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Placing the “Park” in the Washington Park Neighborhood: How the Park on Chicago’s South Side became a Center of African American Identity from its Inception in 1870 to 1961.

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History (MA): Cities, Migration and Global Interdependence

Placing the "Park" in the Washington Park Neighborhood: How the Park on Chicago's South Side became a Center of African American Identity from its Inception in 1870 to 1961.

by

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December 2024

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Introduction

Washington Park, designed in 1870 by Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux as part of Chicago's South Park system, is a historic landmark and cultural centerpiece that reflects the city's rich urban and social heritage. It is celebrated for its dual role as a large recreational green space, as it spans exactly 345.67 acres or 1.39 square kilometers for the European reader, and a cultural hub where impressive gatherings and events can be hosted.[1] It was part of Chicago's 1893 World Columbian Exposition, but has also hosted events like the Bud Billiken Parade, one of the largest African American parades in the U.S started in 1929, to housing the DuSable Museum of African American History chartered in 1961.[2] It is bordered by E 51st Street (Hyde Park Boulevard) in the North to E 60th Street in the South. It is likewise hemmed in by S. Cottage Grove Ave on the East and King Dr. on the West, the large thoroughfare of Martin Luither King Dr. enters the park from its northwest corner. The large park shares its name with the neighborhood which encompasses it, Washington Park, but it also touches the West Woodlawn Neighborhood to the South, the Hyde Park Neighborhood to the East, and the Bronzeville neighborhood to the North. Bronzeville, Washington Park, and the West Woodlawn neighborhoods are of primary importance in mapping the development of the park as well as the exchange of experiences between the park and the neighborhoods.

What these neighborhoods, and Washington Park itself, have in common is that they encompass the heart of the historically African American Chicago area. While the park

[1] Chicago Park District, "Washington (George) Park", Accessed December 29th, 2024, https://www.chicagoparkdistrict.com/parks-facilities/washington-george-park#Description

[2] National Park Service, "Washington Park", Accessed December 29th, 2024 https://www.nps.gov/places/washington-park.htm, https://dusablemuseum.org/about-us/, and Bud Billiken Parade, "About Bud Billiken Parade", Accessed December 29th, 2024 https://www.budbillikenparade.org/about-bud-billiken-parade

itself was designed in 1870 by Olmstead, a white landscape architect, it has seen immense demographic shift in the first half of the 20th century as African Americans began living in these areas because of the multiple "Great Migrations" and internal Chicago "redlining" city policy.[3] This has resulted in Washington Park becoming a center of African American culture which culminated in the creation of the DuSable Museum of African American History inside the park in 1961. St. Clair and Cayton in their seminal work first published in 1945 and later expanded in the 1950s and 60s, which this paper will utilize in its emancipatory but also self-limiting ways, termed this area as a "Black Metropolis" showcasing the African American achievement in economic 'development'.[4] It is this exchange of experiences between the park and the neighborhoods which is of central importance in this paper.

Attempting to do this requires placing the park in the Washington Park neighborhood as central to the analysis from its design in 1870 to the creation of the Museum of African American History in 1961. Namely by asking, how have the African American residents surrounding the park interacted with, used, and benefited from the park in organizing themselves as a community primarily against white dominated city policy. Thus, this paper will have two main components running through it centered on the park itself. The first is on Washington Park as an inward site of community building and identity creation for the African American community. The Bud Billiken Parade and DuSable museum are large examples of this, but showcasing similar ideas on the "micro" scale is important for any kind of community creation. The second is how the park become a site for African American residents to outwardly express

[3] Cutler, Irving. *Chicago: Metropolis of the Mid-Continent*. 2d ed. Kendall/Hunt Publishing, 1976.

[4] Drake, St. Clair, Horace R Cayton, and Mary Pattillo. *Black Metropolis : A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962.

themselves. Oftentimes this took the form of protests against Chicago's White dominated city policy, but also as the 20th century progressed general outward movements of racial solidarity became more common.

To showcase the park's role in this inward-outward aspect, this paper will utilize three main primary sources. The first two are Chicago's famous newspapers, The *Chicago Defender* and the *Chicago Tribune*. The *Defender* being a historic African American newspaper based on the South Side of Chicago while the Tribune has its roots as anti-New Deal and endorsed a Democrat for president, Barack Obama an Illinois Senator, on its editorial page for the first time only in 2008.[5] By placing these two diametrically opposed newspapers in conversation with each other, we can better establish an understanding of the motivations, fears, and impact the African American community had surrounding the park and how that was portrayed by the white residents. The last source is a multitude of city documents accessed either through the Chicago Park District archives or on other City of Chicago pages which showcase the plans for neighborhood, park, and transportation development. The last encompasses both the creation of roads and highways but also the internal public transit managed by the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA). This paper will thus showcase how the park in the Washington Park neighborhood became a site of inward identity creation and unity, and as a way for residents to outwardly project themselves. While not always successful the main fact is that the park was, and is, a

[5] The Editorial Board, "Tribune 2008 presidential endorsement". *Chicago Tribune*. October 19th, 2008. Accessed December 29th, 2024 https://www.chicagotribune.com/2008/10/19/tribune-2008-presidential-endorsement/ And, Time Magazine, "The Colonel's Century", Accessed December 29th, 2024 https://time.com/archive/6775495/the-press-the-colonels-century/

central site of this identity formation by the African American community throughout the 20th century.

1.1 Thesis Overview:

This paper aims to showcase how Washington Park was used by Chicago's African American community as a space of both inward identity creation and outward projection of demands on the cityscape from 1870-1961. The introduction of the paper will give an overview of the newspapers used, the *Chicago Defender* and *Chicago Tribune*, and the methodology used to search for articles. This methodology section will justify the importance of both these papers in explaining how Washington Park became an important place within the cityscape. Following that the introduction will give a brief historical overview of the creation of Washington Park from 1870-1905 by Olmstead and Vaux. This will lay out the major initial themes and requirements that the park held in the beginning to better show how the African American community interacted and built off of those same themes.

The paper will be split up into three main chapters focusing on the date ranges of 1905-1929, 1930-1939, and 1940-1961. The first chapter will explain the rapid increase of African Americans into Chicago through the "Great Migration" and the creation of what St. Clair and Cayton term as the "Black Metropolis" in Chicago. This chapter will also show how the African American community became concentrated in the neighborhoods surrounding the park and how they oriented themselves within the cityscape using the park as a reference point. The second chapter will show how African Americans used the park as a site of outward political activity with local, transnational, and even international rhetoric. This expansion of Washington Park

surrounding the Great Depression cements it as a place not just for Chicago's African Americans, but all African Americans. The third chapter will showcase the fight between the White city establishment and the African American community over transportation issues in the park. As the city was being developed with highways and local transportation networks, Washington Park served as a center point for the community to orient themselves and fight back against racialized development. Concluding this chapter will be an explanation about how the 1961 DuSable Museum of African American History inside Washington Park brought together all the previous discussed themes and represented a triumph for the community.

1.2 Methodology and the Newspapers:

This paper examines how Washington Park in Chicago evolved into a pivotal site for community and identity building for the African American community between 1905 and 1961. To showcase the development of the African American community surrounding Washington Park, this paper has primarily utilized the historic black newspaper The *Chicago Defender* with supplemental analysis from *The Chicago Tribune* in a qualitative approach. Both of these newspapers were accessed from the Chicago Public Library's online archive and were chosen for their historical significance and occasional contrasting perspectives. The *Chicago Defender* is the largest African American newspaper in Chicago and has its roots in civil rights and community reporting making it a fundamental source for showcasing the African American experience in and around Washington Park. The *Chicago Tribune,* however, offers a more mainstream viewpoint which reflected what the city officials and their attitudes were. Together, these sources

provide a multidimensional perspective on the role of Washington Park in the African American experience during the period.[6]

This paper focuses on uncovering and interpreting narratives, events, and trends reflected in the selected newspapers. To achieve this a keyword search was used on the Chicago Public Library database which included: "Washington Park", "South Side Park", "Protest", "Demonstration", "Chicago African American", "Chicago 'Washington Park' Race", "Chicago 'Washington Park' Race Track", and "Chicago 'Washington Park' Events" were used. These key words were then used in each of the date ranges of each chapter: 1905-1929, 1930-1945, and 1945-1961. The articles were then coded as to whether they reflect the park helping inwardly develop the African American identity, or the park outwardly serving as a point where Chicago's African American population could have their voice heard. Guiding this selection of key words were the secondary sources of St. Clair and Cayton's seminal anthropological work *Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City*, Bachin's *Building the South Side: Urban space and civic culture in Chicago, 1890-1919,* as well as Grossman's *Land of Hope: Chicago, Black Southerners, and the Great Migration*.[7] These three sources provided the foundation for developing the above key word searches as they described the macro trends in the development of African Americans in Chicago as well as Washington Park. Supplementing these newspapers are the original primary source writings of Olmstead and Vaux, the designers of Washington

[6] Chicago Defender, Accessed December 29th, 2024 https://chicagodefender.com/, The Chicago Tribune Accessed December 29th, 2024 https://www.chicagotribune.com/, and the database for these papers were accessed through, Chicago Public Libraries "Chicago Newspapers" https://www.chipublib.org/chicago-newspapers-on-microfilm/.

[7] Drake, St. Clair, and Horace R. Cayton. *Black Metropolis:* 1962. And, Bachin, Robin F. *Building the South Side: Urban space and civic culture in Chicago, 1890-1919*. University of Chicago Press, 2004., and Grossman, James R. *Land of Hope: Chicago, Black Southerners, and the Great Migration.* University of Chicago Press, 1989.

Park, as well as city of Chicago documents which help show the development of the neighborhoods around the park to help provide a foundation of the park from 1870-1905.

However, despite utilizing a comprehensive key word search guided by secondary literature there still exists some potential limitations. First, the newspapers themselves are not objective or passive historical voices. Both papers have different motivations and readership demographics which impact what they cover and especially how they cover it. While this is both a limitation and important for the analysis of the paper, it is nonetheless important to keep it in mind when analyzing particularly violent or divisive racial events. Second, this paper is utilizing only records from the online Chicago Public Library database which may be incomplete as digitization efforts are slow and a time-consuming process. Furthermore, the date range of 1905-1961 was selected to reflect the foundation of the *Chicago Defender* and the first "Great Migration" wave to Chicago, and the 1961 creation of the DuSable Museum of African American History inside Washington Park. The park, the neighborhoods, and obviously Chicago still exist so the narratives, events, and trends discussed here are still ongoing and being engaged with in 2024. It is important to keep this in mind as while this offers an analytical "snapshot", it may not encompass longer-term trends or developments. Thus, this methodology seeks to provide a historical account of Washington Park as a site of African American community building from 1905-1961. This approach ensures a balanced examination of the park's role as a place of inward identity creation and community development, but also an organizing point for Chicago's African Americans to project themselves.

1.3 The Historic Creation of Washington Park 1870-1905

As Washington Park is the central focus of this paper, it is important to understand its construction and to historicize it in the broader urban planning environment of the late 19th

century. How and why the park was created, who it was initially created for, and what a 'park' is in the city are the questions this section asks and answers. As mentioned before, Washington Park was designed for Chicago's South Park Commission in 1870 by Frederick Law Olmsted and his business partner Calvert Vaux. In America during the late 19th century, rising industrialization, the mass urbanism required by said industry, and prevalent "dirt" which so obviously crowded houses and the city was the new order of the day. By 1900 for instance 30 percent of the nation lived in cities and Americans were increasingly aware that action needed to be taken to address this omnipresent industrial smudge.[8] This was especially true for Chicago, the Midwest industrial capital, with the publication of Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* detailing the health violations and risks associated with the meat packing industry.[9] The connection between unsanitary practices, environmental degradation, and slum living to the rise of industry were thus very apparent for the late 19th to early 20th century Chicagoan.

Late 19th century reformers, typified on a national scale with Presidents Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson, but especially on a Chicago level with Jane Addams, Architect Dwight Heald Perkins, and more obscurely Sanitary Superintendent of Chicago John H. Rauch led movements to combat the unsanitary conditions brought by the rising industrialization.[10] Specifically, Dwight Perkins and John Rauch highlighted the importance of parks in improving

[8] See here the Library of Congress' material on the Progressive Era. Library of Congress, "Cities During the Progressive Era" Last Accessed December 29th, 2024 https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/united-states-history-primary-source-timeline/progressive-era-to-new-era-1900-1929/cities-during-progressive-era/

[9] Sinclair, Upton. *The Jungle*. Doubleday, Page & Co. 1906 Accessed through Project Gutenberg, December 29th, 2024. https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/140/pg140-images.html. And, David Rosner and Gerald Markowitz. "A Short History of Occupational Safety and Health in the United States." *American Journal of Public Health* 110, no. 5 (2020): 622–28.

[10] See the Introduction of Westhoff, Laura. *A Fatal Drifting Apart: Democratic Social Knowledge and Chicago Reform*. Ohio State University Press, 2020. doi:10.2307/j.ctv16rdd5q.

sanitary conditions by connecting it also to the "moral improvement" of people in cities. Rauch, in his work *Public Parks: Their Effects upon the Moral, Physical and Sanitary Condition of the Inhabitants of Large Cities*, lays out the connection very neatly. He claims that, "The necessity for creating public parks, and on a scale commensurate with the prospective greatness of the city, is recognized by all *classes* of our citizens" (emphasis mine). And goes on to say, "Parks have been aptly termed 'the lungs of a city.'… Places to which the overtasked laborer and mechanic of the overcrowded city can, with his wife and children, resort to breathe the breath of God's pure air".[11] Architect Dwight Heald Perkins in his 1904 *Report of the Special Park Commission to the City Council of Chicago* echoed these statements by saying parks, "lay the foundations for good citizenship and respect for law and order and appreciation of the value of public property."[12] Public parks then had the two-fold job of serving as clean spaces or "lungs of a city" against the backdrop of industrialization, but also as spaces for "moral improvement" for all "classes" where one can go to improve one's character tying public parks to social standing. This shift then from formal European gardens to a more "natural" urban park, is what David Schuyler calls a "new urban landscape".[13] Parks then became necessary parts of the city and not an inaccessible space outside of it. Guided by scientific models of investigation, civic upliftment, ideals of "respectability", as well as attempts to physically clean the city exemplifies the Progressive Era

[11] Rauch, John H. and Chicago Academy of Sciences. *Public Parks: Their Effects upon the Moral, Physical and Sanitary Condition of the Inhabitants of Large Cities: With Special Reference to the City of Chicago*. S. C. Griggs & Company. 1869. Accessed December 29th, 2024 https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/89492., and for elaboration of Parks as "lungs of the city" see Jones, Karen. "'The Lungs of the City': Green Space, Public Health and Bodily Metaphor in the Landscape of Urban Park History." *Environment and History*, no. 1 (2018): 39–58. doi:10.3197/096734018X15137949591837.

