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The sociology of a city in transition: Boston 1980-2000

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my daughters, Megan and Sally Gillis, whose love, encouragement and support made this dissertation possible.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First, I would like to thank those who took time to share their stories with me, the two former Boston mayors, Raymond. L. Flynn and Thomas M. Menino and current mayor Martin J. Walsh, and the many people who believe in Boston’s capacity to be a great, inclusive and equitable city.

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THE SOCIOLOGY OF A CITY IN TRANSITION: BOSTON 1980–2000

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the years 1980–2000 as a sociologically transformative period in Boston’s history. The guiding research question is how organized politics and the policies that emerged responded to racial conflict, inequality and economic development, and wholesale change in the city’s economic base during this period. The policies of the three governing regimes—the end of Kevin H. White’s sixteen-year term, Raymond L. Flynn’s nine years in office, and the beginning of Thomas M. Menino’s twenty-year mayoralty—are analyzed in the context of these domains to identify the outcomes of several policy agendas that have helped shape life in Boston today. This analysis is in the context of urbanization and urbanism, viewed through the lenses of urban regime, growth machine coalition, progressive city, and government communalism theories. The study utilizes retrospective autoethnography linked with interviews and archival data research.

The study found that during the end of the mayoral administration of Kevin White, Boston was in turmoil politically and racially. Political contests centered on growing poverty and inequality and racial unrest in the city. The election of 1983 was a “critical election” both because an African American was in the final runoff and because the two finalists repudiated the growth machine coalition and the racial politics of the
past. Flynn’s election began the populist transformation of economic policies in Boston to heal racial divisions. After he resigned to become Ambassador to the Vatican, the urban regime of Thomas Menino left intact many of the redistributive policies Flynn enacted; however, it also gradually returned to the growth machine coalition model of economic development, fueling the greatest class and income inequality in Boston’s history.

In the final analysis, both the policies of each urban regime and the activities of the religious, cultural, business, and neighborhood organizations that comprise city life changed the city in sociologically significant ways. This is the story of Boston 1980–2000, the role of its three mayors during that period, and how the city entered the twenty-first century with its physical decline in part reversed but with issues of race and class remaining significant touchstones.
RAYMOND FLYNN’S FAITH IN BOSTON MAKES HIM WORTHY OF A TRIBUTE

Boston Globe Editorial August 15, 2014

CITY COUNCIL President Bill Linehan stands on solid ground in his effort to find a fitting tribute to former Boston Mayor Raymond L. Flynn, a son of South Boston who was one of the city’s most important racial healers: During his nine and a half years as mayor, from 1984 to 1993, Flynn strived to convince a city bruised by the busing crisis of the previous decade that the interests of black and white residents were aligned. He was largely successful — a major accomplishment in itself.

Flynn championed the close-knit values of urban living, in black and white neighborhoods, at a time when most people of means headed quickly for the suburbs. And he gained national recognition for pursuing an unabashedly redistributive agenda amid the conservative Reagan era. One of his prime vehicles was the ground-breaking “linkage” program that required developers of large-scale commercial and institutional properties to pay into a fund to create off-site affordable housing.

As a state representative from South Boston during desegregation, Flynn opposed court-ordered busing on the grounds of parental rights and neighborhood cohesion. But as mayor, he pushed courageously to desegregate the Boston Housing Authority — despite threats from his own neighbors — while appointing record numbers of minority officials. His personal relationships and willingness to intercede in local disputes played a large role in knitting the city together.

Shortly after taking office, Flynn described his job as “building bridges . . . between neighborhoods and downtown, and between neighborhoods and neighborhoods.” An appropriate tribute might be to name a bridge in his honor. Flynn famously judged people by how they treated the poor. Another way to salute his public service might be to attach his name to a site associated with the betterment of the lives of the poor.

By the time he left office to accept President Clinton’s appointment as US ambassador to the Holy See, Flynn was universally applauded. But over time, his image has faded and, at 75, his record is underappreciated. It’s long past time for a public recognition of Flynn’s many contributions.

It is my hope that this dissertation accurately reflects many of Mayor Ray Flynn’s lasting contributions to the city of Boston and its people. Boston was transformed not because of one man but through the actions of many in charting a new course for the city.
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INTRODUCTION

Background and Methodology

On January 3, 1984, I walked from the Park Street T station toward Boston City Hall. Heading down Washington Mall, I paused to view the reflection of the sun off the building where I would soon be working. While I was not thinking about it at the time, I had stopped near the spot that Ted Landsmark, a black man, was attacked by a white man using the American flag as a spear only eight years earlier, on April 5, 1976. The school desegregation program that had produced so much anger and violence—much more by whites than by blacks—was still very much on many people’s minds. This chapter in Boston’s history was not closed, and I would soon be called upon by the newly elected Mayor of Boston to play a role in moving race relations forward in Boston.

The previous day I was working at the West Broadway Housing Development (D Street) in South Boston. As part of the nascent Tenants United for Public Housing, a citywide tenants group I had cofounded, we had organized a citywide public housing inaugural celebration for the newly elected Mayor of Boston, Raymond L. Flynn, held at the Condon Community School on D Street. Following his swearing in at the Wang Center earlier that morning, Flynn traveled to meet with public housing tenants, telling them, “The name is still Ray, and I'm still going to come down to D street to play basketball,” while he, his wife Kathy, and their children watched local youth perform a play called “The D Street Troll” (Vennochi 1984a).
The issue of race played itself out on the very first day of the new administration. Although the public housing tenant celebration included a racially and ethnically mixed group of tenants from across the city, the fact that it was being held in the predominantly white South Boston neighborhood caused a change in the new mayor’s schedule. Accompanied by Mel King, the African American mayoral candidate he defeated in November, Flynn traveled to the Franklin Hill housing development in Dorchester at the urging of King, where tenants handed him petitions with over 100 complaints about sanitary code violations. King commented that “People don't want to be used as a symbol, if it [Flynn's commitment] is not the real thing” (ibid. 1984a).

