the city's prevailing racism, not only in housing but in most other areas of life as well.[105] As ever black New Yorkers remained at the bottom of the city's social and economic life.

Tens of thousand of New Yorkers joyfully poured into the streets upon hearing of Japan's surrender on August 14, 1945. People were eager to celebrate the war's conclusion and anticipated the end of rationing, Broadway's dimmed lights, and the acute housing shortage. For them victory meant the speedy return of servicemen and women and a chance to live in a peaceful world. Yet New Yorkers, like other Americans, could not be certain of what lay ahead in either the nation or the world. Pessimists feared a postwar economic slump and a continuation of the racial and ethnic conflict that had marked the 1930s.



8

# A Better Time: New York City, 1945–1970

Fears of a renewal of economic woes, expressed by some at the end of World War II, proved groundless. With the resumption of peace there followed a quarter of a century of improved living for most New Yorkers. A pent-up demand for housing kindled a boom in construction. The Great Depression and especially the war had curtailed new housing starts, and many potential home owners had accumulated savings during the high employment war years. New York City's many other assets also contributed to prosperity. For almost three decades after the beginning of World War II, its natural harbor continued to be a boon. As before the war, the city remained America's leading financial and banking center, and it maintained a solid

base in manufacturing, with one million New Yorkers employed in that sector.

Economic growth from 1945 to 1970 made for "a better time" for those ethnic New Yorkers, particularly Jews and Italians, who found new opportunities in the private sector of the city's economy, in politics, and on the public payroll. So attractive was the New York during those years that immigrants from Europe, the Caribbean, and even Asia looked to New York for new opportunities. Entry into the United States was made possible by modifications in the immigration laws. Puerto Ricans, who as American citizens were exempt from restrictions, also poured into the city. New York's black residents too encountered better economic opportunities as well as more tolerance after the war. But racism was by no means eradicated by 1970, and the progress and acceptance of African Americans in the city was considerably less than that experienced by the descendants of European immigrants.

It took more than economic growth for racial and ethnic groups to experience "a better time." The fierce anti-Semitism that restricted Jewish enrollment in universities and professional schools came under attack during the 1940s as the United States struggled to defeat the racism of Nazi Germany. In 1945 ethnic organizations prodded the legislature to pass the nation's first state law, the Ives-Quinn Law, banning racial and religious bias in employment. The act established the State Commission Against Discrimination (SCAD), a watchdog agency to oversee the enforcement of its provisions. Neither the Ives-Quinn Law nor the chronically underfunded SCAD guaranteed an end to bigotry, but they nonetheless represented a growing public commitment to tolerance.[1] The city also acted, establishing a City Commission on Human Rights (CCHR) to deal with a wide number of discriminatory issues in housing, employment, public accommodations, and education. The CCHR initially focused on incidents of religious prejudice, but after the 1960s racial matters received more attention.[2]

The American Jewish Congress joined with other organizations to pressure the state and city to outlaw discrimination by nonsectarian colleges and universities.[3] After an investigation by the New York City Council revealed widespread bias and that "during the last decade conditions have grown rapidly worse," Mayor William O'Dwyer announced that public funds would be withheld from institutions of higher education that continued to discriminate.[4] The Council backed the mayor's





plan to withhold tax exemptions from nonsectarian institutions that employed racial or religious criteria in admitting students.[5] Institutions like Columbia and New York universities, including their professional schools, subsequently dropped their Jewish student quotas and began to hire Jewish faculty.[6] The end result was a growing number of Jewish dentists, physicians, academics, and lawyers.

Educational institutions were not the only organizations to gradually abandon discriminatory practices. A widely publicized 1967 Anti-Defamation League study of thirty-eight large New York City companies in a variety of industries revealed that Jews were underrepresented in upper management, a finding confirmed by the Federal Equal Opportunity Employment Commission.[7] But, in fact, Protestant-dominated banks, investments companies, corporations, and law firms were beginning to alter hiring practices during the 1960s. Edwin Miller, a Jew who became a high official in the Manufacturers Hanover Trust Company, joined the bank in 1962. Boris Berkovitch, also Jewish and later vice chairman at Morgan Guaranty Trust, likewise began his upward path in banking during the 1960s.[8] A few Jews made fortunes as real estate promoters during the postwar boom years. Harry Uris was prominent in city real estate development between 1945 and 1970 as was Julius Tishman, who was allegedly responsible for 13 percent of the city's new office buildings in those years. The Tisch brothers, Lawrence and Preston, also did extremely well in New York real estate and expanded their operations beyond the city by purchasing the Loews Corporation. Other prominent promoters were Samuel LeFrak and William Zeckendorf.[9]

Of course not all Jews could be classified as middle class or elite professionals by the 1970s. A 1972 study prepared for the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York noted a number of impoverished Jews, usually elderly people who had been bypassed by the postwar prosperity.[10] More reflective of the changing status of New York's Jews, the report noted, "The number of Jewish workers in New York City employed in industrial, factory, and low white collar work has declined sharply during the past two decades." Union officials told investigators that in the past Jewish parents used to send "us their children and ask us to give them jobs. Now they no longer come."[11]

As for Italians, who traditionally lagged behind Jews in their utilization of education as a route to economic success and mobility, begin-

ning in the early 1970s they too began to avail themselves of the city's colleges and universities. Scholar Richard Gambino noted that in 1957, when he attended Queens College, a branch of the City University of New York, he was but one of a handful of Italian-American students. By 1972, after the open admissions policy of the City University went into effect, 34,000 of the system's 169,000 matriculated undergraduate students were Italian Americans. At Fordham University, a private Catholic university once heavily Irish, a significant proportion of the students were of Italian background by the mid-1970s.[12]

New York's Irish also found new economic opportunities in the city, even as their influence in City Hall politics was declining. New York had an Irish middle class in the nineteenth century and an Irish elite by 1900, but a mid-1970s survey financed by the federal Office of Economic Opportunity of three predominately Irish-American communities in the city revealed a wide spread of income, occupation, and education among families, with some elderly couples living on very modest means.[13] Yet as a group the Irish were clearly on the way up. After World War II most abandoned working-class jobs like those as transit workers to incoming blacks and Hispanics.[14] At the top of the Irish elite stood prominent families like the McDonnells, the Murrays, and the Cuddihys. The Fifth Avenue apartment of James Francis McDonnell, owner of a prosperous brokerage house, was at one time the largest in the city.[15]

Ethnic whites who remained working class, especially those members of the city's older Polish, Italian, and to a lesser degree Irish communities, labored in construction projects, in the declining manufacturing sector, or in new service jobs. While jobs in areas such as the garment industry and fast food chains did not offer particularly high wages, other blue collar occupations paid very well. The city's periodic building booms after 1945, for example, brought substantial salaries to the mostly white, union construction workers. Unfortunately for these workers, construction employment was generally cyclical.[16]