[12] Bradley, John and Dwight Heald Perkins. *Report of the Special Park Commission to the City Council of Chicago on the Subject of a Metropolitan Park System.* Chicago: W. J. Hartman, 1905.

[13] Schuyler, David. *The New Urban Landscape: The Redefinition of City Form in Nineteenth-Century America*. Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988.

urban landscape development. These are the themes Olmstead and Vaux worked within during their careers in urban landscaping.

Olmstead and Vaux's 1858 Greensward Plan for Central Park in New York City was one of the first attempts at utilizing the park in a civic upliftment role in the United States, and it served as an inspiration for their 1870 Washington Park in Chicago. The Greensward Plan of Central Park placed the park as, "one public institution among many -- schools, museums, libraries -- that could enhance the lives of free citizens." It was to be a place where all classes could mix, and that modern life could be checked with a, "contemplation of natural scenes of an impressive character".[14] They did this by creating large open spaces coupled with long winding paths where the visitors of "all classes" would walk, and most importantly, be seen walking by other park goers. This is the promenade where the goal was "to see and be seen" by the genteel park visitor and help impart those bourgeois notions of respectability and hierarchy on the lower classes who may also "see and be seen" in Central Park.[15] Olmstead in his *Preliminary Report upon the Proposed Suburban Village at Riverside* said just this, "There is probably no custom (the promenade) which so manifestingly displays the advantages of a Christian, civilized and democratic community…There is non more favorable to a healthy civic pride, civic virtue, and civic prosperity."[16] The goal then was to provide a space which re-affirmed these Christian notions of self-control and moderation where visual lessons could be imparted from social

[14] See Central Park, "Greensward Plan". Acessed December 29th, 2024 https://www.centralpark.com/visitor-info/park-history/greensward-plan/, and Roy Rosenzweig and Elizabeth Blackmar. *The Park and the People: A History of Central Park*. Cornell University Press. 1992

[15] For the connection of public space and being seen, see Gissibl, Bernhard, Sabine Höhler, and Patrick Kupper. *Civilizing Nature: National Parks in Global Historical Perspective*. Berghahn Books, 2012., and Scobey, David. "Anatomy of the Promenade: The Politics of Bourgeois Sociability in Nineteenth-Century New York." *Social History*, no. 2 (1992): 203–27.

[16] Olmsted and Vaux (Firm). *Preliminary Report Upon the Proposed Suburban Village At Riverside, Near Chicago*. New York: Sutton, Bowne, 1868. Accessed December 29th, 2024. https://www.olmstedsociety.org/

betters to social inferiors. This promenade, alongside the "unspoiled nature", was the central focus of the late 19th century parks and was highly requested for Washington Park.

In their *Report Accompanying Plan for Laying out the South Park* for the Chicago Park Commission, Olmstead and Vaux utilized the same ideas as in Central Park. For example, they discussed the "strong and steadily increasing tendency to abandon the old, cramped manner of building, and to adopt a style of dwellings with individual and villa-like characteristics". And highlighted that the element of interest which should be placed first is that a park should serve as, "an antithesis to its bustling, paved, rectangular, walled-in streets; this requirement would best be met by a large meadowy ground, of an open, free, tranquil character."[17] This can easily be seen in the 1880 map (fig. 1) provided by the Chicago Park District Special Collections.[18] Of prominent importance on the plan is "The South Open Green" and the multitude of winding paths sounding it which provide ample opportunity to "see and be seen". The addition of lagoons was just the proverbial cherry on top in providing access to picturesque nature, the antithesis of the dense city. Furthermore, the park here almost consistently has a border of trees, shrubbery, and other foliage (marked in green on the map) which serve as a border to the park. This creates the illusion of physical separation of the park from the city, allowing the experience of undeveloped "nature" to be felt without sacrificing accessibility as the park is in such a prominent location in the city.

[17] Olmsted And Vaux, and South Park Commission. *Report accompanying plan for laying out the South Park*. 1871. Accessed December 29th, 2024, from the Library of Congress, <www.loc.gov/item/09009924/>.

[18] Chicago Park District Records, *Special Collections, Chicago Public Library, Plan and Drawings*. Accessed December 29th, 2024. https://olmsted.org/remembering-the-adventure-playland-on-washington-parks-bynum-island/

This park concept was furthermore reinforced by the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Jackson Park (fig. 2).[19] While Washington Park was not the prominent feature of the Exposition, the parks are very close together and even connected by two long park corridors which were perfect for promenading down and back. One did not even have to leave the park, or more accurately enter "the city", to experience the Exposition from Washington Park and there were plenty of opportunities for movement between them. This is reinforced and supported by the extra rules and regulations in place around Washington Park during the Exposition. As Bachin illustrates in his work *Building The South Side*, "Signs warning patrons to keep off the grass and forbidding active play reinforced the idea of park going as an exercise in refinement and of leisure as tranquil contemplation." There were, as he also showcases, "rules against spitting, swearing, raising one's voice, and running, along with the prohibition on liquor and speechmaking, underscored the desire to create civic order through park regulation."[20] These extra rules and regulations on park visitors reinforced the importance that the park was a place of "civic pride, civic virtue, and civic prosperity" as Olmstead aptly put earlier. There was little leeway for any activity which did not conform to the ideals of bourgeois civics. What this inevitably did is limit the number of low-class workers who could access the park due to its location from 1870-1905. Historian Elizabeth Halsey and Jane Addams both make similar points reinforcing the unequal access of the park due to the remoteness.[21] Addams in particular says in her *Hull House Recreation Guide* from 1897 that, "a mother of the 19th ward can, without a

[19] "World's Columbian Exposition Chicago, Ill. 1893": from Campbell, James B. *The World's Columbian Exposition Illustrated. (February 1891 to February 1892)*. 1894

[20] Bachin, Robin F. 136

[21] Halsey, Elizabeth. "The Development of Public Recreation in Metropolitan Chicago." *Research Quarterly. American Association for Health, Physical Education and Recreation* 10 (3) 1939: 15–27. doi:10.1080/10671188.1939.10622491.

wearisome walk of half a mile or more each way, visit for less than 20 cents for the round trip."[22] This is an extra expense which many working-class people, especially "wearisome" ones, would not care to make thus limiting their access to the park. However, the Exposition as claimed by Conti, "became a magnet of the unemployed" and an opportunity for working class people to engage with surroundings they might not have been able to afford before.[23] The majority of which were minority hired labor, particularly African American janitorial staff, which were required to make the capitalist Exposition run. This means, of course, that working class minorities had better opportunities to engage with the park promenading spaces and nature as a space to visually engage and learn from. The theme continued as demographic shifts in the park's surrounding neighborhoods happen from 1905 on.

Washington Park from its inception thus combines all of these element's courtesy of Olmstead, Vaux, and the broader Progressive Era urban planning movement they embodied. First, the park had to give the illusion of being in the nature to combat the filth of the industrial city as the park are "the lungs of a city". Despite the fact that this nature was highly manufactured and carefully planned out down to the last shrub, walkway, and path as shown in fig 1. Second, Washington Park had to have a promenade so park goers could see and be seen while also reaffirming a social hierarchy and imparting cultural norms on the lower classes who may access the park. It was, from its inception in 1870 then, a place where visual learning and the communication of social values took place, a tradition continued through the changing demographic with the influx of African Americans in starting from 1905. This tradition however,

[22] Addams, Jane. *Hull-House Recreation Guide*, Chicago: Hull-House. 1897

[23] Conti, Meredith. "Spectacular Work: Labor as Entertainment at the World's Columbian Exposition Fairgrounds." *Theatre Survey* 62, no. 2 (2021): 139. https://doi-org.ezproxy.leidenuniv.nl/10.1017/S0040557421000041.

as shown below, was adopted and utilized actively by the African American community as an active space of inward community building as well as outward projection of political ideas.

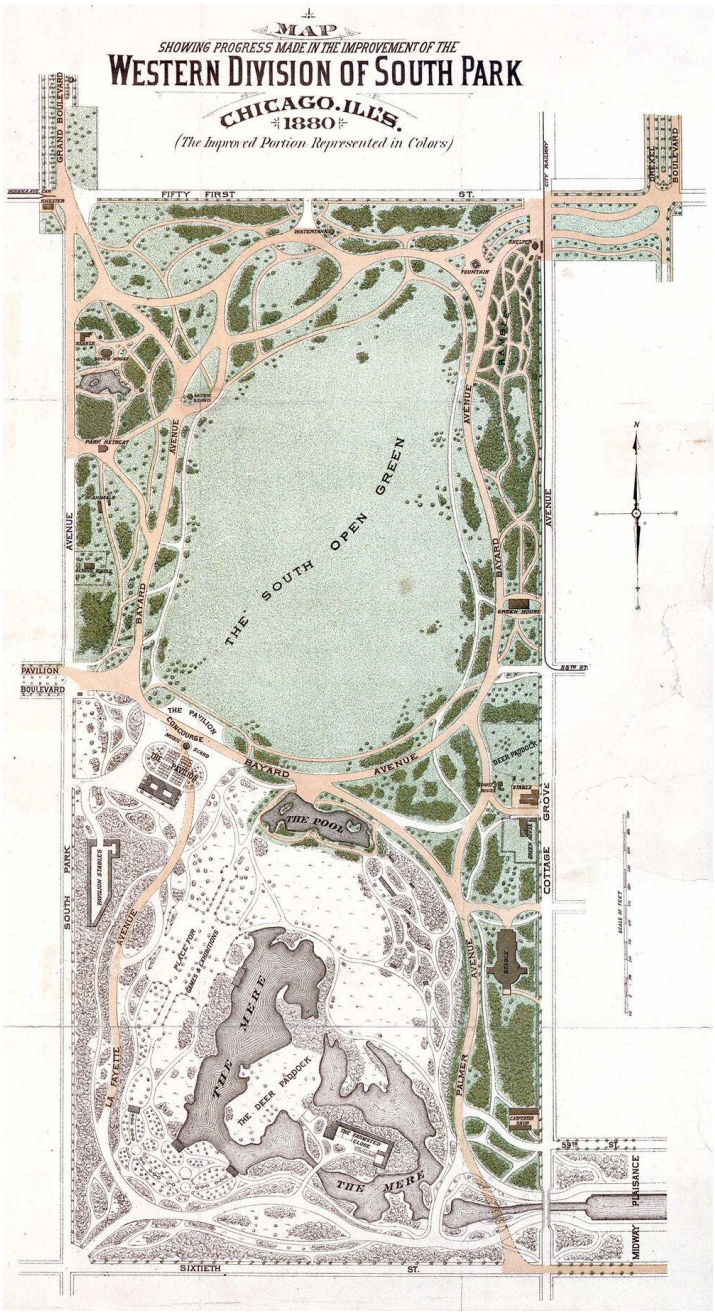

Fig 1: “Western Division of South Park” Olmstead & Vaux. 1880 From the Chicago Park District Special Collections.

Fig. 2: An overview of Chicago's parks at the time of the World Exhibition in 1893 from Campbell, James B. *The World's Columbian Exposition Illustrated. (February 1891 to February 1892)*. 1894

Chapter 1: The Great Migration and the Changing Nature of Washington Park 1905-1929

As discussed before, the creation of Washington Park by Olmstead and Vaux, and the White dominated city establishment, was created as a promenading space visitors could 'see and be seen' as well as a space to impact a cultural and racial hierarchy on the lower classes who visit the park. Park access was difficult for the lower classes, who were majority non-white, so Washington Park and its services were aimed at more upper class "promenades". Olmstead and Vaux even anticipated this when they said that "South Park [Washington Park today] would soon be in the center of a really populous and wealthy district".[24] However, this began to change as a result of the influx of African Americans in the neighborhoods surrounding the park from 1905 and throughout the 1920s which began to utilize the park for their own purposes differing from the original intentions of the Olmstead and Vaux. Discussed further in later paragraphs these dates were chosen as 1905 was the year the *Chicago Defender* was founded which promoted in its article's migration up North for African Americans, and 1929 as the start of the Great Depression which disrupted these earlier urbanization and industrialization trends.[25] The result was that during this massive demographic shift Washington Park became a point of identity building, and community focus for the African American population in Chicago. Changing activities and services inside the park, as well as differing ways the majority African American community used the park all helped build community and identity.

This demographic shift from 1905 and throughout the 1920s is part of the "Great Migration" which was a watershed moment in American history, marking the mass exodus of

[24] Olmsted And Vaux. *Report.* 1871

[25] See here for a history of The *Chicago Defender*, Accessed December 29th 2024, https://chicagodefender.com/history-of-the-chicago-defender/ . Also, St. Clair, Cayton. 8-9. Where they show the decreasing migration patterns of African Americans in the late 1920s.

African Americans from the rural South to urban centers in the North. Urban centers in the North such as New York, Pittsburgh, Detroit, but primarily Chicago became destinations for millions of African Americans from across the Southern sharecropping plantation network.[26] This culminated in the years surrounding World War I where with White European immigration slowing down, Northern industries accepted African American workers from down South and over half a million migrated between 1916-1919 and nearly one million following in the preceding decade, the 1920s.[27] This period between 1905-1929 was thus characterized by the incredible movement of people who all needed places to stay, as well as recreation centers, in the early 20th century.