Flynn had been to public housing developments across the city both as a state representative and city councilor. On April 27, 1983 he had announced his candidacy for Mayor of Boston in the D Street project, stating that D Street had been “taken over by the court because of mismanagement and neglect,” a situation that was not unique to South Boston (Kenney1983a). Now, as mayor, he was inheriting the responsibility for nearly 10 percent of the city’s population living in public housing, which, like the schools, was placed under court receivership during the tenure of his predecessor Kevin White. The Boston Housing Authority (BHA) had long failed to provide safe and sanitary housing for its more than fifty thousand residents. In 1979, after years of protracted battles, tenants had successfully convinced Superior Court Judge Paul Garrity to place the BHA in receivership (Perez et al. v BHA). Founded in 1935 to administer the local response to the Housing Acts of 1934, 1937, and 1949, the BHA tenants faced unsafe and unsanitary living conditions and were looking to the new mayor for action.
At the end of inauguration day, January 2, 1984, I was offered a job by the new administration in the Mayor’s Office of Community Participation. Never having sought or conceived of a position in government, I asked Tom “Alex” Bledsoe, Flynn’s campaign field coordinator and the head of the new office, how long I would have to think it over and decide. Alex responded, “Well, you would start tomorrow morning.” I had been at D Street since 1978 and loved working as a community organizer and leader of the project’s multi-service center, where the tenants had made significant progress in improving the quality of the housing at the development and strengthening the social networks of the residents. I also knew that this was an opportunity to be part of a new team and a journey to make a difference in the entire city.

Walking to City Hall, I didn’t know quite what to expect that first day of my new job. I joined a hastily called staff meeting led by the new mayor to demonstrate that indeed there were people running City Hall. Then we went to work and participated in the governance of the City of Boston for the next decade.

This dissertation, written more than two decades after the events described, is the gift and curse I willed to myself back then as I took an extended sabbatical from the doctoral program at Boston University when I moved into City Hall. If I were taking this degree in history, I would be writing a piece of contemporary social history and no one would think twice about it. I have access to documents from that period that might exist in some unchronicled archive but nowhere else. Included among them are reports and memos that I authored or was able to access only because I worked on the mayor’s staff. I have my contacts from those years, people who were on the scrimmage line and
sidelines during the controversies I describe. (Some liked what Mayor Flynn was doing; others most decidedly did not.) And I have my recollections of meetings and events that some of these same people attended or had a hand in shaping.

Inasmuch as I am writing this document for a degree in sociology, I have to describe what I did in more scientific and unfamiliar terms. The interviews and stories contained herein were collected through a mix of retrospective participant observation and autoethnography techniques. Either I was there myself, or the people who have shared their recollections with me were there. There is archival research involved: the aforementioned memos, reports, and news accounts. Some of the data included here are from official sources. Other data reflect my own and others’ impressions, recollections, and assessments of what happened and what it meant then and means now.

The period 1980–2000 is described and analyzed using information gathered through all these means and from all these sources. I use both primary and secondary source materials, including census and newspaper accounts from the archives of the Boston Globe, Boston Herald, and community newspapers. Key interviewees included former and current city policy makers, as well as business, religious, and neighborhood leaders, through purposeful sampling methodology. All the persons quoted here either gave me permission to use their names or are quoted from already published accounts such as news stories. None of the 60 plus persons I approached refused to let me identify him or her. Two interview subjects were cautions to avoid criticizing Mayor Menino.

As noted earlier, I approach this dissertation project having been a part of the Boston city administration from 1984 until 1994. I seek to portray both the public
perceptions and the concrete realities of the impact of not only the Flynn administration (1984-1993) but also, to some extent, of the other two governing regimes of the period under study on selected areas of city life in Boston. While I may be disposed to believe that there were positive accomplishments during the period that I was a part of city government, I sought to discover and incorporate alternative views about the success or failure of Boston’s governing coalitions to make a significant impact on the following areas of city life: race, immigration, poverty, education, and inequality.

Research Question

The overarching research question examined in this dissertation is, “How did each of the governing regimes in City of Boston between 1980 and 2000 respond to and shape race and ethnic relations, inequality, economic development policy, and public education governance?” I explore municipal government’s ability to promote social and economic justice—to reduce poverty, improve education, eliminate or lessen racial conflict, and increase economic opportunity for city residents. Focusing on these issues, I shed light on what policies led to transformative moments in Boston’s history through a sociological analysis of the period 1980–2000.

Methodology

In-depth Interviews:

I interviewed more than 60 people over a one-and-one-half-year period, traveling to San Francisco, Washington, D.C, South Carolina, Cape Cod, and other sites. I conducted interviews in people’s homes, offices, coffee shops and bars, and in one case an airport. I included in the sample the one living former mayor and unsuccessful candidates for the
office of mayor in 1983 including civil rights icon Mel King; key former and current policy advisors; police, education, and development officials; and city business, community, and religious leaders who were active civic participants during the period 1980–2000. I chose subjects, identified through newspaper accounts and personal knowledge, who could shed light on the following questions: What did city political and civic leaders do during this period to respond to racial conflict, economic development, poverty, and public school governance? How have key areas of urban life—the economy, public education, immigration, race, and politics changed the way urban dwellers view themselves and others? How did newcomers assert themselves during this period of transformation? What were the major points of animosity during this period? How these transformations were managed and how did the public respond? In addition, I examine the additional questions: How was it possible that Ray Flynn and Mel King defeated the downtown real estate and business interests to become the two finalists in the 1983 election for Mayor of Boston? What was the nature of the progressive, conservative, and union coalition that led to the election of Flynn? How did his administration retain political power over three election cycles and accommodate the business community? What were the divisions both within City Hall and with the progressives that had formed the basis of Mel King’s Rainbow Coalition? How was the governing regime organized and managed? Through general interview questions regarding the period under study, I undertook a “guided conversation” rather than a static set of questions (Lofland and Lofland 1995). I asked each interview subject about their experiences and recollections
during the three mayoral regimes between 1980 and 2000 concerning race relations and conflict, economic development policies, and public school governance.

I developed a holistic perspective to understand the experiences and explicit actions taken by key actors in Boston and what happened and why. With each of the interview subjects I explored questions about specific issues during the period under study, the actions of the interviewee, his or her experiences, and the outcome of the particular issue. I explored how decisions were talked about both privately and publicly and how they were played out in the community, the media, and the government.

All the interview subjects were offered complete confidentiality; however, each had the opportunity to waive such confidentiality if they chose. All were willing to comment on the record. However, given that this study is largely a historical sociological analytical retrospective, with much of the data available in the public record, I have been cognizant of and sensitive to the issues of personal harm when a policy or action may now seem misguided and an interview subject may wish to prevaricate to protect his or her legacy or conceal errors in judgment or action.

**Retrospective Autoethnography:**

The use of retrospective autoethnography “constitutes an autobiographical sociology, whereby the sociologist probes one or more past personal experiences as a way of identifying and analyzing something sociologically relevant” (Friedman 1990:61). The retrospective autoethnography methodology is alternatively called retrospective participant observation or, autobiographical sociology, among other lexicons in an emergent method of qualitative inquiry (Patton 2002, Holt 2003, Duncan 2004). Coupled
with ethnographic interviewing and archival data, this alternative research approach is
designed to provide “a different angle of vision on sociologically relevant topics”
(Friedman 1990:64, Patton 2002). Following Friedman’s suggestions on guidelines for
autobiographical sociology, he suggests three broad questions that I consider: “What
happened to me and why did it happen? In what ways was my experience similar to and
different from others involved? What is the larger sociological significance of the
experience?” (Friedman 1990:62). While I was not actively taking field notes during the
period under study, I reviewed files and archival materials that place me as a participant
in many of the conversations and controversies of the period under study.