Descendants of turn-of-the-century immigrants continued to gain power in municipal politics following World War II. That is not to say that the Irish were completely vanquished in that arena. Even though La Guardia's mayoralty had diminished their strength, in 1945 all Democratic county chairmanships were held by Irish Americans, the most powerful being Edward Flynn, boss of the Bronx. Upon his death





in 1953, Congressman Charles Buckley became kingpin of that borough. Voters elected Irish-born William O'Dwyer mayor in 1945 and reelected him in 1949. But O'Dwyer was the last Irish mayor of New York. Robert Wagner, who served three terms (1954–1965) stands as a transitional figure. Half Irish and half German and the son of an influential and popular United States Senator of the same name, Wagner initially depended on the support of the regular Democratic party leadership led by Carmine DeSapio of Manhattan and the Bronx's Charles Buckley. Wagner, after two terms of cohabitation with the machine, in an amazing reversal repudiated the regulars and joined with the reform Democrats who had been gaining strength since the late 1950s. Carmine DeSapio, boss of Tammany, said of Wagner, "We are faced with the spectacle of a candidate who seeks reelection on a platform of cleaning up the mess which he himself has created."[17] To the charge that he was running against himself, the mayor retorted privately, "I could find no better opponent."[18] While winning a third term and repudiating the old guard, Wagner gained support from liberal Jews and blacks. His victory ushered in a new kind of city politics.

Wagner's successor John V. Lindsay (1966–1973), white and Protestant, was a most unlikely mayor for New York's polyglot population. A Republican, Lindsay had attended elite private schools, had earned degrees from Yale University, and "the best he could do for immigrant roots was a grandfather from the Isle of Wight, off the coast of southern England." He could hardly be considered an ethnic New Yorker; yet running as a reformer, with strong backing by liberal whites and blacks and aided by divisions among the Democrats, he twice won election as mayor.[19]

It was Italian and Jewish politicians who gained most at the expense of declining Irish-American power and influence. Fiorello La Guardia, the first Italian American elected mayor, had run on ethnically balanced tickets. Copying that model, in 1945 the Democrats for the first time nominated an Italian American and a Jew for city wide offices. They ran many more after that.[20] The second Italian-American mayor was Vincent Impellitteri, who served from 1950 to 1953, after William O'Dwyer resigned to become ambassador to Mexico. Mayor Impellitteri, who proved to be colorless and none too competent, was easily defeated by Robert Wagner in the Democratic primary in 1953, only doing well in heavily Italian Staten Island. Then, choosing to run as an independent,

he lost by a large margin in the general election.[21] The first Italian American leader of Tammany Hall was Carmine DeSapio, who achieved that position in 1949. Other Italian Americans ran and held office in growing numbers on the City Council and in the borough governments. They were active but less successful in mayoral campaigns. In 1973 the city elected its first Jewish mayor, Abe Beame (1974–1977), who had the misfortune to hold that office during the New York fiscal crisis in 1975.[22]

If by 1970 the Irish lost their hold on city hall, they still kept several congressional seats and continued their domination of the Roman Catholic Church in New York City. The Catholic church, long a victim of religious prejudice, received growing respect and acceptance after 1900. Under Patrick Cardinal Hayes, the "Cardinal of Charity," the archdiocese was known for giving relief during the bleak days of the Great Depression.

Hayes's successor, Francis Cardinal Spellman, archbishop of the Diocese of New York from 1939 until his death in 1967, modified the church's agenda. Spellman, the grandson of Irish immigrants, downplayed his Irishness but not his politics or church building. Contributions from the increasingly prosperous Catholic community of New York permitted him to build schools and hospitals and to fund numerous charities. Spellman also cultivated politicians and important business leaders. His conservative views on morals, birth control, and church-state relations were stated often and aggressively, and he vigorously endorsed Senator Joseph McCarthy's anti-communist campaign. His backing of the unpopular Vietnam War diminished his influence.[23] As Daniel Moynihan and Nathan Glazer put it, his reign "went on too long by half."[24] Nonetheless, when he died, attendance at his funeral was mandatory for many civic and political leaders, including President Lyndon Johnson. Spellman was followed by another Irish-American priest, New York native Terence J. Cooke, a more modest man. Like so many New York Irish he was born on Manhattan's West Side and raised in the Bronx.[25] Under Cooke the church was less involved in politics and controversy.

Just as Jews and Italians increasingly won elective offices, they also entered municipal jobs in greater numbers as the public payroll expanded in mid-century New York. The city's employees numbered about 100,000 at the end of World War II, but grew to 200,706 by 1961





and 294,555 in 1975, on the eve of the city's fiscal crisis.[26] After World War II several Italians and Jews were appointed commissioners of various city agencies.[27] Jews were heavily represented among the city's public school teachers, amounting to about 60 percent of the instructional staff. Many other professionally trained Jews entered social work, as the city expanded its social services. Italians had dominated the sanitation department for decades, and after 1945 they too found other municipal employment opportunities as teachers, police officers, and clerks.

City jobs became attractive to ethnic New Yorkers in part because of the effectiveness of municipal employees' organizations. Unions for fire, police, and sanitation personnel dated from the 1890s, though they initially were labelled benevolent associations. By the 1930s some employees dared to call their organizations unions, and the transit workers secured important contractual gains after 1937. The main thrust for the teachers and other city unions came after World War II.[28]

During the Wagner years, the mayor's office made it clear that it was supportive of municipal unions. In 1958 Mayor Wagner issued an executive order permitting city employees to organize and engage in collective bargaining.[29] The mayor also worked closely with labor leaders, who represented an important voting bloc. One scholar noted, "While Wagner could not always provide generous contracts to labor, he always took pains to give the union hierarchy a feeling of importance. No city initiative in labor policy was ever undertaken without first clearing it with organized labor."[30] Wagner's executive order was given state backing when the legislature passed the New York City Collective Bargaining Law of 1967. One of the key city unions to benefit from these developments was District 37 of the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) under the leadership of Victor Gotbaum and Lillian Roberts. AFSCME represented traditionally low paid clerical and hospital workers, at first mostly Italian but later largely black and Hispanic. Teachers, social workers, and others also organized to win significant salary, health, and pension benefits from the city between 1958 and 1970.[31] The Irish stronghold remained in the police and fire departments, whose benevolent societies likewise flourished during the Wagner years.

If City Hall proved unresponsive to labor's demands, the unions resorted to strikes. The militant and colorful Mike Quill often threat-

ened to shut down the city's transport system. The most famous Quill-led walkout was a city wide affair that greeted Mayor John Lindsay when he assumed office on New Year's Day 1966. Working-class Quill had no use for Lindsay, who he said was "strictly silk stocking and Yale. This nut even goes in for exercise. We don't like him." The city managed to have Quill jailed, but the Irish leader boasted of telling the judge to "drop dead in his black robes." In the end, after a twelve day walkout crippled the city, the TWU won major concessions.[32]

With enhanced incomes and with growing toleration easing access to housing, New York's white ethnics enjoyed improved living conditions in newer neighborhoods. Housing had almost always been a problem for New Yorkers, but during the war shortages became acute. After 1945, aided by various state, city, and federal programs, the city experienced a building boom for private homes, rental apartments, and business offices. Of necessity, much of the new housing went up in the outer boroughs of the Bronx, Staten Island, and Queens, areas accessible to Manhattan because of the tunnels, bridges, and the subway system built prior to World War II. Large areas of these boroughs remained underdeveloped when the housing expansion of the 1920s slowed during the Great Depression and virtually stopped during the war. They were now ripe for building.