In Chicago for example, the African American population increased six-fold from 44,000 in 1910 to over 280,000 in 1940.[28] In the 1920 the Washington Park neighborhood, which runs alongside the park and today encompasses it, had a Black population makeup of only 15 percent, in 1930, it was 92 percent black. The overall population however did not increase much, 38,000 to 44,000 in 1920 and 1930 respectively, highlighting a massive and fundamental shift in the neighborhood's demographics.[29] As McCammack illustrated in *Landscapes of Hope*, "the white novelist James T. Farrell, who grew up in the Washington Park neighborhood, recalled that by 'about 1927 the neighborhood around 58th Street just west of Washington Park, was considerably and noticeably black.'"[30] In addition, a neighborhood map of Chicago (fig. 3),

[26] In discussion of the Northern destination cities for African Americans in the rural South see the first chapter of Wallace D. Best, *Passionately Human, No Less Divine: Religion and Culture in Black Chicago, 1915–1952* Princeton University Press, 2005. and McCammack, Brian. *Landscapes of Hope: Nature and the Great Migration in Chicago*. Harvard University Press, 2018. doi:10.4159/9780674982604.

[27] Grossman, James. 3.
[28] St. Clair and Cayton. 8-9.
[29] Glen E. Holt, Dominic A. Pacyga, and Chicago Historical Society. *Chicago, a Historical Guide to the Neighborhoods: The Loop and South Side* Chicago Historical Society. 1979. 174
[30] McCammack, Brian. 17

provided by St. Clair and Cayton, showcase this six-fold growth in the African American population by highlighting the expanding areas in which they lived. It also shows a list of homes which were bombed between 1917-1921 in "Conflict Over Housing" which will be discussed later. Featured prominently on the map however, as the only park, recreation space, or non-housing location inside this growing African American area is Washington Park. It stands out on this map like a lighthouse does to a ship and serves as not only a border to the "White Middle-Class Neighborhood", but also as a space where one can understand the expanding geographical relationships from 1905-1929.[31]

[31] St. Clair and Cayton. 63

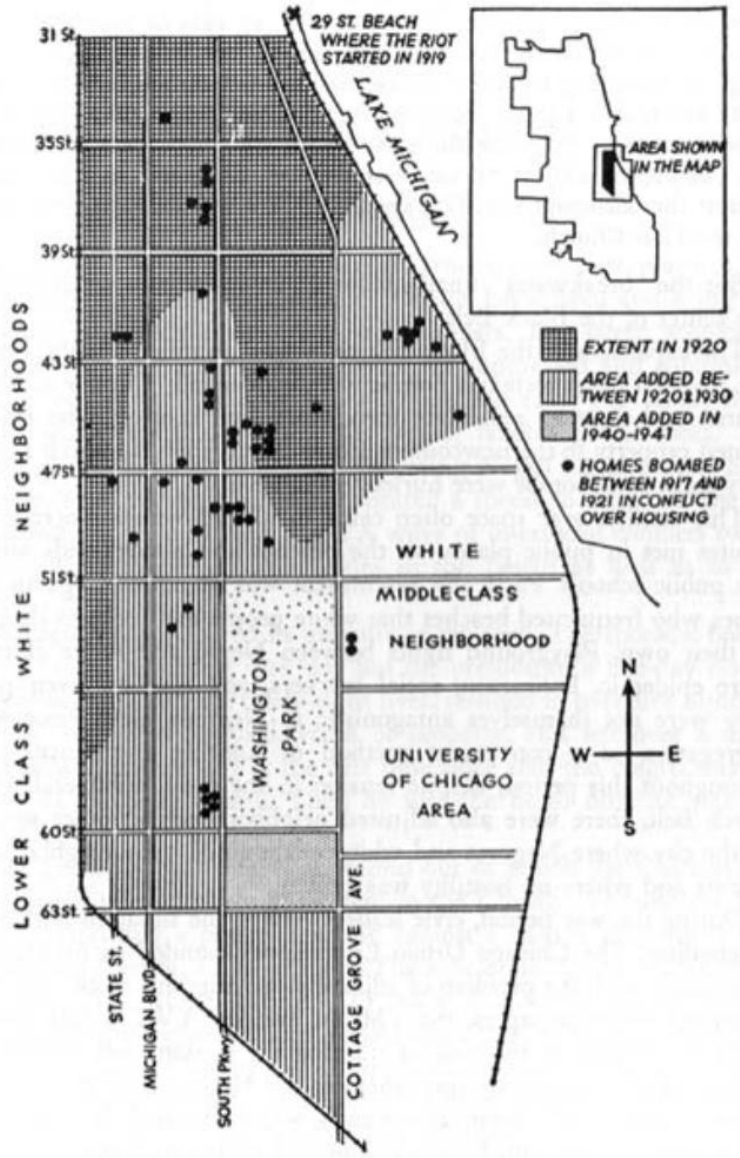

Fig. 3: “Expansion of the Black Belt”. St. Clair and Cayton

These growing populations were termed the Black Belt or the *Black Metropolis* by St. Clair and Cayton in arguably the best scholarly work describing African American life in a large city, *Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City*. This work offers a detailed sociological examination of Chicago’s South Side, particularly the neighborhood of Bronzeville, as a microcosm of the broader African American experience in Northern cities during the mid-

20th century. Initially intended as a study of juvenile delinquency, *Black Metropolis* evolved into a far-reaching exploration of the economic, political, cultural, and social dimensions of African American life. The authors approached the study with a combination of ethnographic research, historical analysis, and statistical data collection, resulting in a multidimensional portrayal of the African American community. They documented the profound impact of the Great Migration, noting how migrants reshaped Chicago's industrial workforce, political dynamics, and cultural identity. The work also delves into the systemic challenges faced by African Americans, including housing segregation, labor discrimination, and political disenfranchisement, while highlighting the resilience and ingenuity that emerged within the community.[32] It is in this last part, an analysis of the systematic challenges faced by African Americans and their responses, in which the Washington Park is located in and one which helps expand the definition of the *Black Metropolis* to include the park despite not being comprised of houses and shops.

As mentioned above, one of the main drivers of this migration was the *Chicago Defender*. The *Chicago Defender* was founded in 1905 by Robert S. Abbott with this goal of facilitating this movement from South to North. Through its compelling journalism, the newspaper highlighted the systemic injustices faced by African American individuals in the South, including lynchings and segregation, while simultaneously portraying the North, particularly Chicago, as a land of opportunity and equality. The paper not only informed readers but also inspired many to relocate in search of a better life. It actively facilitated the migration process by publishing job listings, housing opportunities, and firsthand accounts from successful migrants, providing practical guidance for those considering the move northward. Abbott's strategic use of advertisements aimed at southern African American audiences further positioned

[32] See the Introduction of St. Clair and Cayton.

Chicago as a desirable destination, promising employment and a vibrant cultural life. Moreover, the *Defender's* reach was amplified through an informal distribution network, notably via Pullman porters who discreetly transported the paper to southern states. This clandestine circulation ensured that the *Defender's* message penetrated regions where such information was often suppressed, thereby broadening its impact and solidifying its role as a catalyst for the Great Migration.[33].

The biggest example of this is the *Chicago Defender's* February 10, 1917, article titled " Northern Drive to Start". It was published in the newspaper's big weekend edition, thus featuring in a prominent place for readers and the main goal of it is to serve as an advertisement for leaving the South The article claims that "a million will leave with the Great Northern Drive, Tuesday, May 15" and it goes on to state that the reason for this mass exodus is because of the "maltreatment" by the whites.[34] If these weren't enough reasons the language used in the article in persuasive and rousing for the reader, the article helps them reach the conclusion that taking part in the 'Great Northern Drive' is beneficial to all. For instance, it starts with the assertion that African Americans are generally ahead in their thinking to move as compared to "their leaders". It furthermore connects the movement with "God's plan" but then in the next sentence congratulates by name, and with a personable rhetoric, all the church leaders who are facilitating

[33] See https://chicagodefender.com/history-of-the-chicago-defender/ for the brief history of the origins of the paper along with, Gibson, C. A. "The Voice of the Black Exodus: The *Chicago Defender* and Its Role in the Great Migration." *Journal of African American History*, 81(4), 731-754. For the explanation of the goals and reach the early *Chicago Defender* had. Also see DeSantis, Alan Douglas. "Selling the American Dream: The Chicago 'Defender' and the Great Migration of 1915-1919." 1993. 1-12, 27-30. To further show the motivating factors in moving as well as the general ways the paper achieved this.

[34] "NORTHERN DRIVE TO START." *The Chicago Defender,* Feb 10, 1917. https://chipublib.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/northern-drive-start/docview/493324050/se-2.

this movement up North. Thus, the article serves the two-fold purpose of advertising and encouraging the migration, but also does so in a persuasive way with the underlying message akin to “all the cool and smart people are doing it”.

This style of objectional fact updating mixed with persuasive undertones is likewise done in three follow up articles which each explain, using different rhetorical strategies, why moving up North is more beneficial than staying. The article titled “Migration” by Latham in August of 1916 argues in a logical way that moving North would be beneficial. Latham here compares the migrations of other minorities to the United States, and Chicago, and argues that it would be generally “unprofitable” to stay and that buy going north the African American will gain “New ideas of manufacturing”.[35] The second titled “Bids South ‘Good-Bye’ Forever” by Abbott from July 26, 1918 details his experience traveling back home to Alabama where he encounters multiple targeted racist behaviors including being refused service just because he was black. The way it is written illustrates to the reader that one can avoid these relatable experiences by moving up North as he even rhetorically asks, “Is it any wonder that when one leaves that part of the country one never wants to return?”[36] The last one is an editor’s response article from September 26, 1925 where a white person wrote in asking, “Why didn’t you stay in your beloved south?”. They go on to say that “That the Negro South knows his place and is not popped over the head with a pistol or club”. It then ends on an attack against an African American leader named

[35] Latham, W. J. "MIGRATION." *The Chicago Defender (Big Weekend Edition),* Aug 26, 1916. https://chipublib.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/migration/docview/493352753/se-2.

[36] "Bids South ‘Good-Bye’ Forever: Visit to Home in Alabama Convinces Anywhere Else is Home." *The Chicago Defender (Big Weekend Edition) (1905-1966),* Aug 03, 1918. https://chipublib.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/bids-south-good-bye-forever/docview/493309029/se-2.

Griggs who was advocating for the Northern move saying, "If Griggs is so ignominious in your estimation, then your paper should not be patronized by Negro people".[37] While this could be a faux letter to spur momentum for a Northern move the fact is, alongside these other three articles, it worked. The *Chicago Defender* and its articles had a huge influence and knowledge about the African American community which allowed them to drive momentum for issues and understand where the unifying location is for the community. It is through these articles then that Washington Park from 1905-1929 becomes an important site of identity and community for Chicago's African American community.

The most obvious way this is show is through the change of recreation activities inside the park, namely the change from horse racing to baseball. As shown earlier Washington Park was designed by Olmstead & Vaux as a space for the wealthy to impart a cultural hierarchy on the lower classes and was very much a space catered to the promenading wealthy park visitors. The Washington Park racetrack and Washington Park Club from 1883-1905 thus reinforced this hierarchy. As Reed describes in his work *Horse Racing the Chicago Way*, the Washington Park Club was established by elite Chicagoans who, copying the European tradition of equestrian sports for the upper class, wanted a closed club which reinforced their new money status.[38] The original members who raised the $100,000 (over $3 million today) included names such as Philip H. Sheridan the current US Army commander in chief, multiple connected bankers to the Republican Party, and Marshall Field of the large Chicago department store.[39] The *Chicago*

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[37] H, L. S. "WHY DIDN'T YOU STAY IN YOUR BELOVED SOUTH?" *The Chicago Defender (National Edition) (1921-1967),* Sep 26, 1925. https://chipublib.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/editors-mail/docview/492078073/se-2.

[38] Riess, Steven. *Horse Racing the Chicago Way: Gambling, Politics, and Organized Crime, 1837-1911*. Syracuse University Press, 2022. doi:10.2307/j.ctv1gwqr8t. 48-49

[39] Riess, Steven. 49-53

Tribune, the more upper class paper of the establishment compared to *The Defender*, likewise reinforced these elitest club origins with their reporting on the racetrack and the Washington Park Club. In multiple articles between 1883-1884 the paper praised the racetrack, the location, the men who started and funded it, as well as the social rules to partake in it. For example, in an article from November 1883, the race house is described as "quite pleasurable" and only by completing it can the "excellent idea of the general formation of the park now be obtained".[40] In a *Tribune* article from March of 1884 it says that "Jews are not wanted. Reports that the Washington Park Club rejects them". It then details that despite having money, Jews would not fit into the social hierarchy of the race club.[41] This continued until the racetrack closed and moved to Arlington as a response to Illinois banning gambling in 1905.[42] However, the time was now ripe for the increasing numbers of African Americans, who moved in response to the *Chicago Defender's* activism, to utilize Washington Park in a way to build a community. They did this through taking over the former racetrack grounds and utilizing them for baseball.

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[40] "The Washington Park Club's Grounds." *Chicago Daily Tribune (1872-1922),* Nov 04, 1883. https://chipublib.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/washington-park-clubs-grounds/docview/172798979/se-2.