Archival Research:

Through archival research, I reviewed city documents, correspondence, and memos to
and from city officials; census data; and newspaper and other media reports to develop a
grounded theory approach to a deepened understanding of events and actions by key
leaders and citizens during the period of this study. Former Mayor White’s
administration’s records are in large part at the Boston Public Library; Mayor Flynn
(1984–1993) has deposited all his papers and records in the City Archives, and these are
still in the process of being catalogued; limited records of former Mayor Menino are in
the City Archives, with most in the possession of City Hall. Other records were obtained
through city departments and newspaper accounts.

Data Analysis:

Interviews for this qualitative study were recorded and transcribed. Data were coded with
NVivo software and analyzed to uncover themes in the approaches, issues, ways
decisions were made, and the results of those decisions. The interviews were triangulated
with archival data and interviews with several key informants to test reliability and
attempt to deal with the problems of retrospective data accuracy (Barnard 1984,
Friedman 1990). On the topics under study, certain themes emerged regarding issues of
race relations and conflict and economic development policies pursued by each of the
administrations. I had expected the administrations of Flynn and Menino to be similar in
many respects regarding these domains and differ significantly from the White era;
however, the interview and archival data revealed significant differences between Flynn
and Menino and similarities between White and Menino, which I will describe and
analyze in the later chapters and conclusion.
CHAPTER 1

Theoretical and Thematic Frameworks

“Sociologically research based upon the traditional definitions of what an urban place is has had very little relevance to the actual, day-to-day activities of those at the top of local power structure whose priorities set the limits within which decisions affecting land use, the public budget and urban social life come to be made.” (Molotch 1976. The City as a Growth Machine: Toward a Political Economy of Place)

In analyzing the results of my research, I employed four theoretical approaches: urban regime theory, growth machine coalition theory, progressive city theory, and government communalism theory. Using the framework of urban sociology, I then explored three basic themes to shed light on the way the city worked under the different mayoral administrations of the period under study. This chapter first discusses the theoretical approaches used and then explains their relationship to the thematic framework.

Theoretical Framework

Urban Regime Theory:

Urban regime theory—the view that city governance is the result of the coalition between public and private actors—became prominent following Clarence Stone’s study of Atlanta and has guided significant research in other urban areas (Burns 2003, Domhoff 2006, Ferman 1996, Gendron 2006, Stone 1989). Most urban sociological and political theorists would agree that there are limits to localism and to the ability of an urban regime to single-handedly increase economic opportunity, reduce poverty, solve racial conflict, and fix the social problems that face cities in urban American (Dreier 2000, Peterson 1981). Paul Peterson argues that, “The rivalry among groups, the patterns of
coalition formation, the presence or absence of competitive political parties, the power of local elites, or the vagaries of political campaigns are what influence policy outcomes. Moreover, parties, groups, the news media, bureaucracies, and other political institutions function similarly in local and national contexts” (Peterson 1981:3). He identifies some of the areas of inquiry, and the key institutions, issues, and actors that are the focus in this study of Boston.

**Growth Machine Coalition Theory:**

Growth machine coalitions formed in cities across the U.S. following World War II, and in Boston they resulted in the elections of Mayors John Hynes (1949), John Collins (1959), and Kevin White (1967). This trend will be juxtaposed with the election to the office of mayor of the populist candidate Ray Flynn in 1983 and his successor Thomas Menino in 1993, in office until 2014 (Kimelberg 2011, Mollenkopf 1983, Molotch 1976).

One window into the theoretical questions of growth coalition theory is whether governing regimes can implement redistributive policies, and if they can, how they do so. I examined how regime and growth coalition theories align with the experiences of key actors in Boston. The exploration of political, community, and governmental actions and decisions during the period under study will help gain a better understanding of why Boston is the place it is today.

Growth machine coalition theory and practice were challenged in many cities across the country by activists seeking a more balanced distribution of economic rewards from the growth of urban areas. Of particular note was the reaction to the urban renewal policies of federal and local governments of the 1950s, which sought to facilitate a post-
war economic revival of the post-industrial city. While the growth coalitions were largely successful in the initial phases of the physical transformation of urban areas, the cultural revolt soon formed the basis of a new set of politics and policies.

**Progressive City Theories:**

I examined the progressive city theories developed by Pierre Clavel in the 1970s and 1980s as an outgrowth of the civil rights and anti-war movements decades before. Urban political and community leaders were fostering the creation of a new type of social organization in many cities centered on redistributive and participatory reforms. Clavel’s research on a number of cities revealed that “many of the programs had a populist tone reminiscent of the great democratizing of the period around the turn of the century” (Clavel 1986:1, 2011).

Elected in 1983 by a coalition of left-leaning tenant and community organizers, neighborhood activists, labor leaders, and conservative old-line Irish political and anti-abortion activists, Ray Flynn ran on a populist platform that promised social and economic justice. He also pledged to direct the benefits of the downtown building boom of the 1980s to the city’s neighborhoods through a new social contract (Kennedy 1992). In addition, he promised to heal the city’s racial cleavage, reflected in the legacy of court-ordered busing from the 1974 Federal court decree, which he opposed.

Race has always been the third rail of Boston politics. Although Boston was in the forefront of the abolitionist movement and the Underground Railroad, blacks have long been isolated in segregated neighborhoods and schools and absent in the political discourse and corporate and government positions of power in the city.
**Government Communalism Theory:**

“Government communalism” is a phrase coined by Daniel Monti (1999), who uses it to distinguish one of four main ways in which Americans “do community.” Monti argues that the principles underlying government communalism are exclusivity, accountability, and tolerance. Only some persons are deemed worthy enough to be welcomed as citizens (exclusivity). Those who are allowed in are expected to treat others in public in a way that is respectful of other citizens’ needs (accountability). People who make it as citizens are treated more leniently than those who do not (tolerance). The Flynn administration in particular was pivotal because it worked to make black residents into black citizens. That is, the city government could be made to work in a way that enabled black Bostonians and the growing immigrant populations to be thought of and treated like every other group or class that had been granted citizenship. Government could help build community by being more inclusive of those left out of the mainstream of the civic culture (Monti 1999).