The development of Canarsie in Brooklyn illustrates the growth of postwar white ethnic communities. Located along Jamaica Bay, Canarsie was inhabited by a few thousand Dutch, Irish, Germans, Scots, and British when Italians and Jewish garment workers began moving there in the 1920s. Large parts of the area still remained undeveloped marshland at the outset of World War II, yet by the 1950s developers gave the community a "new sleek look."[33] Two builders, Harry and Sidney Waxman, constructed private residences on more than two hundred acres of Canarsie land, which attracted primarily Jewish and Italian homeowners. Canarsie's population rose from 3,000 or so in the 1920s to 30,000 in 1950, and 80,000 in 1970.[34] Many of the new residents came from Brooklyn's Brownsville, fleeing a black influx. Brownsville's Jewish population declined from 175,000 in the 1930s to only 5,000, mostly elderly, in the 1960s. The last synagogue there closed in 1972.[35] Brooklyn was not alone in witnessing shifts in the Jewish population. The Bronx's Grand Concourse was developed in the 1920s and became a Jewish center with large apartments, synagogues, and a variety of cultural institutions. But the area was almost totally abandoned by Jews after the 1950s as blacks and Hispanics moved in. Jews moved northward to Riverdale and other neighborhoods on the periphery of the borough. In the north Bronx Co-op City was constructed to house 80,000 persons, and Jews constituted its largest ethnic group for years.[36]





Italians lived in several areas of the city, but they too demonstrated similar mobility in housing patterns. In 1970 some Italians still resided in lower Manhattan's "Little Italy," just north of Chinatown, but many more lived in Brooklyn's Canarsie, Red Hook, Bensonhurst, and Cobble Hill neighborhoods. New York's least populated borough, Staten Island, became particularly known for attracting Italian residents. The ethnic community there boomed after 1964, with the construction of the appropriately named Verrazano Bridge, which connected the island with Brooklyn.[37]

The 1980 census revealed that Italians were the largest foreign-born group in the city. "The Italians are in first place," declared a knowledgeable city demographer, "because alone among the older immigrants groups they tend to stay in the city. They pass the house on from one generation to another."[38] One could even find a very few Italian-American neighborhoods that had changed little from the days of their initial immigrant settlement. The Belmont section of the Bronx, near Fordham University, was originally settled by Calabrians who helped build the city's Croton Reservoir in Westchester County. At the end of the 1980s it still contained an Italian component. One Italian who grew up there noted, "I go to the same butcher that waited on my grandmother."[39]

Right after the war the main concentration of a still-large Irish population was centered in the Bronx, but by the 1970s Queens had become the most Irish borough. Half of the city's declining Irish population lived there or in nearby Brooklyn. The Woodside section of Queens is one of the last neighborhoods to retain a distinctly Irish flavor. First- and-second-generation Irish New Yorkers in those neighborhoods were outspoken in criticizing Great Britain when troubles began again in Northern Ireland in 1969, and IRA backers published a newspaper in support of the unification of Ireland.[40]

As striking as the movement of whites to new city neighborhoods was, even more impressive was the scope of their migration to the mushrooming suburbs. Commuter rails, highways, tunnels, and bridges

enabled New Yorkers to move to nearby Long Island, Westchester County, and New Jersey and still commute to work in the city. Some connections had been built before the war, but the volume of traffic greatly increased after 1945 and strained their capacities. Indeed, a needed second deck was added to the George Washington Bridge in the 1950s. Many of the new traffic arteries were the work of city planner Robert Moses.[41]

Mass transportation and the auto culture provide only part of the explanation for the suburbanization of the Greater New York area. Higher incomes during the good years from 1945 to 1970, governmental subsidies of mortgages, the desire to leave deteriorating neighborhoods, white flight from blacks, and the constant search by Americans for greener pastures all played roles. Moreover, businesses, jolted by high taxes and high rents in New York City, often sought relief in the suburbs. As offices and stores opened in the suburbs, workers found it desirable to live nearer their places of work.

The 1940s had witnessed a net migration out of the city; only a high natural population increase kept the city's population growing. During the next decade the movement to the suburbs became "a flood," and the city actually lost population. This exodus continued in the 1960s, although the city once more gained population in that decade because of a large in-migration of blacks and immigrants.[42] A loss of jobs beginning in the late 1960s and a major fiscal crisis in the mid-1970s added fuel to the white exodus.

How extensive was the post war white flight? The net outflow of whites exceeded 400,000 in the 1940s, 1.2 million in the 1950s, and another 500,000 in the 1960s. Who moved? Members of nearly all white ethnic groups. In 1970 Jews still represented the largest European group, accounting for about a third of the city's declining white population with Italians a close second. The Bureau of the Census does not record religious affiliation, but a study by the Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York put the city's Jewish population at 2,114,000, in 1957, its highest total ever. By 1981 the estimate had fallen to just over one million, and the number probably has decreased further since then.[43] Irish, German, and Italian New Yorkers were also on the move, and their city populations diminished after 1945.

The loss of so many middle class taxpayers began to strain city finances, but perhaps more serious was the flight of jobs from 1945 to





1970, an exodus that became even more marked in the years that followed. Brooklyn, which lost more people than the other boroughs, was especially hard hit. For example, the Brooklyn Navy Yard, founded in 1801 when the frigate *Fulton* was built there, employed more than 70,000 workers during World War II, but afterward its economic and military importance rapidly declined. Finally in 1966 it closed.[44] In a parallel decline, the Brooklyn Army Terminal also radically cut its staff. Businesses dependent upon the Army Terminal and the Navy Yard suffered. The borough's beer industry also fell upon hard times. In 1940 Brooklyn could boast of having 132 breweries, an all time high. That number soon fell drastically, and by the end of the 1950s only four remained. In 1976 the last Brooklyn brewery shut its doors.[45] In 1973 one columnist suggested a desperate way to keep the last two open. New Yorkers should "demand that every saloon have both New York beers on tap. And they can drink [New York's] Rheingold and Schaefer, and forget they ever heard of Bud, Schlitz, Pabst, or any of the other foreign beers."[46]

