message," he reiterated the need to establish "a method of priority processing" for renewal proposals that would privilege open land and "open occupancy" projects. In other words, Horne had a clear idea of what elements needed to be included in what he would consider a "workable plan."<sup>xcvii</sup>

His challenge was at once institutional, procedural, and substantive. Rhetoric aside, a "strengthened and augmented" RRS (to borrow Eisenhower's phrase) that would inject racial and civil rights concerns into the heart of the planning structure and process was not a proposition around which the administration could rally. In fact, the emergent reality of urban renewal not only took no cognizance of Horne's vision, but stood in stinging refutation of it. It



did not take long for the student of “Minority Studies” to make his feelings known — and in such a manner as to render his position in the HHFA untenable.

In early February, 1955, Horne informed Cole that the inadequate “machinery and method for appraising racial relations factors” exhibited in DSCUR were now being folded into and appropriated by its successor, the URA. “Now,” he wrote, “with the expansion of the Urban Renewal Program and decentralization of its administration in field offices, these deficiencies are becoming even more evident and dangerous.” Convinced of the “validity” and value of the “racial relations technicians” in precluding project-related problems, Horne decried low staffing levels and, especially, the absence of RRS officials from the now enhanced and vital field offices. That meant that the Service would not get its first glimpse of renewal plans until after they were drafted. From that vantage point the RRS could only “troubleshoot” and be employed to dampen “minority” complaints. It was “as though the primary minority aspect of the local urban renewal program were only the degree to which minorities ‘accept’ the program,” he protested. The URA’s failure to weigh “the totality and impact of minority group considerations,” Horne concluded, “is a disservice . . . to the local community, the Agency, the program, and the Administration.”<sup>xviii</sup>

More than a year-and-a-half later, Cole’s own appointee — Joseph R. Ray — confirmed Horne’s analysis. Noting that the reorganization of DSCUR into the URA “was contingent upon commitments” to add six Regional Racial Relations Officers, Ray (in October, 1956) recommended not only those new appointments, but the filling of standing vacancies as well. “To continue . . . the extended absence of racial relations services from the expanded and growing programs. . . of urban renewal activities that so predominantly involve Negroes and other minorities,” he concluded, “can only serve to place the Agency in an increasingly tenuous and not easily defensible position.”<sup>xix</sup>

Under strength and poorly situated, the RRS found it increasingly difficult to protect, let alone pursue, minority interests. It was not long, then, before such institutional weakness translated into procedural and policy setbacks for what remained of the Service. Most notably, the supposed “safeguards” instituted by Cole’s predecessor to protect minority neighborhoods (or, at least, suitably relocate their residents after “consultations” with local leaders) provided no cover whatsoever. According to the Administrator, any federally-assisted development that had the potential to damage non-white housing interests (especially through slum clearance that would reduce the housing supply and “living space” available to minorities) had to certify that new housing or existing accommodations in areas not previously open to non-whites would be “provided in an amount equal to that so occupied in the project area.” The certification would be documented administratively in Local Public Agency (LPA) Letter No. 16 — a written assurance that satisfactory relocation housing had, in fact, been made available and that “representative minority group leadership has been afforded adequate opportunity for consultation respecting the matter.”<sup>c</sup> Permissive of both “Negro removal” and segregation

(and, indeed, sometimes facilitating both), LPA Letter No. 16 tried simply to hang a more humane veneer on existing practice.

Even that, however, eluded the HHFA's grasp. Near the end of Eisenhower's second term, RRS official George Nesbitt reported that the lack of personnel, procedure, and, ultimately, concern, rendered the application of the safeguards moot. The agency's failure to issue instructions, definitions, or process directives precluded meaningful evaluations. And, even more glaringly, the prescribed negotiations with non-white leaders either never took place or appeared as shams. Committees went unappointed, conferences went unscheduled, and — when meetings did take place — they were often held too late in the planning process to have any impact, or were attended by overly compliant minority “representatives” that were occasionally drawn from the pool of LPA employees. Nesbitt's tale of bureaucratic laxity and disarray led him to the disturbingly forlorn conclusion that “LPA Letter 16 has not forestalled ‘Negro clearance’ undertakings, as the White House appears to have desired.”<sup>ci</sup>

### ***The Firing of Frank Horne and Corienne Morrow***

The heightened concern over racial affairs that gripped the White House following Brown, the simultaneous launching of the administration's urban renewal initiative, political reality, and Horne's unrelenting bureaucratic resistance finally combined in the summer of 1955 to end his seventeen-year tenure as the most outspoken, high-ranking minority official in the nation's housing agencies. Cole's appointment as Administrator had produced Horne's initial demotion and isolation just twenty-two months earlier. This time Horne — and his like-minded assistant, Corienne Morrow — found their jobs eliminated in what had now become a familiar ritual: official displeasure, sanctions, protest, and eventual settlement, as occurred in 1953 and would be offered in 1955. This time, however, there would be no settlement.

Cole's publicly stated reasons for taking such drastic action proved so patently transparent they would have been laughable had not the issues been so serious. The initial dismissal announcement of July 25 cited “budgetary considerations” after the appropriation for the Administrator's office had just been increased from \$2.8 million to \$5 million. There were, moreover, roughly 900 housing agency positions, some 200 of them staffed at equal or higher rank; only Horne (who should have been protected by his career status and veteran's preference) and Morrow were fired, and they represented 25% of the eight African Americans in those jobs (Morrow was the only woman). Cole obviously wielded the budgetary axe with great selectivity and dexterity.<sup>cii</sup>

If conceivable, the second ostensible reason for the reduction-in-force made the first one seem convincing. Compelled to respond to a flood of protesting communications, Cole drafted a reply for Max Rabb to send out in the President's name. “The decision that the special unit headed by Dr. Horne was no longer justified came about in the course of Mr. Cole's review of his agency's personnel needs for the new fiscal year,” the letter stated. “It was decided,” Cole tried to explain, “that the Agency's organization would be strengthened if all of the racial

functions were concentrated in the regular Racial Relations Service headed by Joseph R. Ray.” Getting quickly to the point, the missive attempted to reassure critics that “this action reflects no change in the attitude . . . on matters affecting racial minorities.” That was a point now well understood by angered civil rights advocates – though it was clearly not taken in the way Cole had intended.<sup>ciii</sup>

The letter’s final paragraph contained what the administration must have considered a controversy-ending offer. In an attempt to reprise 1953’s strategy, Cole dangled yet another job in front of Horne, one that would let him “retain his previous salary” (so much for “budgetary considerations”) and also permit him to use his “talents and experience.” The new position, however, unlike the earlier one fabricated in “Minority Studies,” would cut him off entirely from domestic racial affairs and place him in an office dealing with international housing issues. Horne refused it without hesitation.<sup>civ</sup>

For his part, Horne understood only all too well the real reasons behind his forced departure: the intertwined problems of race and politics. He rejected the international post, he said, because “acceptance . . . could only be interpreted as a repudiation of my efforts to implement the principle of non-discrimination in housing . . . to which I have dedicated my entire public service.” “Every informed observer,” he continued,

recognizes that the key problem . . . is the question of whether federal support of the racially discriminated housing market is to continue. . . . I have, therefore, identified myself with the efforts of Negro families in Chicago, Los Angeles, St. Louis, Dallas, Atlanta, Detroit, Cleveland, New York, Richmond and other cities . . . to attain the real property rights due them under the Constitution.

Since the embryonic urban renewal program was now bringing this matter into “sharp focus,” Horne’s assumption of the new position would serve only to “divert” his time and efforts. “I cannot honorably accept an offer,” he directly informed Cole, “whose good faith I so deeply question.”<sup>cv</sup>

Horne’s reading of the situation was hardly idiosyncratic; and, as might be expected, civil rights advocates and the African American community reacted with notable indignation. The National Urban League’s Lester B. Granger, for one, was well aware that two hundred individuals “at a similar grade” were passed over in order to selectively dismiss “the senior staff member in the racial relations service” and his assistant. Such facts made it apparent that Horne’s ouster was a “special action aimed at getting rid of an individual who may have become ‘embarrassing’ to the administration . . . because of his influence and views,” Granger wrote.<sup>cvi</sup> Others pointed out that Horne served as a symbol of “good race relations” and fair housing that gave the White House whatever credibility it enjoyed on those issues. His professionalism and expertise, moreover, led more than one to characterize him as a non-political expert, one that was “nationally known” and a leading “authority” on minority

housing. His forced removal subsequently sparked invidious comparisons with patronage appointee Ray and vocal concerns about both the integrity of the RRS and government support for integration. One Ivy League professor who worked in the OA during the war confirmed that Horne was "more widely known than any other single person in the field of the housing problems of the negro and other minority groups." "To force such a person from the public service," the professor concluded, "is a travesty upon the Civil Service and an act of the most shallow politics." Cole, he was certain, could have taken such action "only under the most severe and reprehensible political pressure."<sup>cvi</sup>

The most ferocious commentaries and scathing critiques, however, came from those who focused on policy and the future. George L-P Weaver, writing as acting chair of the National Committee Against Discrimination in Housing (NCDH), reminded the President that the RRS under Horne had "operated to orient government personnel, the general public, private industry, and civic agencies toward a new vision: eventual elimination of the American ghetto." But, he lamented, in the two years since Horne's initial demotion, there had been a "steady retreat from sound race relations policies." The NCDH, moreover, agreed with those who believed that residential segregation posed the "greatest danger" to the Supreme Court's ruling in Brown and that the "vast federal urban renewal program" would, "without sound racial relations review," create "new areas of segregated living." Indeed, the HHFA seemed to hew closely to the advice Administrator Cole passed on to Congress in recent testimony before the House Judiciary Committee. They should "go slow," he counseled (within days of Horne's dismissal), in eliminating discrimination from federal housing programs.<sup>cviii</sup>

All of this proved too much for New York civil rights attorney Pauli Murray. Cole's action, she wrote the President, was a "cowardly retreat" from the move toward non-discrimination and "one of a series of steps calculated to throw the tremendous financial and other powers of the United States Government behind the insidious determination to keep Negro citizens confined to ghettos." "Cities of the future are taking shape now," she asserted. "Patterns of human relations for a century or more to come are being molded by our housing developments of today." It was self-defeating, she said in a clear reference to Brown, to call for an end to segregation in the schools while, at the same time "deliberately destroy[ing] a sound race relations policy in federally-aided housing." "Why spend billions of dollars in slum clearance," she asked, "only to create new ghettos and harden the very pattern of segregation you are committed to eliminate?" As for Cole, Murray expressed "outrage" and "indignation" at his apparent belief that blacks would not understand that the Horne-Morrow purge was a "political rather than a fiscal act on your part." They knew only too well, she wrote the Administrator, that the twin firings represented "a continuation of your determination to get rid of the high calibre of thinking and the complete integrity" symbolized by Horne and Morrow.<sup>cix</sup>

Not everyone shared these opinions, of course, and Horne (and the RRS) did have detractors – particularly within the black ranks (such as they were) of the GOP. Val J. Washington, Director

of Minorities for the Republican National Committee (RNC), dispensed patronage to the party faithful and took a particularly dim view of the RRS. Its greatest sin was that it remained “in the hands of Colored Democrats,” Washington declared, who “fought our Administration’s Housing program,” in order “to perpetuate their jobs.” “These Democratic holdovers have a closed corporation,” he complained, that “ignored and fought” Joseph Ray “since the day he took office.” Betraying, perhaps, his sense of the Service, Washington declared there were “qualified” Republicans “who can hold any of these phony seat-warming, report writing jobs.” “These race relations experts,” his rant went on, “would have you believe that . . . [they] have some kind of unusual ability. This is the biggest joke of [the] modern day.” In sum, Washington judged the RRS “one of the most absurd operations in all Government” in which the “top men run around to all kinds of Negro meetings uncontrolled.” The real issue, for the patronage chief, was that the growing URA generated jobs across the country that “should be filled by qualified Republicans.” As for settling the housing market’s racial problems, Washington remained confident that the Republicans would do so “on a more practical basis” than could those adhering to the “old New Deal theory.”<sup>cx</sup>

If any doubts remained regarding the potent mix of partisanship and policy in the Horne affair, they were dispelled by the hearing on his civil service appeal. There, the NAACP’s Clarence Mitchell testified that Cole informed him – in front of witnesses – that the “budgetary considerations” rationale for Horne’s dismissal was just a cover. The “real reason,” Cole then said simply, was “politics.” “That’s why I got to move him.” The “sole reason,” Horne’s most ardent advocates subsequently concluded, for the HHFA’s “calculated drive . . . to rid itself of Dr. Horne and his assistant [was] pressure by the Republican National Committee.”<sup>cx</sup> And, it must be added, it was politics writ both small and large – from the pettiest partisan battles over patronage to vital debates over broad questions of public policy – that sealed his fate and Morrow’s.