**The Urban Sociological Framework**

This dissertation is intended to both draw upon previous research and chart new ground in an analysis and examination of Boston through the eyes and experiences of those who participated in the governing regimes and civic life of the period under study.

I frame my urban sociological analysis under the two main questions addressed in urban sociology: First, urbanization, or how do cities and urban areas develop? This question focuses primarily on demographic and economic factors, but it also alludes to the creation of large institutions to manage and make local populations more productive.
Growth coalition and progressive city theories fall under this category. Second, following Wirth’s *Urbanism as a Way of Life* (1938), urbanism, or how do people live in urban places? The emphasis here is on the size and density of the urban population. This question focuses on various levels of group life, informal and formal, including large institutions and how they enable people to adapt, especially in view of their largely heterogeneous character (Borer 2006). Urban regime and government communalism theories fall under this category. To understand Boston during the period under study, I gathered data about the city’s urbanization (the development policies of the city) and urbanism (the changing nature of race relations) from Boston’s key civic actors between 1980 and 2000.

The most prominent research undertaken in urban sociology consists of studies of problems in cities such as poverty, delinquency, racial conflict, gangs, and prostitution, among others (Du Bois 1899, Gans 1962, Gottdiener 1994, Liebow 1967, Monti 1985, 1994, Park 1915, Park and Burgess 1925, Small 2004, Stack 1979, Suttles 1968, 1972, Whyte 1943, Wilson 1978, 1996, 2009, Wirth 1928, 1938). Emerging in the late 19th century, the field of urban sociology reflected the anti-urbanism of the period, which originated over concerns about the social disorganization believed to be the byproduct of industrial capitalism in large cities (Boyer 1992, Lees 1985). Schools were seen as important institutions for responding to this social disorganization—in particular the problems associated with immigrants and poverty, social conflict, and class antagonisms. The connections between urban sociology and the sociology of education can be understood in part as a way to address the conflicts associated with race and class and the
heterogeneous nature of urban life. Cities and their educational institutions have been portrayed as the laboratories in which sociological issues—race, class, inequality, culture, power, and stratification—have been aired and addressed (Park, Burgess and McKenzie 1925, Wirth 1938).

Urban sociology must be understood within a historical perspective. Cities and their institutional structures, such as schools, were formed as a direct result of economic change (Boyer 1978, Lees 1985, Rury 2005, Weber 1958, Wirth 1938). With this in mind, I discuss development in Boston including urban renewal and downtown growth building of Boston, with its related economic and political policies, in the context of the group life in the city and how people adapt and create their own unique cultures. I explore what I will term theories about the governing regimes in the City of Boston between 1980 and 2000 and whether these regimes adopted policies and strategies to shape the domains of race and ethnic relations, inequality, and public education.

This analysis attempts to understand how decisions between 1980 and 2000 impacted the city and established the economic, political, and cultural framework for 21st-century Boston. Was poverty reduced? Did economic development decision making change to be more inclusive? Were race relations improved? These are the quantitative and qualitative measures I explore. Through examination of the coalitions that formed within City Hall and the governing regime, and the private interests of business, community, religious, and non-profit leaders in Boston, I shed light on how the regimes were built, who the key members were, and how they differ significantly from today. To understand what happened during this period and explain the insights learned, I utilized
interviews, the stories of the civic and political leaders, autoethnography, and archival and historical sociological analysis (Patton 2002).

**Thematic Analysis**

I use the four theoretical approaches described above to make sense of three problems that were crucial to the way the city worked and which each mayoral administration approached differently: mayoral leadership and community power; inequality and economic development and redistribution; and race relations and conflict, including public school governance. Each theoretical framework is more helpful for one of these three problems. Mayoral leadership and community power are framed by urban regime theory; inequality and economic development and redistribution draw upon growth coalition theory and theories about progressive city governments; and race relations and conflict, including public school governance, explore government communalism and regime theory as a theoretical guiding frameworks. Each thematic framework is summarized below and draws upon key literatures to help explain sociologically how Boston became the city it is today.

**Theme One: Mayoral Leadership and Community Power:**

The study of mayoral leadership and urban regime theories emerge from contests between the liberal and neo-liberal urban framework. Liberal and neo-liberal tenets include tolerance for diversity, maximization of individual liberties, an unfettered market that protects the rights of private property, and a minimization of the role of government (Clavel 1986, Hackworth 2007). Mayoral leadership is an area not widely researched by sociologists. Theories that speak directly to how we have come to view cities in terms of
power and governance, and the internal and external forces at work—including how the factors that shape urban policy are internal to the city—are contested by Paul Peterson in his prominent work, *City Limits*, in which he states “City politics is limited politics” (1981:4).

Discourse on politics in cities has been shaped by the literatures on community power, including the conflict between political machines and reform movements, comparative urban policy, and federalism (Peterson 1981). I will highlight these in an effort to identify how the debate on community power can help shape the exploration of this question for Boston.

Community power is often understood in three broad areas: the “power elite,” comprised of business, labor, and political leaders (Domhoff 2006, Mills 1956); “pluralists,” who see competition between these groups for power (Dahl 1961, Levine, C. 1974); and a third group who sees political power as diffuse, with an “invisible elite” who keep issues off local agendas (Peterson 1981). The exercise of community power is a contested field of study, which includes Clarence Stone’s and Peter Dreier’s frameworks of urban regime theory.

The machine-reform conflict is often described as class-based conflict “between the ‘ethos’ of the machine as representative of working-class immigrants, and the ‘ethos’ of the reformers, who represented upper class, silk-stockinged, Anglo-Saxon businessmen and professionals” (Peterson 1981:7). The reformers of both cities and schools sought to run the city like an efficient business, with a corporate board of directors and where cities and schools would serve the interests of the business elites
The comparative urban policy approach seeks to understand city politics in terms of political variables that are often hampered by wide variations in urban governance structures from city to city. And the federalism theory of urban politics suggests that intergovernmental relationships are complex and often have contested roles and responsibilities.

In his study of Atlanta based on the regime theory framework, which he largely formulated, Clarence Stone posits that governing capacity is created and maintained through the formation of coalitions between the government actors and economic and business leaders (Stone 1993). He takes a political economy approach, drawing from Peterson: “exploring the middle ground between, on the one side, pluralists with their assumption that the economy is just one of several discrete spheres of activity and, on the other side, structuralists who see the mode of production as pervading and dominating all other spheres of activity, including politics” (Stone 1993:2).