Even sadder for Brooklynites was the 1955 closing of its newspaper, *the Brooklyn Eagle*, and the move of the baseball Brooklyn Dodgers to Los Angeles two years later. The *Eagle* had been especially important for reporting borough news and events for generations, but it could no longer meet its payroll. Perhaps no institution personified Brooklyn in the twentieth century as did the Dodgers. A struggling team during the 1930s, "the Bums," became a consistent winner after 1940. Frequently atop the National League race, the Dodgers were unable to defeat their Bronx rivals, the American League Yankees, until 1955, when they became World Series champs. Emotional Brooklyn supporters jammed the tiny Ebbets Field to cheer their club, but the front office decided to leave for the more lucrative promises of California. One fan summarized the team's move, "Boy, it sure is quiet since the Dodgers left."[47]

The loss of employment was by no means confined to Brooklyn. Manufacturing plants, in particular those in the garment industry, began an exodus that increased in speed after 1970. While New York remained an important port, other cities like Baltimore challenged its supremacy as did facilities in nearby New Jersey. Moreover, technological changes along the waterfront reduced employment among dockworkers. One scholar, Louis Winnick, described a portion of Brooklyn's once thriving docks in the 1980s: "At Sunset Park's last hiring hall on

60th Street, a thousand longshoremen 'badge in' each day, but there are no jobs. The gesture is pure theater, acting out a script hammered out years ago in an extraordinary agreement between the dock unions and maritime employers, in which the union accepted labor-saving container ships in exchange for a guaranteed life time income for their workers."[48] The continued hemorrhaging of jobs and population would loom even larger after 1970 as the city struggled to deliver a growing number of municipal services.

The postwar decline of New York's white population, both in actual numbers and as a proportion of the total population, would have been even greater but for the white migration from abroad and from other parts of the nation. After the war more liberal immigration laws made possible a new influx of Europeans, chiefly from southern and eastern Europe, more than one million of whom settled in New York from 1946 to 1970.[49] They entered a city quite different from that experienced by prior generations of immigrants, for modern New York was vastly more hospitable to its postwar newcomers. It offered a number of governmental programs to aid in their settlement.

Included among the new immigrants were Jewish survivors of the Holocaust, refugees from the early days of the Cold War, Italians, Greeks, Irish, Chinese, and people from the Caribbean. Some early refugee programs called for dispersal of the refugees, but many immigrants, especially Jews, desired to remain in New York City. About one quarter of the persons arriving under the Displaced Persons acts of 1948 and 1950 did stay, as did a similar number of other refugees entering in the 1950s.[50]

Of the 85,000 Jews settling in the city, many were members of ultra orthodox Hasidic sects from eastern Europe, who settled in sections of Brooklyn. A large contingent of Satmar Hasidim found homes in Williamsburg near the Navy Yard, where Orthodox had lived since 1920.[51] The city's largest Hasidic community, the Lubavitch, took root in the Crown Heights section of Brooklyn, replacing other Orthodox Jews who moved to Boro Park. Opposed to birth control on religious grounds, the Hasidic community grew rapidly with average family sizes of seven to eight.[52] While New York's community of unaffiliated, Conservative, and Reform Jews declined, the Hasidim vastly increased, although no exact figures of the size of the community exist. Experts estimated it was about 70,000 in 1989, large





enough to be courted along with other Orthodox Jews by candidates running for mayor.[53]

The intensely religious Hasidim organized their lives around a highly structured system of Judaic practices. Both Satmar and Lubavitch Jews published weekly Yiddish newspapers which kept their people informed on issues of concern to the community. These religious communities had little contact with outsiders, observed the Sabbath strictly, used the Jewish calendar, segregated the sexes in many social and religious activities, taught their children Yiddish, and arranged marriages for them. Their rabbis scorned television, which they considered an evil, modern amusement.[54]

Italians and Greeks wishing to come to the United States benefitted from special immigration laws and an immigration act passed in 1965, which among other provisions eliminated discriminatory national origins restrictions. During the peak years, 1965 to 1975, about 6,000 Italians and 3,000 Greeks annually settled in New York City.[55] By the early 1970s the backlog of visa applicants had eased, and that, combined with improved economic conditions at home, lessened the pressures for emigration to America.[56] By the late 1980s the immigration authorities recorded only about 3,000 Italians entering the United States annually and a similar number of Greeks. Of these about one quarter indicated they intended to live in New York City.[57]

Italian immigrants seeking economic opportunities settled mostly in Queens, Brooklyn, and Staten Island, where they could count on hearing Italian spoken and where family, friends, churches, and ethnic organizations helped them find housing and jobs.[58] Such was the case of Francesco Pecse who migrated to the United States during the 1950s because he believed his sons would have more opportunity here. The Pecse family went to Red Hook in Brooklyn, a predominately Italian neighborhood. One son became a lawyer and New York State assemblyman who specialized in helping other Italian immigrants.[59] The single largest Italian-American area in the city was in the Bensonhurst section of Brooklyn. One forty-five-year old Italian resident of that neighborhood commented, "My parents' generation moved out, and another wave of Italian immigrants bought their houses."[60]

Unlike the turn-of-the-century Italian migrants, who were mostly uneducated male rural workers and peasants, the new arrivals were predominately artisans, semi-skilled workers, or professionals. They usual-

ly came as families, originated in urban centers, and had experience with city living. More than a few had worked in industrial cities of Europe outside of Italy, but the majority had gained their work experience entirely in the growing industrialized urban areas of their own country. Although they were not highly educated, in contrast with their predecessors they were literate and on the whole had an easier time adjusting to life in America.[61]

In New York City the men found jobs in construction, barber shops, restaurants, and factories, while the women most often worked in the garment industries or became hairdressers.[62] Locating in Italian-American neighborhoods, they helped to reinforce Italian institutions and strengthened to some degree Italian-American ethnicity. But their numbers were not large, and immigration from Italy declined in the 1980s, while earlier immigrants and their children and grandchildren moved in increasing numbers to the suburbs.

The city's Greek community grew markedly during the prime years of postwar European immigration, from 1960 to the early 1970s.[63] Community leaders in the heavily-Greek Astoria section of Queens insisted that the census undercounted their cohort, in part because Greeks arrived not only from Greece but also from Turkey, Cyprus, and Egypt and were counted as nationals from those countries. One community leader claimed that New York's Greek community by 1990 numbered 350,000, counting both the foreign born and the descendants of earlier Greek immigrants, but others have cited lower figures.[64]

As with the Italians, recent Greek immigrants differed from their turn-of-century predecessors. They too emigrated most often as families rather than as single males and arrived equipped with higher levels of education and skills. Also, as with the Italian newcomers, there were a few highly educated professionals among them. Yet, like so many immigrants without English language proficiency, the majority initially took what jobs they could find, frequently in factories, in construction, as pushcart vendors, or in entry-level service occupations.[65] Employment opportunities did exist in traditional Greek-American business fields, and some found positions in the fur business, where Greeks had a presence for several generations both as workers and shop owners. However, such employment was declining by the 1970s as competition from Asian producers forced American firms out of business.[66] The most conspicuous new Greek business ventures were as





owners of coffee shops and of "un-Greek" pizza parlors. Hellenic businessmen purchased dozens of Manhattan's coffee shops and hired Greek immigrants to work in them. In 1980 *Newsweek* reported: "Greeks have all but taken over the coffee shops, conquering the quick lunch business under their ubiquitous symbol: the drink container with a picture of a discus thrower."[67] Community social life revolved around coffee houses, restaurants, and churches like St. Demetrios Greek Orthodox Church in Astoria. Strong community assistance groups, particularly the Hellenic American Neighborhood Action Committee (HANAC), were established in the early 1970s. The growing community supported several Greek-language daily newspapers, a number of other publications, as well as several TV and radio programs.[68] Some Greek community leaders took a keen interest in the conflict between Turkey and Greece over Cyprus and lobbied Congress in support of the Greek cause.

