Transplanted in Alien Soil

Should I have come here?
But going back was
impossible. . . .
Wherever my eyes turned,
they saw stricken,
frightened black faces
trying vainly to cope
with a civilization
that they did not understand.
I felt lonely.
I had fled one insecurity
and embraced another.

—Richard Wright,
Black Boy

MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN, NOVEMBER 1937

IDA MAE BRANDON GLADNEY

IDA MAE REUNITED WITH HER BIG SISTER, Irene, at the train station in Milwaukee, and it was clear to both sisters that Ida Mae and George had a long way to go before they could survive on their own in the North. Ida Mae had made it out of Mississippi, but her task had just begun. Irene took them to her walk-up apartment in a two-flat off Reservoir on the North Side of the city. The sister had been in Milwaukee only a couple of years herself, having followed her husband, the

third one, Richard, there in 1935. Ida Mae and her family camped out in Irene's front room with all their worldly belongings while Ida Mae's husband went out hunting for work.

Ida Mae had landed in Milwaukee because her sister had migrated there along a not altogether random route established at the start of the movement, back when the two of them were just little girls. It was one of the by-products of the Great Migration that particular southern counties became feeder lines to specific destinations in the North, based on where the earliest migrants went and established themselves, which in turn was often based on something as random as where the northern companies recruiting southerners in World War I just happened to be based. Irene had followed one of those tributaries.

A map of the crosscurrents of migration would link otherwise completely unrelated southern counties and towns with seemingly random northern cities that, other than the train lines and sometimes in spite of them, made little practical sense but nonetheless made sister cities of the unlikeliest of pairings: Palestine, Texas, and Syracuse, New York; Norfolk, Virginia, and Roxbury in Boston; Brookhaven, Mississippi, and Bloomington, Illinois. Small colonies of migrants from Chickasaw County, Mississippi, ended up in Toledo, Ohio, where Ida Mae's older brothers fled, and in Kalamazoo, Michigan, when the call came for workers.

But for most sharecroppers in Chickasaw County, the Promised Land was, oddly enough, a place called Beloit, Wisconsin, on the Rock River seventy-five miles southeast of Milwaukee, which, along with Chicago, because of the *Chicago Defender* and the mail-order catalogues, would have figured prominently in their minds.

The foundries and metalworking factories in Beloit and the steel mills and manufacturers of farm implements in Milwaukee went to northeast Mississippi to hire workers used to hard labor for little money back during World War I. With so many northerners nosing around the South for cheap black labor, the recruiters had to work undercover and spread themselves out among the targeted states to escape detection, arrest, or fines that could run into the thousands of dollars.

Ultimately, southern protectionism had limited effect, and neighbors and cousins of Ida Mae's husband made their way from Okolona to Beloit, some later fanning out to Milwaukee and Chicago. And so, arriving as she did deep into the Depression, Ida Mae's sister, Irene, followed a quiet but well-trod rivulet from Chickasaw County to Milwaukee.

The city's colored population had not skyrocketed as it had in De-

troit, which rose sevenfold from 5,741 to 41,000, or Gary, which shot up from 383 to 5,300, during World War I. But the number of colored people in Milwaukee had risen from a mere 980 in 1910 to 2,229 by 1920, an increase of 127 percent, and continued to rise in the 1920s and 1930s.

Once Irene got to Milwaukee, it didn't take her long to start sending gift boxes of clothes from the North and talking up Wisconsin—not pressuring Ida Mae, who was too easygoing to take anything too seriously anyway, but just telling her flat out, "If I was you, I just wouldn't stay down there."

Milwaukee was a frank and clattering workhorse of a town, a concrete smokestack of a place with trolley cars clanking against a web of power lines and telephone cables filling the sky. Curls of steam rose from the rooftops and factory silos and from the gray hulk of the Schlitz brewery over by the Cherry Street Bridge.

It was the other side of the world from the wide-open, quiet land of the cotton fields. Ida Mae saw things she never imagined, bridges that lifted into the air to let ships pass through, traffic lights and streetlamps and flocks of white-robed women—nuns, she was told they were—their habits fluttering in the wind and their crisp headdresses making a stiff halo around their faces. Ida Mae had never seen anyone like them before. She felt drawn to them, and she liked to watch them float by, regal and otherworldly.