Stone’s regime theory thesis suggests an alternative social production model of power (“power to” rather than “power over”), where government is just one of many actors, and not necessarily the most important broker in urban decision-making. In regime theory, public policies are shaped and carried out by coalitions that include the government and political actors but in which the government is not the only or the most influential of the coalition partners. Stone categorizes four ideal types of urban regimes: maintenance regimes, which support the status quo and focus on delivery of basic services; development regimes, similar to the growth coalition model, which use public action to promote private investment; middle class progressive regimes, which seek to
negotiate community benefits as part of the development process; and lower class
opportunity regimes, which pursue a redistributive agenda to alter the actions of the
private sector without stifling investment. The redistributive agenda has been the central

Dreier, Mollenkopf and Swanstrom, drawing from Stone and others, classify
urban regime ideal types as liberal, progressive, and conservative—which may more
accurately reflect the basic operational tenets of how regimes are ideologically
constituted in cities. In his case study of Cleveland under the mayoralty of Dennis
Kucinich from 1977 to 1979, Swanstrom seeks to uncover the political side of growth
politics in that city (1985). Richard Gendron and G. William Domhoff conduct a similar
analysis about Santa Cruz (2009), in which they argue that the fundamental conflict is
between exchange value, promoted by the growth coalition, and use-value, promoted by
advocates comprising neighborhood groups, community leaders, and environmentalists.
They posit that it is difficult to develop the progressive city coalition and “sustain such a
coalition because most social movement activists focus on class-based and social justice
issues, whereas neighborhood and environmental activists have a primary if not sole
concern with the use values of land” (2009:206). Richard DeLeon studied San Francisco
(1992) during approximately the same period under study in Boston. He argues that
opposition to the growth coalition led to an anti-regime approach, in which “proposed
development projects were blocked at every turn by angry progressives who would not be
crowded out by stadiums or hotels,” and he suggests that then-Mayor Agnos “learned too
late that democratic process and citizen empowerment were integral to the progressive
agenda” (1992:159). Interestingly, Mayor Flynn was in attendance when San Francisco approved the controversial Downtown Plan in 1985 to pick up pointers for Boston’s approach to linkage and growth management. Following conversations with Boston officials, DeLeon observed: “Although Boston modeled its comprehensive linked development policies on San Francisco’s earlier pioneering efforts, growth-control measures such as San Francisco’s Downtown Plan continue to be perceived by Bostonians as politically dangerous and economically unnecessary” (1992:198 n19).

These theories and approaches are central to the insights, understandings, and analysis that follow about Boston. While each of these studies has made important theoretical contributions and analysis in the light of urban regime, growth coalition, government communalism and progressive city theories, Boston has to be examined as unique. Boston’s historical, economic, cultural, and political development, and the governing coalitions that emerged between 1980 and 2000, followed a different trajectory and achieved different results than San Francisco, Santa Cruz, Cleveland, and Atlanta. What is likely true, however, is that after two decades of struggle to balance the interests of business and neighborhood residents, particularly low-income and working-class citizens, each of the cities mentioned is now confronting widening income inequality with the resultant conflicts.

Theme Two: Inequality and Economic Development and Redistribution:

A central focus of this dissertation is to identify Boston’s development policies, including redistribution and participation and their implementation and outcomes. Growth machine coalition theory frames this analysis in Boston. For Peterson (1981), cities compete for
development with policies that are inherently positive and “redound to the advantage of the city as a whole...because the benefits of the policy are widely enough distributed” (1981:148). He maintains that redistributive policies negatively impact the city with pernicious economic consequences. Monti, too, believes that everyone profits in the long run from economic development and “(e)ven when business leaders’ interests are confined largely to matter of rebuilding cities, some corporate and business leaders can do a better job of spreading the wealth around than most persons expect” (Monti 1999:271).

It is a matter of considerable debate as to whether the benefits from urban economic development are widely distributed to the needy and unfortunate (Dreier 1990, 2000). John Logan and Harvey Molotch suggest that government, the most influential of the coalition partners, affects urban fortunes and therefore that developers are “structural speculators who must influence government decisions if they are to maximize returns from their holdings and also make campaign contributions (or bribes) to public officials” (Logan and Molotch 1987:157).

The growth coalition model extends beyond the question of who governs to explore the questions, “for what?” and, ultimately, “for whom?” Logan and Molotch argue that “elites use their growth consensus to eliminate any alternative vision of the purpose of local government or the meaning of community” (Kennedy 1992, Logan and Molotch 1987, Molotch 1976). They “construct a sociology of cities on the basis of a sociology of urban property relations,” where places are commodities for which the goal is achieving the maximum economic value (Logan and Molotch 1987:13). While
Peterson, Stone, Clavel, Logan, Molotch, Gendron, Domhoff and Dreier each provides insights on the development or growth imperative, each approaches the political economy of place through a different lens.

Several urban politics theorists outline three major policy arenas in cities: developmental policies, redistributive policies, and “allocational” policies (Peterson 1981). In his studies of “progressive cities,” Clavel postulates that progressive urban coalitions emerge in direct response to the growth coalition and the lack of participatory democracy and that they can implement both redistributive and participatory reforms (Clavel 1986, 2011; Dreier 1990). Cities seek to maximize their local economy and adopt allocational approaches to the delivery of basic city services. Contested, however, is the ability of governing regimes of cities to redistribute power, resources, and benefits (Dreier 1990, 2000). This framework is supported by elite power theorist William Domhoff, who, in challenging the limits of regime theory, suggests that the way to understand urban power structures is to understand the growth machine (Domhoff 2006). Swanstrom’s investigation of Cleveland also reinforces the notion that tensions between the growth coalition and a more populist or redistributive program has political implications (Swanstrom 1985).

These frameworks are applied to Boston through an investigation and understanding of the governing regimes of the period through the eyes and stories both of those governing and those being governed. Boston’s early growth coalitions and the impact of their policies on Boston’s neighborhoods has been researched (Dreier 1990, 2000, Gans 1962, King 1981, Mollenkopf 1983, Worthy 1976). Boston is in many ways
unique because of its historical position in the regional economy; however, the growth machine coalition that emerged in Boston in the 1950s were similar to those in comparable cities such as San Francisco and Cleveland (Mollenkopf 1983, Swanstrom 1985).

Here I will through interviews with a broad cross section of Boston past and present civic and government leaders, as Shelley McDonough Kimelberg (2011) writes, “strive to give voice to those individuals whose rights have often been ignored, or purposely subordinated, in the pursuit of expansion or profit and at the same time examine how those presumed to be in power understand their position and capacity in the development process” (2011:77).

One view, which I share, is that progressive urban regimes can implement redistributive policies that can both manage growth and exact concessions from the corporate and real estate development communities (Clavel 1986, 2011, Dreier 1990, 2000). In Boston, an example is “linkage”—a tax on large scale development—by which over $58 million was contributed to build nearly 6,000 units of housing between 1984 and 2000. Of these, 4,812 (80 percent) were affordable for low-to-moderate-income residents of Boston’s neighborhoods (BRA Report 2003).