[41] "JEWS ARE NOT WANTED.: REPORTS THAT THE WASHINGTON PARK CLUB REJECTS THEM." *Chicago Daily Tribune (1872-1922),* Mar 07, 1884. https://chipublib.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/jews-are-not-wanted/docview/172824964/se-2. For reference to the Jewish admittance in the Washington Park Club and rise of Anti-Semitism in American upper-class circles see also Riess, Steven. 54. See also, "WASHINGTON PARK CLUB: THE NEW CLUB HOUSE THROWN OPEN AND INSPECTED BY 3,000 GUESTS." *Chicago Daily Tribune (1872-1922),* Jun 08, 1884. https://chipublib.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/washington-park-club/docview/173719276/se-2., "WASHINGTON PARK: HOW THE DRIVING CLUB WAS ORGANIZED AND COMPLETED." *Chicago Daily Tribune (1872-1922),* Jun 28, 1884. https://chipublib.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/washington-park/docview/173696717/se-2. Which illustrate the elitest nature of the Washington Park Club. Both articles utilize phrasing to situate the racetrack and club apart from the general masses.

[42] Riess, Steven. 47-48

Baseball for the African American community was a huge activity and was one of the main ways the community gathered and shared experiences. As St. Clair and Cayton told it, "At ball-parks…and other spots where crowds congregate as spectators, Negroes [could] be found sitting where they please, booing and applauding, cheering and 'razzing,' with as little restraint as their white fellows."[43] This was even before Jackie Robbinson broke the color barrier and started for the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1947 and decades before Martin Luther King Jr. toured Chicago as part of the Civil Rights movement. The early 20th century was a time when, as Bachin describes, "blacks were excluded from the amusement parks, vaudeville shows, and theaters that welcomed working-class ethnic whites and restructured mass culture" and when not denied entry in public spaces blacks were segregated into the outskirts and corners of the establishment.[44] As a result of being racially excluded from White run professional baseball leagues, the African American community set up their own parallel Negro Leagues as well as running their own games on a local level. If African Americans could not participate in the white leagues, they would operate their own and maintain the obvious traditional love for the sport in their own spaces.[45]

This was especially true for Washington Park which, as the neighborhoods became increasingly African American dominated due to the 'Great Migration', hosted more African American baseball games. Thus, from 1905-1929 Washington Park became a place of

[43] St. Clair and Cayton. 102
[44] Bachin, Robin F. 206
[45] See Cottrell, Robert Charles. *The Best Pitcher in Baseball: The Life of Rube Foster, Negro League Giant*. NYU Press, 2001. 1-7, 62-78, doi:10.18574/9780814790403, and Kirwin, Bill. *Out of the Shadows: African American Baseball from the Cuban Giants to Jackie Robinson*. University of Nebraska Press, 2005. 1-14. For a discussion on the importance and creation of Negro baseball Leagues set up parallel to white baseball organizations.

community building and identity creation for African Americans through baseball. The *Chicago Defender* reinforced this point with the publication of hundreds of articles from 1905-1929 which advertise important games being played, updating readers on scores, and even calling readers into Washington Park to watch games. For example, in a sports update article from May 8, 1915, it is proclaimed that Grace, the championship team from last year, is to play again at Washington Park in a local rivalry battle. It is expected that "the usual large following that the team has will be on hand to welcome it."[46] Furthermore, in another 'Big Weekend Edition' article from 1910 it is announced that The Chicago Giants, a prominent Negro League team, has "left old camping grounds, thereby cutting off 25 minutes in running time and placing many at Washington Park who never see it on Sunday."[47] Almost every article from the time period showcases the central location of Washington Park in hosting African American baseball. It does so by either highlighting the large crowds which follow the teams, like in the Grace article, or by advertising the availability of important and influential matches which may be seen in the park. Or even less blatantly in a September 30, 1911, article by saying, "Grace Baseball Team Must Win. Everybody Must Go Out to Root for Them."[48] This organization of baseball, promoted through the preeminent African American newspaper, thus fostered gatherings and traditions

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[46] "GRACE TO OPEN SEASON WITH QUINN CHAPEL: CHAMPIONSHIP TEAM TO BE SEEN IN ACTION AGAIN--WASHINGTON PARK TO BE SCENE OF BATTLE". *The Chicago Defender (Big Weekend Edition) (1905-1966)*, May 08, 1915. https://chipublib.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/grace-open-season-with-quinn-chapel/docview/493214818/se-2.

[47] "THE CHICAGO GIANTS IN THEIR NEW HOME: LEFT OLD CAMPING GROUNDS, THEREBY CUTTING OFF 25 MINUTES IN RUNNING TIME AND PLACING MANY AT WASHINGTON PARK WHO NEVER SEE IT" *The Chicago Defender (Big Weekend Edition) (1905-1966),* Jun 25, 1910. https://chipublib.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/chicago-giants-their-new-home/docview/493192720/se-2

[48] "GRACE BASEBALL TEAM MUST WIN: EVERYBODY MUST GO OUT TO ROOT FOR THEM." *The Chicago Defender (Big Weekend Edition) (1905-1966),* Sep 30, 1911. https://chipublib.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/grace-baseball-team-must-win/docview/493227218/se-2.

inside Washington Park. Thus, the shifting demographics of the surrounding neighborhoods increased African American visitors into Washington Park. In 1922 for example Black Chicagoans made up only 10 percent of park visitors, by the end of the decade they made up the majority however.[49] Once a site of upper-class horse racing, the park became a center for African American baseball and a place where one can go to share ideas and manufacture an identity within the constructed Negro League baseball network. Much like the social learning Olmstead & Vaux intentionally crafted, it was done now between 1905-1929 within the African American community.

The *Chicago Defender* showcases many more examples of this active inward creation of identity and community by the African American community from 1905-1929. For example, other sports became important for the community, although not nearly as much as baseball. There are articles from throughout the 1920s which detail sporting events for the African American community inside Washington Park. The park is mentioned as hosting grounds for tennis and cricket where they, like baseball, expect large crowds to come see the games and thus share experiences create a community.[50] The article about a cricket match from June 1924 is very interesting as it details how an international "colored" team from the West Indies beat the

[49] Chicago Commission on Race Relations, *The Negro in Chicago: A Study of Race Relations and a Race Riot* University of Chicago Press. 1922, 275–276

[50] "CHICAGO TENNIS CHAMPIONSHIPS AUG. 2 TO 10: WASHINGTON PARK COURTS TO BE USED NEW IMPERIAL CLUB IS NOW UNDER WAY." *The Chicago Defender (National Edition) (1921-1967),* Jul 19, 1924. https://chipublib.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/chicago-tennis-championships-aug-2-10/docview/492019113/se-2 And, "FIRST OPEN GRASS COURT PLAY JULY 27: TENNIS TOURNAMENT AT WASHINGTON PARK." *The Chicago Defender (National Edition) (1921-1967),* Jun 15, 1929. https://chipublib.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/first-open-grass-court-play-july-27/docview/492217271/se-2

hometown Washington Park team.[51] This event which had a large turnout and newspaper presence would have been a mixing ground inside the park for African American people of different nationalities as they played the same sport. It would have been an international opportunity for Black Chicagoans to construct their own racial identity whether or not they did so actively, the fact remains that they came into contact with other people who would help shape a community identity inside Washington Park. It wasn't just in sports; however, the *Chicago Defender* also wrote articles about events and festivals which took place in Washington Park. For example, in 1922 an article was written which detailed a "City Play Festival" to be hosted by the Chicago Women's Club in collaboration with various civic leaders from across the city. The festival would have dances, races, games, and even have access to "a large amphitheater" for a children's chorus of over 200 voices.[52] Thus, this is advertised by the *Chicago Defender* as a large event, the families and friends of the promised 200 choir children is already a significant gathering. It shows that as Washington Park and the surrounding neighborhoods were being populated by African Americans, they actively engaged in festivals, sports, and other activities which would serve to bind the community together and impart some kind of cultural tradition. The park, therefore, was a very important space where one could participate in cultural activities, building a common identity.

However, this inward community building during 1905-1929 by the African American community inside Washington Park was not always a peaceful process. The Chicago race riot of

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[51] "INTERNATIONAL CRICKETERS DEFEAT CRACK WHITE CLUB." *The Chicago Defender (National Edition) (1921-1967),* Jun 07, 1924. https://chipublib.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/international-cricketers-defeat-crack-white-club/docview/492005573/se-2.

[52] "CITY PLAY FESTIVAL FOR WASHINGTON PARK." *The Chicago Defender (National Edition) (1921-1967),* Jun 10, 1922. https://chipublib.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/city-play-festival-washington-park/docview/491928142/se-2.

1919 saw broad city destabilization where Washington Park played a central role in organizing and creating a racial identity for the African American population. The race riot of 1919 began at a Lake Michigan beach where two African American boys while swimming crossed over the invisible boarder separating the segregated beach and swimming spaces. One of the boys was stoned to death by the White mob who attempted to reaffirm racial boundaries on Lake Michigan. The riot then officially kicked off after a White police officer refused to arrest the man, putting the established city power firmly behind the White population and cementing very clear racial boundaries.[53] As shown above, 1919 was the height of African American immigration into the city and it was becoming a city very clearly defined by racial boundaries. Previously, the White population of the city had tried to restrict the movement of African Americans through housing regulations in Hyde Park, the neighborhood to the East of Washington Park. In 1918 for example White residents formed the Hyde Park and Kenwood Property Owners' Association with the stated goal of, "putting up a united front and keep Hyde Park for ourselves" and to save the neighborhoods from "almost certain destruction".[54] In addition, as fig 3 shows, there were many bombings that were carried out against African Americans to discourage them from moving or carrying out advocating work which would have them cross the color line. The Chicago commission set up to investigate the riot even said that "Bombing of real estate men's properties appears to have been part of a general scheme to close the channels through which the invasion proceeded rather than a protest of neighbors."[55] The "invasion" here refers to increased movement of African Americans into the city and especially into formerly White areas. The restriction of movement on the African American population was

[53] Chicago Commission on Race Relations. Chapter 1. And see, Bachin, Robin F. 248-250
[54] Chicago Commission on Race Relations. 121-123.
[55] Chicago Commission on Race Relations. 123.

thus carried out violently with bombings, but also through housing and city policy, cementing a racialized cityscape. As shown on the map and in the conflict on the beach, this clear racial boundary was centered on public spaces of leisure as these are the most fluid spaces within the city.

While this did not happen in Washington Park perse, the park provided a place of community building, protest, and organizing whereby the African American community could outwardly engage with the city. For example, in 1918, a year before the riot precipitated by the attack on the Lake Michigan beach, there were a group of African American girls assaulted by "white hoodlums" inside Washington Park. The *Chicago Defender* article details how "our young girls and boys who are frequents of the recreation spot…suffered at the hands of a modern Ku-Klux-Klan." The park police even "looked on with greedy eyes burning with the lust of passion."[56] Washington Park as a result of the shifting neighborhood demographics thus became a contested space where racial tension continually erupted. It was a public space where anyone could go and also represented the shifting racial demographics of the area which made the park a symbol in Chicago's racial fight. The article in particular highlights this by showcasing how the African American boys and girls, in the article described as 'our', are normal users of the park and should have access to its services. The park is almost seen by the *Chicago Defender* as a space *for* the African American community, or 'our space'. The intentional lack of police action

[56] "RACE GIRLS BRUTALLY ASSAULTED BY WHITES IN WASHINGTON PARK." *The Chicago Defender (Big Weekend Edition) (1905-1966),* Jun 08, 1918. https://chipublib.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/race-girls-brutally-assaulted-whites-washington/docview/493335585/se-2.

mirrors the same situation on the beach a year later where the police and the city officials fail to impartially police spaces of leisure.

After the bombings which took place surrounding Washington Park (fig. 3) and the start of the riot in 1919, the *Chicago Defender* launched multiple articles which connected the events to Washington Park itself. For example, in June of 1919, the *Defender* published an article titled, "Bedlam of Bombs: Time for Real Action". In it author Nahum Brascher recaps the bombings which took place in and around Washington Park. He starts by highlighting Chiago as a "great city of the world" where a "grand center" has been created for all despite the "incipient anarchy" which has made bombings part of Chicago's South Side residents' daily lives. He then goes on to place the blame on the police department by ironically calling out how "unlucky" they are in solving these bombings and seem to make no progress in helping the African American community. He then ends the article with a quote by Mr. Austin, whose house was bombed near Washington Park, that says "They [African Americans] will live forever on the South Side and will, no doubt, eventually get into the Washington Park district. Bombing their homes will not frighten them away."[57] Thus, Nahum of the *Chicago Defender* is showcasing the geographic nature of the bombings by utilizing Washington Park as an established reference point for the African American community. He is likewise combing the park and the geography of the neighborhood to the riot and racial tension through call to action by Mr. Austin. Washington Park is thus a central analytical point for the *Chicago Defender* author, who is writing towards

[57] NAHUM, DANIEL BRASCHER. "BEDLAM OF BOMBS: TIME FOR REAL ACTION." *The Chicago Defender (Big Weekend Edition) (1905-1966),* Jun 21, 1919. https://chipublib.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/bedlam-bombs/docview/493383026/se-2.

the African American community, and its surrounding neighborhoods should be fought over as it is perceived as African American space.

This is continued into 1920 in much the same vein with an article from June 12th which detail a large group of White boys who attacked African American men in Washington Park with police looking the other way.[58] The *Chicago Defender* also highlighted the lack of police action in protecting African Americans through similar irony by asking "Why The Difference?" in police action.[59] This led to a 1920 article showcasing "a monster mass meeting of protest and action against segregation and bombing on the South Side" at Washington Park. The article connects "the critical housing situation" with the "Universal determination" against the bombings all within Washington Park.[60] From these three articles in 1920 there is a clear attempt to build up African American identity geographically, but also through shared experiences. Each article discusses conflict on racial lines, but also through the in action by police. The African American community according to these *Defender* articles cannot rely on the police to "protect and serve" them and must take matters into their own hands. This call to action, highlighted by the 1919 article literally saying, "A Time For Action", unified the African American community against attacks on racial lines and through shared experiences. This happened geographically through Washington Park and its surrounding neighborhoods. As the African American

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[58] "BOYS ATTACK MEN IN SOUTH SIDE PARK." *The Chicago Defender (Big Weekend Edition) (1905-1966),* Jun 12, 1920. https://chipublib.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/boys-attack-men-south-side-park/docview/493397760/se-2.