There were unknown tongues and aromas drifting out of the beer gardens and delicatessens. There were Germans, Poles, Slavs, Hungarians, Irish, Italians, Greeks, and Russians who had come here, as Ida Mae and her husband had, willing to work their way up from the bottom and make a life for themselves in a freer place than the one they had left. Before World War I, Milwaukee had not extended itself to the laboring caste of the South, nor had it needed to, with the continuing supply of European immigrants to work its factories.

But, as in the rest of the industrial North, the number of Europeans immigrating to Milwaukee plummeted from 22,508 in the first decade of the twentieth century to a mere 451 during all of the 1920s because of the war. Factories that had never before considered colored labor came to see the advantages of colored workers from the South, even if some of the so-called advantages were themselves steeped in stereotype. "They are superior to foreign labor because they readily understand what you try to tell them," one employer reported. "Loyalty, willing-

ness, cheerfulness. Quicker, huskier, and can stand more heat than other workmen."

Most colored migrants were funneled into the lowest-paying, least wanted jobs in the harshest industries—iron and steel foundries and slaughtering and meatpacking. They "only did the dirty work," a colored steelworker said of his early days in Milwaukee, "jobs that even Poles didn't want."

But it was now the fall of 1937, and even those jobs were disappearing. George and Ida Mae arrived in Milwaukee as the city was falling deeper into the Depression. The automotive, farm, and heavy machinery sectors suffered crushing layoffs in August 1937, two months before they arrived, layoffs that would continue well into the following year. The kinds of jobs George was looking for and that most colored men performed—unskilled labor that was often hot, tedious, backbreaking, or dangerous—plunged by seventy percent, from 1,557 such jobs in 1930 to only 459 at the end of the decade, around the time George and Ida Mae arrived.

With jobs scarce, the old tendency toward intolerance and exclusion reasserted itself. Hiring managers at A. O. Smith Company, a tank and auto frame factory, said there was no use in colored people applying for jobs there because the company "never did and didn't intend to employ Negroes." Company guards knew to stop colored job seekers at the gates.

Still, the urge to get out of the South was so strong that by the mid-1930s, Milwaukee's North Side, a neighborhood of tenements and two-flats just above the city's central business district, was already becoming the colored side of town. Since World War I, it had been filling each day with more and more colored people from the South, so much so that in some grade-school classrooms, nearly every child was from Mississippi, Tennessee, or Arkansas, and those born in the North were in the minority. The way things looked, Ida Mae's children would add three more to that demographic equation.

By now Ida Mae couldn't hide the fact that she was pregnant and was already making plans to head back to Mississippi to give birth. She didn't quite trust whatever it was they did to people in hospitals. She had never been inside one but had heard that they strapped women down during delivery, and so she decided to surrender herself to a Mississippi midwife as she and everybody she knew had always done.

It was calculated that the baby was due sometime in the late spring, so she would be heading back to Mississippi in three or four months. George hadn't found steady work yet, and Ida Mae would have to leave him with her sister and brother-in-law while he continued to hunt for work. Ida Mae's return to Mississippi delayed her adjustment to the New World, planning as she was to leave nearly as soon as she arrived. But her decision had assured her that she wouldn't end up like so many other wives, left down south waiting for a husband who might never get around to sending for them.

HARLEM, SPRING 1945
GEORGE SWANSON STARLING

GEORGE HAD THE GOOD FORTUNE to have made it out of Florida and to have arrived in New York well into World War II, and was thus able to find a job right away. It was a job doing the one thing, whether he sought it or not, that would keep him tied to the South. It was a job on the railroad, the Seaboard Air Line, it was called, which would keep him on the rails up and down the East Coast for days and weeks at a time, expose him to the temptations of women and drink, and do little to help his already colicky marriage to Inez.

He was overqualified and overeducated for the job as a coach attendant, hauling luggage into the baggage car and helping people stow their carry-ons in the overhead bins for a dime or a nickel tip. But it was a step up from what they had wanted him to do when they first got a look at him.

"We need some big, tall, husky boys like you to carry the trays in the dining room," the manager told him.

"Well, you need some big husky boys to carry the bags on the coaches too," George said.

"We need waiters."

"But I don't want to wait no tables."

The war was on and labor was short, so George got the job as coach attendant. He wouldn't get paid what his white counterparts were get-

good schools, run on real tracks, and be coached at Ohio State University, rather than spend his life picking cotton. "My son's victories in Germany," Henry Owens said, "force me to realize that I made the best move of my life by moving out of the South."