Ireland, which had a favored quota under the national origins formula, began to send newcomers to New York after the lean immigration years of the Great Depression and World War II. Several thousand arrived annually during the 1950s and early 1960s, but then the numbers dropped. The Irish economy picked up in the 1960s, and by the 1980s fewer than 1,000 annually were emigrating to the United States.[69] Those Irish who did come were on the whole better educated than their predecessors. They settled in the new Irish neighborhoods in Queens or Brooklyn where they followed the traditional immigrant search for a better life.[70]

From the Caribbean came Haitians and Dominicans and from South America came Colombians. Among the Haitians were upper and middle class political exiles who were fleeing the dreaded and oppressive American-supported Duvalier regime that assumed power in 1957. But politics alone does not explain this immigration. Haiti was the most economically destitute nation in the Caribbean, and the exodus included thousands escaping poverty. Those who could not comply with American immigration restrictions often entered illegally or as visitors who stayed on after their visas expired.[71]

Dominicans were also driven by economic forces, and like many Haitians, if they could not obtain an immigrant visa, they came as visitors and stayed on illegally. Many found jobs in the garment industry, while others worked as janitors in offices, as dishwashers and busboys

in restaurants, and as service workers in hospitals. Their principal location in New York was the upper west side of Manhattan, an area that would receive many more of their countrymen after 1970.[72]

Small numbers of Asians, benefitting from modifications in the formerly exclusionary Asian immigration policies, also arrived between 1945 to 1970, but their numbers substantially increased only after the 1965 immigration act went into effect. Discrimination against Chinese had decreased after the outbreak of World War II, one consequence of which was that in 1943 Congress repealed the Chinese Exclusion Act and granted China a small quota. Subsequently Congress passed the War Brides Act, which permitted several thousand Chinese women to enter. Anthropologist Bernard Wong tells us, "Older informants remember this period as the first time they saw young Chinese women and children living in the community."[73] This movement was the forerunner of a large scale Chinese immigration to New York City after 1970.

Puerto Ricans were numerically the largest Hispanic group to migrate to New York City between 1945 and 1970, when following World War II the flow of these islanders renewed. They traveled largely by plane, inaugurating the first massive air migration in history. Attempts in the 1950s to improve the Puerto Rican economy, such as "Operation Bootstrap," had only limited success, and many islanders looked to New York City as a place to seek better living conditions. The major period of Puerto Rican migration to New York City lasted from the mid-1940s to the mid-1960s, when 30,000 to 50,000 persons annually came to the city.[74] East Harlem was the main area of Puerto Rican settlement in Manhattan, as long-time Italian residents moved to other sections of the city or to the suburbs. A second major neighborhood for these newcomers emerged in the South Bronx, while other substantial Puerto Rican barrios also arose in Brooklyn. By 1970, the migration slowed, and many of New York's Puerto Ricans returned home.

Institutions such as the Migration Division of the Department of Labor of Puerto Rico helped Puerto Ricans adjust to life New York. Leaders responsible for the creation of this agency argued that the city's social agencies and schools were inadequate to accommodate the new migrants and that a special office was required. The Migration Division did succeed in placing thousands of Puerto Ricans in jobs and helped others prepare for civil service examinations. The agency's staff also





worked with New York bureaucrats in aiding Puerto Ricans to adjust and explained to school leaders the importance of teaching English to Puerto Rican children. During the 1960s the federal government played a more active role in such activity, pouring funds into new urban-oriented organizations and creating anti-poverty agencies. Consequently, several of the Division staff left to serve in these new initiatives, and in the 1970s the Division disbanded.[75]

Groups like the Puerto Rican Forum, the Puerto Rican Family Institute (the only grassroots Puerto Rican family agency in the city), and the Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund sought in one way or another to improve the life of New York's Puerto Ricans. So did ASPIRA, an important organization founded in 1961 to promote higher education for these New Yorkers.[76] Puerto Rican Studies programs developed after 1970 on several campuses of the City University, with particularly active ones at Hunter College and at The City College of New York.

No less important in attracting other Puerto Ricans to the mainland and in helping them cope with their new environment was the Puerto Rican family. Family networks were key in the migration process; they provided funds for travel and help in finding housing and jobs. Gradually the character of New York's Puerto Rican families changed, with a growing number of second- and third-generation members marrying non-Puerto Ricans and an increasing number of families being headed by women.[77]

The Roman Catholic Church also played a significant role in the Puerto Rican community. Most Puerto Ricans retained the Catholicism of their homeland after settlement in New York. Yet the largely Irish-dominated Catholic church was slow in responding to the needs of the new arrivals. Puerto Ricans were expected to become members of integrated English-speaking parishes, but many of the first migrants did not speak English well. In the 1950s the church inaugurated new policies aimed at teaching the clergy Spanish and Puerto Rican culture and encouraging them to hold services in Spanish.[78] Some priests became involved in attempts to promote stability in the barrios.

During the peak migration years some scholars viewed the Puerto Ricans as simply the latest migrant group to come to New York. While they were American citizens, the argument ran, they spoke a foreign language and hailed from a different culture, thus resembling previous

waves of New York immigrants. In the end it was assumed they would pursue the same ladder of upward mobility in a traditional path of "ethnic succession."[79]

In the early years of their New York experience, these latest newcomers did indeed seem to be doing just that. They entered with low levels of education, and many were rural workers with limited English-language skills. They settled largely in the barrios of East Harlem or the South Bronx, where housing was crowded and in poor repair. They took jobs in the city's garment industry or in unskilled occupations. As the children attended the public schools, they learned English, achieved higher levels of education than their parents, found better jobs, and in some cases moved away from Puerto Rican neighborhoods and married non-Puerto Ricans. Puerto Ricans usually spoke Spanish at home, but their children rapidly became bilingual.[80]

In city politics, initial signs indicated that perhaps Puerto Ricans would exercise considerable influence. Some activity was evident before 1941, but with the rapid growth of the Puerto Rican population after the war, the potential for influence increased.[81] After 1945 a number of Puerto Ricans were elected to public office. Herman Badillo served as Borough President of Manhattan in the 1960s, following a term in Congress. He was replaced in Congress by Robert Garcia.[82]