This is an arena that has been contested with Peterson’s argument that “city politics is limited politics,” owing more to federalism and the global economy than local influence (Peterson 1981:4), versus Clavel and Dreier’s argument that cities have and can implement successful redistributive policies (Clavel 2011, Dreier 1990, 2000:206, Swanstrom 1985). Boston’s downtown and neighborhoods look like they do today
because of the “political choices on the physical city” (Kennedy 1992:2) and I refute Peterson’s argument as I explore those choices.

**Theme Three: Race Relations and Public School Governance Contest:**

Government communalism is a theoretical framework that analyzes how the government can help to build community and be more inclusive of those individuals left out of the mainstream civic culture. Politicians use the government to make rules that favor the rights of individuals not otherwise protected from harm (Monti 1999). How Boston’s civic culture has been shaped by its political, business, religious, and community leaders is an important aspect of the city’s history and with impact on how its citizens get along today (Monti 2012). As Lyn Lofland observed, “in the obviously anonymous and impersonal world of the city, someone had located not only social life but a socially important life” (Lofland 1998:4).

Boston of the 1970s was a turbulent period in race relations in the city. Ignited by the June 21, 1974 Federal court school desegregation order and subsequent bussing of students between Boston’s black neighborhood, Roxbury, and white neighborhood, South Boston, Boston’s racial climate was volatile. Martin Walsh, Regional Director of the Community Relations Service, who was responsible for managing the role of the U.S. Department of Justice in the Boston busing case, identified Boston’s school desegregation ordeal as, “an exorcism, following which the resolution of other stubborn civil rights problems became possible” (Levine, B. 2005:179-180).

School desegregation was not the only arena of racial conflict in Boston. Residential blockbusting and racial discrimination in housing had been occurring
throughout the city, exacerbated by bank policies as well as the Federal housing, transportation, and urban policies of the 1950s and 1960s (Levine, H. and Harmon 1992). The iconic image captured by Boston Herald photographer Stanley Forman in his 1976 Pulitzer Prize–winning photograph of a black man being attacked with an American flag on City Hall Plaza, “The Soiling of Old Glory,” would come to define Boston in the eyes of the world (Masur 2008).

Out of the turmoil in the schools and neighborhoods of Boston, the Community Disorders Unit (CDU) of the Boston Police Department was created in April 1978. That year, 607 racial incidents were reported. The charge for the CDU, then as it is today (although renamed the Civil Rights Unit), according to the Boston Police Department, is for District personnel to refer incidents to the CDU if elements of bias or hate motivation are detected at the initial reporting stage (BPD 2008 Crime Summary Report). Between 1978, when the CDU was formed, through 2000, Boston saw, on average, more than 266 incidents of race-motivated hate crimes each year. The integration of public housing in Boston during the period under study was closely monitored by the CDU, and during this period (1990-1999) racially-motivated hate crimes rose significantly.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
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<td>1978</td>
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**Chart 1: Racially Motivated Crimes in Boston**
Source: Boston Police Department

Yellow: Mayor White; Blue: Mayor Flynn; Orange: Mayor Menino administrations
Source: Boston Police Department

Punctuating the racial divisions in the city was a secession effort initiated in 1986 by a loose coalition of black leaders and activists to carve out a 12.5 square mile swath of Boston as an independent municipality. Proposed to be called Mandela after the South African leader, the new city would cover 22 percent of the city’s population, 25 percent
of the land area, and be 90 percent minority, encompassing the neighborhoods of Roxbury, Mattapan, parts of Dorchester, the South End, Jamaica Plain, and the Fenway (Kenney 1987a). The proposal led to several referendums, all defeated and opposed by Mayor Flynn, many black clergy, political leaders, and the white business community. This would symbolize the ability of the Flynn administration to respond effectively to issues of race relations in Boston and include those historically left out of the benefits of citizenship. This campaign is explored in greater detail in Chapter 5.

Then on October 23, 1989, race relations in Boston again took a turn for the worse when Carol Stuart, a pregnant woman returning with her husband Charles from childbirth classes at the Brigham and Women’s Hospital in Mission Hill, was murdered and her husband seriously injured. Charles Stuart claimed a black man had attacked them and later identified a black suspect, Willie Bennett, as the shooter in a police lineup. However, in statements made later to police by Charles’s brother Matthew Stuart, he identified Charles as the shooter. On January 4, 1990, Charles Stuart committed suicide by jumping off the Mystic Tobin Bridge, and the issue of race reached a new crescendo in Boston. How Mayor Flynn and his administration handled the incident and its aftermath was hotly contested between the minority and majority communities of the city.

Boston public schools, created to educate elites and socialize the growing immigrant populations, have been an important institution and a contested arena for each governing regime. Home to America’s first public school—the (Boston) Latin School, established in 1635 by business elites and religious leaders—the city has been in the
forefront of education reform efforts since that time. From its earlier days, the school system was dominated by a politically controlled school board where machine politics provided patronage appointments and contract awards serving the needs of the ethnic machine. Remnants of this structure continued into the middle of the 20th century, when social, ethnic, and economic change pushed the school system to confront (or avoid) critical issues of race and class that were emerging at that time. Population and job loss in Boston, coupled with racial and housing segregation and growing urban poverty, posed a new set of challenges for the public schools. Schools were now dealing with increasing segregation and, emerging from the civil rights movement, there were vocal calls to address the problem of the racial achievement gap and unequal educational systems and inequality between the urban minority students and their white suburban counterparts.

Critics of reform, who included teachers and local political leaders, believed that centralization, bureaucratization, and professionalization of the public schools would remove the schools from popular control in favor of the upper class elites (Ravitch 1974). This led to a new movement to decentralize school governance, both in terms of system and market decentralization, across such issues as local control, school choice, vouchers, and charter schools, which are prevalent today (Portz 1999).

As mentioned earlier, of particular importance to this study of Boston will be the governance controversy that resulted in the transition from a 5-member elected school committee, created in 1949, to a 13-member decentralized district structure created in 1983. This research project examines that process and the racial conflicts that occurred as a result of the mayoral takeover of the Boston School Committee in 1992.
The research project will study these and other periods of racial conflict in an effort to understand the ability, or inability, of a governing regime to make significant progress on race relations, including whether the new public school governance structure has achieved the results that the reformers promised.