CHICAGO, AUGUST 1938
IDA MAE BRANDON GLADNEY

MISS THEENIE HAD BEEN RIGHT about her daughter. Ida Mae was expecting when she left Mississippi with her husband and two little ones in the fall of 1937. That spring, she returned south for the express purpose of having the baby in the familiar hands of a midwife. She had heard that up north, doctors strapped women down when they went into labor, and she wasn't going to submit to that kind of barbarity. So she gave birth to her last child in Miss Theenie's house, on May 28, 1938. It was a baby girl, and Ida Mae named her Eleanor, like the first lady of the land, Eleanor Roosevelt.

She kept the baby in Mississippi until she was plump and strong and then carried her and little James and Velma north on the Illinois Central sometime in August to rejoin her husband. Only this time, Ida Mae didn't return to Milwaukee. She got off in Chicago, the city of skyscrapers and Montgomery Ward that she had thought was Heaven when she first set foot in the North.

While she was away giving birth, George had left Milwaukee, having found little work and given up on the prospects of making a living there. One of his brothers had settled in Chicago. So George turned to the bigger city with its steel mills, blast furnaces, slaughterhouses, and tanneries. He would have been willing to take just about anything to feed his family, having stooped to pick cotton all his life, but what he found first was a job on another man's ice wagon.

Up and down the rutted streets they went, steering the horse and wagon in the early-morning hours, delivering ice to the colored people in their cold-water flats on the South Side.

"Iceman! Iceman!" they shouted as they steered.

"Bring me fifty pounds!" someone would yell from the window of a three-flat.

"Bring me a hundred!" came an order from another.

George slung a rug across his shoulders and hoisted a block of ice on his back to carry it up the tenement steps. He was used to hauling a hundred pounds of cotton in a day for fifty cents. Now he could make that with each fifty-pound block of ice. And he was delivering a lot of it. Ice melted fast in the summer heat. Some people needed to replenish their iceboxes every day. He was already making more money than in Mississippi, and not under the shotgun scrutiny of a planter. It was stoop labor, and he couldn't do it forever. But it would have to do for now.

By the time Ida Mae got back with the baby and little James and Velma, he had secured for his family a one-room basement apartment among the frail tenements and dilapidated lean-tos in the roped-off colored section of town.

It was a kitchenette in a two-flat in the low Forties off St. Lawrence. Preceding waves of European immigrants had lived there before them in creaking buildings from the nineteenth century, the streets now pockmarked and piled so high with rubbish that ice wagons couldn't get through some of them. It was only a few miles south but a world away from the boulevards and skyscrapers Ida Mae had seen when she first arrived, gray and weed-strewn as this new place of hers was.

They were confined to a little isthmus on the South Side of Chicago that came to be called "Bronzeville," the "black belt," "North Mississippi." It was "a narrow tongue of land, seven miles in length and one and one half miles in width," as the midcentury historians St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton described it, where a quarter-million colored people were packed on top of one another by the time Ida Mae and her family arrived.

Up and down Indiana and Wabash and Prairie and South Parkway, across Twenty-second Street and down to Thirty-first and Thirty-ninth and into the low Forties, a colored world, a city within a city, rolled out from the sidewalk, the streets aflutter with grocers and undertakers, dressmakers and barbershops, tailors and pressers, dealers of coal and sellers of firewood, insurance agents and real estate men, pharmacists and newspapers, a YMCA and the Urban League, high-steepled churches—Baptist, Holiness, African Methodist Episcopal

churches practically transported from Mississippi and Arkansas—and stacked-heeled harlots stumbling out of call houses and buffet flats.

There were temptations a southern sharecropper couldn't have known existed and that could only catch root when so many people were packed into one place, the police could be bought, and the city looked away: reefer pads, card sharks, gangsters and crapshooters. The so-called mulatto queen of the underworld running poker games. Policy kings running the numbers racket, ready to take a migrant's newly earned dollar fresh from the slaughterhouse. The migrants could see Ma Rainey at the Regal or just melt into the neon anonymity of city life without a watchful uncle or jackleg preacher knowing about it.