To their supporters, the consequences of their forced exit seemed immediate and dire. Corienne Morrow herself and the NCDH’s Frances Levenson, for example, saw Cole’s internal HHFA reorganization as part of a larger campaign to evade the import of recent Supreme Court rulings. “The movement to use residential containment to enforce school segregation is gaining momentum,” Levenson flatly told her executive board. Similarly, Morrow alleged that Cole “conceived” his special “minority housing program” in order to “counteract” Brown. To them, and others such as housing expert Charles Abrams, Cole’s actions and HHFA policy represented a repudiation of the principle of non-discrimination and a change in the promising direction seemingly taken just a few years before. Indeed, the NCDH wrote of the “abandonment” of the “Horne policy” of “steady advance in racial relations” through “the application to all federal housing programs of all the technical knowledge and skill accumulated by specialists in this delicate and complex field.” The “practical result,” the Committee vented, was that the federal government was now “actively promoting and financing a vast program of intensified, enforced segregation.”<sup>cxii</sup>

Long-term prospects seemed even more frightening. Urban renewal, obviously, had the potential to “literally change the face of urban America.” The URA also, just as clearly, in NCDH eyes, had the authority to pursue its mission on a non-discriminatory, non-segregated basis. “Unless this authority is used,” the NCDH predicted, “a new slum will be created for every one eliminated, and the pattern of constrictive ghettos will be fixed upon America for many years to come.” The only difference between the old ghettos and the new, NCDH prognosticators presciently wrote a decade before Watts exploded, was that “the new ghettos will be more confining than the old, the pressures will be greatly increased and the danger of violence intensified.” It was, therefore, in their judgement, “a policy of incredible folly and recklessness” made “all the more . . . deplorable” by its secret adoption “under a pretense that the Horne policy is still in effect.”<sup>cxiii</sup>

It did not take long for the implications of the purge to manifest themselves. First among them was the rapid deterioration of the RRS. Virtually under siege since 1953, the Service found itself neutered by Cole in the mid-1950s, and then placed in thrall to the Administrator’s agenda by the end of his tenure in 1958. At first, Ray was careful to question neither his boss’s motives nor his actions. He defended Cole, for example, against the charge that the Administrator was intentionally “scuttling” the RRS. “I have no agreement whatsoever with this accusation,” he reassured his superiors. At the same time, however, he felt compelled to voice concern about the need to “revamp” the whole operation. “The field service,” he reported in 1955, “is spread too thinly over a vast territory without proper supervision resulting in inefficiency and ineffectiveness.” “It is evident that further delay in giving more serious consideration to this task,” Ray warned, “could have embarrassing, as well as some serious repercussions.” Decrying the lack of a “well-defined program, with central authority or responsibility” Ray submitted a reorganization plan that, with but a single staff addition, promised “at least 100,000 units in new construction . . . in the minority housing field during 1956.” Despite playing to Cole’s quantitative bent, however, the plan went nowhere.<sup>cxiv</sup>

By early 1956, Ray complained more pointedly that the RRS was “being denied the opportunity properly to advise the Administrator” on racial issues and that the Service’s “duties and responsibilities” had been diminished. In obvious disagreement with Val Washington, Ray doggedly asserted once more the need for “skilled racial relations technicians.” By the early spring of that year, however, it became obvious that the RRS had been systematically excluded from all review and evaluation processes; the agency even routed mail and referrals to racial problems to other offices as a matter of routine. Completely frustrated with the “bypassing” of the RRS, Ray argued that such treatment undermined “the integrity and vitality of the Service, especially in light of the fact that the urban renewal program affects minorities more heavily and deeply than any other segment of our citizens.” Still reluctant to ascribe motivation, Ray entertained the hope (at least in a memo to Cole) that such treatment may have been due to nothing more malevolent than an “oversight.” A different RRS officer, however, at least ventured to assign responsibility. The troubling state of affairs, he believed, existed for reasons “best known to Mr. Cole.”<sup>cxv</sup>

Within another year, though, the carping had largely ceased, and both Ray and the RRS seemed more fully domesticated. The “emotional wave of fingerpointing in the field of housing minorities has to some degree receded,” Ray happily reported in May, 1958, “and a crisp atmosphere of action is gradually developing.” Ray echoed Cole’s mantra about producing more specifically “minority” housing as he described an RRS with a new mission. The Service now sought to “stimulate a home development program, spearheaded and sponsored by Negro trade organizations.” “These efforts,” Ray went on to explain, “centered around . . . Negro-owned and -controlled lending institutions and Negro real estate brokers.” Described as a “self-help” campaign, the RRS tried to recruit and coordinate “65 Negro insurance companies, 30 Negro savings and loan associations and 500 Realtists” (which, as a Jim Crow appellation, needed no further racial designation). At the same time, informational mailings went out to “2500 officials and members of Negro organizations and groups interested in the housing problems of Negroes.” It was, in other words, precisely the sort of endeavor that had earlier drawn Frank Horne’s contempt.<sup>cxvi</sup>

Radically transformed, Ray could not help but acknowledge that the “scope of our activities has perhaps been narrowed.” And, in total conformance with Cole’s fondest wishes, he could even be “pleased to report that the reduction of personnel in our office force has not lessened our efforts for the production of more and better homes for minorities.” Yet he still could muster some concern for “the importance of Race Relations Services in the field of urban renewal.” They were, he believed, “very necessary to bring results satisfactory to the Administrator and especially helpful to those so badly in need of improved living conditions.”<sup>cxvii</sup>

### ***Housing Policy and Racial Consequences***

Midway through Eisenhower’s second term, Val Washington and the Republican National Committee requested that Cole pull together “a documented account of progress in minority group housing.”<sup>cxviii</sup> An unabashedly political presentation, it allowed the administration to make its best case. Overall, the Administrator contrasted a more energetic, aggressive, and intensive Republican effort to house minorities with what he deemed their predecessor’s more hesitant, lethargic, and sporadic endeavors. There was at least some evidence to sustain the characterization. To the extent Frank Horne and his allies within the RRS could measure their success by the number of delayed or canceled projects that would have damaged minority interests, their bureaucratic infighting, when effective, would have hampered and slowed redevelopment plans. Once Horne and the RRS were reduced from institutional brakes to mere speed bumps, and then removed as obstacles altogether, it became possible to act more assertively in augmenting the housing supply on a segregated basis.

That augmentation and segregation stood as twin pillars supporting the Eisenhower administration’s approach to housing minorities is hardly in doubt. Indeed, the assumptions they represented and the values they reflected proved so widely taken for granted that Joseph

Ray's review of an early draft caught some compromising language. "I believe it might be wise," he suggested to Cole, "to eliminate from the draft certain terms that could be interpreted as connoting racially separate housing." The unconscious, reflexive use of such phrases as "minority group housing" and "minority housing market" should be replaced, he advised, "with terms that are less susceptible to this connotation." Thus, the section initially titled "FHA Mortgage Insurance for Minority Housing" in the draft report became the far clumsier (but presumably less offensive and revealing) "FHA Mortgage Insurance for Housing Available to Members of Minority Groups" in the final version sent to the RNC.<sup>cxix</sup> The willingness to change a sub-heading, though, remained less important than the cast of mind that produced the original phrasing and the substantive policy that survived such cosmetic alterations.

The final document delivered to Val Washington proved unrelentingly positive, but could have been called "The Metaphysics of Housing." While Ray seemed confident that the record "present[ed] a very clear picture of accomplishments" that "reflect[ed] indisputable progress," much of that record consisted more of what was thought, planned, and said than actually done. Cole resurrected rapidly fading memories of his December, 1954 conference (a gathering that, by his own admission, produced "nothing tangible") and spoke glowingly of the FHA Commissioner's exhortations to develop the minority market in the summer of 1954 and spring of 1955. Programmatically, the agency intended to extend FHA services to a growing list of properties and clients not previously eligible; and for those still not accommodated, the new Voluntary Home Mortgage Credit Program (VHMCP) would provide access to FHA-like support. Persons displaced by urban renewal had legal safeguards written into the law and relocation became a top priority.<sup>cxx</sup> In sum, Cole believed he had given the RNC "ample evidence that we have made highly significant strides supporting the provision of good housing for racial minorities, and have done so in a . . . framework . . . consistent with the Presidentially enunciated . . . doctrine of moderation in matters involving racial questions."<sup>cxxi</sup>

There was less here than met the ear. Despite the talk of open occupancy experiments and a handful of "integrated" projects, Cole, the HHFA, and the constituent agencies continued to adhere to pre-Brown racial policies. For the URA, this meant consultation with local minority representatives, relocation assistance, and the promise of comparable quarters for the displaced. For the PHA, it meant the persistent application of the "equity" policy, the standard for the allocation of both jobs and benefits since the late 1930s. And for the FHA, it meant more oaths to try really hard to serve minority clients while operating on a "business basis." In no instance, however, did it mean federally-mandated or -leveraged desegregation. The color line at the housing agencies remained intact.

Indeed, Cole affirmatively defended the HHFA's refusal to interfere with federally-supported residential segregation throughout his tenure. In November, 1958, in fact, shortly before he left office, he created a stir at a San Francisco press conference by asserting that, according to the



New York Times, neither the national government nor the private real estate industry had caused residential segregation, and that the former had no responsibility – beyond obeying state and local law – to end it. The statement came less than a week after the release of the “Schwulst Report,” a study generated by the Commission on Race and Housing, a private group under the leadership of the president of New York’s Bowery Savings Bank that was financed by the Fund for the Republic. The Schwulst Report cast a harsh light on federal housing operations and had called explicitly on the government to “take the lead” in ending housing discrimination. In that context, Cole’s press conference could only be seen as an apology for the administration, and he dutifully stated his case.<sup>cxii</sup>

The key distinction for Cole was precisely the one raised by Eisenhower in the January 28, 1955 Cabinet meeting. After claiming that he had been both “misquoted and misinterpreted” by the press, the Administrator responded to critics by emphasizing the restricted parameters of his initial statement. “I was questioned concerning the responsibility of the Federal Government to enforce non-segregation in private housing,” he wrote. “My response was that the Government does not have such a responsibility. I underline the words ‘enforce’ and ‘private,’” he pointed out, “to emphasize the limited frame of reference of the question and my response.” Where the NCDH saw public subsidization of the FHA as opening the door for a national policy of non-discrimination in the housing market, Cole affirmed a “hands off” approach for what he believed remained in the “private” sphere despite government assistance.<sup>cxiii</sup>

Cole’s assertion of private prerogatives in what was a less than private market enjoyed the support of a host of corollary arguments whose collective weight reinforced the resistance to federal “interference.” Supporters of a segregated status quo pointed to the repeated Congressional failure to legislate a policy of non-discrimination as a primary indicator of the lawmakers’ “intent.” The FHA, in particular, argued from that premise that the agency could not deny the benefits of the program to anyone for failing to meet a standard that was never mandated. The seemingly common sense assertion that the government could not tell property owners whether or to whom they must sell or rent their homes then joined with the bland assertion that federal bureaucrats were simply following local law to complete an intellectual/rhetorical barricade capable of forestalling even determined attempts to “intervene” socially in the housing market. This was the edifice that fell under Cole’s protective wing in San Francisco.

The difficulty with such apparently principled, interlocking arguments is that they seemed to cut in but a single direction – in favor of segregation; and there is evidence, moreover, that when, on rare occasion, the facts ran in the opposite direction, rules of institutional conduct previously deemed inviolable achieved a new-found flexibility. The FHA-backed purchase of a Berkeley home by a white school teacher at the time of Cole’s Bay-area press conference provided one such instance. Gerald S. Cohen’s subsequent rental of the premises to a black fellow educator sparked inquiries by both the FBI and the U. S. Attorney before the FHA instituted proceedings

to, in the words of counsel, “deprive Cohen of . . . the privileges of the National Housing Act.” No state or local law compelled such action, nor had Congress, in lieu of favoring non-discrimination, mandated segregation. Yet, the FHA, acting solely on its administrative authority, moved precisely to deny Cohen benefits under the law that would otherwise be available save for his taste in tenants.<sup>cxiv</sup> Acts such as these could not help but make Cole’s expressed desire for the “earliest possible elimination of racial discrimination” ring hollow.<sup>cxv</sup>

### ***The Eisenhower Record***

In the end, officially expressed desires, protestations, and the cumulative weight of uncounted policy decisions must be measured against the “facts on the ground.” In terms of public housing, some 160,000 units were built under the Housing Act of 1937. The Housing Act of 1949 called for another 810,000, but only 155,000 materialized in the first three years after its passage; the Eisenhower administration continued construction, but at an even slower pace, averaging 15,000 to 35,000 units each year into the next decade. Some 600,000 were produced altogether before 1960, and, ten years later, 1 million of the 1.3 million units in use by the 1980s were in operation. With regard to urban renewal, some 877 localities had adopted “workable programs” by mid-1959. Of those, 386 were then engaged in carrying out 645 different projects.<sup>cxvi</sup>

There were hints, however, that all of this activity represented something less than a social revolution, or even a triumph of New Deal-style reformism. One of the clearest indicators was the uneven regional distribution of the federal largesse. Nearly half of all the local PHAs, for example, could be found in but thirteen Southern states; together they controlled one-third of the nation’s public housing units – a disproportionate amount by any reasonable standard. Georgia alone had 180 PHAs by the end of the 1950s; and, in a state hardly known for its urbanity, progressive social policy, or love of federal intervention, it had also adopted nearly 90 “workable programs” for urban renewal. No other state, whether in the industrial northeast, the midwestern rustbelt, or far west, requested such frequent national support or bureaucratic assent.<sup>cxvii</sup>

The South’s easy, indeed, eager acceptance of the federal government’s novel presence in its urban affairs between the 1930s and 1950s stands in stark contrast to the bitter, historic resistance characteristic of preceding and succeeding decades. The obvious explanation for the region’s unlikely equanimity would seem to be the effortless adaptation of federal housing and renewal policies to local racial realities and, in fact, their positive assistance in reinforcing patterns of segregation. More than a means of maintaining the status quo, federal subsidy and authority had considerable utility for those desiring a refashioned dual school system and a more rigid form of racial separation in a post-Brown world. It also provided a way to spur economic growth and development while accommodating growing minority needs within the locality’s traditional racial framework.

By 1959, the U. S. Commission on Civil Rights reported that “segregation in all public housing projects and in most renewal projects appears to be the official rule throughout the South.”

Quoting a high Atlanta housing official to the effect that “forced integration” would bring only “chaos and tragedy,” the Commission articulated its own domestic “domino theory.” Any attempt to enforce such a policy would simply result in the refusal to accept federal aid and the effective termination of the public housing program throughout the region. That, in turn, would mean the evisceration of the ability to relocate the displaced poor from urban renewal sites and the shutdown of that initiative as well. Given the level of black need, the executive director of the Atlanta Housing Authority warned that such a chain of events would “militate against the best interests of the nonwhite population.” That likelihood compelled the Commission to conclude, in Cole-like fashion, that “considerable progress” could be made in providing minorities with “equal opportunity for decent housing,” but only “within the limits of the Southern policy of racial separation.”<sup>cxviii</sup>

It would be a mistake, however, to view such developments through the South’s peculiar regional lens alone or to assume the idiosyncratic nature of such adaptations. If, given the challenges presented to Jim Crow at this precise moment, the Southern seizure of federal tools for parochial ends boldly stood out, the rank opportunism of the North more than matched that exhibited below Mason and Dixon’s line. It must be remembered that the emergence of the ghetto in the urban North in the first half of the twentieth century placed a premium on the establishment of physical distance between the races. Southern reliance on social distance to hierarchically separate blacks and whites who otherwise found themselves in close and intimate proximity meant that it lagged behind the North in creating residentially segregated cities. Forced to absorb a floodtide of black migrants during and after World War II, the industrial North had to redraw its social landscape even as it sought economic revitalization; it tried to sustain a pattern of segregated neighborhoods, in other words, amidst bewildering change. For the South, the problem was not to preserve existing residential patterns under new circumstances, but to create them in emulation of the Northern model. Thus the Commission on Civil Rights, as it approached the end of the Eisenhower administration, could complain, with reason, that federal involvement in urban renewal established “strict patterns of residential segregation” for “the first time” in some localities. Indeed, in a statement that embraced every region, it acknowledged that “urban renewal projects are . . . accentuating or creating patterns of clear-cut racial separation.” As for Cole’s HHFA, the Commission cited the Administrator’s San Francisco press conference as evidence that the agency had not “moved very far or very fast” in fighting such discrimination.<sup>cxix</sup>

If there were regional and local variations on the national theme of increasing residential segregation with federal support, it is clear that legislative and administrative policy emanating from Washington, D. C. was more than just passively permissive. It was not simply a matter of indulging the prejudices of state and municipal authorities (although there was much of that), but the Congress and executive branch housing agencies paved, pointed toward, and pushed localities down a path they had long sought but never before reached without federal intervention. The cities simply filled in the blanks of a template cobbled together on the national level; the results and consequences of housing policy during the Eisenhower years –

and their influence in succeeding decades – represented both the symbiotic and synergistic relationships that characterized contacts among local, state, and federal governments.