The influx of blacks into New York continued during the postwar decades. In 1940 the city's blacks, numbering about 450,000, accounted for about 6 percent of the population. By 1970 they numbered 1,668,115, constituting a larger proportion (about 20 percent) of the city's residents than at any time since the middle of the eighteenth century.[83] Of course, natural population growth as well as small immigration from the Caribbean contributed to this increase, but most significant was the migration from the South.[84] For black New Yorkers 1945–1970 was also "a better time," but much less so than for whites. All black New Yorkers faced the common problem: racism. They lived in a city and nation with a long history of racial bias and segregation, but just as anti-Semitism decreased after 1945 so did racial discrimination. In no area was the improved status of blacks more apparent than in politics and municipal employment. Building on the early precedent of Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., the city's first black congressman, blacks were successful in electing black candidates for city, state, and federal offices.[85] The key element in this success was the increasing number of





black voters. Before 1960, the highest municipal elective office won by a black New Yorker was the borough presidency of Manhattan. In 1953 Hulan Jack, an assemblyman and Democratic district leader, achieved this victory.[86] Within the Democratic party itself, J. Raymond Jones moved slowly up the ladder and won a reputation as an astute politician. After holding various party and municipal positions, he served as Manhattan's Democratic county leader from 1964 to 1967 and became one of that borough's most powerful political figures.[87]

In Brooklyn, African Americans won several local elections before sending one of their own to Congress. Racial gerrymandering prevented the election of a black to represent Brooklyn in the House of Representatives until 1968, but then black Assemblywoman Shirley Chisholm won a seat in Congress. After enactment of the 1970 Voting Rights Act and under federal pressure, New York redrew Brooklyn's congressional boundaries so that two districts had black majorities. In the 1976 election, two African Americans were sent to Congress from the borough.[88] A similar situation prevailed in the Bronx, where the Irish boss, Edward J. Flynn, realized that the population was changing and that he needed to grant blacks some recognition.[89]

Among the blacks increasingly turning to urban politics were a number of West Indians. During the 1920s black nationalist Marcus Garvey, a Jamaican, had demonstrated how to mobilize the city's blacks, although he did not venture into organized politics. Within the Democratic party, West Indians began to make their mark during the 1930s. In 1935 Barbadian-born Herbert Bruce became the first black to serve on the Tammany executive committee, and by 1953 four of five Democratic district leaders from Harlem and the only black one in Brooklyn were West Indians. J. Raymond Jones was born in the Virgin Islands; Hulan Jack was born in British Guiana and raised on St. Lucia. Other prominent West Indian political stars were Percy Sutton and Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm.[90] By the 1970s the influence of this generation was coming to end, and when Representative Chisholm retired in 1982, the last of the old guard of West Indian political leaders passed from the scene.

The growing political clout of African Americans reaped dividends in municipal employment. Far underrepresented on the city payroll in 1940, blacks had reversed this by 1970. Political pressure, a growing commitment to equal opportunity in public employment, and affirma-

tive action programs after the 1960s opened up opportunities. The employment pattern of blacks varied from agency to agency and from rank to rank. They were prominent in agencies devoted to health and welfare but underrepresented in the police and fire departments. They were underrepresented in the top managerial positions of city agencies. Even as late as 1988 a mayor's commission reported that "there are *no* black senior managers in almost half of the city's agencies."[91]

Progress did not always come easily. In the police department, long a bastion of Irish domination, court fights were required to change both qualifying examinations and hiring practices to increase the number of black officers. The Patrolman's Benevolent Association (PBA), the white controlled police union, opposed these pressures.[92] The PBA also fought against the establishment of a civilian review board, which most black New Yorkers favored, to hear charges regarding suspected police misconduct. As late as 1987 no black sat on the PBA's executive board, and there were only four blacks among the association's 360 delegates.[93] Consequently, black officers—as had many other ethnic groups—formed their own organization, the Association of Guardians. In the Police Department there existed separate black, Puerto Rican, Jewish, Irish, Polish, German, Catholic, and Protestant societies.[94] African Americans also had organizations within the fire and sanitation departments.[95] Only the PBA, it should be pointed out, had the bargaining power and status of a union.

While the municipal government was the largest single employer in New York, and while state, municipal, and federal governments employed about one third of working native-born blacks in the 1970s, the private sector provided the vast majority of jobs for African Americans as discriminatory hiring practices ebbed somewhat. Some New York blacks founded their own businesses, and a few did very well, even in the world of high finance. Most black enterprises, however, were small, family-run operations with low sales and profits. While increasing after World War II, these businesses employed only a small proportion of black New Yorkers.[96] In 1968 blacks owned a scant majority of the businesses in Harlem.[97]

In the world of entertainment—particularly in sports, music, and theater—African Americans made many inroads after World War II. Blacks had occasionally appeared before white New York audiences prior to World War II. In 1912, for example, an all-black musical group





had appeared at Carnegie Hall, and during the twenties and thirties all-black variety shows were popular on Broadway.[98] A few blacks, notably the famed actor Paul Robeson, appeared on stage before 1940, but too often in limited and stereotypical roles.[99] Robeson also gained fame as a singer and made his first appearance at Carnegie Hall in 1929.[100] But by no means were all New York theaters and concert halls receptive to blacks. Marian Anderson, the noted black singer who had sung at Carnegie Hall as early as 1928, was not offered a contract at the New York's Metropolitan Opera until 1955, after her voice was past its prime.[101] Gradually, however, other African Americans began to appear in prominent roles at the Met.

Nowhere was the segregation of black professionals more noticeable at the close of World War II than in baseball, the so-called national pastime. Black baseball players did play in the New York Giant's Polo Grounds and in Yankee Stadium before 1945, but only with all-black teams which rented the stadiums for their games. Indeed, in the 1940s the Yankees earned more than $100,000 annually from renting their Bronx stadium and other fields in their farm system to blacks. In 1946 the major league owners cited this added income as one reason not to desegregate.[102] With pressure mounting on baseball brought on by the passage of the New York's Ives-Quinn Law on discrimination in employment as well as by the more positive racial attitudes stemming from the war, Branch Rickey, owner of the Brooklyn Dodgers, hired Jackie Robinson to break the color line. In 1947, after a year in the Dodgers' farm club in Montreal, Robinson became the first African American to play in the big leagues. While blacks and most whites throughout the league cheered for Robinson, he was not warmly received by all the players. Dixie Walker, a popular Dodger, rallied other players to block Robinson from playing. The protest collapsed, however, and Walker requested a trade to another club. Rickey subsequently hired other black athletes as did the New York Giants beginning in 1949. The Yankees dragged their feet and did not field black players until the end of the 1953 season, when they placed two on their roster.[103]

Shortly after baseball began to desegregate, professional football and the newly formed National Basketball Association (NBA) hired black players.[104] By 1970 black athletes were fixtures on all New York City's professional teams (except hockey). But they were noticeably scarce in the front offices and in the coaching ranks. Neither the Yankees nor the

Brooklyn Dodgers nor the New York baseball Giants (while the latter two were located in New York) ever employed a black manager.