This was the landing place in Chicago for most colored people just in from the South. They had left the wide-open spaces and gravel roads of the cotton fields and had to watch their every step. Ida Mae and George, in particular, pious and churchly as he was, wanted nothing to do with the devilment crowding in on them but had to make the best of it and just be thankful for having made it out of Mississippi alive.

By the time Ida Mae and her family arrived, Chicago was a major terminus of the Great Migration of colored people out of the South and of latter-day immigrants from central and eastern Europe. It had first been settled in 1779 by a black man named Jean Baptiste Point DuSable in what was then wilderness. He was a fur trader who built a "rude cabin on the sandpoint at the mouth of the river."

Ida Mae found the living conditions not much better than those back home and, in some cases, worse. "A few goats and an occasional pig" roamed alleyways that reeked of rotting vermin. Front doors hung on single hinges. The sun peeked through cracks in the outer walls. Many rooms sat airless and windowless, packed with so many people that some roomers had to sleep in shifts, all of which made a mockery of city codes devised to protect against these very things.

"Families lived without light, without heat, and sometimes without water," observed Edith Abbott, a University of Chicago researcher who studied tenement life in Chicago in the 1930s, the time when Ida Mae arrived. "The misery of housing conditions at this time can scarcely be exaggerated."

They were living in virtual slave cabins stacked on top of one another, wives, like Ida Mae, cooking on hot plates and hanging their laundry out the window, if they had a window at all, unable to protect them-

selves or their children from the screams and conversation and sugar talk and fighting all around them. It was as if all of them were living in one room without space for their own thoughts or for their dreams of how best to get out.

Ida Mae soon discovered that there really was no getting out, not right off anyway. "Negro migrants confronted a solid wall of prejudice and labored under great disadvantages in these attempts to find new homes," Abbott wrote. The color line in Chicago confined them to a sliver of the least desirable blocks between the Jewish lakefront neighborhoods to the east and the Irish strongholds to the west, while the Poles, Russians, Italians, Lithuanians, Czechs, and Serbs, who had only recently arrived themselves, were planting themselves to the southwest of the colored district.

With several thousand black southerners arriving each month in the receiving cities of the North and no extra room being made for them, "attics and cellars, store-rooms and basements, churches, sheds and warehouses," according to Abraham Epstein in his study of the early migration, were converted to contain all the new arrivals. There was "rarely a place in these rooms for even suitcases or trunks."

People like Ida Mae had few options, and the landlords knew it. New arrivals often paid twice the rent charged the whites they had just replaced for worn-out and ill-kept housing. "The rents in the South Side Negro district were conspicuously the highest of all districts visited," Abbott wrote. Dwellings that went for eight to twenty dollars a month to white families were bringing twelve to forty-five dollars a month from black families, those earning the least income and thus least able to afford a flat at any rent, in the early stages of the Migration. Thus began a pattern of overcharging and underinvestment in black neighborhoods that would lay the foundation for decades of economic disparities in the urban North.

Ida Mae tried never to worry about things she couldn't change and so made do with what they could get. She wasn't the only one. "Lodgers were not disposed to complain about the living conditions or the prices charged," Epstein wrote. "They were only too glad to secure a place where they could share a half or at least a part of an unclaimed bed."

The story played out in virtually every northern city—migrants sealed off in overcrowded colonies that would become the foundation for ghettos that would persist into the next century. These were the original colored quarters—the abandoned and identifiable no-man's-lands that came into being when the least-paid people were forced to pay the

highest rents for the most dilapidated housing owned by absentee landlords trying to wring the most money out of a place nobody cared about.

It would soon come to be that anyone living in any American city would know exactly where these forgotten islands were, if only to make sure to avoid them: under the viaduct along a polluted stream in Akron, Ohio; in the Hill District in Pittsburgh; Roxbury in Boston; the east side of Cincinnati; the near east side of Detroit; nearly all of East St. Louis; whole swaths of the South Side of Chicago and South Central in Los Angeles; and much of Harlem and Bedford-Stuyvesant in New York.

Like other migrants with limited options, Ida Mae and her family moved from place to place, from one unacceptable flat to a slightly larger and less odious option a few blocks away, not unlike sharecroppers moving from farm to farm looking for a less exploitive arrangement with, they hoped, a fairer planter. Soon they were living on the top floor of a three-flat at Thirty-sixth and Wabash. It was well into the Great Depression, and a man took to sleeping at odd hours of the day on the little landing outside their kitchen door.