The best indicator, perhaps, of the outcome produced by that symbiosis and synergy can be found in a comparison of indices of black isolation within the neighborhoods of thirty cities calculated by Douglas S. Massey and Nancy A. Denton for their excellent book, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*. They computed their indices for two years. The first, 1930, captured urban America on the eve of massive federal involvement in housing, redevelopment and renewal; the second, 1970, followed a generation of such intervention and more than a decade-and-a-half of post-*Brown* civil rights agitation. The data are striking. Rates of black isolation jumped dramatically in every case without exception. Equally important, the rates generated by a dozen Southern cities rendered them virtually indistinguishable from their Northern and Western counterparts. Indeed, if measured only by a regional average level of black isolation, the South not only “caught up to” but surpassed its competitors.<sup>xxx</sup>

**Table 2.4 Indices of black isolation within neighborhoods of thirty cities, 1930-1970**

City	Northern cities		Southern cities	
	1930	1970	City	1970
Boston	19.2	66.1	Atlanta	88.0
Buffalo	24.2	75.2	Baltimore	84.8
Chicago	70.4	89.2	Birmingham	57.9
Cincinnati	44.6	63.9	Dallas	82.0
Cleveland	51.0	86.6	Greensboro	62.0
Columbus	----	65.2	Houston	72.1
Detroit	31.2	77.1	Memphis	82.9
Gary	----	83.2	Miami	81.5
Indianapolis	26.1	65.5	New Orleans	75.6
Kansas City	31.6	75.6	Norfolk	79.8
Los Angeles	25.6	73.9	Tampa	62.3
Milwaukee	16.4	74.5	Washington	88.1
New York	41.8	60.2	Average	76.4
Newark	22.8	78.3		
Philadelphia	27.3	75.6		
Pittsburgh	26.8	70.8		
St. Louis	46.6	85.1		
San Francisco	1.7	56.1		
Average	31.7	73.5		

Sources: Indices for 1930 are computed from ward-level data and come from Stanley Lieberson, *A Piece of the Pie: Blacks and White Immigrants since 1880* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), pp. 266, 288. Indices for 1970 are computed from tract-level data and were calculated by the authors using U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Census of Population and Housing 1970, Fourth Court Summary Tapes, File A* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1970).

The attenuation of regional differences reflected more than a national consensus on race; it was also evidence of the national template of housing policy forged between the New Deal and Great Society. Bracketed by two periods of ostensible Democratic “reform,” the activism of the Eisenhower years played a defining role in crafting that template by developing its urban renewal departure and its administration of existing programs such as public housing and those of the FHA.

### ***The FHA***

The results generated by the upper-tier FHA program are instructive. From its inception in 1934 to hearings held by the U. S. Commission on Civil Rights in 1959, the FHA insured mortgages on more than 5,000,000 homes and over 800,000 families occupied similarly covered multifamily rental or cooperative projects. More than 22,000,000 homeowners qualified for agency-backed home improvement loans. In barely its first twenty years of existence (1934-1955), the FHA insured mortgages on nearly 30% of all new private nonfarm residential construction.<sup>cxvxi</sup>

The agency’s presence literally restructured the housing market; so much so (and so favorably), in fact, that Republican political advisors did not hesitate to clamber on board this particular New Deal bandwagon. One White House counselor, in gearing up for the 1956 campaign, asserted that the federal interest in cities and housing was “no longer the political offspring of any one party.” The “affirmative steps already taken” by the President should, it was advised, be trumpeted as a “major domestic achievement” that “dwarf[ed] the claims of previous Administrations.” Indeed, one needed only to look at the “huge scale” of clearance and renewal operations, and perceive the “political potentials inherent in the provision of the Nation’s homes” to come to such an obvious conclusion. The “liberalization of terms” upon which homes could be purchased following FHA intervention in the sacrosanct market could be rationalized, moreover, as a “new direction” taken on the advice of pragmatic, “highly specialized businessmen” and an abandonment of the “detached theorizing of Government planners.”<sup>cxvxi</sup>

If the administration could embrace the “liberalization” of financial terms, however, neither the FHA nor the White House demonstrated similar flexibility in the social sphere. In 1959, witnesses told the U. S. Commission on Civil Rights that minorities occupied fewer than 2% of the homes insured by the FHA since World War II; and most of those units could be found in segregated, all-black developments in the South. The degree to which the upper-tier, private housing program remained a white preserve is perhaps best illustrated by the fact that the FHA, over its first twenty-five years (1934-1959) assisted in building but 200,000 units for black occupancy — and at least 25,000 of those resulted from “racially designated priorities” associated with the defense housing program. Agency attention and effort were clearly directed elsewhere. “With the help of FHA financing,” the Commission concluded, “all-white suburbs have been constructed in recent years around almost every large city. Huge FHA-

insured projects that become whole new residential towns have been built with an acknowledged policy of excluding Negroes.”<sup>xxxiii</sup>

Again, two specific Southern examples demonstrate the conditions under which the FHA would lend its support for minority housing — and what it hoped to accomplish through such assistance. First, in Atlanta, the agency tried to assist in the relocation of those displaced by urban renewal as encouraged by section 221 of the Housing Act of 1954. The city, however, rejected 12 of 15 suggested sites for “political” (read: “racial”) reasons, in effect reserving “unused land for white development.” Still, Atlanta provided more new housing units on outlying land for blacks than did most other cities; but it did so, the Civil Rights Commission revealed, only after whites and African Americans “negotiat[ed] the orderly transition of some areas from white to colored occupancy” and “reliev[ed] the pressure for colored expansion into existing white neighborhoods.”<sup>xxxiv</sup>

In New Orleans, desperate housing needs similarly intersected with political necessity to produce the FHA-assisted Pontchartrain Park Homes development — a 210-acre site that surrounded a park and golf course with more than a thousand homes built for middle- and upper-income blacks. Designed both to meet a real demand and salvage the principle of “separate but equal,” the project included a “shopping center, a public school site, and scenic drives” that identified it as a “high class subdivision for Negroes.” With legal action pending that promised to breach the color-line in such public facilities as golf courses and parks, New Orleans tried (as did Atlanta) to “relieve the pressure” by finally living up to a now-discredited maxim. It was as if the sheer novelty of providing new construction for blacks that featured “utilities, underground drainage, curbs, gutters, sidewalks, street paving and other facilities equal to or better than that provided” a neighboring white subdivision could compel a return to a pre-Brown jurisprudence. Indeed, in a September, 1954 letter begging for FHA support, Mayor DeLesseps S. Morrison affirmed the city’s “vital interest” in the project, pledged its financial assistance, and offered assurances that there was not the “slightest possibility” that either he or the city council would “change the designation of this area from one of colored development to development for whites.” Hoping to do more than put roofs over the heads of the Crescent City’s black professional class, Morrison closed with a promise to “bend every effort possible to make this badly needed project a reality.”<sup>xxxv</sup>

The local branch of the NAACP protested against the poisoned pill of segregation that accompanied the project, but the homes sold quickly and the development proved, financially at least, a rousing success. Pontchartrain Park became, in fact, a symbol (in the FHA’s own estimation) of good works and an example proudly discussed around the country by agency officials. Attempts to gain minority approval for such efforts beyond Dixie’s borders, however, could be difficult, as FHA race relations officer George Snowden learned in Detroit. In a biting letter to the President, one black realtor told of Snowden’s “gleeful” rendition of the New Orleans story and how its neighboring well-to-do all-black and all-white communities (“all insured by F.H.A.”) represented “the type of thing [the] F. H. A. wanted.” “The rest of his

speech,” the realtor reported, “consisted of illustrations of segregated housing of other communities, and how very proud he was of the housing for Negroes only, which he had been shown in Detroit.” Snowden finished, to the evident disgust of his reporter, by asserting that “he was near the end of a four-month’s tour of more than fifty cities to encourage construction of this type [of] segregated homes.”<sup>xxxvi</sup>

If minorities found participation in FHA programs elusive and, when attained, purchased only at the cost of segregation, the administration tried — at least feebly — to address the problem of accessing capital. Created by the Housing Act of 1954, the Voluntary Home Mortgage Credit Program (VHMCP) was a private sector initiative designed to forestall direct government lending as it extended credit to those having difficulty obtaining conventional or FHA assistance. Minorities were to be primary beneficiaries, but the program had great trouble attracting them from its inception. Frank Horne pointed to a legacy of discrimination and a history that taught black brokers that the “FHA was not for them or their clients.” Such brokers learned how to obtain conventional, if costly, loans but lacked experience “in handling the more involved and time consuming” government transactions; Horne theorized that they shied away from the VHMCP for that reason. Whatever the cause, there is little doubt that, as RRS officer B. T. McGraw put it, the program generated “only a very small number of applications” from minorities. The Civil Rights Commission confirmed that, in its first four-and-a-half years of existence, the VHMCP placed fewer than 40,000 loans nationwide, with but 8,000 of them going to minorities in metropolitan areas. One VHMCP official admitted to the Commission that the number served was “far smaller than had been originally anticipated.” The Commissioners could conclude only that the program “neither stimulated any large volume of construction of new homes for minority group families, nor has it relieved . . . the shortage of mortgage credit for minority groups”<sup>xxxvii</sup>

The FHA, then, maintained an unerring constancy in the conception and implementation of its racial policies from its organization in 1934 through the Eisenhower administration despite the appearance of great change. Ostensibly, the FHA evolved from an agency that required segregation, through a period in which it maintained a studied “neutrality” on race, to a position from which it “encouraged” open occupancy developments by the end of the 1950s. True, its Underwriting Manual dropped references to “inharmonious racial groups” from its appraisal criteria in 1948, and the agency finally ceased its advocacy of racially restrictive covenants (albeit belatedly and reluctantly) two years later. In 1952, the FHA even set racial “goals” for its local field offices in the hope of expanding the housing supply for minorities, and, following Brown in 1954, encouraged “open occupancy” projects even as it promised to stop doing business with builders and developers who violated state anti-discrimination laws.

But the reality was that changes in printed criteria, procedures, and guidelines had little impact on actual practice; appraisers continued to follow the lead of a private real estate industry that remained wedded to invidious racial judgements and discrimination. As for the program establishing racial “goals” in the localities, it was jettisoned almost as soon as it began. And

the threat to cut off discriminatory developers proved equally worthless. The FHA refused to act on its own initiative (even where builders stated discriminatory intent) and warned that sanctions would be imposed only after the states instituted a formal proceeding and issued an official finding. No developer ever bore the sting of punishment under this standard. In the end, despite the metamorphosis in stated policy, the FHA's largesse remained beyond the reach of the overwhelming majority of minority families; and the only exceptions appeared invariably to reinforce — or indeed, enhance — the existing segregated order. In 1959, the agency self-consciously rebuffed attempts by the Commission on Civil Rights “to secure official figures on the degree to which nonwhites have participated in FHA programs” by claiming the numbers “were not available.” Citing “difficulties” in collecting such information, officials simply reiterated their track-covering, post-Brown determination to “abandon . . . the whole idea” of gathering racial data.<sup>xxxviii</sup>

### ***The PHA***

The FHA's hallmark consistency contrasted sharply with the fundamental transformation that overtook PHA operations. The Eisenhower years marked a watershed in the public housing program as it dropped all pretense of “reform,” assumed a strictly utilitarian posture, and saw its social role transformed from presumptive escalator for the working poor to warehouse for the impoverished and most unfortunately located residents of the urban core. The dilution of public housing's “reform” content could be seen in a process that dated to its very act of creation. The 1937 Wagner-Steagall Act that gave rise to public housing and the USHA emerged from its legislative battles as a compromise measure in which conservatives eliminated all aid to the nonprofits, cooperatives, and demonstration projects so prized as experimental vehicles by the reformist “housers.” The measure also slapped a tight lid on construction costs, restricted the program to those who could not afford market-based shelter, and established the linkage between public housing and slum clearance. Most important of all, the bill exhibited a deference to localism that meant that tenant- and site-selection remained in local hands, as did the decision as to whether or not a town would choose to take advantage of the proffered assistance at all. The Housing Act of 1949 tightened the connection between redevelopment and public housing, and the renewal legislation of 1954 went still further by monopolizing a limited supply of public units to service a market-based economic revival rather than a social revolution.<sup>xxxix</sup>

With the onset of the massive demolition that accompanied slum clearance and, especially, the invigorated post-1954 renewal program, the most dramatic transformation in the lower-tier public housing program involved its racial composition. In the mid-1930s, the PWA's housing program — based on population and relative need criteria — devoted more than one-third of its units to African Americans in twenty-one segregated and six technically “mixed” projects. In 1948, nearly a decade-and-a-half later, the proportion of black-occupied public housing stood virtually unchanged at 35%. By 1959, however, the number of public housing units occupied by blacks jumped to 45.5%. Given the nature and demands of urban renewal, this proved but the first step in the process through which public housing would soon become identified as an



inner-city, problem-plagued “black” program. Indeed, in the first three years following the passage of the Housing Act of 1954, the task of relocating displaced inner city residents so dominated the public housing program that nine of every ten such tenants in urban renewal areas were non-white. By the 1970s, more than three-quarters (76%) of all public units designed for “families” could be found in central cities; they contained, tellingly, some 76% of all the public housing units occupied by blacks, and 82% of those held by Hispanics.<sup>cxl</sup>

The tendency for PHA operations to be characterized by high rise, inner city, black-occupied projects in the 1950s received perhaps its most extreme expression in Chicago. There, the city administration selected public housing sites almost exclusively in all-black areas to rehouse those to be uprooted by renewal projects that were thinly disguised exercises in “Negro removal.” Operating under a nominal “open occupancy” policy (application of the old “equity” standard would have meant a greater white allocation), some 85% of such public housing became black-occupied before the end of the decade. Chicago thus became a model for large, Northern cities in which, according to the Commission on Civil Rights, “open occupancy” became “a euphemism for ‘Negro housing’.” The PHA, the Commission added pointedly, had “no policy for dealing with the problem which exists Chicago.” Site selection remained a local prerogative; and the PHA refused to disapprove of project sites selected for their utility in segregating the black population. HHFA Administrator Mason conceded “something should be done” here, but could not propose any constructive action in his testimony before the Civil Rights Commission.<sup>cxli</sup>

The imperatives imposed by the Housing Acts of 1949 and 1954, along with some accompanying shifts in administrative policy, meant, moreover, that public housing’s newest tenants changed more than the program’s complexion. Beginning in 1950, the PHA began to demand the mass eviction of “over income” tenants. Put off by postwar housing shortages and political pressures, these forced departures removed public housing’s most successful inhabitants and destroyed the program’s mixed-income character. The reduction in the authorization of new low-rent units — from 810,000 in 1949 to 140,000 in 1954 — not only added force to the movement to reclaim living quarters from the “ineligible,” but, given public housing’s mandate to facilitate renewal by assuming the burden of relocation, meant that high priority displaced families commanded virtually every unit. Maintenance suffered as PHA workers who formerly lived on-site were forced out, and the projects’ rental income (which paid for upkeep) dropped precipitously. At the same time, local managers lost the power to screen tenants and found themselves compelled to take in precisely those who had proven least capable of sheltering themselves in the private market.<sup>cxlii</sup> The result was that the gulf separating the upper tier, private, largely suburban and white, homeowner’s hidden subsidy program from the lower tier, public, largely inner city and nonwhite, renter’s directly subsidized program loomed larger and became more visible.