Few African-American New Yorkers were highly paid athletes, or professionals, or owners of businesses. For the working and middle classes, opportunities opened very slowly after World War II.[105] SCAD investigations in the 1940s and 1950s revealed that many New York hotels, manufacturers, and other business refused to hire blacks and that employment agencies continued to fill positions for "whites only."[106] In the 1960s the United States Equal Employment Commission reported either total absence or token representation of blacks in banking, insurance, advertising, and communications (including publishing, radio, newspapers, and television). On the city's major newspapers, for example, blacks accounted for fewer than one percent of white collar employees.[107] Employment opportunities were hardly better in the construction industry, where the Italian and Irish-run unions restricted entry into their membership. Two reports by the City Commission on Human Rights in the 1960s revealed great ethnic imbalance in the building trades and little sign of improvement.[108]

Like other black Americans, those in New York organized on behalf of civil rights during the turbulent 1960s. Directed by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Congress of Racial Equality, and ad hoc groups, activists picketed a number of construction sites and businesses, protesting against racial discrimination in hiring. Black ministers like Adam Clayton Powell and the Rev. Milton Galamison of Brooklyn were especially important in the civil rights struggle. Established black churches had always played a key role in addressing their congregants' social and economic concerns as well as their spiritual ones, and they continued to be influential during the civil rights era.[109] These efforts won the support of some politicians who insisted that public building projects, including a number of schools and the heavily picketed Downstate Medical Center in Brooklyn, employ companies and unions with records of fair hiring practices.[110]

Not all blacks agreed with the emphasis mainline civil rights advocates placed on achieving integration. Some urged that blacks build their own institutions within their community instead of attempting to desegregate white ones. The Black Muslims, the most important religious group urging separation, worked among the black poor, often dealing effectively with drug problems and employment issues.





Although the Nation of Islam, as the group was formally named, did not have an especially large following, it had an eloquent spokesman in Malcolm X. Before he was assassinated in 1965, he touched many black New Yorkers with his pleas for racial uplift.[111]

Civil rights advocates achieved only limited success in reversing discriminatory union hiring practices. Progress in black employment in the construction field was just beginning by 1970s, and was often resisted by unions in court actions.[112] In the public sector, among municipal transport workers, as late as 1938 only a few blacks were employed as porters and none as motormen.[113] By the mid-1960s black workers made up one half of all nonsupervisory positions in the industry, though the old Irish guard of the Transport Workers Union had effectively resisted black gains for years.[114] Other unions proved more accommodating to blacks as union members and even leaders. Membership in the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) was dominated by white males until the 1950s, when the union began major organizational drives among the city's low paid (usually black female) employees in the schools, hospitals, and government offices. With the support of leaders of District Council 37, Victor Gotbaum and Lillian Roberts, a black woman, the power base of DC 37 shifted from white males to black women by the 1970s, and the concerns of its minority group members began to be seriously addressed.[115]

Most service employees in private hospitals were also recruited from minority groups. Hospital Workers Union 1199, headed by older Jewish radicals, successfully organized most of these workers after New York state passed a law in 1963 guaranteeing them the right to union representation. Black unionists also began to take over leadership in 1199 as the older leaders retired.[116]

Like whites, blacks tended to move from traditional neighborhoods; often away from Harlem, the pre-war center of black New York. But there the similarity ended, because blacks generally found housing available only in racially segregated areas or in neighborhoods becoming all black because of white flight. The black settlement in Brooklyn's Bedford Stuyvesant, well on its way to becoming a racial ghetto by 1940, expanded rapidly to contiguous Crown Heights and Brownsville. Historian Harold Connolly wrote of the rapid flight of whites, "The speed of some of these neighborhood reversals could be blinding. In less

than ten years much of East New York was transformed from a comfortable, predominately white, lower-middle-class community into an impoverished, overwhelmingly black and Puerto Rican area."[117]

For the city's black and Puerto Rican poor segregated housing frequently meant run down, dilapidated accommodations in high crime areas, where many landlords abandoned their buildings rather than maintain them. As a result apartments fell into city hands because of tax delinquency, and the municipal government found itself in the position of becoming a slum landlord. Beginning in the 1960s thousands of buildings were simply abandoned, and once unoccupied, they were vandalized and fell victim to arson. City blocks in the South Bronx, Harlem, and Bedford Stuyvesant looked as if they had experienced wartime air raids.[118] Some buildings, technically abandoned, nonetheless housed squatters or became drug centers.[119]

During the New Deal years, the federal government had embarked upon a modest public housing program. After the war, the state and city, with federal backing, built housing for low income as well for middle class families. By 1990 the federal government had subsidized the construction of about 175,000 low rent units, which housed approximately 600,000 New Yorkers. Of the nation's public housing projects, New York's had a reputation of being among the best. As a result, there was always a long waiting list for the their apartments. The city's low income residences certainly provided improved housing for many poor citizens, but they sometimes became centers of crime, and frequently lacked adequate maintenance. Also, they were often segregated because of racial steering.[120]

Sadly, in some instances the postwar urban renewal programs aimed at slum clearance meant less rather than more housing for the poor. In constructing projects like the Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts and highways and bridges, builders tore down tenements and destroyed many small businesses as well without always providing new accommodations for the former occupants. Critics tagged urban renewal "Negro removal." In addition, corruption plagued slum clearance in New York City. Charges of scandal and of ignoring the poor became so frequent while Robert Moses ran urban renewal in the city that he was removed as director of the Mayor's Slum Clearance Committee.[121] After 1960, when reformers and city officials proposed scattering low income housing for the poor among middle-class neighborhoods





instead of building more large scale public housing projects, they encountered stiff opposition. Such was the case with a plan to place 7,500 units for low income families in Corona, an Italian community, and in Forest Hills, a predominately Jewish neighborhood, both in Queens. Forest Hills residents resisted the proposal and blamed Mayor John Lindsay for supporting it. "Don't Let Adolph Lindsay Destroy Forest Hills" became one of their slogans. Mario Cuomo, future governor of New York, finally arranged a compromise, but the incident ended practically all talk of more scattered low income housing.[122] Instead, many poor families began to receive rent subsidies.