"I open the door and put garbage out there, and he still be sleep," Ida Mae remembered. "I don't know who he was. He stayed there winter and summer. He didn't bother nobody. He was sleeping like he was in a bed. He had his little cover out there."

Did he ever wake up when you went out there? I asked her once. "No," she said. "Because I reckon he done did his devilment all night."

Ida Mae didn't know it, but, with the Great Depression deepening, she and her family had arrived in a city unprepared for and utterly resistant to the continuing influx of migrants. City fathers and labor experts had expected the Great Migration to end with World War I. Jobs and housing were scarcer now. White unions were refusing colored workers membership, keeping colored wages low, restricting the work that migrants could do, and leaving them unprotected during cutbacks.

The colored old-timers who were already there were not especially happy to see them. Even as the Migration was a bonanza for colored storekeepers and businessmen, it meant more competition for the already limited kinds of jobs blacks were allotted and made the black presence in the city more conspicuous and threatening to the city's racial alchemy.

As it was, the city was still recovering from the tensions of one of the worst race riots in American history. The riots had set the city on edge and hardened race lines that would persist for generations.

The trouble began after an incident only blocks from the three-flat at Thirty-sixth and Wabash where Ida Mae's family would live exactly two decades later. It was the summer of 1919. World War I, the stimulus of the first wave of the Great Migration, was over. Munitions plants had shut down, the factories that lured black southerners were now letting workers go, the country was on the verge of recession, not able even to imagine the actual Depression that was brewing. The migrants, hemmed in and living on top of one another, even as more of them arrived, pressed against the white neighborhoods on their borders and were met with death threats and bombings when they ventured to the other side.

The demilitarized zone was a moving target that no one could see but that everyone knew in his bones. Blacks were finding more things off-limits than it would otherwise appear, defined by custom and whites' discomfort rather than by law. Even the beaches of Lake Michigan were segregated. Everyone was feeling the strain of a declining economy. Whites saw the migrants as competition for a scarcer pool of jobs and took to attacking them along the western boundary of the black belt.

Then on Sunday, July 27, 1919, a seventeen-year-old black boy named Eugene Williams, swimming along the shore of Lake Michigan, drifted past an invisible line in the lake into the white side of the Twenty-ninth Street beach.

As was common in the North, there were no white or colored signs. It was merely understood that whites entered and used the beach at Twenty-ninth Street and blacks were to stay near the Twenty-seventh Street entrance two blocks north. The imaginary color line stretched out into the water. Swimming as he was, the boy couldn't see the line where the white water began because the water looked the same.

Carl Sandburg, the future poet who was then a reporter for the *Chicago Daily News,* recounted it this way: "A colored boy swam across an imaginary segregation line. White boys threw rocks at him and knocked him off a raft. He was drowned."

Blacks demanded that the white police officer on the scene arrest the whites they said had hurled rocks at Williams. The officer refused, arresting, instead, a black man in the crowd "on a white man's complaint."

Within hours, tensions reached a boil on both sides, and a riot was in full cry. Whites dragged black passengers from streetcars and beat them. Blacks stabbed a white peddler and a white laundryman to death. Two white men were killed walking through a black neighborhood, and two black men were killed walking through a white neighborhood.

White gangs stormed the black belt, setting houses on fire, hunting down black residents, firing shotguns, and hurling bricks.

All told, the riots coursed through the south and southwest sides of the city for thirteen days, killing 38 people (23 blacks and 15 whites) and injuring 537 others (342 blacks, 178 whites, the rest unrecorded) and not ending until a state militia subdued them.

Contrary to modern-day assumptions, for much of the history of the United States—from the Draft Riots of the 1860s to the violence over desegregation a century later—riots were often carried out by disaffected whites against groups perceived as threats to their survival. Thus riots would become to the North what lynchings were to the South, each a display of uncontained rage by put-upon people directed toward the scapegoats of their condition. Nearly every big northern city experienced one or more during the twentieth century.

Each outbreak pitted two groups that had more in common with each other than either of them realized. Both sides were made up of rural and small-town people who had traveled far in search of the American Dream, both relegated to the worst jobs by industrialists who pitted one group against the other. Each side was struggling to raise its families in a cold, fast, alien place far from their homelands and looked down upon by the earlier, more sophisticated arrivals. They were essentially the same people except for the color of their skin, and many of them arrived into these anonymous receiving stations at around the same time, one set against the other and unable to see the commonality of their mutual plight.