The rapid physical deterioration of the high rise public units and the quality of life within them emphasized the gap — and, as might be expected, segregation compounded the problems. In

offering a 1957 critique of agency operations, the RRS's Philip G. Sadler informed the PHA Commissioner that, in their "segregated programs," the sites of black projects were frequently "far removed" from those housing whites, "thus creating serious management and maintenance problems." The former, moreover, were often situated "on terrain which is difficult to keep in good, dry and sanitary condition." Better conditions generally obtained in black projects under African American management, but Sadler found the whites vested with such control "not always sympathetic toward Negroes as a group." And in those black developments lacking a management or maintenance office altogether, service remained "only occasional and inadequate." Finally, Sadler's report had to acknowledge that the expulsion of over-income tenants included an "overwhelming number of Negroes." Offered the fewest private market choices, they tended to hold onto their public units longest, and the transition hit their buildings hardest. The "only solution," Sadler concluded, was an "onslaught on the barriers which restrict Negroes to defined areas, and on the . . . increasing rents and sales prices charged them for decent housing."<sup>cxliii</sup>

The administrative and conceptual separation of the federally-supported (and increasingly racially identifiable) housing operations made the always vulnerable lower tier an even more inviting ideological and political target. The real estate lobby, among others, made frequent and effective use of public housing's seemingly "socialistic" character in the age of Joe McCarthy in attacking its very existence. One last Eisenhower era innovation, however, shored up the program's political base as it recruited a new constituency without threatening its ability to sustain segregation. The 1956 decision to make public housing accessible to the elderly, in a single stroke, to quote one close observer, made "the program more palatable" and, in the aggregate, made it appear to be more than a vehicle for creating racial reservations in the urban core.<sup>cxliiv</sup>

A statistical snapshot of PHA operations taken at the beginning of John F. Kennedy's presidency demonstrates both the impact of new procedures and the dogged continuity of racial policy. On the one hand, whereas the proportion of black-occupied units continued to increase to 46.8% (210,280 out of 449,353 as of March 31, 1961), it did so only slowly and still presented a picture of some overall balance. On the other, however, remained the inescapable fact of near universal segregation. Of the 2,596 PHA projects then open, 774 were "all Negro," 973 were "all white," and 14 were "exclusively Latin-American." Another 204 contained both blacks and whites, but remained internally segregated, according to the PHA Commissioner, "by site, buildings, or other artificial barriers." Thirty-six additional projects maintained an all-white or all-black occupancy save for the presence of a single "other race" family. Outside the 506 developments designated as "completely integrated," the final fifty included "at least one integrated project and at least one unintegrated project." As for the "completely integrated" sites, the PHA defined them as containing "whites and Negroes in varying numbers, without any efforts to control their placement within the projects." Undoubtedly including those with a mere token non-white presence (apparently anything more than a single family would suffice) as well as those undergoing racial succession, an

accurate accounting of stable, “completely integrated” projects remains elusive. It is exceedingly likely, therefore, that segregation remained the rule in more than the 80% of its projects so characterized by Commissioner Marie C. McGuire at the beginning of the 1960s. Still showing great deference to local authority, she admitted PHA policy in this area was “arrived at by administrative decision” and “could be changed in the same manner.” But, given the projected impact an “open occupancy requirement” would have, she expressed great reluctance to “institute such a policy unless by order of the Administrator or higher authority.”<sup>cxlv</sup>

By 1977, the last year for which such racial data are available, the impact of including the elderly in the program was starkly apparent. Of the approximately 1.3 million public housing units then in existence, the elderly occupied 47%. In a detailed statistical study, John Goering and Modibo Coulibaly conclude that the inclusion of the elderly “promoted a substantial realignment of the allocation of units, including their increasing suburbanization.” They reported, furthermore, that their racial data “suggest the concentration of nonwhite families in central city public housing authorities, with elderly households, primarily white, located outside of the central cities.” In short, the congressional action to open public housing to previously ineligible elderly tenants broadened the PHA’s constituent base, restored some of the program’s racial balance (if not “equity”) in the aggregate, and largely did so within the framework of segregation.<sup>cxlvi</sup>

## **The URA**

Urban renewal constituted the third leg in the triad of key government programs — along with the FHA and PHA — designed to address the nation’s housing ills. As the newest, and the one invested with the tasks of economic revitalization and slum prevention (in addition to the removal of blight), urban renewal held great promise. Albert Cole’s resignation in early 1959 and his replacement as HHFA Administrator by former FHA Commissioner Norman P. Mason, moreover, seemed at first to indicate a greater administration willingness to confront the racial difficulties then beginning to manifest themselves.

Indeed, in a New York speech, Mason focused on the “baffling problem of minority group concentration in the larger American cities.” Rather than seeing the agencies under his aegis as a source of such residential “stratification,” however, Mason gave the impression that urban renewal might provide “a means of relieving the unfortunate trend toward concentration of Negroes in the central sections of our cities.” The Washington Post subsequently editorialized, in fact, that renewal, under Mason’s direction, could “change the character of close-in slum areas.” In a column entitled “Ethnic Balance,” however, the paper wildly misread the Administrator’s concerned tone and what should have been the familiar incantation that more living space must be furnished the poor then being displaced by new construction. The editors asserted — with great hope and without warrant — that Mason’s HHFA placed “increasing emphasis on ethnic balance” and that it would use the leverage of the “workable program”

requirement to compel the “housing of minorities outside the core area as well as” their reintroduction into “reclaimed slums.”<sup>cxlvii</sup>

No doubt some in the URA harbored such intentions, as did some in the re-named Intergroup Relations Service. But, however soft the rhetoric, it is clear that Mason had no such leanings. When the URA proposed issuing a publication entitled “Urban Renewal for all Americans,” Mason dismissed it as “not proper for the government” to release. Though the draft document itself has not yet been located, Mason’s critique is telling. It contained, he pointed out, a “clear cut admission that we program for ‘Negro’ families and nonwhite families’.” Anticipating a “fiasco” should it become public, the new Administrator observed that the “paper could even be called the ‘Battle of the Races’.” “And that’s not a good government publication even in an off-election year,” he added somewhat acidly. Among a host of other problems, Mason warned that “positive statements” about excluding people from their old neighborhoods would not play well. Finally, he asked rhetorically, “do we really stand for breaking up the ‘ghetto’ by bringing people from the suburbs?” The clearly implied negative response to that query immediately preceded his unequivocal decision to bury the report. To do otherwise, he concluded, would simply give the opposition “lots of clubs to clobber us with.”<sup>cxlviii</sup>

Mason’s evident discomfort with urban renewal’s racial implications and outcomes led to a politically-weighted judgement to mute the issue. That choice testified to the difficulties presented by the reconfiguration of American cities at mid-century, difficulties that were compounded by a Presidential promise. “We shall take steps,” Eisenhower had earlier affirmed in his 1954 housing message to Congress, “to insure that families of minority groups, displaced by urban redevelopment operations, have a fair opportunity to acquire adequate housing.” “We shall,” he reassured, “prevent the dislocation of such families through the misuse of slum clearance programs.” Such had demonstrably not been the case in the implementation of Title I of the Housing Act of 1949 under the Democrats, and it took little imagination to foresee similar racially-tinged relocation problems and charges of “Negro clearance” being laid at the feet of the GOP’s ambitious endeavors following the passage of urban renewal.<sup>cxlix</sup>

There were, of course, other possibilities. It is clear, certainly, that Frank Horne and his cohorts saw the Housing Act of 1954 as a possible new, and positive, departure, though not one without its dangers. George Nesbitt, Special Assistant to the Director of Racial Relations, warned just weeks after the Act became law that the “racially complicated causes of slums” must be faced lest urban renewal “founder from the first.” Horne agreed and suggested the creation of a Task Force of race relations specialists to thoroughly review proposed “workable programs” before they were approved. “The very essence of the urban renewal program,” he wrote, “is its challenge to localities to lift their sights and review attitudes and approaches that have caused the deplorable conditions which now require Federal and local governmental action for correction.” “At the same time,” he ruefully observed, “experience indicates that

localities are most reluctant to effect revisions in the area of racial relations and that generally Federal officials tend to the greatest reticence in influencing localities to effect revisions in this respect.” In a swipe at past practice and the “piecemeal” project-by-project approach, he advised that, to be successful, comprehensive “workable programs” had to be developed “far in excess of anything heretofore conceived” and involve a “great deal more than token representation of local minority group leadership.” He had hoped and worked, in short, for the best, but gauged more accurately the hurdles confronting a sound implementation.<sup>d</sup>

By decade’s end there was no longer a Racial Relations Service, as such, let alone a “Task Force” of experts charged with scrutinizing each and every “workable program” to see if it passed racial muster. There was, instead, a lame-duck Republican Administrator who used his letter of resignation to list administration achievements in “minority housing.” Those who dared to look beyond the rhetoric and facade of accomplishment could see, however, that it was a structure lacking foundation and substance. He spoke of a “de-Horned” Intergroup Relations Service as though it protected minority interests, of the VHMCP as though it made up for the failings of the FHA, and of the “preferential opportunity” offered those displaced by urban renewal. Mason wrote of “encouraging” open occupancy and “supporting” anti-discrimination laws passed by the states. And he concluded with a proud assertion of the inclusiveness demanded by the “workable programs.” He remained silent, however, on the “baffling problem” of increasing minority concentrations in central cities, subsidized white flight to the suburbs, the transformation of public housing, and continued federal support for segregation. It was an assessment, in other words, that seemed utterly detached from the realities and trends of the times. In accepting Mason’s resignation, Eisenhower praised the “great advances” of urban renewal, the “tremendous strides” taken toward the “goal of having every American live in a home of which he can be proud.” With more justification, he also noted the “significant increase” in home ownership among American families. The President’s reply, however, said nothing about race or the fundamental social changes reshaping the metropolitan scene.<sup>di</sup>

### ***Eisenhower’s Exit – An Executive Order Denied***

Much to its chagrin, the administration’s final grades on housing policy came not from within, but from the new Commission on Civil Rights and the private, independent Citizens’ Commission on Race and Housing, the source of the Schwulst Report – and their collective judgement represented a considerable departure from Mason’s self-congratulatory evaluation. Most striking was the way in which the two Commissions’ conclusions and recommendations tracked each other. The public body, in fact, quoted approvingly the “overriding finding” of the Schwulst Report, echoing a point made frequently by Frank Horne over the years. “[H]ousing is apparently the only commodity in the American market which is not freely available to minority groups,” the Civil Rights Commission repeated. Nonwhites, especially, the Commission went on somewhat optimistically, could “compete on equal terms” for virtually anything else, “but not . . . housing.” Where the CCR’s document detailed ways in which

federal programs maintained and extended residential segregation through persistent discrimination, the Citizens' Commission placed government "among the principal influences sustaining racial segregation in housing." Aside from the actions of the FHA, PHA, and urban renewal, publicly supported large developers revolutionized the industry while gaining government approval and "moral sanction" for their discriminatory practices, the private group concluded.<sup>clii</sup>

To those working within the federal housing agencies, this was, by now, an old tale rather than a startling revelation. Indeed, in issuing a "commentary" on the CCR's findings, Philip G. Sadler, a PHA Intergroup Relations officer, noted that they represented a "long familiar story to this office." He went on to observe that despite (or, more likely, because of) the surge in government building programs, "the situation now appears to be even worse" than before. For Sadler, who had been part of an earlier study within his own agency that found nothing to "indicate any intent or effort to comply with" the Presidential assurances contained in Eisenhower's 1954 "Housing Message," this had to be predictably distressing. The twin Commissions raised, in a particularly stark form, the issue of whether public funds were to be used "to confine nonwhite Americans" to the "less desirable" cores of aging cities.<sup>cliii</sup>