[59] WHY THE DIFFERENCE?" *The Chicago Defender (Big Weekend Edition) (1905-1966),* Feb 21, 1920. https://chipublib.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/why-difference/docview/493614827/se-2.

[60] "CITIZENS TO PROTEST BOMB THROWING." *The Chicago Defender (Big Weekend Edition) (1905-1966),* Feb 21, 1920. https://chipublib.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/citizens-protest-bomb-throwing/docview/493400842/se-2.

population became more and more concentrated in the neighborhoods around the park, they began to use the park as a space to outwardly project these shared experiences and identities. Washington Park as a space of leisure, much like the segregated beaches on Lake Michigan, became an important site of identity creation and unifying community point. It was where African American residents from 1905-1929 could physically place themselves in the city by utilizing the park as both an inward space of community, as well as an outward site of protest.

The *Chicago Tribune* likewise shows Washington Park as an important focal point for the African American community during the 1919 race riots albeit in a negative and condescending way. However, by reading between the lines of the *Tribune's* articles one can see the position of the White city policy and the fear of African American's organizing ability around the park. For example, while the *Chicago Defender* discusses the inaction of police in protecting African American citizens the *Tribune* does the opposite. An article from August of 1919 is titled, "Police Bravery in Riots Wins Public Praise". The article then goes on to laud the police for their "individual bravery…in the handling of the race riots" and then highlights the injuries sustained by the police, with no mention of any African Americans.[61] This is an obvious and stark contrast to the *Defender's* coverage of the police during the riots and clearly showcases the *Tribune's* viewpoint. Furthermore, while Washington Park is discussed as a site of positive organizational space by the *Defender*, the *Tribune* paints it as a space apart of the city labeling it almost as a space of "other" and one to be feared. For example, an article from August 3rd, 1919, titled "Another Girl Vanishes While Police Seek One" showcases this attempt at vilifying Washington

[61] "POLICE BRAVERY IN RIOTS WINS PUBLIC PRAISE: 25 INJURED AND ONE KILLED DURING DISORDERS." *Chicago Daily Tribune (1872-1922),* Aug 01, 1919. https://chipublib.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/police-bravery-riots-wins-public-praise/docview/174524615/se-2.

Park. The article goes on to describe how "three policemen from the East Chicago station were bending every effort… to find a trace of Caroline Pelliccia" who disappeared from her home. The last anyone heard of her was that she "was going to Washington Park" and it is believed that "she is lost somewhere in the riot district".[62] Here the connection between Washington Park and the unknown of "the riot district" are clearly shown. The *Tribune* has attempted to set up an East vs. West narrative, where East is full of noble white police while the West is African American rioters. Firmly in the West is Washington Park which was a strong organizing destination for the African American community as it is the assumed destination of Caroline. Reading against the source here we can see that for Caroline, an African American, the park served as a geographic reference point for her movements around the city and one which was being actively utilized by African Americans in their protests.

This inward-outward relationship Washington Park has with the African American community has been commented on in the intersectional field of race and environmental history. Namely how, and why, African Americans in the United States interacted with parks the way they did, what that meant for community building. Why then is a public park such a unifying and contested space as supposed to a public school, church, or even private home? As shown previously through the writings of Olmstead and Vaux, Washington Park was designed to be a space apart from the city where one can go to escape the dirty urbanization and visually communicate with others in the park. However, as McCammack, Smith, and Finney argue in their respective works, the concept of a park was highly important for the African Americans

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[62] "ANOTHER GIRL VANISHES WHILE POLICE SEEK ONE: STACY NESTER BELIEVED LOST IN THE ZONE OF RIOT." *Chicago Daily Tribune (1872-1922),* Aug 03, 1919. https://chipublib.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/another-girl-vanishes-while-police-seek-one/docview/174551275/se-2.

who moved as part of "The Great Migration". More so than other minorities, and in fact, a public park is a necessary and needed space for the African American community.[63] In her work Smith connects the African American experience to nature through the work of W. E. B. Du Bois and other 20th century Black intellectuals. For instance, she cites Du Bois Romantic conception of "Southern Blacks as a peasant community with an organic connection to the land". This organic connection was not "a simple harmonious relationship with nature; it was a product of injustice and violence".[64] This 'injustice and violence' which Smith discusses through Du Bois is obviously slavery. The African Americans who moved up North as a result of the *Chicago Defender's* push were former slaves or at the very least, had a strong connection to slave culture and its farm life. As McCammack states, "The contours of urban life meant that kinships with the soil that had been forged through labor *and* leisure in the South were now mainly nurtured through leisure alone".[65] As African American's moved North and into urbanized and modernized jobs, the very way in which they shared identities shifted in radical ways. For these migrants between 1905-1929 particularly they lost kinships with "the soil" and thus a way to build identity and community. This led African Americans during this period to parks and other public leisure centers, such as beaches, as connecting through nature was a relatable previous experience. Washington Park thus became a site of identity and community building beyond just its easy access. It was integral to the African American culture of connecting through 'the soil'

[63] The works referenced are McCammack, Brian. *Landscapes of Hope*. Smith, Kimberly. *African American Environmental Thought: Foundations*. University Press of Kansas, 2007. And Finney, Carolyn. *Black Faces, White Spaces: Reimagining the Relationship of African Americans to the Great Outdoors.* The University of North Carolina Press, 2014.

[64] See Smith, Kimberly. 172-173, and Chapter 4 for further discussion of this connection.

[65] McCammack, Brian. 5

and offered both a way to recall the life they left behind as well as an escape to the modern urbanized work conditions they now existed in.

Thus, the demographic shift in the neighborhoods surrounding Washington Park from 1905-1929 fundamentally altered the way in which the park was utilized, as well as the racial makeup of the city. As increasing numbers of African Americans moved up North in "The Great Migration", they began to use the park as a site of inward identity creation and even as place to outwardly project their demands on the city. Olmstead and Vaux first designed this park with the idea of imparting a cultural and racial hierarchy on its visitors as well as cleaning the city. However, through the festivals, sporting games, and protests the African American community fought for control over the park and used it to actively reinforce their own identity. This was seen especially throughout the use of the park as a place to outwardly project demands and show racial inequalities. Washington Park was thus an important space for the first generation of "Great Migration" migrants to connect and share identities as they had done on Southern Plantations previously for centuries.

Chapter 2: The Depression, Increasing Globalization, and the Park

The Great Depression, which began with the stock market crash of 1929, marked a significant turning point for Chicago's African American population, particularly in their use of Washington Park as a space for organization and identity formation. Drawing from prior experiences of public protest and organization in the park, African Americans in the 1930s leveraged it more extensively to respond to the economic crisis. This period saw a heightened capacity and willingness to use the park as a hub for political organizing, often employing national and international rhetoric to amplify their demands and assert their political presence. The result of which was that by the 1940s Chicago's African American community had begun to assimilate itself in broader national currents which was a major change from the earlier more formative years of 1905-1929.

The Great Depression impacted the entire nation, but Chicago was particularly hard hit as a major manufacturing, transport, and banking hub. The banking sector was notably impacted during the 1930s as low liquidity led to many bank failures when mass withdrawal requests came in in the early years of the Great Depression.[66] Significant industrial decline starting from 1930, the first full year of the depression, likewise led to widespread unemployment and major economic hardship, as shown through the quantity of goods which were available to people to purchase.[67] The *Chicago Defender* in 1930 discussed this in an article titled "Economic Problems

[66] See Postel-Vinay, Natacha. "What Caused Chicago Bank Failures in the Great Depression? A Look at the 1920s." *The Journal of Economic History* 76, no. 2 (2016): 478–519. https://doi.org/10.1017/S002205071600053X. for an overview of the banking failure and its impact on the available goods for people during the Great Depression.

[67] See the introduction here for a brief overview of the availability of goods and services during the Great Depression. Reed, Christopher Robert. *The Rise of Chicago's Black Metropolis, 1920-1929*. University of Illinois Press, 2011.

Conference Appeal" where it called for a discussion "centered around general employment and wages, farming and marketing…and banks".[68] The economic impact of the Great Depression was thus on the minds of Chicago's contemporaries and active calls for discussions to solve it were already seen in the early 1930s.

For the average Chicago resident in the 1930s and especially for African Americans, the Great Depression was especially felt hard in relation to the access to housing. From 1929-1931 the number of evictions increased significantly and African American neighborhoods surrounding Washington Park, making up of the "Black Metropolis", accounted for nearly 25% of Chicago's relief cases.[69] Chicago's White residents seized on this chance to push African American's out of their neighborhoods or even stop the development of new housing projects which would help alleviate the disproportionate housing burden. For example, in a 1935 *Chicago Defender* article it is shown that the white residential districts have been protesting and "moved to block the development of the mammoth housing project for members of the Race sponsored by the Public Works Administration." According to the article, the main actors which are trying to block it are the "Jim Crow Chicago Real Estate Board".[70] While this housing project proceeded despite of this protest, it still highlights that the African American community in

[68] ECONOMIC PROBLEMS CONFERENCE APPEAL" *The Chicago Defender (National Edition) (1921-1967),* Mar 15, 1930. https://chipublib.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/economic-problems-conference-appeal/docview/492251078/se-2.

[69] Gosnell, Harold Foote. *Negro Politicians: The Rise of Negro Politics in Chicago*. University of Chicago Press, 1967. 321

[70] "WHITES IN MOVE TO BLOCK U. S. HOUSE PROJECT: GOVERNMENT PROCEEDS IN FACE OF PROTESTS." *The Chicago Defender (National Edition) (1921-1967),* Aug 03, 1935. https://chipublib.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/whites-move-block-u-s-house-project/docview/492421899/se-2.

Chicago not only had to deal with housing and economic issues from the Great Depression but were also seemingly besieged by the white residents.

Washington Park in particular hosted these Great Depression housing protests and calls for development to alleviate the housing burden on the African American community. In a 1938 *Defender* article titled "Report U.S. to Guarantee Race Jobs on Slum Project", it shows how steps are being taken for the construction of "the long-delayed South Parkway Gardens housing project" through a Federal Government grant. The grant will cover "90 per cent of the funds necessary to construct the project… The other 10 per cent must be raised by local authority" and this was only achieved through the protests led by The *Chicago Defender*.[71] This article is particularly exciting and enlightening for multiple reasons. First, this housing complex of the South Parkway Gardens, is more commonly referred to as "O'Block" today and is infamous with gang activity, as a hub of low-income African American residents, but also as a place of great cultural heritage with many influential African Americans being born here.[72] It is also in the vicinity of Washington Park, less than a thirty-minute walk, and has its origins directly tied to the park through housing protest movements. Secondly, while the *Defender* is trying to market its importance in organizing the protest for the construction of the housing complex it nonetheless showcases how the "local authority" which was centered on Washington Park, outwardly projected the needs of the African American community Thus, this disproportionate economic burden highlighted the systemic racial inequalities in housing and economic support, as

[71] "REPORT U.S. TO GUARANTEE RACE JOBS ON SLUM PROJECT." *The Chicago Defender (National Edition) (1921-1967),* Oct 22, 1938. https://chipublib.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/report-u-s-guarantee-race-jobs-on-slum-project/docview/492508370/se-2.

[72] Former residents include Michelle Obama, Chief Keef, King Von, and Freddo Santana. Ford, Tanisha "The History of Parkway Gardens", OCT 29, 2021. https://www.townandcountrymag.com/society/tradition/a38004821/parkway-gardens-history-middle-class-black-families/

Chicago's African Americans needed to continue this outward projection of identity centered on Washington Park.

However, the organizing by the African American community differed from the pre-depression period as it became more political, larger, and willing to capitalize on the larger national rhetoric surrounding communism. This is especially seen through the development of Chicago's Urban League (CUL) and the articles posted by the *Chicago Defender*. Established in 1916, the CUL is an affiliate of the National Urban League which is dedicated to promoting economic, educational, and social progress for African Americans in Chicago.[73] The main focus in the early years of the CUL was to help assist African American migrants arriving in Chicago during the Great Migration through access to affordable housing and equal economic opportunities. This was achieved, as Reed points out, through two main strategies centered around the rhetoric of internal self-improvement. The first helped to "reorganize the lives of black tenants… through the provision of wholesome influences and guidance". The second was that the CUL worked *with* "landlords and real estate developers to improve the quality of housing in ghetto communities."[74] These are the same landlords the *Defender* was describing as a "Jim Crow Chicago Real Estate Board" in their 1935 article. However, for the early years of the CUL, 1919-1929, this approach is not unreasonable as African American racial theory reflected such self-upliftment terms. The African American pre-depression racial theory was thus established by thinkers like W. E. B Dubois who were calling for "every effort and sacrifice

[73] See this article which gives an overview of the CUL. "The Chicago Urban League Commemorates 100 Years". July 14th, 2016. https://chiul.org/2016/07/14/the-chicago-urban-league-commemorates-100-years/

[74] For an analysis of the Chicago Urban League see Chapter 2 of Reed, Tour *Not Alms but Opportunity: The Urban League and the Politics of Racial Uplift, 1910-1950*. The University of North Carolina Press, 2008. doi:10.5149/9780807888544_reed. Quotes from pages 29-30.

possible on their part toward making themselves fit members of the community within a reasonable time".[75] The early CUL was thus a product of its time in its internal mission to civilize and "uplift" the African American community.

This changed drastically in the 1930s as the *Chicago Defender* and the CUL called for more external political action to change the environment of Chicago's African Americans, political action which had its roots in Washington Park. For the CUL this was seen in their efforts to secure jobs for Chicago's African Americans on a non-discriminatory basis. They did this not by focusing on what could be done to make African Americans look more "civilized" or "presentable", but rather through the direct connection and communication with companies.[76] The *Chicago Defender* likewise published a nine step platform "For America" which included things such as "1-The opening up of all trades and trade unions to blacks as well as whites" as well as "3-Engineers and firemen on all American railroads."[77] And the *Chicago Defender* in 1930 published an article titled "Chicago Workers to Take Part in Urban League Meet". In the article they detail "the most successful conference which the National Urban League has ever held" and show how "the recently conducted 'vocational opportunity campaigns'" held in and around Washington Park through the University of Chicago were an immense success and will be implemented nationally.[78] The National Urban League thus chose Chicago for the initial

[75] W. E. B. Dubois quoted from Reed, Tour. 2008. 1

[76] Chapter 1, 1930. Hagley ID, Box/folder number, E185.8 .N465 1930, Published Collections Department, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, DE 19807.