**Significance of Research**

“*Sociological literature has offered a truncated historical perspective*” (Ternstrom 1973. *The Other Bostonians: Poverty and Progress in the American Metropolis, 1880 – 1970*)

The area of inquiry covered by this dissertation—mayoral leadership and the policies and actions of Boston’s governing regimes to respond to inequality and racial and ethnic conflict, including issues of public education governance—has not been extensively studied. Major theories of urban sociology and urban politics have not used a systematic historical analysis to understand the changing nature of immigration, race and ethnic relations, public schooling, and the economy. This study will seek to augment the research in this arena by exploring how Boston’s citizenry and its governing regimes responded to events during this period.

These research questions are significant theoretically. Increasingly, scholars view comparative historical analysis as “part of a longstanding intellectual project oriented toward the explanation of substantially important outcomes” (Mahoney and Rueschemeyer 2003:6). “Historical analysis of social phenomena is thus not a luxury for those interested in the past for its own sake. A study of the present that neglects the processes of change by which the present was created is necessarily superficial,” writes Stephan Ternstrom (1973:3). Historical sociology is central in understanding present-
day Boston and the construction of knowledge for future civic and political leaders. Whereas this study largely focuses on the 10-year mayoralty of Raymond Flynn (1984–1993), it is perhaps the first empirical study of this period in Boston’s history.

**Chapter Outline and Organization of the Dissertation**

*The goal of the following chapters is to weave together the story of Boston between 1980 and 2000 in three areas of inquiry: mayoral leadership and community power; inequality and economic development and distribution; and racial conflict and public school governance. It utilizes the civic diaries (Monti 1999:5), or newspapers, and stories of the actors themselves.*

In the Introduction, I describe how I came to this project as the progression of a journey that has involved much of my lifetime and outline the research questions I seek to answer. In Chapter 1, I present my methodology and the theoretical and thematic plan for the dissertation. Following on Michael Borer’s analysis, challenging the dichotomy between urbanization and urbanism in the study of urban areas (Borer 2006), I explore the limits and possibilities of municipal government and the forces—economic, political, and social—that influence cities.

In Chapter 2, I provide a brief social, economic, and political history of Boston before and after 1980. This history attempts to frame the period under study, 1980 – 2000, with a backdrop of the key milestones that led to the economic, political, and social changes that followed.

Chapter 3 is a case study of the 1983 race for Mayor of Boston and the implementation of a new approach to governance of the urban regime motivated by social
and economic justice. I explore the political environment that led to the 1983 election and the issues and forces that shaped it. This should be considered a “critical election” (Key 1955) in Boston’s history, as nine candidates competed in the first open race for mayor in sixteen years. What made the 1983 election historically important was that it was the first repudiation of the business community since 1949. Finalists Ray Flynn and Mel King, the first African American to be a final candidate in the city’s history, were united in embracing the need to promote social and economic justice for all Boston’s residents. More than 201,000 votes, representing 70 percent of the electorate, were cast in that final election for a new direction for Boston. Even with the growing population since 1983, turnout in Boston’s last five mayoral elections haven’t even come close to what occurred in that year.
From linkage to affordable housing, the agenda of the city shifted away from the downtown to the neighborhoods. The results: the period from 1984 to 1993 saw a transformation in race relations, reduced inequality, and expanded neighborhood empowerment. Boston saw real progress, while the growth in the downtown resulted in economic benefits redistributed to those most in need. How governance of the city—the urban regime—accomplished these transformations is outlined and then expanded upon in subsequent chapters.
Chapter 4 describes the history of income inequality, housing policy, and the resulting displacement and gentrification in the city. I trace the responses of the political leadership to the economic transformation, and those interviewed recount their experiences in the changing city. The chapter traces the rise and fall of the growth coalition and the contested public policies that were at the center of the public discourse during the period under study. Following the end of the term of Mayor Kevin White, policies Mayor Ray Flynn’s administration put in place to “manage growth” for the benefit of Boston’s neighborhoods included linkage, inclusionary zoning, and resident and minority jobs and training policies. These began the transformation of Boston into a “progressive city.” This period can best be defined as one that put social and economic justice at the forefront of the city’s agenda. The chapter includes analysis of the lasting impact of the residential blockbusting and racial discrimination in housing had been occurring throughout the city, fed by bank policies and the Federal housing, transportation, and urban policies of the 1950s and 1960s (Levine, H. and Harmon 1992).

The chapter closes highlighting several very successful neighborhood empowerment movements, including the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative and the Parcel to Parcel linkage effort in Roxbury. Both initiatives were designed to foster neighborhood and minority empowerment in the redevelopment of their communities. The role of community development corporations and neighborhood organizations in rebuilding Boston is explored. Finally, I examine how the policies changed under Flynn’s successor, Thomas Menino.
In Chapter 5, the politics of race—a topic central to Boston’s troubled past—emerges as a central theme in this dissertation. The turbulence engendered by the 1974 Federal Court decision to implement school busing and its aftermath, the integration of public housing, and the efforts of some in Boston’s black community to secede from the city frame the analysis of racial politics and conflict. Supporters of the Mel King campaign sought to frame the race issue as a contest between redistributive and transformative populism, whereby the former sought to unite the community based upon class solidarity and the latter upon race and diversity through a consciousness-raising and empowerment strategy (Kennedy, Tilly and Gaston, 1990). The debate on this issue is explored. The response of the Flynn administration in combating racial violence through the Community Disorders Unit of the Boston Police Department and efforts to integrate the historically segregated public housing developments are examined. The divisive succession campaign and the traumatic event—the so-called Stuart incident in 1989—which was framed as symbolic of a city where racial divisions are ingrained in the public consciousness, are discussed.

In Chapter 6, I examine the turbulence involving the Boston Public Schools with a specific case study about the transformation from an elected school committee to one appointed by the mayor in 1992. Every person I interviewed raised the issue of the impact the 1974 court-ordered busing had on the social fabric of the city. The racial conflict that followed received national attention, and the iconic Pulitzer Prize–winning photo by Stanley Forman of Ted Landsmark being speared with the American flag on City Hall Plaza, is imprinted in the memories of Bostonians of that era (and is often referred back
to in significant events of racial cleavage or change even today). The transformation of the school committee sharpened the racial divide in the city and, although the charter change was implemented and the majority of voters ratified it five years after initial implementation, the majority of black Bostonians (71 percent according to poll data by Suffolk University in July 2013) would likely support a return to the elected committee today. Overall, the poll showed that 63 percent support a return to an elected school committee with only 24 percent supporting the mayorally appointed board.

In Chapter 7, I discuss my conclusions and argue that the period under study was a transformative time in Boston’s history. I revisit the three themes and the advantages and disadvantages of the four theoretical approaches used to make sense of those themes. Policies put in place between 1980 and 2000 have led Boston to where it is today. I explore lessons for cities that want to be progressive and pursue a social and economic justice agenda. I also explore the current state of economic, political, and social conditions in Boston today. With the mayoralty of Thomas M. Menino having ended in January of 2014 after 20 years, what are the conditions and legacy he left behind? I also offer a postscript on the 2013 mayoral election and thoughts on the challenges facing Boston and its new mayor, Martin J. Walsh.