Federal, state, and local housing programs failed to keep up with demand, and their inadequate funds were cut during the Reagan years. The City's Commission on the Year 2000 estimated in 1988 that the city was short 231,000 apartments and that, given the lack of construction, the figure would rise to 371,805 by the year 2000. To make ends meet, some poor families even doubled up, which often led to severe crowding. In sum, adequate housing for the poor remained an illusive goal in the decades following World War II.[123]

Even middle-class black New Yorkers who had found improved employment opportunities faced racial discrimination in renting and buying homes and apartments. In some interracial, middle-class neighborhoods, like the Laurelton section of Queens, community efforts maintained a mixed population for a number of years.[124] But these were exceptions rather than the rule. Researchers found little change in housing segregation in the decades after World War II. Douglas H. White, Commissioner of the New York State Division of Human Rights, concluded in 1989, "Housing is amazingly closed in the city. . . . I think its's striking the degree to which we have segregation."[125] Not until 1968 did the federal government enact a fair housing law, ten years after New York City had passed its Sharkey-Brown-Isaacs Act. Yet the federal law was difficult to enforce, while the agency to enforce the local law, the New York Commission on Human Rights, was understaffed and underfunded. Thus, neither the city nor the federal government successfully halted discriminatory practices in the housing market.[126]

Some black New Yorkers had long looked to schooling as the road to a better future for their children, and the issue of educational opportunities for minorities did receive more consideration after 1945. The city's special high schools—such as Hunter College High School,

Bronx Science, and Stuyvesant—were among the nation's finest and accepted only the top academic students. These elite institutions took pride in having rigorous curricula, with most of their graduates going on to prestigious universities and some winning national academic prizes. Yet they accommodated only a small fraction of the city's high school students and an even smaller percentage of minority pupils. New York also ran a number of experimental educational programs, a few of which resulted in lowered dropout rates and improved reading and math scores.[127] But here too the percentage of the whole was small.

Most New York youngsters attended the city's regular public schools, which were rapidly being abandoned by whites. After World War II the system was beset by social and economic problems—drugs, dilapidated old buildings, vandalism, high dropout rates, low test scores, violence, and de facto racial segregation. Civil rights advocates had long urged desegregation of the city's public schools and had organized demonstrations to force the Board of Education to act.[128] But because of white flight from the city and its public schools, the goal became increasingly illusive. A 1964 report by State Commissioner of Education James Allen, Jr. praised the goal of racial integration but noted that blacks and Hispanics accounted for three quarters of the school population.[129] In the city's private independent and parochial schools whites were in the majority, though many black and some Hispanic parents, seeking quality education, enrolled their children in them as well.[130]

As the goal of racially integrated public schools became impossible to achieve and as New York City's educational system seemed to be deteriorating, reformers suggested decentralizing control of the schools in order to give parents more input into the education of their children. In 1967 the city adopted a plan for decentralization suggested by a panel headed by McGeorge Bundy of the Ford Foundation.[131] It provided for elected district school boards that would have considerable administrative control over the city's elementary schools. The central school board would retain direct supervision of the high schools.

One immediate result of decentralization was the outbreak of a serious conflict between black leaders in the Ocean Hill-Brownsville District and Albert Shanker's United Federation of Teachers (UFT). In an emotional atmosphere replete with charges of anti-Semitism by the teachers and of racism by the local community leaders, the UFT won reinstatement of teachers who had been fired by the district's





school board. This beginning did not bode well for decentralization.[132]

For those who had earned a high school diploma, the city offered the chance for a college education. Few blacks attended private college and universities or even the tuition-free branches of the City University of New York (CUNY) prior to the 1960s. In 1960 minority students accounted for only five percent of the matriculants in the city's municipal colleges, the same percentage as in 1950.[133] Rising standards for admission and a shortage of space further limited the black presence at the city's colleges. A few special programs to boost black enrollment achieved little. A columnist for the *Amsterdam News* wrote in 1964, "The campus of the College of the City of New York (CCNY) is rapidly becoming as lily-white as the campus of Ole Miss University was the day after James Meredith graduated."[134]

Building on the civil rights momentum of the 1960s, black and Puerto Rican college students staged protests and demonstrations in the spring of 1969 at various CUNY schools. They closed CCNY and pressured the Board of Higher Education to agree that beginning in fall 1970 all of New York City's high school graduates would be granted a place in one of CUNY's branches.[135] This "open admissions" policy offered real hope for the city's minority students.

The presence of a substantial black middle class supporting an expanding black culture enabled New York City to remain a center of African-American literary and artistic creativity. No American city was as accepting of black performers. Alvin Ailey arrived in New York during the 1950s, became a noted black dancer on Broadway, and in 1958 formed the Alvin Ailey Dance Company. At first Ailey used only black dancers, but he began to add whites to his troupe in 1963. Ailey's inspired use of jazz and Afro-Caribbean dance as well as other modern idioms and classical ballet soon won him international recognition.[136] Arthur Mitchell joined the New York City Ballet in 1955, became a leading dancer within a few years, and then starred on Broadway. In 1969 he founded the acclaimed Dance Theater of Harlem. The Negro Ensemble Company, a theatrical group, received praise from mixed audiences, and Lorraine Hansbury's play, *A Raisin in the Sun*, won acclaim on Broadway in the 1960s. Harlem's Schomburg Library, the nation's largest collection of materials on black history, attracted many scholars and viewers when it ran special exhibits on black culture and history.

In contrast to these cultural achievements was the harsh reality that thousands of black New Yorkers lived in poverty and attended deteriorating schools. Moreover, racial bitterness made violence ever ready to explode, as it did in 1964 when a riot occurred pitting Harlemites against white police.[137] Upon taking office, Mayor John Lindsay expressed determination to do something about the plight of black New Yorkers. During the summer of 1967, when several cities—among them Newark, New Jersey—experienced racial rioting, Lindsay walked the streets of black neighborhoods and kept the peace.[138] Some called it his finest hour. In addition, he supported Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty programs to aid the urban poor and urged the creation of a civilian review board to hear complaints about police mistreatment of blacks. The mayor also established a variety of special programs aimed at helping black neighborhoods.[139]

Mayor Lindsay won considerable praise from African Americans for these efforts, though some black leaders complained that he promised more than he was able to deliver.[140] Lindsay's programs suffered from a white backlash in the late 1960s when voters defeated his civilian review board proposal by a two to one margin. The measure did especially poorly in white working class neighborhoods.[141] Moreover, as noted, proposals for scattered public housing also encountered fierce opposition and had to be scrapped.

Given the city's economic growth; the enactment of laws banning racial, religious, and ethnic discrimination; affirmative action programs; the more enlightened political discourse of the 1960s; and the opening of new opportunities for Jews, Italians, other white ethnics, blacks, and Puerto Ricans, one would have to conclude that on balance the period from 1945 to 1970 indeed represented "a better time" for most New Yorkers. But neither poverty nor racial and ethnic conflict were by any means eradicated by 1970. Moreover, with signs of a deteriorating city economy emerging and the repudiation of President's Johnson's War on Poverty by his successor Richard Nixon, the future appeared uncertain.



9

# *Truly a Global City: New York, 1970 to the Present*

**i**

Even as its economy slumped in the 1970s, New York City received yet another wave of newcomers, and ever since immigration has once again been reshaping the city. Six years after the enactment of the immigration restrictions of 1924, 34 percent of the city's residents were foreign born, but the figure decreased until 1970, when it stood at only 18 percent. The new post-1970 arrivals pushed the percentage up again; the city gained about 800,000 immigrants during the 1970s and nearly a million during the 1980s. A liberal immigration law enacted in 1990 helped make it possible for 120,000 newcomers to settle in the city even during the economically depressed year of 1992, and raised the