[77] "Defender's Platform for America" *The Chicago Defender (National Edition) (1921-1967),* May 24, 1930. https://chipublib.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/other-14-no-title/docview/492253794/se-2.

[78] "Chicago Workers to Take Part in Urban League Meet." *The Chicago Defender (National Edition) (1921-1967),* Jun 21, 1930. https://chipublib.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/chicago-workers-take-part-urban-league-meet/docview/492282536/se-2.

launching of new employment and training programs for the African American community. Not only that but they chose Washington Park and its surrounding neighborhoods as the place to hold these programs and meetings reflecting the parks importance as a place for the outward projection of African American identity in the 1930s. While this did happen in the earlier period, the scale, rhetoric, and scope increased dramatically as a result of the Great Depression.

This expansion of the outward political rhetoric from Washington Park was directly seen in the combination of the *Chicago Defender's* Bud Billiken Parade and Bronzeville's mayoral elections. In 1923, the *Defender's* founder Robert S. Abbott introduced the fictional character Bud Billiken as a symbol of pride and hope for African American youth, featuring him in a youth advice column in the *Defender* and creating a club called the Bud Billiken Club.[79] This proved so popular that by 1929 a parade was established which provided entertainment as well as serving as a symbol of racial upliftment for the African American community.[80] Today it is the largest African American parade in the United States and stretches two miles south down Dr. Martin Luther King Dr. (also known as Grand Boulevard) through the Bronzeville neighborhood where it ends in Washington Park.[81] One can feel the immense excitement and gravity from the 1929 *Chicago Defender* article titled "City Honors its 7000,000 Boys for the Week". The article describes the many events hosted such as "athletic contests and prizes" with most attention being placed on the parade of boys where "fifty-three boys were chosen from different communities…and the three rating highest were awarded scholarships to the University of

[79] See these two websites which give an overview of Bud Billiken. CHM Staff, "The Bud Billiken Day Parade: Chicago's Parade of Stars", AUG 08, 2020. https://www.chicagohistory.org/bud-billiken-day-parade/. And, West, James. "The Bud Billiken Parade, June 16th, 2022. https://www.aaihs.org/the-bud-billiken-parade/

[80] See the excellent work of Morrow, Solomon. *The Bud Billiken Day Parade and Picnic 1929–2000*. Lambert Academic Publishing, 2015.

[81] See the official website of the parade here, "About Bud Billiken Parade" Accessed December 29th, 2024. https://www.budbillikenparade.org/about-bud-billiken-parade

Chicago"[82] The very next year of 1930 saw the expansion of the parade where "12,000 were Given Free Ice Cream" at the parade with "a crowd so large Bud had to make several trips to the park before the parade got underway".[83] This Bud Billiken parade thus showcases how Washington Park was pivotal for the outward projection of African American racial identity. Situated in the heart of the "Black Metropolis", as show in the earlier section, the park provided the perfect geographic marker for Chicago's African Americans. Everyone knew where the park was and so making it an organizational point for a parade celebrating African American youth and racial identity then makes perfect sense.

Differing from the previous period, however, was that this outward expansion of identity centered in Washington Park was also seen nationally. This is clearly seen from a 1929 *Chicago Defender* article titled "Bud Gets Hearty Welcome in N.Y.". In the article it is described how "Bud came to town directly from Buffalo and Niagara Falls" to a "roaring welcome" where "hundreds of Kiddies" lined up to parade.[84] This was not just reserved for the large state of New York however as another 1929 article describes "Bud Billiken Plans Tour Around U. S.". It proclaims how "The Chicago Defender is pleased to announce that Bud Billiken… will leave Chicago in a few days for an extensive tour of the United States" where "every town and city

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[82] "CITY HONORS ITS 700,000 BOYS FOR WEEK: GREAT CROWD CHEERS AS YOUTHS PARADE." *The Chicago Defender (National Edition) (1921-1967),* Jun 01, 1929. https://chipublib.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/city-honors-700-000-boys-week/docview/492230063/se-2.

[83] "THOUSANDS CHEER BUD'S 'GANG' IN PARADE: 12,000 GIVEN FREE ICE CREAM AT PICNIC." *The Chicago Defender (National Edition) (1921-1967),* Aug 23, 1930. https://chipublib.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/thousands-cheer-buds-gang-parade/docview/492301433/se-2.

[84] "BUD GETS HEARTY WELCOME IN N. Y.: GROWN-UPS LINE STREETS TO CHEER HUNDREDS OF KIDDIES." *The Chicago Defender (National Edition) (1921-1967),* Aug 17, 1929. https://chipublib.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/bud-gets-hearty-welcome-n-y/docview/492218080/se-2.

will be visited".[85] Thus, the parade in the 1930s utilized the earlier identity and community building which Washington Park was central in. The park was already a center of inward identity creation and established geographic place in the mind of Chicago's African American community, and one which could be exported to other African American communities nationally. The parade and Washington Park were thus very successful in unifying and outwardly projecting a shared identity. While these articles obviously showcase the parade in a positive light, as it was the *Chicago Defender's* creation, the fact remains that it was and still is a large and successful parade celebrating African American culture.

The parade was also directly connected with internal mayoral elections in Chicago as well, specifically in Bronzeville, which showcases yet another layer of outward identity project the park facilitated in the 1930s. In the earlier period from 1905-1929, the parade would have been a celebration with a focus on internal community development and, at best, secondary ties to political engagement. The mayoral elections of Bronzeville starting from 1930s however changed the use of the parade and the park. Bronzeville is a neighborhood to the north of the park which encompasses the majority of the "Black Metropolis" described by St. Clair and Cayton. It is where the largest concentration of African American economic power was held and through the parade it was linked to the park and the broader political climate. While it was a created neighborhood by African Americans, it allowed residents to symbolically exercise their

[85] "BUD BILLIKEN PLANS TOUR AROUND U. S.: WILL START ON JOURNEY WITHIN FEW DAYS." *The Chicago Defender (National Edition) (1921-1967),* Jun 29, 1929. https://chipublib.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/bud-billiken-plans-tour-around-u-s/docview/492228000/se-2.

voting power to choose their own mayor as a spokesman for the community.[86] The *Defender* played a significant part in this park-parade-Bronzeville connection with “Mayor of Bronzeville Campaign”, as well as hosting the parade itself. For example, from a 1938 article the *Defender* details the election results for Bronzeville’s mayor where “Four men are in a final battle” and the person announcing the results is none other than “Bud Billiken” himself at the parade.[87] Furthermore in a 1935 article titled “Selecting Bronzeville Candidates”, it shows “judges and tallymen counting the votes” where the main people running also did campaigning in the summer Bud Billiken parade.[88] The Bud Billiken Parade thus became a stage not only for cultural celebration and youth advocacy but also for political expression and communal agency within the African American community. By intertwining the election of the "Mayor of Bronzeville" with the parade and the use of Washington Park as a public arena, the event symbolized the intersection of cultural pride, political organization, and civic participation. This transformation reflected the shifting dynamics of African American self-determination during the 1930s, as the parade extended its influence beyond entertainment and inward development to a broader outward public political platform. Linking this all together was the *Chicago Defender* which served as the mouthpiece for the change of outward expression in the 1930s as supposed to the early 1905-1929 period.

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[86] Rutkoff, Peter, and William Scott. “Pinkster in Chicago: Bud Billiken and the Mayor of Bronzeville, 1930-1945.” *The Journal of African American History* 89, no. 4 (2004): 316–30. doi:10.2307/4134057.

[87] "FOUR IN CHICAGO BRONZEVILLE MAYORALTY RACE” *The Chicago Defender (National Edition) (1921-1967),* Sep 10, 1938. https://chipublib.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/four-chicago-bronzeville-mayoralty-race/docview/492524789/se-2.

[88] "SELECTING BRONZEVILLE CANDIDATES." *The Chicago Defender (National Edition) (1921-1967),* Jul 20, 1935. https://chipublib.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/selecting-bronzeville-candidates/docview/492448328/se-2.

During the 1930s Washington Park also was a site of engagement for the African American community with the international communist movement and its rhetoric. As Reed details in his work, "Depression-decade circumstances dictated that most radical and militant organizations…embraced both economic relief and civil rights".[89] It was in this intersection of analysis in which the African American community around Washington Park was engaging in. Both the Chicago chapters of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Communist Party of the United States (CPUSA) attempted to lure African Americans into their ranks through this duality of economic and racial advancement. Both these organizations have a long-storied history in Chicago, however, for the purposes of this paper it is important to really note two things. First, as Reed explains, these organizations had a global scope which forced Chicago's African American community to engage with these issues on a much larger scale in the 1930s than in 1905-1929.[90] Second, the theatre in which these global issues were consumed by Chicago's African American community was still primarily in Washington Park.

For example, throughout the 1930s the *Chicago Defender* connected economic and racial justice with the communist party or to "Reds". In two articles from 1931 titled "U.S. Acts to Curb 'Reds'" and "Police Face 'Reds' Arrest Ten", the *Defender* showcases the communists work in battling with the police, which exist only to reaffirm white city policy.[91] The first article

[89] Reed, Christopher Robert. 2011. 96

[90] Reed, Christopher Robert. 2011. Chapter 4

[91] "U. S. ACTS TO CURB 'REDS'" *The Chicago Defender (National Edition) (1921-1967),* Aug 08, 1931. https://chipublib.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/u-s-acts-curb-reds/docview/492319163/se-2. And. "POLICE FACE 'REDS'" *The Chicago Defender (National Edition) (1921-1967),* Sep 05, 1931. https://chipublib.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/police-face-reds-ten/docview/492318331/se-2.

in particular details the story of a group of “Reds” who scuffled with the police in order to get “the furniture of Mrs. Diana Gross, 72 years old” back from the police. The group is also known according to the article and has operated in attacks in areas surrounding Washington Park, making it a reasonable assumption that they frequent the large public space for gathering and sharing of ideas. Thus, this activity within and around Washington Park highlighted its function as a critical hub for organizing and resistance during a period marked by heightened racial and economic tensions. The park's accessibility and prominence made it a natural meeting ground for groups advocating for social change, including the communists or “Reds”, whose efforts often intersected with the struggles of African Americans facing systemic inequities. The *Chicago Defender* amplified the connection and showcased the increasing importance Washington Park played on a global scale throughout the 1930s for the African American community.

Thus, the 1930s marked a transformative period for Washington Park and its role in Chicago’s African American community. Amid the economic turmoil of the Great Depression and the systemic racial inequalities that defined the era, the park became a vital space for organizing, identity formation, and outward political engagement. Its significance was extended from local housing protests and economic advocacy to its role in larger movements which were led by the *Chicago Defender* such as the Bud Billiken Parade and the Bronzeville mayoral elections. These events not only celebrated African American culture but also symbolized the community's political agency and solidarity. Moreover, Washington Park served as a critical intersection of local activism and global rhetoric whereby the park transitioned from a primarily inward-focused site of community development, developed between 1905-1929, to a central arena for outward political action throughout the 1930s.

Chapter 3: Chicago's Transportation and Museum in the Park

Between 1940 and 1961, Chicago underwent significant infrastructural developments, notably the expansion of its highway system and to a lesser extent for this paper the establishment of the Chicago Transit Authority (CTA). While these projects aimed to modernize the city and improve transportation, they were often had detrimental effects on African American communities, particularly in the "Black Metropolis" surrounding Washington Park. These infrastructure developments were forced through by the White city officials and their creation represents an important, and for this paper, final chapter showcasing the ability of Washington Park to mobilize action against the "siege" of Chicago's racialized transportation policies. The culmination of these efforts is then seen in the creation of the DuSable Museum of African American History inside Washington Park which represents an ideological and racial takeover of the ever-important park in a climate of the Civil Rights movement.

The construction of highways in, around, and especially *through* Chicago's urban areas from 1940-1961 serve as a prominent example of how infrastructure projects adversely affected African American neighborhoods. The expansion of United States roads and highways is most commonly attributed to the Interstate Highway System of President Dwight D. Eisenhower in the 1950s. He said as much in the State of the Union Address on January 6, 1955, where he proclaimed a highway system as "essential to meet the needs of our growing population, our expanding economy, and our national security"[92] The very next year as well, in 1956, the passage of the Federal-Aid Highway Act offered States huge grants to plan and construct

[92] Dwight D. Eisenhower "Annual Message to the Congress on the State of the Union" January 6, 1955. Accessed December 29th, 2024.
https://www.eisenhowerlibrary.gov/sites/default/files/file/1955_state_of_the_union.pdf

massive road systems across the nation.[93] As historian Raymond Mohl states, the funding of these "concrete monsters" in the 1950s came at the expense of city amenities such as parks, historic districts, pools, gardens, and even schools.[94] The, "pushing expressways through the social and physical fabric of American cities inevitably resulted in housing demolition on a large scale, the destruction of entire communities, severe relocation problems, and subsequent environmental damage".[95] The Interstate Highway Act as thus physically transformative to the cityscape in the United States, but also politically as contemporary research has shown that highway programs have impacted poor and minority communities at a disproportional rate to more white neighborhoods.[96] As Karas proclaims these effects "have been posited by some scholars as constituting significant civil rights violations."[97]

Chicago is no exception to this highway construction frenzy however, it started even earlier with the 1940 publication of Cook County's Long Range Highway Plan.[98] This comprehensive study of Cook County was prepared by the Highway Department at the behest of the Board of Commissioners so the expansion of highway and road planning could be

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[93] "Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956". June 29, 1956. Accessed December 29th, 2024 https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/STATUTE-70/pdf/STATUTE-70-Pg374.pdf

[94] Mohl, Raymond. "Stop the Road: Freeway Revolts in American Cities." *Journal of Urban History*, 30(5), (2004). 674-706

[95] Mohl, Raymond, 2004. 674

[96] See particularly, Mohl, Raymond, 2004. 674-676. Mohl, Raymond. "The interstates and the cities: The U.S. Department of Transportation and the freeway revolt, 1966-1973." *The Journal of Policy History*, 20(2), (2008) 193-226, and Karas, David Patrick. "Highway to Inequity: The Disparate Impact of the Interstate Highway System on Poor and Minority Communities in American Cities." *New Visions for Public Affairs, Vol. 7,* (2015).