Their recommendations for action reflected the Commissions' analysis of the nature of the problem. Both explicitly recognized that the federal government now "play[ed] a major role in housing," and both, subsequently, sought federal remedies. The Schwulst Report asserted that private efforts to eliminate the "evil of housing discrimination" could not proceed "with any assurance of success unless the Federal government moves to cure the ills of its own programs by the most expeditious yet sound measures." It recommended, therefore, the creation of a presidential committee with a mandate to establish a "complete program and time schedule looking toward the elimination of discrimination in the distribution of Federal housing benefits at the earliest time practicable." Though the Civil Rights Commission pointedly rejected the forceful imposition of "a pattern of integrated housing" and sought only "equal opportunity to secure decent housing," it, too, determined that "direct action by the President" was essential. Indeed, its lead recommendation called for an "Executive order" that would cover "all federally assisted housing, including housing constructed with the assistance of Federal mortgage insurance or loan guaranty as well as federally aided public housing and urban renewal projects."<sup>cliv</sup> There is no doubt that the President was aware of such calls for his direct intervention as Earl Scwulst sent him a copy of Where Shall We Live? in late November, 1958. Eisenhower acknowledged receipt of the report a few weeks later, noting that he was "gratified" to have "an independent study of this problem" submitted by "a Commission that contains friends and acquaintances for whom I have great respect."<sup>clv</sup>

The Schwulst Report and that of the Civil Rights Commission placed the issue of an executive order that would prohibit discrimination in federal housing programs on the President's desk

for the remainder of his term. It was kept there by Senator Jacob Javits (R-NY) who, in November 1959, reminded Eisenhower of the latest research and asked directly for just such an order. Javits voiced particular concern over the persistence of “discrimination . . . in federally-aided housing activities” as well as the fact that “the decisions of the Supreme Court as to desegregation in public schools are . . . being rendered ineffective because of residential segregation.” He also worried that urban renewal worked particular hardships on minority families that were disproportionately displaced and banned from the “new construction [that] is often segregated in effect.” The senator remained confident that an executive order, backed by the “good will” of the various housing administrators could effect a “change in the pattern of segregation,” and do so without jeopardizing the housing program.<sup>clvi</sup>

Unlike Max Rabb’s startled reaction to Adam Clayton Powell’s 1953 request, this time no one in the administration registered surprise. The ensuing years had educated them all to the difficulty and danger of tinkering with residential segregation and the response to the senator’s proposal reflected less puzzlement than panic (and, ultimately, paralysis). When handed Javits’ missive, Presidential aide Bryce Harlow sought advice on how to handle the problem, noting with trepidation that “[t]his one has hair on it.” Turning to another assistant for guidance, Harlow wrote Gerald D. Morgan to ask “what kind of follow thru [sic] [is] needed.” Indeed, he even felt the need to inquire as to whether they should “in truth try to do something on this?” Morgan advised that “Housing [HHFA] look over Javits’ letter & come up with comments.”<sup>clvii</sup>

Administrator Mason claimed that the issue raised by Javits “has been a long concern of mine.” “During the past several months,” he admitted, “we have been carefully reviewing the housing recommendations in the final reports of both the Federal Commission on Civil Rights and the Commission on Race and Housing.” He intended to make a recommendation on the executive order before the end of the year, and by mid-January, 1960, staff talked openly of Mason’s negative decision. The Administrator finally informed Javits during the summer that the “matter has been under discussion since the Schwulst report was received.” “The general feeling has been,” he went on, that

while the President is fully and actively in accord with the principle of equality of opportunity in housing for all our citizens, he has felt that with the splendid progress . . . being made in this field by voluntary cooperative leadership, that perhaps the results will come more rapidly than through an Executive Order.<sup>clviii</sup>

In the end, that order had to await another Presidential campaign, a change in administrations, and two more years – and all that for a statement that fell short of the one called for in 1959.

## **Conclusion**

The Eisenhower administration inherited both a housing problem and a bare handful of remedial tools when it assumed office in 1953. The FHA (created in 1934) and public housing (sanctioned in the Housing Act of 1937) represented the New Deal's best efforts to use housing to revive a moribund national economy, transform the majority of American families into homeowners, and provide shelter to that famous "one-third" of the nation too poor to compete in the marketplace. The immediate postwar era produced, furthermore, the Housing Act of 1949, a measure that began to address, it appeared, not only the housing shortage, but the more general decay and obsolescence characteristic of the nation's aging cities. Creating yet another bureaucracy (DSCUR) under the aegis of the HHFA (itself confectioned as a coordinating, umbrella housing agency in 1947), the 1949 legislation defined a process of urban redevelopment that focused upon slum clearance, massive demolition, and the use of public housing as a relocation tool for inner city residents. By 1953, the earliest efforts under the new law – most notably those in Chicago, Detroit, Baltimore, and Birmingham – generated more problems than answers, however, for the incoming administration.

There were, moreover, a number of additional complicating factors. Ideologically discomfited by much of the New Deal, Eisenhower's Republican administration found itself admiring and supporting the FHA, an agency dogged by charges of corruption. Though they made efforts to slough off blame for the "Section 608" scandals on the Democrats (on whose watch they occurred), Republicans feared the political fall-out might well damage, or even destroy, a New Deal institution that had proven a boon to the real estate and related industries. Talk of abolishing such agencies was usually reserved for "socialistic" public housing, a program now deemed essential to the process of rebuilding decayed urban cores. Fearing the cost of that process – and the recurrence of another postwar recession (or worse) – the administration sought some bureaucratic or legislative formula, through the appointment of a new HHFA Administrator and an Advisory Committee to the President, that would get more "bang for the buck" in urban revitalization (an approach not reserved for nuclear policy) and stimulate the national economy; if it saved a favored agency then under attack and transformed, in a utilitarian fashion, another it needed, but did not want, so much the better. The answer was urban renewal.

A racially bifurcated playing field provided the final, crucial element. Two major population flows – that of African Americans out of the rural South to the urban South, North, and West, and that of rural and urban whites to suburbs everywhere – made virtually every project a litmus test on desegregation. Hardly a random development, the pace of white metropolitanization relied heavily upon FHA policy and practice, including the exclusion of nonwhites. Similarly, siting and tenant-selection choices in public housing reinforced a black inner city presence. Redevelopment merely accelerated existing trends. Homeowning suburbanites who received hidden subsidies that allowed them to participate in the private



market for shelter contrasted sharply with inner city black renters who accepted direct government support through the occupation of publicly-owned projects.

Questions of racial justice attached themselves to federal housing policy long before the President's Advisory Committee took up the cause of urban renewal. Institutionally, before the 1930s had expired, the RRS emerged to protect both nonwhites in the formation and implementation of policy, and the government from charges of ill treatment and bad publicity. First under the direction of Robert C. Weaver, and then under the tutelage of Frank S. Horne, the RRS developed an “equity” policy that sought a “fair share” of programmatic benefits for minorities. That was the policy that remained in place at the dawn of the civil rights era and the beginning of Eisenhower's first term.

The appointment of Albert M. Cole as HHFA Administrator and the work of the President's Advisory Committee (as communicated in Eisenhower's January 25, 1954 “Housing Message” to Congress) gave the first hints that the new administration would pursue its own housing initiatives – and that it could hardly avoid the race issue. Indeed, Cole's appointment apparently depended upon his perceived ability to keep separate increasingly racially identifiable upper- and lower-tier programs, and to deliver service across the color line without breaking it. That the administration could acknowledge (as indicated by an advisor's notes in the margins of an early “Message” draft) that Ike's plans for urban renewal “condone[d] segregation,” simply confirmed the foreknowledge of that likely event, and the President's easy acceptance of it. Reluctant even to discuss race in public, Eisenhower soon found himself, however, drawn inexorably into a debate in which actions spoke louder than words.

The decision rendered by the U. S. Supreme Court in Brown v. Board of Education, Topeka, Kansas on May 17, 1954 still echoed in the halls of Congress and the states when, just a few weeks later, the Housing Act of 1954 brought urban renewal to life. Their temporal proximity forever linked the judgement and the legislation, and did so in more than a symbolic or coincidental manner. The judicial obliteration of “separate but equal” had obvious legal and constitutional implications for public policy in areas other than education. This was especially true of a housing program that was, essentially, built on that premise. But more than that, given the intimate connection between residence and “neighborhood” schools, there was a functional tie as well. In short, the widening debate over race and equality, and the emergent resistance to Brown, involved housing policy from the beginning.

The federal government's deference to localism – and especially that of the Eisenhower administration – need little reiteration. The first twenty years of FHA and PHA operations testified to the national government's reluctance, especially in matters involving race, to dictate policy to municipal or state authorities. The result was that local elites successfully hitched new federal powers and supports to the reinforcement (or establishment) of segregation. Brown, potentially, called that traditional relationship into question, and at least threatened great change.

Having compelled a direct engagement of the race issue, the Supreme Court seemed less disposed to resolve it quickly or decisively. Nor did the executive branch willingly jump in. The President's criticism of the Warren Court and the Brown decision were well known as were his general distaste for the public discussion of racial discrimination and reticence to grant his administration the power to root it out anywhere save in instances (such as the military) involving the most direct and controlling federal connection. HHFA Administrator Cole needed little help in following Eisenhower's lead or his own evident predisposition.

He responded in two ways. First, he curbed dissent in his own shop and reshaped the bureaucracy so that it offered little resistance. This is the context that framed the 1955 dismissal of Frank Horne and Corienne Morrow, and the subsequent domestication of the RRS. Not only were the leading voices for a policy of non-discrimination stilled, but the Service itself soon lost its *raison d'être* and, eventually, its very identity. By 1959, the Commission on Civil Rights reported, the RRS became the Intergroup Relations Service ostensibly "to avoid the connotation of racial separateness." Instead of gaining momentum with the growing civil rights movement, or broadening its base among a potential array of nonwhite interests, the new unit seemed only to lose focus. The HHFA assigned these "specialists" only "where non-discrimination housing laws had been already enacted, and "the unit's all-black personnel found it difficult to play a constructive role. One member of the Intergroup Relations Branch assigned to the PHA assessed its work shortly before the administration entered its last year. We "could and should be more effective," he wrote, "but we are precluded from being so largely because of limited personnel and because . . . there is still a tendency to overlook us . . . in making decisions as to policy and procedures. . . ; and often our warnings and disapprovals are passed over." Its effective life seemingly at an end, the Service displayed little direction or assertiveness and simply became what the RNC's Val Washington had always claimed it to be: a patronage dumping ground for politically-connected minorities.<sup>clix</sup>

Cole's second response – closely related to the first – involved the set up and operation of the Urban Renewal Administration. Still adhering closely to the principles of localism and decentralization, the Administrator made certain that there could be no effective evaluation of the racial impact of proposed "workable programs." He assigned no RRS agents to URA field offices, and such oversight procedures as were created were honored in the breach or proved strikingly ineffective. Localities subsequently had a virtual free hand to employ the new federal assistance not only to rebuild aging neighborhoods, but to restructure their racial composition.<sup>clx</sup> This became a particularly salient feature of the program in the wake of the Supreme Court's action in Brown.

The National Urban League's Lester Granger predicted, shortly after Brown was handed down, that increasing residential segregation would be used to "compensate" for the Supreme Court's handiwork in dismantling the legal supports sustaining dual school systems. And it was not long thereafter that the NAACP's Roy Wilkins and Clarence Mitchell added their protests to Granger's prognostication. Wilkins objected to a Dayton, Ohio development that included a

school to service and contain its black population while Mitchell registered a strong complaint against a planned Pulaski, Arkansas school that local authorities intended for the children of white military personnel. Cole incredibly dismissed Wilkins’ call not to support segregation with the assertion that neighborhoods should not be denied government assistance simply because they were black. But even the administration had to admit that a racially restricted school financed in its entirety by federal funds for armed services families might present problems. Such straws in the wind simply highlighted housing expert Charles Abrams’ claim that the President had broken his promise “that Federal funds would not be used to support discrimination.”<sup>clxi</sup>

Certainly great changes had been anticipated in the immediate aftermath of Brown, and those within HHFA understood the broad implications of housing policy. Less than three weeks after the Supreme Court ruled, the agency held a race relations workshop at which the Administrator “pressed those present to examine carefully “ Brown’s potential impact on urban renewal, including its “interwoven” political, social, and legal aspects. “The examination revealed the inevitable sweeping influences of urban renewal activity on racial patterns in housing and related facilities,” the workshop reported.<sup>clxii</sup> It went on to conclude:

An assembly of governmental funds and powers and a multiplicity of governmental decisions . . . makes possible the urban renewal project. This governmental action either catches up the favorable forces in the direction of a free housing market or cuts against them. If the latter, segregation in housing is extended and democratic advance in other areas of living such as schools . . . is left ineffective and unreal.

The HHFA personnel attending the workshop subsequently “expected “ not only an “attack” against “racially exclusive public housing” but a broader campaign against segregation resulting from “public-assisted housing and [urban renewal] land assembly” as well.<sup>clxiii</sup>

It did not take long for the hopeful – or the fearful – to be disabused of such notions.

Little more than a year later, Corienne Morrow placed her separation from government service – and that of Frank Horne – squarely in the context of the Supreme Court’s ruling. Not only had the HHFA “abdicated” its duty to abolish “separate but equal,” according to Morrow, but – as the NCDH charged – its failure to address the “insistent racial . . . factors involved at every stage of most urban renewal proposals” threatened “the proper functioning of the program” for “all American families.” If the federal government continued down its chosen path, Pauli Murray concluded with specific reference to Brown, “it will nullify the decisions of the United States Supreme Court.”<sup>clxiv</sup>

By 1959, the NCDH read the writing in the rubble. “Urban renewal, the keystone of the Federal housing programs,” it warned URA Commissioner Walker, “is in danger of foundering completely on the minority issue.” “Unless the trends now operating are reversed,” Director

Frances Levenson wrote, "urban renewal may well be remembered merely as a tremendous 'Negro clearance' operation." "[F]ar from helping the housing plight of racial minorities," the Committee concluded, urban renewal was "actually hurting them." As for its impact on Brown,

It is resulting in both the curtailment of living space available to minority families and is increasing segregation. Entire Negro neighborhoods are being cleared to make room for housing restricted to whites only. Even some presently integrated areas are being "renewed" on a segregated basis. Some Southern communities are actually using the program to insure future school segregation by moving minority families out of presently integrated neighborhoods.