Thus these violent clashes bore the futility of Greek tragedy. Yet the situation was even more complicated than the black migrants could have imagined. As they made their way north, so did some of the poorer whites from the South, looking not for freedom from persecution but for greater economic rewards for their hard work. Slavery and sharecropping, along with the ravages of the boll weevil and floods, had depressed the wages of every worker in the South. The call of the North drew some of the southern whites the migrants had sought to escape.

Initially, they came to the North in greater numbers, but they were much more likely to return south than colored southerners were—fewer than half of all white southerners who left actually stayed in the North for good, thus behaving more like classic migrant workers than immigrants. Still, many brought their prejudices with them and melted

into the white working-class world of ethnic immigrants to make a potent advance guard against black inroads in the North.

As a window into their sentiments, a witness to the Detroit riots in 1943 gave this description of a white mob that had attacked colored people in that outbreak. "By the conversation of the men gathered there, I was able to detect that they were Southerners and that they resented Negroes working beside them and receiving the same amount of money," the informant said, adding that these southern whites believed that the black migrants "ought to be 'taken down a peg or two.' "

Perhaps the earliest indication of what the migrants were unknowingly up against came from an outbreak directly related to the Great Migration, or rather to how the North reacted to the newcomers from the South. These were the riots that erupted in East St. Louis, Illinois, in the summer of 1917 after companies being struck by white workers hired colored migrants to replace them. The migrants were flocking to the city at a rate of a thousand a month, some eighteen thousand having arrived that spring, and they instantly became the perfect pawns, an industrialist's dream: they were desperate to leave the South, anxious for work, untutored in union politics or workers' rights—as most could not have imagined unionizing themselves as field hands, thus uncomprehending of the idea of a worker making demands and unlikely to complain about whatever conditions they might face.

Once the strike was over, the colored migrants, resented by the unions and unprotected by the plants that had hired them, paid the price. One union wrote its members that "the immigration of the southern Negro into our city for the past eight months has reached a point where drastic action must be taken" and demanded that the city "retard this growing menace, and devise a way to get rid of a certain portion of those who are already here."

On the night of July 1, a carload of whites fired shots into colored homes. The colored residents fired back when a second car filled with whites passed through, killing two policemen. The next day, full-scale rioting began. Colored men were "stabbed, clubbed and hanged from telephone poles." A colored two-year-old "was shot and thrown into the doorway of a burning building."

"A black skin was a death warrant on the streets of this Illinois city," wrote an observer shortly afterward.

The police, charged with quelling the riot, in some cases joined in, as

did some in the state militia sent in to restore order, actions that resulted in seven courts-martial. All told, thirty-nine blacks and eight whites were killed, more than a hundred blacks were shot or maimed, and five thousand blacks were driven from their homes.

After the two riots, city leaders in Chicago could see no end to the racial divisions without intervention and a public appeal for tolerance. A white-led, biracial commission set up to investigate the climate and circumstances leading to the riots produced a 672-page report, *The Negro in Chicago*. It stands to this day as one of the most comprehensive examinations of both the early stages of the Great Migration and race relations in a northern American city.

With a sense of urgency, it set out fifty-nine recommendations for improving race relations. It urged that the police rid the city's colored section of the vice and prostitution that plagued the black belt; that the schools hire principals with an "interest in promoting good race relations"; that white citizens seek accurate information about blacks "as a basis of their judgments"; that restaurants, stores, and theaters stop segregating when they weren't supposed to; that companies "deal with Negroes as workmen on the same plane as white workers" and stop using them as strikebreakers and denying them apprenticeships; that labor unions admit colored workers when they qualified; that employers "permit Negroes an equal chance with whites to enter all positions for which they are qualified by efficiency and merit"; that the press avoid using epithets in referring to blacks and treat black stories and white stories with the same standards and "sense of proportion."

With the commission having no authority to enforce its recommendations and a good portion of the citizenry not likely even to have seen them, much of its counsel went unheeded. So Ida Mae arrived in a world that was perhaps even tenser than before the riots. In the ensuing decades, the color line would only stiffen. The South Side would become almost totally black and the North Side almost totally white. Ida Mae's adopted home would become one of the most racially divided of all American cities and remain so for the rest of the twentieth century.