[97] Karas, David Patrick. 10

[98] Quinlan, George A. "Highway Plan for Cook County" Aug, 1940. Accessed December 29th, 2024. https://www.cookcountyil.gov/sites/g/files/ywwepo161/files/service/1940_long_range_highwayplan_.pdf

undertaken. The study concluded that this construction "would require the allocation of approximately 43% of its anticipated highway funds for the next 20 years" and then lists eleven improvements between 1940-1960 which should be prioritized.[99] The study then claims that "Such facilities [of increased traffic movement] can be accomplished only by a system of highways."[100] Just from the introduction and overview of the highway plan this is clearly not going to be a small and insignificant affair. This study is planning funds for at least 20 years across huge swaths of the city making it highly impactful on the physical cityscape. The most interesting page from this 1940 report is a map on page 19 (Fig. 4) which showcases the proposed highways construction through the city of Chicago.[101] In this map which showcases Chicago's highways with reference to the populated Suburban areas, one can see the roads already built in solid black lines, and proposed connections into the city in black dashed lines. There are four main dashed lines which emanate from the center of Chicago on this map which each cut through massive swaths of the city. This development, if you can imagine, would isolate each newly created section in a surrounding ring of highways as supposed to the previous free flowing movement which a no highway construction afforded.

This is further reinforced through an interactive map from the University of Chicago's "Race Riot" section.[102] In this interactive map (Fig. 5), which I have edited to highlight important details, one can see the proposed highways which were built as a result of the 1940

[99] "Highway Plan for Cook County". 5-6.
[100] "Highway Plan for Cook County". 15.
[101] "Highway Plan for Cook County". 19.
[102] See the University of Chicago's Race Riot 1919 section. "Chicago 1919: Confronting the Race Riots", Accessed December 29th, 2024. https://uchicago.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=64e5689e591d465ea783d8730fef17d4

study highlighted in black, Washington Park outlined in green, and a "Riot heatmap" courtesy of the interactive map. In the heatmap blue indicates areas which were highly impacted by the riot, followed by red, yellow, and then white for areas with no active riot reports. The center of Chicago is to the north, cut off by the map. This clearly shows the divisive impact the highways had in the area around Washington Park. Before the construction of the highways, the black lines, one could walk from Washington Park to the major rivers in the western part of the city. Even more so, one could walk from Washington Park to the center of Chicago. However, this became an impossibility as highways planned and constructed between 1940-1961 isolated the African American "Black Metropolis" in its own box limiting movement through the city unless one was wealthy enough to own a car of course. As Mohl and Karas showcase in their work the expressway's route was thus deliberately chosen to act as a physical barrier between predominantly African American and the White communities, reinforcing racial segregation. This decision led to the displacement of numerous African American residents and businesses, disrupted community cohesion, and the economic stability in the neighborhoods surrounding Washington Park.[103]

As this was taking place Washington Park became a center of action against the racial construction of the highways and its detrimental impact on the community it had. As shown in the previous sections the park was already a huge site of community identity and a place where African American residents outwardly project their wishes, so it was only natural that it became a protest hotspot between 1940-1961. For example, this is shown in a 1957 article from the *Chicago Defender* titled "Civic Group Maps Fight On South Central Problems". The article goes

[103] Mohl, Raymond 2004. 674-677 and Karas, David Patrick. 10-15

on promote “the first of three public hearings…at the Washington Park YMCA”. These hearings are a response to the division of the community by the construction of transportation infrastructure which has been labeled a force of “poisonous influence”[104] According to the *Defender* then the construction of highway and transportation infrastructure is a direct attack against the African American Community. The rhetoric in the article is nothing short of a neighborhood “call to arms” against this construction with the first step being the organization of this meeting. The location of this meeting is of course held in Washington Park as it is a well-known spot with a large history of community organizing and action already. Furthermore, the construction of these highways facilitated the use of Washington Park for these purposes as it was one of the only public spaces available to residents surrounding the new highway.

The rhetoric against highway construction however goes beyond the abstract notions of movement or community cohesion, to realistic concerns over health and safety. As Faras shows that there is significant “impact that freeways have in contributing levels of pollution or other potential health threats – particularly within neighborhoods adjacent to spans of roadway”[105] Furthermore, scientists Fuller et. all have concluded that “Ultrafine particles (UFP; aerodynamic diameter < 0.1 micrometers) are a ubiquitous exposure in the urban environment and are elevated near highways.”[106] These particles have been associated with morality, increased lung cancer, deep vein thrombosis, atherosclerosis, and childhood asthma symptoms.[107] Thus, the

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[104] "Civic Group Maps Fight on South Central Problems." *The Chicago Defender (National Edition) (1921-1967),* Apr 20, 1957. https://chipublib.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/civic-group-maps-fight-on-south-central-problems/docview/492862754/se-2.

[105] Karas, David Patrick. 16

[106] Fuller, Christina, et al. “Estimation of ultrafine particle concentrations at near-highway residences using data from local and central monitors.” *Atmospheric Environment*, 57, (2012). 257

[107] Fuller, Christina, et al. 2012. 258

construction of the highway system which cut through the African American communities surrounding Washington Park was not only an attempt to limit movement, but an ecological attack on its residents including children. This spurned protest by the African American community in an attempt to increase the safety of children. For example, in a 1961 *Chicago Defender* article titled "Protest Site of School at Hazardous Corner" these issues are laid out in full. The article explains that this corner was hazardous due to "overhead elevated tracks, bus and elevated transfer points and U.S. highway truck routes". The protest was done by the "Southside Chicago Committee on Racial Equality" which organized at the Northwest corner of Washington Park.[108] This article thus showcased the resident's connection of highways and transportation as being detrimental to their health and safety especially for children. The community's protests thus reflected a desire for a safer environment for children, but also for the entire community. The African American community achieved this by utilizing Washington Park as a site of protest. In doing so, they echoed Olmsted and Vaux's original 1870 vision of the park as the "lungs of the city." This vision symbolized the community's aspirations for their neighborhoods while the park itself became a physical space to mobilize, advocate for change, and build an identity against Chicago's racial infrastructure plans.

Chicago's development of the CTA, particularly in the Red and Green lines, further reinforce this racial transportation planning and perpetuation of inequality from 1940-1961. As the CTA expanded its network, decisions about station locations and service routes often disadvantaged African American neighborhoods. Fernandez highlights this in her discussion of

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[108] "Protest Site of New School: Protest Site of School at Hazardous Corner." *Chicago Daily Defender (Daily Edition) (1960-1973),* Oct 30, 1961. https://chipublib.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/protest-site-new-school/docview/493850665/se-2.

Chicago's Hispanic community but the same conclusions can be applied to other non-white city residents such as African Americans. She shows how the construction of the Red Line and its initial termination at 95th Street created a geographic boundary that limited access for predominantly African American communities further south.[109] This placement effectively restricted mobility, isolating African American residents from economic opportunities in the city's more prosperous (White) areas. Furthermore, elevated train lines and bus routes were frequently placed in ways that prioritized connecting affluent, white neighborhoods while providing limited or inconvenient service to African American communities especially those surrounding Washington Park.[110] Like the construction of the highway system, the racial placement of the CTA prompted protests which centered around Washington Park. This is illustrated in a *Chicago Defender* article from 1959 titled "New CTA Service For Hyde Park". In the article it showcases how "CTA services in the Kenwood Hyde Park area are to be rearranged and extended, instead of being curtailed as originally planned" as a result of a committee which specifically wanted operations "through Washington Park instead of skirting the north side".[111] this is an exciting article because while it again showcases African American residents utilizing Washington Park to outwardly project their wishes, it also explicitly showcases their desire to have Washington Park connected by public transportation methods. Thus, this shows that the African American residents utilized the park to organize and wanted that reflected in the geography of the city's transportation. The stops listed in this article are still in use today as well

[109] Fernandez, Lilia. *Brown in the Windy City: Mexicans and Puerto Ricans in Postwar Chicago*. University of Chicago Press, 2012. Chapter 3 https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226244280.001.0001.

[110] Fernandez, Lilia. Chapter 3.

[111] "New CTA Service for Hyde Park." *Daily Defender (Daily Edition) (1956-1960),* Apr 30, 1959. https://chipublib.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/new-cta-service-hyde-park/docview/493775914/se-2.

further reinforcing Washington Park as a connecting feature for Chicago's African American community.

So far, the impact between the expansion of Chicago's transportation and the African American communities surrounding Washington Park have only been explored through the African American paper the *Chicago Defender*. The *Defender* has constantly showcased protests against the expansion of highways on racial and health lines, as well as arguing for more public transportation to be centered on Washington Park. The *Chicago Tribune* on the other hand, uses its articles to advocate for the expansion of highways through positive coverage and sow discontent on the CTA's ability to operate. This showcases how the *Chicago Tribune* is a paper in support of the policies the *Defender* is against and represents the position of the white city officials. For example, in an article from 1958 titled "3 Highways Cleared into Michigan City" the *Tribune* showers nothing but praise on the highways. In the article it says that city workers are working "to restore city services" by clearing snow off of the highway with the "initial efforts being concentrated on…the city's main business thorofare".[112] The article's rhetoric applauds those working to clear the highways because of the economic benefits which this brings. It also illustrates the importance of the highways for connecting the city of Chicago to the broader Midwestern market and through that, pushes the argument about how pivotal they are to the city. This clearly differs from the *Chicago Defender's* articles which are way more negative and discuss the personal interactions with the highway, as supposed to the macro-economic *Tribune* arguments. The *Chicago Tribune* also published articles which attempted to paint the

[112] "3 HIGHWAYS CLEARED INTO MICHIGAN CITY: WORK TO RESTORE CITY SERVICES." *Chicago Daily Tribune (1923-1963),* Feb 18, 1958. https://chipublib.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/3-highways-cleared-into-michigan-city/docview/182046495/se-2.

CTA, and other Chicago public transit, in a negative light to argue for a reduction in funding which would hurt the African American community. For example, in an article from 1954 titled "Bare Theft of Half Million in CTA Fares", the *Tribune* makes the connection between corrupt government and the CTA. It states that, "stolen fare registers have been used by conductors to defraud the Chicago transit authority of what police estimate may exceed a half million dollars a year", their bases of this was that "one conductor said he pocketed $15 or $16 a day when he used one. On the basis of this police estimate that…this could cost the CTA above half a million".[113] First, the *Tribune* is publishing an attention-grabbing headline which a huge monetary value associated with it, based off of one singular source. Not very believable at all and much like today, one needs to read the article to discredit the headline. Second, the article is clearly attempting to showcase this as a much larger issue by paint brushing every CTA conductor as corrupt rather than putting any kind of number into perspective. The use of language to discredit the CTA, and its conductors on an individual level, is a clear attempt to galvanize their White status quo supports to want to reduce funding to the transportation. This would, due to the construction of the highways, limit African American mobility in and around Chicago. It is through the *Defender* and the Washington Park then that the African American community organized and outwardly expressed their political stances. It was, through transportation at least, a siege on the communities around Washington Park.

In many ways the culmination of all the protest and community building, both inward and outward, as well as the coming together of the many threads discussed here were seen in the

[113] "Bare Theft of Half Million in CTA Fares: USE OF STOLEN REGISTERS IN RACKET TOLD SOME LEASED ON SHARE BASIS." *Chicago Daily Tribune (1923-1963),* May 09, 1954. https://chipublib.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/bare-theft-half-million-cta-fares/docview/178744981/se-2.

1961 creation of the DuSable Museum of African American History inside of Washington Park. The museum was first called the Ebony Museum of Negro History and Art but was renamed by 1968 to honor Jean-Baptiste Pointe DuSable, the Haitian born founder of Chicago which traces the lineage of African Americans, and rightfully so, to Chicago's foundation.[114] This name change firmly places African American culture and identity within the heart of Chicago's history and, of course, it is located in the ever present park. The museum was founded by Margaret Taylor Burroughs and Eugene P. Feldman and its original home before moving into the park was in a large house in Bronzeville, the neighborhood which hosted one terminus of the Bud Billiken Parade (Fig 6).[115] The museum was thus conceived in Bronzeville, the historic heart of the "Black Metropolis", but later moved into Washington Park showcasing the parks central role in developing an African American identity. The park could reach more people with this move and, as we have seen, people were very familiar with using its space to discuss ideas and build identities. Cofounder Feldman in his book recalled the major motivations behind the creation of the museum during a large gathering of African American intellectuals "Here I found a most unusual cultural scene. There was a fellow there giving guitar lessons. Then Charles Burroughs, Margaret's husband, who had since boyhood gone to school in the USSR, began giving lessons in Russian." He then goes on to say that there was a "large wooden picnic table around which we were, in many weeks, months, and years, to drink coffee and give birth to projects including the building of a Museum. I was thrilled to be in such a wonderful atmosphere."[116] Thus, the foundation of the museum had many of the ideas which were already seen throughout

[114] See, The DuSable Black History Museum, "Making Good History" Accessed December 29th, 2024. https://dusablemuseum.org/about-us/
[115] Feldman, Eugene. *The Birth and the Building of the DuSable Museum*. DuSable Museum. 1981. 48
[116] Feldman, Eugene. 12

Washington Park. First, the connectivity, building of an identity, and sharing of all ideas were a strong commonality between the two. Second, the grabbling of outward political action through communist rhetoric was also engaged with at the two spots. Washington Park was thus a culmination of everything Feldman enjoyed, and it was built by the African American community over the sixty years prior. The museum being created in the park was just a culmination of all of those efforts.