The review process had clearly broken down and "workable programs" consisting of no more than "pious declarations" routinely passed through. "Lack of definite policy by the Federal Government has permitted these outrageous schemes to receive approval and support," the NCDH protested.<sup>clxv</sup>

Indeed, by that time, voices within the URA and HHFA could be heard confirming the perceptions of such outside critics. Taking the South particularly to task, George Nesbitt observed that urban renewal "projects are accumulating which appear or can be made to appear motivated by the desire to effect 'Negro clearance' and frustration of desegregation in education in the one stroke and with Federal aid." Acknowledging the failure of current safeguards, Nesbitt suggested a halt in the processing of applications throughout the region until a new racial policy could be put in place. The new policy would, he hoped, "prevent 'Negro clearance', retain minority hold on living space where it now exists, and remove the Federal Government from charges of facilitating and sanctioning the racial conversion of residential areas in order to frustrate desegregation in educational and other public facilities." The bureaucratic shield critiqued so devastatingly by Nesbitt was, of course, LPA Letter 16 – the device allegedly protective of minority interests that was praised so highly by both Cole and Mason. In short, no internal procedural reform would be forthcoming.<sup>clxvi</sup>

With such outcomes clearly apparent, the Eisenhower administration had one last opportunity to take action. When hope of obtaining an executive order prohibiting racial discrimination in federal housing programs evaporated, the House Committee on Banking and Currency brought up a bill that would cut off government support, financial or otherwise, from developments guilty of such discrimination. Asked for guidance in the spring of 1960, the HHFA's Mason responded for the administration that, despite its "sympathy with the underlying purpose" of the bill, it did "not feel that legislation along these lines represents the most practical method of achieving progress." Objecting first of all to the "detailed controls which would necessarily be imposed," Mason reminded the committee that lenders supported FHA programs "on a voluntary basis" and assured it that such restrictions "would undoubtedly have a serious adverse effect." Indeed, in a letter to the committee's chair, Mason rejected a

negative legislative approach and reaffirmed, instead, the administration’s determination to provide “additional housing for all groups.” As for urban renewal, he offered the familiar bland assurances that the URA conducted its operations “in conformity with state and local law” and that “citizen participation” remained “one of the required elements of a ‘workable program’.” No other safeguards, apparently, were needed. The administration, clearly, had staked out a position and was sticking to it.<sup>clxvii</sup>

Less than a year later – and just nine days before John F. Kennedy’s inauguration – Mason submitted his resignation and a report to the President on housing. He reminded Eisenhower of the work of his Advisory Committee, the passage of the Housing Act of 1954, and the ongoing implementation of urban renewal. Of the 844 such projects then “underway or completed,” roughly 600 won approval, he noted in taking a swipe at the previous administration, since 1954. He noted, too, the work of the FHA and the rise in homeownership rates (from 56% to 62%) that accompanied the Eisenhower years. And he praised the attention now being paid to the elderly. As for “minority housing,” Mason spoke of having “encouraged” and “supported” the principles of open occupancy and non-discrimination; of having “strengthened” the Intergroup Relations Service and the “preferential opportunity” afforded urban renewal’s displaced families; and he extolled the VHMCP and the procedural protections instituted for the creation of “workable programs.” As a litany of accomplishment for non-whites, it did not even rise to the level of “smoke and mirrors.” Conspicuously left off the list were the growing federally-sponsored inner-city concentrations of increasingly isolated African Americans.<sup>clxviii</sup>

In accepting his letter of resignation, Eisenhower paid tribute to Mason’s “dedication” and HHFA’s “major tangible achievements.” Urban renewal’s success in “preventing” as well as clearing slums came in for accolades, as did advances in planning and homeownership. If the President could point to the elderly and colleges as deserving recipients of federal largesse, however, his reference to minority groups lacked the specificity of Mason’s attempted recital of administration “accomplishments.” And he, too, failed to mention the expansion and reinforcement of urban “ghettos” even as the Supreme Court knocked the legal props out from under a segregated society. That would be left for the Kerner Commission.<sup>clxix</sup>

- i Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (New York: Bantam Books, 1968), 2.
- ii The rather distinctive handwriting commenting on the text appears to be that of Gabriel Hauge. The memo to which the draft is attached is also addressed to him. "First Draft of Housing Message," attached to Albert M. Cole to Gabriel Hauge, January 18, 1954, in folder: OF 120 - 1954 (3), box 613, Central Files, Official Files, Dwight D. Eisenhower Papers (DDE Papers), Eisenhower Library (EL), Abilene, KS.
- iii Recent historiographical trends are noted in several essays in Kenneth W. Goings and Raymond A. Mohl, eds., The New African American Urban History (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1996). See also, Heather Ann Thompson, "Rethinking the Politics of White Flight in the Postwar City: Detroit, 1945-1980," Journal of Urban History 25 (January 1999): 163-98 and Gary Gerstle, American Crucible: Race and Nation in the Twentieth Century (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).
- iv Public Housing Administration (PHA), "The Negro in Public Housing, 1933-1953: Problems and Accomplishments" (typescript, May 1954), in folder 4, box 1, RG 196, National Archives II (NA II), College Park, MD; Arnold R. Hirsch, "Searching for a 'Sound Negro Policy': A Racial Agenda for the Housing Acts of 1949 and 1954," Housing Policy Debate 11(Issue 2, 2000), 393-441.
- v Hirsch, "Searching for a 'Sound Negro Policy'," 404-19.
- vi PHA, "Negro in Public Housing."
- vii Office of the Administrator, Racial Relations Service, "Policy Questions - Staff Discussion of Staff Papers," April 6, 1953, Adker 116127 (LC), plaintiff's ex. 121. The author wishes to thank Tom Henderson of the National Lawyer's Committee for Civil Rights Under Law for providing documents from Adker v. HUD.
- viii Ibid.; George R. Nesbitt to J. W. Follin, October 19, 1954, Adker 116135 (LC), plaintiff's ex.? (illegible); PHA, "Negro in Public Housing," 109. For Trumbull Park, see Arnold R. Hirsch, "Massive Resistance in the Urban North: Trumbull Park, Chicago, 1953-1966," The Journal of American History 82 (September 1995), 522-50.
- ix A sampling of the individual city, case study approach to post-World War II redevelopment, housing and race includes Arnold R. Hirsch, Making the Second Ghetto: Race and Housing in Chicago, 1940-1960 (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983); John F. Bauman, Public Housing, Race and Renewal: Urban Planning in Philadelphia, 1920-1974 (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987); Thomas J. Sugrue, Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit (Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1996); Raymond A. Mohl, "Making the Second Ghetto in Metropolitan Miami, 1940-1960," Journal of Urban History 21 (1995): 395- 427; Charles F. Casey-Leininger, "Making the Second Ghetto in Cincinnati: Avondale, 1925-1970," in Race and the City: Work, Community and Protest in Cincinnati, 1820-1970, ed. Henry Louis Taylor, Jr. (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1993); Howard Gillette, Jr., Between Justice and Beauty: Race, Planning, and the Failure of Urban Policy in Washington, D. C. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995); Thomas H. O'Connor, Building a New Boston: Politics and Urban Renewal, 1950-1970 (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1993); William H. Wilson, Hamilton Park: A Planned Black Community in Dallas (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998); Christopher Silver, Twentieth-Century Richmond: Planning, Politics, and Race (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1982); and Ronald H. Bayor, Race and the Shaping of Twentieth-Century Atlanta (Chapel Hill, N. C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

- x Gerald F. Healy to Arthur E. Summerfield, December 12, 1952, in folder: Endorsements, box 398, General File (GF) -50-A, DDE Records.
- xi Healy to Summerfield, December 12, 1952 and James Rouse to Aksel Nielsen, December 12, 1952, both in folder: Endorsements, box 398, GF-50-A, DDE Records.
- xii Robert A. Taft to Herbert Brownell, December 17, 1952, in folder: OF-120, Housing, 1953 (1), box 612, Central Files, Official Files, DDE Papers.
- xiii Aksel Nielsen to Governor Sherman Adams, December 22, 1952, in folder: Endorsements, box 398, GF 50-A, DDE Records.
- xiv David M. P. Freund, “The Color of Property: Federal Policy and the Origins of White Backlash,” paper presented at annual meeting of the American Historical Association, January 4, 2002, San Francisco, CA.
- xv Charles F. Willis, Jr. to Governor Adams, January 29, 1953 and January 28, 1953, both in folder: Endorsements, box 398, GF 50-A, DDE Records.
- xvi Walter P. Reuther to The President, March 6, 1953 in folder: Official File (OF) 25, HHFA, box 201, DDE Papers as President (White House Central Files); NAACP, Press Release, March 5, 1953, frame 0447, reel 6, NAACP Papers, Part 5: Campaign Against Residential Segregation (University Publications of America).
- xvii Joseph R. Ray to Senator John Sherman Cooper, March 18, 1953; John Sherman Cooper to Joseph R. Ray, Sr., March 31, 1953; Charles F. Willis, Jr. to Guy Hollyday, April 24, 1953, all in folder: 121-R, April-June, 1953, box 729, GF 121, DDE Records; John M. Robison, Jr. to The President, September 28, 1953 and Charles F. Willis, Jr. to John M. Robison, Jr., October 2, 1953, both in folder: GF 50-A, Ray, Joseph R., box 399, DDE Papers.
- xviii Joseph R. Ray to Dr. Carl Murphy, n.d., in folder: Racial Relations, box 116, General Subject Files, 1947-1960, RG 207.
- xix Lester Granger to President Eisenhower, September 16, 1953; Alexander L. Crosby to Mr. President, September 21, 1953; Mary McLeod Bethune to Dwight D. Eisenhower, September 23, 1953; Elmer Henderson to Dwight D. Eisenhower, September 18, 1953; and Albert M. Cole to Bernard N. Shanley, October 16, 1953, all found in folder: GF 50-A (1), Horne, Frank, box 399, Central Files, DDE Papers.
- xx Albert M. Cole to Sherman Adams, October 21, 1953 in folder OF 120 - Housing, 1953 (2), box 613, Central Files, DDE Papers.
- xxi Frank S. Horne to Albert M. Cole, Memorandum re Proposals for the President’s Advisory Committee on Housing,” n.d. in folder 12, box 745, Program Files, Racial Relations Files, 1946-1958, RG 207.
- xxii Ibid. Horne sought minority participation in FHA=VA programs “at least to the proportion that these families represent in the effective middle income housing market in the localities served by these offices.”
- xxiii Ibid.
- xxiv “Report of the President’s Advisory Committee on Government Housing Policies and Programs,” n. d., attached to Albert M. Cole to Mr. President, December 14, 1953 in folder: Public Housing-1953, box 7, James Lambie Records, DDE Library.

- xxv Ibid.
- xxvi Ibid.
- xxvii Clipping from Business Week, December 12, 1953 found in folder: Housing (1), box 47, Howard Pyle Records, DDE Library.
- xxviii There is an ambiguous and perhaps veiled reference to race in a single notation that urban renewal would, among other things, "protect new neighborhoods." It is difficult to believe that anyone conversant with the state of American cities in the 1950s would have missed the racial implications of that comment, but there was no recorded specific discussion of the issue. See the handwritten notes of the December 9, 1953 Cabinet Meeting, folder: C-9 (1), December 9, 1953, box 1, Office of the Staff Secretary, Records, 1952-1961, Cabinet Series, DDE Papers.
- xxix The FHA scandals involved "Section 608," an addition to the 1934 National Housing Act intended to spur construction of rental housing for war workers. Created in 1942, Section 608 was extended and amended in the postwar period to address the continuing housing shortage. The program shut down amid rumors of fraud and corruption in 1950 after building 7,045 developments containing 465,683 units.
- xxx Ibid. and Minutes of Cabinet Meeting, December 9, 1953 in folder: Cabinet Meeting, December 9, 1953, box 2, Ann Whitman File, Cabinet Series, DDE Papers.
- xxxi Joseph R. Ray to Messrs. Horne, Nesbitt, Sadler, and Snowden, January 26, 1954 in folder: Racial Relations (2), box 96, Subject Files, 1947-1960, RG 207.
- xxxii Joseph R. Ray to Albert M. Cole, January 15, 1954 in folder: Racial Relations (2), box 96, Subject Files, 1947- 1960, RG 207.
- xxxiii Both the draft of the speech and Mitchell's suggested language are attached to Albert M. Cole to Maxwell M. Rabb, n. d. in folder: GF 50 (1) HHFA, box 397, DDE Records.
- xxxiv The full text of the "Housing Message" may be found in the New York Times, January 26, 1954; a clipping is in folder: Housing (2), box 47, Pyle Records.
- xxxv "Address by Albert M. Cole to the Economic Club of Detroit, " February 8, 1954, in folder: Housing (2), box 47, Pyle Records; Clarence Mitchell to Walter White, March 17, 1954, frame 0552, reel 6, Part 5: Campaign Against Residential Segregation, NAACP Papers.
- xxxvi Albert M. Cole to Mr. President, January 15, 1954 in folder 2, Racial Relations, box 96, Subject File, 1947- 1960, RG 207.
- xxxvii Ray to Messrs. Horne, Nesbitt, Sadler and Snowden, January 26, 1954.
- xxxviii Frank S. Horne to Joseph R. Ray, February 4, 1954 in folder 2, Racial Relations, box 96, Subject File, 1947- 1960, RG 207.
- xxxix Warren Olney III to [all United States Attorneys], September 23, 1954, attached to Olney to Bernard M. Shanley, September 23, 1954 in folder: OF 25-D-1 (4), box 206, Central Files, Official File, DDE Papers; Dwight D. Eisenhower to Senator Capehart, n.d. and Capehart to Mr. President, n.d., both in James C. Hagerty, Press Release, October 23, 1954, in folder: OF 25-D (4), box 206, Central Files, Official File, DDE Papers.
- xl Report of William F. McKenna (hereafter the "McKenna Report"), attached to McKenna to Albert M. Cole, August 31, 1954, in folder: Housing - Housing and Home Finance Agency, box 14, Gerald Morgan Records, DDE Library. The report concluded that the taking of such



gratuities became an “accepted norm of operation,” even to the point where “an entire field staff” would be given vacations by “grateful builders.” Among other indiscretions, FHA employees were also permitted to conduct private business from their government offices. See also, Gail Sansbury, “Section 608: Title VI, National Housing Act,” in Willem van Vliet, ed., The Encyclopedia of Housing (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 1998), 519-29.

- xli McKenna Report, pp. 3-4 and passim.
- xlii Ibid., 3; Nelson A. Rockefeller, Memorandum for the President, January 30, 1954, in folder: OF 25 1954 (1), box 201, Central Files, 1953-61, Official File, DDE Records; Herbert Brownell, Jr. to Sherman Adams, May 14, 1954, and “Statement by Albert M. Cole,” April 12, 1954, both in folder: OF-25-D-1 (2), Central Files, Official Files, DDE Papers.
- xliii R. G. Hughes to Sherman Adams, April 6, 1954 and W. A. Clarke to Sherman Adams, March 16, 1954, both in folder: OF 25 1954 (1), box 201, Central Files, 1953-61, Official File, DDE Records.
- xliv Guy T. O. Hollyday to Sherman Adams, February 19, 1954, in folder: OF 25 1954 (1), box 201, Central Files, 1953-61, Official File, DDE Records.
- xlv McKenna Report, 9-10, 13; Capehart to the President, n. d.; Roger Steffan to Governor Adams, April 23, 1954, in folder: OF 120 1954 (3), box 613, Central Files, Official File, DDE Papers.
- xlvi McKenna Report, 29.
- xlvii Eisenhower to Capehart, n. d.; Staff of the Senate Republican Policy Committee, “The Scandal of Scandals: The Incredible Story-in-Brief of the Sordid and Corrupt Federal Housing Mess of the Democratic Administration,” (October, 1954), 1, in folder: Housing (1), Pyle Records, DDE Library.
- xlviii [Charles F. Willis, Jr.], Memorandum on Housing Legislation and FHA Reorganization, May 17, 1954, attached to Willis to Governor Adams, May 19, 1954, in folder: OF 25-D Federal Housing Administration, box 205, Central Files, Official File, DDE Papers.
- xlix McKenna Report, 35-39; Norman F. Mason to the President, December 27, 1960, in folder: OF 25 1959-60 (3), box 202, Central Files, Official File, DDE Papers; Nelson A. Rockefeller to Sherman Adams, February 8, 1955, in folder: OF 25 1955 (1), box 201, Central Files, Official File, DDE Papers; “Actions Taken Since April 14, 1954 to Strengthen the Operations of FHA,” June 29, 1954, in folder: OF 25-D-1 (3), box 206, Central Files, Official File, DDE Papers.
- I Albert M. Cole to Gabriel Hauge, February 18, 1955, in folder: OF 25 1955 (1), box 614, Central Files, Official File, DDE Papers. Analyzing “what was really wrong with the program,” Assistant Attorney General Warren E. Burger had earlier “suggested to Hauge” that the President address the lending agencies in “sharp” language on the need to have it “administered by incorruptible men.” Warren E. Burger to Mr. Shanley, September 22, 1954, in folder: OF 25-D-1 (2), box 206, Central Files, Official File, DDE Papers.
- li Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. to Mr. President, June 10, 1953 and Max Rabb to Governor Adams, June 15, 1953, both in file: OF 142-A-4, Segregation-Integration (1), box 731, DDE Papers.
- lii Address by Albert M. Cole at the Hampton Institute, Hampton, Virginia, October 29, 1954, in NAACP Papers (University Publications of America microfilm), Part 5: Campaign Against Residential Segregation, reel 6, frame 0601; James C. Downs, Jr. to Albert M. Cole, October 29, 1954 (telegram), in folder: Trumbull Park, box 116, General Subject File, 1947-1960, RG 207; Cole to Mayor Martin H. Kennelly, October 28, 1954, in NAACP Papers, Part 5: Campaign

- Against Residential Segregation, reel 6, frame 0614. More than six months before Cole's Hampton Institute appearance, the Chicago Civil Liberties Committee had petitioned the President "to order an FBI investigation" of the Trumbull Park rioting. The Committee also noted in its letter that the Commissioners of the Chicago Housing Authority (CHA) had already met with the U.S. Attorney in Chicago "to request that the federal government intervene to stop the violence." There is no indication of any response to either the Committee's or the CHA's pleas. See Ira H. Latimer and King S. Range to President Dwight Eisenhower, March 22, 1954, in folder: OF-50 - HHFA (1), box 397, General Files, Official Files, DDE Papers.
- liii Walter White to Mr. President, April 22, 1954 in file: OF 142-A-4, Segregation-Integration (3), box 731, DDE Papers; Maxwell M. Rabb to Walter, May 17, 1954 in file: GF 50, HHFA (1), box 397, DDE Records.
- liv Minutes of Cabinet Meeting, January 28, 1955 in file: Cabinet Meeting, January 28, 1955, box 4, Ann Whitman File, Cabinet Series, DDE Papers.
- lv Tex McCrary to Mr. President, April 22, 1955 and DDE to Tex, April 29, 1955, both in file: OF 120 - 1955 (2), box 614, Central Files, Official File, DDE Papers.
- lvi Max Rabb Memorandum for Ann Whitman, July 5, 1955 and DDE Memorandum for Max Rabb, July 5, 1955, both in file: Rabb, Maxwell, M., box 29, Administrative Series, Ann Whitman File, DDE Papers.
- lvii Memorandum for the Record, August 19, 1953, in file: August-September, 1953 (2), box 3, Ann Whitman File, DDE Papers.
- lviii Hamilton, Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., 200; Diary entry, January 3, 1957, in file: January, 1957 Diary - acw (2), box 8, Diary Series, Ann Whitman File, DDE Papers.
- lix Morrow note on race and Rep party pol calculation
- lx J. W. Follin to Albert M. Cole, May 28, 1954 in folder: Racial Relations, box 284, General Subject Files, 1949- 1960, RG 207.
- lxi Ibid.
- lxii Ibid. Follin envisaged other scenarios as well. The involvement of state and local governments might push the level of public participation in a given project to the point where private developers could no longer fend off demands for publicly-imposed non-discrimination requirements. And projects where a local public agency (LPA) seized the property of one private owner only to pass it on later to another, meant that such land – for a time – "constitute[d] public property and, hence [was] subject to the pertinent non-segregation rulings."
- lxiii B. T. Fitzpatrick to Mr. Cole, June 10, 1954, in folder 5, box 20, Subject Correspondence File, Albert Cole, Administrator, RG 207.
- lxiv Allan F. Thornton o Walter S. Newlin, June 28, 1954; W. S. Newlin to Regional Directors, July 2, 1954; Joseph R. Ray to Albert M. Cole, June 30, 1954; all in folder: Minority Group Housing, General, 1954, box 3, Program Correspondence of the Assistant Commissioner for Operations, 1936-1956, RG 31.
- lxv Ray to Cole, June 30, 1954 and George W. Snowden to Norman P. Mason, July 2, 1954, in folder: Minority Group Housing, General, 1954, box 3, Program Correspondence of the Assistant Commissioner for Operations, 1936-1956, RG 31.

- lxvi Frank S. Horne to Albert M. Cole, June 29, 1954, in file: Racial Relations (1), box 748, Program Files, Racial Relations Files, 1946-1958, RG 207.
- lxvii Ibid.
- lxviii Ibid. The pertinent section of the U. S. Code states: “All citizens of the United States shall have the same right, in every State and Territory, as is enjoyed by white citizens thereof to inherit, purchase, lease, sell, hold, and convey real and personal property.”
- lxix Joseph R. Ray to Albert M. Cole, July 14, 1954, in folder: Racial Relations (1), box 96, General Subject Files, 1947-1960, RG 207.
- lxx The memorandum is attached to Frank S. Horne to Albert M. Cole, August 13, 1954, in folder 3, box 11, RG 196. lxxi Ibid.
- lxxii Joseph R. Ray to Albert M. Cole, August 13, 1954.
- lxxiii Joseph Guandolo to J. W. Follin, August 24, 1954, in folder: 3, bo 11, RG 196.
- lxxiv Max Rabb to Governor Adams, July 15 and July 16, 1954, both in folder: OF 120 - 1954 (4), box 614, Central Files, Official File, DDE Papers.
- lxxv Maxwell Rabb to Robert W. Dowling, October 28, 1954, in folder: Racial Relation (1), box 96, General Subject Files, 1947-1960, RG 207.
- lxxvi Lester B. Granger to Sherman Adams, June 18, 1954; Lester B. Granger to Dwight D. Eisenhower, June 18, 1954; and National Urban League, “The National Housing Situation As It Affects the Non-White Population,” (typewritten memorandum to the President, June 18, 1954); see also Max Rabb to Governor Adams, July 23, 1954, all in folder: GF 50 - HHFA (1), box 397, General Files, DDE Papers.
- lxxvii Albert M. Cole to Sherman Adams, November 9, 1954 in folder: OF 120 - 1954 (4), box 614, Central Files, Official Files, DDE Records.
- lxxviii Charles F. Masterson to L. Arthur Minnich, Jr., November 13, 1954; and Sherman Adams to Albert M. Cole, November 10, 1954; both in folder OF 120 - 1954 (4), box 614, Central Files, Official Files, DDE Records.
- lxxix Maxwell Rabb to Robert W. Dowling, October 28, 1954, in folder: Racial Relations (1), box 96, General Subject Files, 1947-1960, RG 207.
- lxxx Walter White to Herbert R. Brownell, December 22, 1954, in frame 615, reel 6, Part 5: Campaign Against Residential Segregation, NAACP Papers; George W. Snowden to Henry M. Day, March 14, 1955, in folder: Minority Group Housing, 1955-1956, box 6, Program Correspondence of the Assistant Commissioner for Operations, 1936-1956, RG 31.
- lxxxi Albert M. Cole to Homer E. Capehart, April 6, 1954, in folder: 7, box 748, Program Files, Racial Relations Files, 1946-1958, RG 207.
- lxxxii The housing issue was buried at the tail end of the Attorney General’s Cabinet Paper and handled in a perfunctory manner. It mentioned only two aspects of the problem: the reorganization of the HHFA and RRS, and the Trumbull Park disorders. In both instances, the report provided unwarranted positive assessments of administration actions. See “Report by the Attorney General on the Administration’s Efforts in the Field of Racial Segregation and Discrimination,” January 26, 1955, in folder: Cabinet Meeting, January 28, 1955, box 4, Cabinet Series, Ann Whitman File , DDE Papers.

- lxxxiii Handwritten notes of January 28, 1955 Cabinet Meeting, in folder: C-21 (3), 1/28/55, box 3, Office of the Staff Secretary Records, 1952-1961, White House Office, DDE Records. lxxxiv Ibid.
- lxxxv Ray's statement, dated April 27, 1955, is attached to Charles F. Willis, Jr. to Albert M. Cole, April 29, 1955; see also Cole to Willis, May 3, 1955 and Charles F. Willis, Jr. to Joseph R. Ray, May 5, 1955, all in folder: OF 120- 1955 (2), box 614, Central Files, Official Files, DDE Papers.
- lxxxvi Albert M. Cole to Honorable Craig Hosmer, November 16, 1955, in folder: Racial Relations (5), box 116 and Albert M. Cole to Honorable Herbert H. Lehman, February 2, 1956, in folder: Racial Relations (2), box 134, both letters in HHFA General Subject Files, 1947-1960, RG 207; "Address by Albert M. Cole to the Annual Convention of the National Association of Housing Officials, Milwaukee, Wisconsin," October 15, 1953, in NAACP Papers, Part 5: Campaign Against Residential Segregation, reel 6, frames 0526-0534.
- lxxxvii Albert M. Cole to Honorable Herbert H. Lehman, February 2, 1956, in folder: Racial Relations (7), box 134, Subject File 1947-1960, RG 207.
- lxxxviii Albert M. Cole to Honorable Charles C. Diggs, Jr., March 14, 1956, in folder: Racial Relations (7), box 14, Subject File, 1947-1960, RG 207.
- lxxxix Albert M. Cole to Honorable Prescott Bush, May 3, 1956, in folder: Racial Relations (7), box 134, Subject File, 1947-1960, RG 207.
- xc Cole to Diggs, March 14, 1956; Cole to Bush, May 3, 1956. The Eisenhower quotation is taken from the letter to Senator Bush.
- xci Cole to Lehman, February 2, 1956.
- xcii Ibid.
- xciii Hirsch, "'Containment,'" 169.
- xciv Albert M. Cole to Arthur Burns, December 6, 1955, in folder: Housing-HHFA Miscellaneous Correspondence, 1953-1954, box 109, Arthur F. Burns Papers, DDE Library; "Address by Albert M. Cole to the Annual Meeting of the Ohio Association of Real Estate Boards," September 15, 1954, in frames 0590-0600, reel 6, Part 5: Campaign Against Residential Segregation, NAACP Papers.
- xcv Albert M. Cole, "Address to the Mid-Atlantic Conference, National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials, New York," April 1, 1954, in frame 0563, reel 6, Part 5: Campaign Against Residential Segregation, NAACP Papers and "The Slum, the City, and the Citizen," Speech at St. Louis Chamber of Commerce Lunch, February 24, 1954, in frame 0537, reel 6, Part 5: Campaign Against Residential Segregation, NAACP Papers.
- xcvi Cole to Bush, May 3, 1956.
- xcvii See pp. 13 and 20, above.
- xcviii Frank S. Horne to Albert M. Cole, February 15, 1955, in folder: 1, box 748, Program File, Racial Relations File, 1946-1958, RG 207; Frank S. Horne to Albert M. Cole, February 17, 1955, in folder: 1, box 11, Subject Correspondence Files, Albert M. Cole, Administrator, 1953-1958, RG 207.
- xcix Joseph R. Ray to Albert M. Cole, October 26, 1956, in folder: Racial Relations (3), box 116, HHFA Subject Files, 1947-1960, RG 207.