The *Chicago Defender* unsurprisingly also lauded this decision to move the museum and advertised its creation profusely, even giving it more prestige than the other large Chicago Museums. For example, in this March 7, 1968 "calendar of community events" newspaper section, the *Defender* lists everything which is happening in the community on that date. At the top of the list is the "Museum of American African History" which is "featuring an exhibit of arts and artifacts…and crafts from Jamaica." It then lists the location and hours that the museum will be open.[117] Here the museum is giving top priority in by being listed first showcasing the importance it held. Also, the collections listed in the article are international not just from local African American histories which once again highlight the development of an international outlook from the post-depression period. Not only are African Americans, and the *Chicago Defender*, attempting to build a common identity with local networks in Washington Park but also with international ones showcasing the importance and outward outlook the park had. Furthermore, in a similar type of article except from April 29, 1968, the *Defender* lists multiple museums and their collections which are open. Occupying places are the large "Art Institute of

[117] "Calendar of Community Events." *Chicago Daily Defender (Daily Edition) (1960-1973),* Mar 07, 1968. https://chipublib.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/calendar-community-events/docview/494331585/se-2.

Chicago" and "The Museum of Science and Industry" which are larger museums in both size and number of visitors than the DuSable Museum of African American History. Still at the top of the list is "The African American Museum" with an exhibition on "the late Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.".[118] Again the African American is being given place number one on the list of community events, not surprising coming from the *Defender* sure, but it is also ranked over the larger Chicago museums which showcase the attempt to place African American culture as a central component to Chicago's history. Furthermore, the museum has exhibits on Dr. Martin Luther King connecting the victory in many Civil Rights issues to Chicago. More specifically, however, to Washington Park itself as the themes of identity building and outward political engage all culminated in the park through the construction of this museum.

The infrastructural developments in Chicago from 1940 to 1961, centered on the expansion of highways and public transportation, exemplified how urban planning initiatives, often veiled in the rhetoric of modernization and economic growth, systematically marginalized African American communities. Washington Park, a cornerstone of Chicago's "Black Metropolis", bore witness to both the detrimental impacts of these developments and the community's resilience in resisting their effects. Washington Park thus emerged as a critical space for resistance and advocacy, both inward and outward. It served as a rallying point for protests and a venue for community organization, reflecting its long-standing role as a hub of African American identity and political action. The culmination of this was in the establishment of the DuSable Museum of African American History within Washington Park in 1961. This was

[118] "Calendar of Community Events." *Chicago Daily Defender (Daily Edition) (1960-1973),* Apr 29, 1968. https://chipublib.idm.oclc.org/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/historical-newspapers/calendar-community-events/docview/494336233/se-2.

the result of decades of activism and community building and by situating this cultural institution in the park, Chicago's African Americans reclaimed and redefined the space, embedding their history and aspirations into the city's landscape.

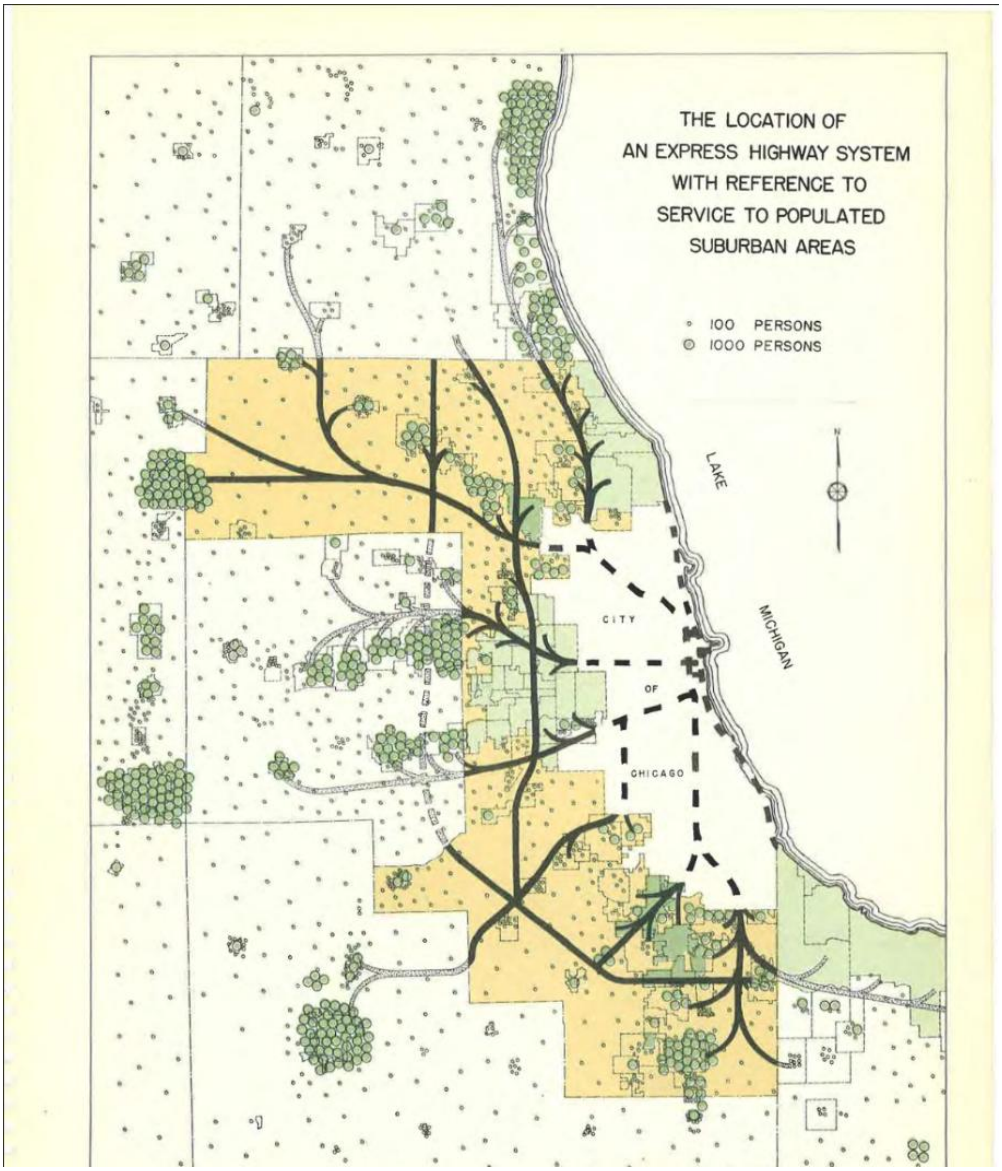

Fig. 4: "The Location of an Express Highway System With Reference to Service Populated Suburban Areas" courtesy of cookcountyil.gov.

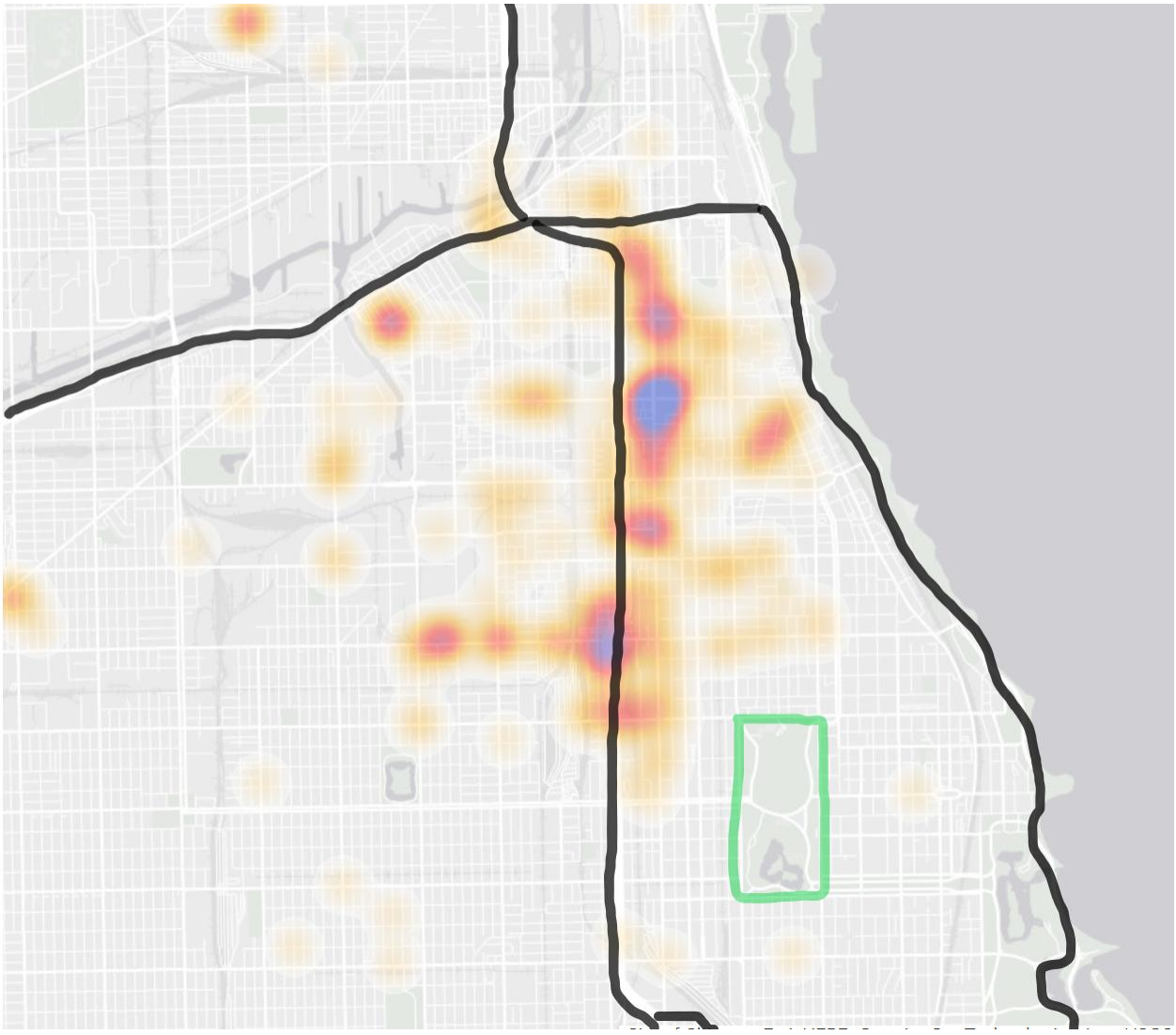

Fig 5: “UChicago’s Interactive Map”. Black are highways, green is Washington Park all over a heatmap of the 1919 Race Riots.

Fig 6: The original home of the DuSable Museum of African American History, 3806 South Michigan Avenue, in historic Bronzeville

Conclusion:

Washington Park has thus served as a crucial space for Chicago's African American community from its inception in 1870 to the founding of the DuSable Museum of African American History inside of the park. Throughout this time frame the park was used as a physical space to inwardly build identity and community, as well as a space to outwardly project it. Initially envisioned as a recreational green space by Olmsted and Vaux in 1870, the park's original aims were to serve as a space of reinforcement for Chicago's social hierarchy, as well as "lungs of the city" to combat the dirty urbanization of the late 19th century. This historic design then evolved through the active use by Chicago's African American community as they came to the city in massive numbers from the "Great Migration". As the neighborhoods surrounding the park became more concentrated with housing developments and segregated through city policies on housing, African Americans used the park as a physical space inside of the city to redefine themselves. This creation of identity stemmed in part from the deeply ingrained relationship the Southern born migrants had with the land, shaped by their experiences with nature, agriculture, and the open, undeveloped landscapes of the rural South. For many, these spaces evoked a sense of familiarity and resilience, and Washington Park was thus a perfect place to build on those themes in an unfamiliar urbanized Northern landscape.

Thus, Washington Park was a perfect place to develop an inward community identity inside of a racially hostile city, exemplified by events like the Bud Billiken Parade, the usage of the park for community sports, and the establishment of the DuSable Museum. More than that however, the park also served as a place for outward engagement as it was the organizing spot for the 1919 Chicago race riots, places of protest in the post-depression 1930s over housing and economic affairs, as well as a rallying point against the invasive transportation planning by the

city of Chicago between 1940-1961. These narratives were best captured through the primary sources of the historic African American *Chicago Defender,* and the more pro-establishment *Chicago Tribune*. By analyzing how these events were discussed between the papers, and Washington Park's role in organizing them, one can see how the park transcended its original design to become a symbol of both African American cultural achievement and a site of resistance against exclusionary policies.

For the purposes of this paper focus has been on how the African American community has made Washington Park their own space, echoing Olmstead and Vaux's earlier designs from 1870, which culminated in the 1961 museum being brought back to the park. However, the parks importance is still going on to this day as this engagement with Washington Park is an active process by Chicago's African American community. For example, as recently as 2015 the park was used by hunger strikers to protest against the closing of Walter H. Dyett High School.[119] In this article protesters again used Washington Park to organize and demonstrate against city policy decisions harkening back to the earlier protest in Chapter 3 from the 1950s against the placement of a school in a busy and dangerous area. This continuity highlights how Washington Park remains a vital arena for community engagement, resistance, and self-expression. While its history is deeply rooted in past struggles and achievements, its role as a gathering space for activism underscores its ongoing relevance. The park continues to serve as a symbol of resilience and unity, where the African American community actively asserts its agency and challenges systemic inequities, ensuring that the legacy of Washington Park as a site of empowerment and advocacy endures well into the present day.

[119] Ewing, Eve. "The Fight for Dyett". *American Educator*, Spring 2019. Accessed December 29th, 2024. https://www.aft.org/ae/spring2019/ewing

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