- c Albert M. Cole to Honorable Robert T. Ashmore, August 27, 1957, in folder: Racial Relations, box 309, General Subject Files, 1949-1960, RG 207.
- ci Hirsch, “Searching for a ‘Sound Negro Policy’,” 428.
- cii George L-P Weaver to Friends of the National Committee [Against Discrimination in Housing], August 12, 1955, in box 5, RG 48S13, Baltimore City Archives (BCA); I am grateful to the American Civil Liberties Union - Maryland Foundation and Barbara Samuels for uncovering this source. Vivian C. Mason (National Council of Negro Women, Inc.) to The Honorable Dwight D. Eisenhower, August 15, 1955, in folder: GF 50-A (2), Horne, Frank, box 399, Central Files, General Files, DDE Papers.
- ciii [Max Rabb] to Lester B. Granger and Lillie M. Jackson, n.d., in folder: GF 50-A (1), Horne, Frank, box 399, Central Files, General Files, DDE Papers.
- civ Ibid.
- cv Frank S. Horne to Albert M. Cole, August 17, 1955, in box 5, RG 48S13, BCA.
- cvi Lester B. Granger to President Dwight D. Eisenhower, August 4, 1955. Granger included a cover note to Max Rabb: “This letter to the President is more than ‘for the record’. It represents a very strongly held opinion not only by myself but by every Urban League leader whom I know.” See Lester B. Granger to Max, August 4, 1955. Both letters are in folder: GF 50-A (1), Horne, Frank, box 399, Central Files, General Files, DDE Papers.
- cvii Joseph C. Coles to The President, August 9, 1955, in folder: GF 50-A (1), Horne, Frank, box 399, Central Files, General Files, DDE Papers; George Schermer to Honorable Dwight D. Eisenhower, August 31, 1955; Mason to Eisenhower, August 15, 1955; Morris Milgram to Honorable Dwight D. Eisenhower, August 15, 1955; William L. C. Wheaton to Governor Sherman Adams, August 22, 1955; all in folder: GF 50-A (2), Horne, Frank, box 399, Central Files, General Files, DDE Papers.
- cviii George L-P Weaver to Honorable Dwight D. Eisenhower, August 22, 1955 and Herbert T. Miller to President Dwight D. Eisenhower, August 17, 1955, both in folder: GF 50-A (2), Horne, Frank, box 399, Central Files, General Files, DDE Papers.
- cix Pauli Murray to Honorable Dwight D. Eisenhower, August 27, 1955, in folder: GF 50-A (2), Horne, Frank, box 399, Central Files, General Files, DDE Papers; and Pauli Murray to Mr. Cole, September 27, 1955, in folder: 1, box 11, Subject Correspondence Files, Albert M. Cole, Administrator, 1953-1958, RG 207.
- cx Val J. Washington to General Wilton B. Persons, August 12, 1959, in folder: OF-50 (5), box 397, General Files, Official Files, DDE Papers.
- cxii Several documents, or parts of documents, regarding the Horne-Morrow controversy are attached to Frances Levenson to Maxwell Rabb, January 23, 1956, in folder: GF 50-A (3), Horne, Frank, box 399, Central Files, General Files, DDE Papers.
- cxiii Frances Levenson to Executive Board Members and Friends of the NCDH, March 19, 1956, and NCDH Press Release, July 9, 1956, both in Supplement to Part 5: Residential Segregation, General Office Files, 1956-1965, frames 0631-0632, reel 8, NAACP Papers; see the statements attached to Levenson to Rabb, January 23, 1956. cxiii See the statements attached to Levenson to Rabb, January 23, 1956.

- cxiv Joseph R. Ray to Albert M. Cole, December 12, 1955, in folder: Racial Relations (5), box 116, HHFA Subject Files, 1947-1960, RG 207.
- cxv Joseph R. Ray to Frank J. Meistrell, January 5, 1956, in folder: Racial Relations (7), box 134, HHFA Subject Files, 1947-1960 and Joseph R. Ray to Albert M. Cole, April 16, 1956, in folder: 1, box 11, Subject Correspondence Files, Albert Cole, Administrator, 1953-1958, both in RG 207; Philip G. Sadler to Commissioner, PHA, May 22, 1957, in box 10, RG 196.
- cxvi Joseph R. Ray to Albert M. Cole, May 20, 1958, in folder: 1, box 166, Subject Files, 1947-1960, RG 207.
- cxvii Joseph R. Ray to Albert M. Cole, December 22, 1958, in folder 1, box 166, Subject Files, 1947-1960, RG 207.
- cxviii Albert M. Cole to Charles E. Slusser, July 10, 1957, in folder 3, box 11, Intergroup Relations, 1936-1963, RG 196. A draft of the statement for the RNC is attached to this letter.
- cxix Joseph R. Ray to Albert M. Cole, July 24, 1957, in folder: Racial Relations, box 151, HHFA General Subject Files, 1947-1960, RG 207.
- cxx [Albert M. Cole] to Honorable Val J. Washington, July 30, 1957, in folder 3, box 11, PHA Racial Relations, RG 196 contains the revised and final statement to the RNC.
- cxxi Ibid.
- cxxii New York Times, November 14, 1958, clipping in folder 5, box 10, RG 196.
- cxxiii Albert M. Cole to Reverend William J. Villaume, December 30, 1958, in folder 1, box 166, Subject File, 1947- 1960, RG 207.
- cxxiv Franklin H.. Williams, Memorandum Re FHA Proceedings Against Gerald S. Cohen, January 27, 1959; and Franklin H. Williams to Director, FHA, January 27, 1959, both in folder: Racial Affairs-Correspondence and Materials, 1960-1959, box 10, Frederic Morrow Papers, DDE Library.
- cxxv Albert M. Cole to Robert Hinton, December 19, 1958, in folder 1, box 166, General Subject Files, 1947-1960, RG 207.
- cxxvi U. S. Commission on Civil Rights, Report (Washington, D. C.: GPO, 1959) , 480-81; John Goering and Modibo Coulibably, "Public Housing Segregation in the United States," in Elizabeth D. Huttman, ed., Wim Blauw and Juliet Saltman, co-eds., Urban Housing Segregation of Minorities in Western Europe and the United States (Durham, N. C.: Duke University Press, 1991), 307, 314.
- cxxvii U. S. Commission on Civil Rights, Report, 480.
- cxxviii Ibid., 419, 421, and 427.
- cxxix Ibid., 459, 488.
- cxxx Massey and Denton, American Apartheid, p. 48-49.
- cxxxi U. S. Commission on Civil Rights, Report, 462.
- cxxxii [Bryce Harlow?], "Proposal for Analysis of Housing and its Relationship to the Political Campaigns of 1956," (typescript, n. d.), in folder: Housing (4), box 11, Bryce Harlow Papers, DDE Library.

- cxxxiii U. S. Commission on Civil Rights, Report, 465.
- cxxxiv U. S. Commission on Civil Rights, Report, 426.
- cxxxv A. Maceo Smith to Dr. George W. Snowden, December 15, 1954 and deLesseps S. Morrison to Ralph Agate, September 20, 1954, both in folder: Minority Group Housing, General, (1954), box 3, Program Correspondence of the Assistant Commissioner for Operations, 1936-1956, RG 31; see also Arnold R. Hirsch, “Race and Renewal in the Cold War South: New Orleans, 1947-1968,” in Robert Fishman, ed., The American Planning Tradition: Culture and Policy (Washington, D. C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2000), 220-26.
- cxxxvi M. Stewart Thompson to Dwight D. Eisenhower, September 23, 1955 in folder: GF 50-B, 1952-1955 (2), box 403, General File, DDE Records.
- cxxxvii Frank S. Horne to William A. Ullman, May 9, 1955 and B. T. McGraw to Joseph R. Ray, July 19, 1955, both in folder: (5) Racial Relations, box 116, HHFA Subject Files, 1947-60, RG 207; U. S. Commission on Civil Rights, Report, 492-93.
- cxxxviii *Ibid.*, 461-72.
- cxxxix Radford, Modern Housing for America, 189-91, 197-98; Bauman, Public Housing, Race, and Renewal, 43-44. cxl U. S. Commission on Civil Rights, Report, 473, 476; John Goering and Modibo Coulibably, “Public Housing Segregation in the United States,” in Elizabeth D. Huttman, ed., Wim Blauw and Juliet Saltman, co-eds., Urban Housing Segregation of Minorities in Western Europe and the United States (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1991), 305-34.
- cxli U. S. Commission on Civil Rights, Report, 474-76.
- cxlii Elizabeth Wood, The Beautiful Beginnings, The Failure to Learn: Fifty Years of Public Housing in America (Washington, D. C.: National Center for Housing Management, 1982), 28-45,
- cxliii Philip G. Sadler to Commissioner, PHA, March 26, 1957, in folder 7, box 10, RG 196.
- cxliv Elizabeth Wood, The Beautiful Beginnings, The Failure to Learn: Fifty Years of Public Housing in America (Washington, D. C.: The National Center for Housing Management, 1982), 45. There were many reasons – and many good reasons – to provide public housing to the elderly who needed it; not the least of which was to halt the painful and distasteful eviction of single, surviving spouses who no longer fit the traditional, legal definition of a “family.” Changing that definition “greatly increased the size of the market,” according to Wood.
- cxlv Commissioner, PHA to Jack T. Conway, Deputy Administrator, HHFA, July 3, 1961, in folder 7, box 10, RG 196.
- cxlvi Goering and Coulibably, “Public Housing Segregation,” 313-16. The Dallas Morning News published a Pulitzer Prize-winning series on public housing February 10-17, 1985; see, especially, the articles on elderly housing that appeared on Feb. 11, 1985.
- cxlvii Clipping from the Washington Post and Times Herald, April 20, 1959, in folder: (2), box 398, General Files, GF 50-A, DDE Papers.
- cxlviii Norman P. Mason to David M. Walker, May 17, 1960 in folder: (8) URA – Policy Memos, box 44, Subject Correspondence Files, Norman Mason, Administrator, 1959-1960, RG 207.
- cxlix DSCUR, “Racial Relations Workshop Report,” (typescript, June 4, 1954), 2 and passim; in folder 12, box 745, Program Files – Racial Relations Files, 1946-1958, RG 207.

- cl George B. Nesbitt to J. W. Follin, October 19, 1954, in folder: Racial Relations, box 284, General Subject Files, 1949-1960, RG 207; Frank S. Horne to Albert M. Cole, September 24, 1954 and September 27, 1954, both in folder: (1) Racial Relations, box 96, General Subject Files, 1947-1960, RG 207.
- cli Norman P. Mason, "Report to the President on Housing," attached to Norman P. Mason to Mr. President, January 11, 1961; and Dwight D. Eisenhower to Norman P. Mason, January 11, 1961, both in folder: Norman P. Mason, box 26, Administration Series, Ann Whitman File, DDE Papers.
- clii U. S. Commission on Civil Rights, Report, 519; Citizens' Commission on Race and Housing, Where Shall We Live? Report of the Commission on Race and Housing, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1958), 32.
- cliii Philip G. Sadler to Commissioners, PHA, September 22, 1959, in folder 7, box 10, RG 196; and Philip G. Sadler to B. T. McGraw, August 31, 1955, in folder 1, box 742, Program Files, Racial Relations Files, 1946-1958, RG 207. cliv U. S. Commission on Civil Rights, Report, 537; Commission on Race and Housing, Where Shall We Live?, 64- 65.
- clv The Commission on Race and Housing was created in 1955 and supported by the Fund for the Republic. See E. B. Schwulst to Dwight D. Eisenhower, November 17, 1958 and Dwight D. Eisenhower to Earl B. Schwulst, December 9, 1958, both in folder: OF 120, 1958 (3), box 615, Central Files, Official File, DDE Papers.
- clvi Jacob K. Javits to Dwight D. Eisenhower, November 4, 1959, in folder: OF 120, 1960, box 616, Central Files, Official File, DDE Papers. The President promised to give the request "careful consideration." See Eisenhower to Jack, November 7, 1959, in the same folder.
- clvii Bryce [Harlow] to Jerry [Morgan], November 6, [1959]; and GDM to Bryce, n. d., both in folder: OF 120, 1960, box 616, Central Files, Official File, DDE Papers.
- clviii Norman P. Mason to A. J. Goodpaster, November 16, 1959; and Norman P. Mason to Jacob K. Javits, August 13, 1960, both in folder: OF 120, 1960, box 616, Central Files, Official File, DDE Papers.
- clix U. S. Commission on Civil Rights, Report, 468; Philip G. Sadler to Commissioner, PHA, September 22, 1959, in folder 7, box 10, RG 196. In treating non-discrimination as a regional peculiarity, Cole took an approach exactly the opposite of that suggested by Frank Horne in 1952-53. The Commission claims that the Intergroup Relations Service was created in 1958; other documents place its origin in April 1959. See Intergroup Relations Branch (HHFA and PHA), "Transmittal #10," March 1960, in folder 6, box 7, RG 196.
- clx The desire to engage in such manipulation was nowhere more apparent than in the pioneering plans devised by the University of Chicago for its Hyde Park community. In a meeting of the URA Commissioner and three members of the university hierarchy, the latter (who learned to speak in racial "code" sooner than most) informed the government "it might be desirable to acquire standard properties solely for the purpose of replacing occupants who are non-professional people with occupants who are." See Urban Renewal Commissioner to Albert M. Cole, May 23, 1958, in folder 3, box 20, Subject Correspondence File, Albert Cole, Administrator, 1953-1958, RG 207. clxi The Wilkins-Cole confrontation over Dayton is presented in more detail in Hirsch, "'Containment' on the Home Front," 175; see also Robert Gray to Fred Morrow, August 26, 1958, in folder: Civil Rights - Official Memos, 1960- 1957, box 10, Administrative Office - Special Problems, Frederic Morrow Papers, DDE Library; Abrams letter, written August 19, 1955, appeared in the  , August 23, 1955.



- clxii Division of Slum Clearance and Urban Redevelopment, “Racial Relations Workshop Report,” (typescript, June 4, 1954), 13.
- clxiii Ibid., 13-14.
- clxiv Morrow is quoted in National Committee Against Discrimination in Housing, “Press Release,” July 9, 1956, in frame 0632, reel 8, Supplement to Part 5: Residential Segregation, General Office Files, 1956-65, NAACP Papers; Frances Levenson to Executive Board Members and Friends of the National Committee, July 19, 1956, in frame 0630, reel 8, Supplement to Part 5: Residential Segregation, General Office Files, 1956-65, NAACP Papers; Pauli Murray to Dwight D. Eisenhower, August 27, 1955, in folder: GF 50-A (2), Horne, Frank, box 399, Central Files, General Files, DDE Papers. See also Frances Levenson to Albert M. Cole, April 6, 1956, in folder: Racial Relations (5), box 116, HHFA Subject Files, 1947-1960, RG 207.
- clxv Frances Levenson to David M. Walker, October 9, 1959, in folder: Racial Relations, box 330, HHFA General Subject Files, 1949-1960, RG 207.
- clxvi George B. Nesbitt to Sid Jagger, February 16, 1959 and George B. Nesbitt to David M. Walker, September 30, 1959, both in folder: Racial Relations, box 330, HHFA General Subject Files, 1949-1960, RG 207.
- clxvii Norman P. Mason to Brent Spence, April 22, 1960, in folder 2, box 4. RG 196.
- clxviii Norman P. Mason, “Report to the President on Housing,” attached to Mason to Mr. President, January 11, 1961, in folder: Mason, Norman P., box 26, Ann Whitman File, Administrative Series, DDE Papers.
- clxix Dwight D. Eisenhower to Norman, January 11, 1961, in folder: Mason, Norman P., box 26, Ann Whitman File, Administrative Series, DDE Papers.