This is the first systematic, scholarly qualitative analysis of this period and the varying governing regimes of the era using a grounded theory approach to make the analysis directly from the data collected (Buroway 1991, Strauss and Corbin 1990). It explores what constitutes an urban “progressive” or populist regime, and outlines this type of regime’s approach to governing a large and diverse urban metropolis. The
analysis presented in the following chapters differs from more descriptive presentations about the history of Boston political actors. I have attempted to uncover the significance of policies in Boston and, by extrapolation, urban areas beyond the city’s boundaries that respond to the needs of the citizenry to both participate in their government and share in the benefits of governmental decision making. Racial conflict is not a local Boston problem or even an urban phenomenon, but rather a global issue. The power relationships between blacks and whites in Boston may be the root cause of racial conflict in the city and around the globe. The political expression by blacks in Boston to gain control over development in their communities and the Mandela effort is a form of nationalism (Stone and Rizova 2014). How leaders deal with the historic conflict between different racial groups defines us as a society.

The results of the study should help current and future political and civic leaders understand the impact of their policies and create opportunities to affect change—to make Boston a city that includes all of its citizens in a shared prosperity and racial harmony.
CHAPTER 2

Boston Brief Political, Social and Economic History—Before and After 1980

*I mean Boston was still in a funk in '71. Some would argue we really didn’t recover from the depression.* (Larry DiCara interview)

This dissertation examines how each of the governing regimes of the City of Boston between 1980 and 2000 responded to issues and shaped policy in the domains of race and ethnic relations; economic development and inequality; and public education. The governing regimes of the period under study are placed in historical context in the following sections.

**Historical Background**

Boston’s 350-year-plus history has evolved to shape the political, economic, physical, social, and cultural city it is today. First settled in the 1630s as an English colony, the city became the economic center of New England. John Winthrop, an early settler and first governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony famously proclaimed Boston to be “The City upon a Hill” in 1630, referring to the Puritan community he envisioned settling there, with the church at the center of the “Godly Commonwealth” (Kennedy 1991:11).

The political, economic, physical, social, and cultural city Boston is today has been shaped by its evolution over 350 years of history. From these beginnings as an English colony in the 1630s, and only becoming an independent municipality in 1822, by early in the 18th-century the city had grown to become the economic center of New England.

The physical development of the city, which originally only consisted of the Shawmut peninsula and grew to encompass the 47 square miles it occupies today, was
made possible through both filling in the harbor and wetlands and annexing the
neighboring towns. The population grew exponentially from about 15,000 during the
mid-18th-century revolutionary period to more than a quarter million a century later,
reaching its peak of 801,000 in 1950. From that population milestone, the size of the city
decreased rapidly each decade until in 1980 (the beginning of the period under study) the
population was 562,994, increasing to 589,141 in 2000. Boston’s population in 2013
stood at about 620,000 (see Chart 1).

Fueled by Irish and Italian immigration in the mid-19th century, the political
leadership of the city—for centuries dominated by the Brahmins, who controlled textile
manufacturing, banks, railroads, and insurance companies—was gradually taken over by
the new Irish immigrants. In 1884 the first Irish-born mayor, Hugh O’Brien, was elected.
The dawn of the 20th century saw the increasing political power of the Irish and a
dismantling of the exclusionary practices of the Brahmins, alongside the expansion of the
industrial base of Boston from mercantile economy to manufacturing and service center
for the region. The political culture of Boston is rooted in its early history.
Political Leadership Overview

Until the mid-20th century, Boston’s political leadership was dominated by the Irish political machine. First with the election in 1901 of Mayor Patrick Collins and then in 1905 of the quintessential ward boss, John F. “Honey Fitz” Fitzgerald, the era of the modern-day political machine emerged in Boston.

In 1949, the business-backed reform coalition was successful in dislodging the machine and its leader, Mayor James Michael Curley, and created a new nine-member at-large city council system to replace the ward council districts that had been in place since 1922. The reformers believed that wresting control of the city council from the ward bosses would put them in a better position to influence who was elected through campaign contributions and political organizations under their control—and it worked. According to Cynthia Horan:
The new-at-large system performed as hoped. Only one of the fourteen incumbents seeking election to the at-large council in 1951 was successful. In addition, the pattern of ward representation changed. The former system of twenty-two wards had guaranteed all areas of the city a councillor and, in particular, each of the city's fifteen major neighborhoods had a voice. Under the new at-large system of nine councillors in the 1950s, city councillors came from just nine wards and represented only seven neighborhoods. Moreover, the new at-large councillors tended to represent the reform voters. Indeed, only one of the nine wards represented on the council had consistently backed Curley in mayoral contests from 1937 to 1951; five had consistently supported other candidates. These reform wards controlled a majority of council seats throughout the 1950s. The new at-large system also tended to over-represent wealthier voters. Of the thirty-six councillors elected during the 1950s, fourteen resided in the city's wealthiest ward, which contained less than 5 percent of the population (Horan 1990:496).

Thus began the process whereby the growth machine emerged and undertook the economic transformation of Boston (Horan 1990, Mollenkopf 1983). The results were dramatic—the demolition of the New York Streets area of the South End, the destruction of the West End, and the development of the Prudential Center were all part of the business-led pro-growth development politics of the 1950s and 1960s. From the 1950s and 1960s and into the 1970s and 1980s, opposition emerged to the plans of Boston’s business and government growth machine coalition for a “New Boston,” initially during Collins’ and Hynes tenure and gaining more power under the regime of Mayor White.

The late Kevin White, the product of a Boston Irish political family, grew up in the lace curtain district of West Roxbury. He ran for Secretary of State in 1960 and was reelected three times. He first ran for mayor in 1967 at the age of 37 and won. He ran on a platform largely based on a rejection of the urban renewal and development policies of his predecessors, Mayors Hynes and Collins. These policies ignited neighborhood opposition and led to the abandonment of many of the urban renewal plans, and the
community empowerment movement expanded to contest these policies and reform the political structure to include greater neighborhood representation (Mollenkopf 1983, King 1981, Kennedy 1992, Small 2004). Kevin White had seen the job as mayor as a stepping stone, telling me, “I was going down to go up”—and “up” was the governor’s office, which he ran for and lost in 1970 (Weinberg 1981).

White served for 16 years as Mayor of Boston, during which time the city underwent a number of crises, including both the schools’ and public housing authorities’ being placed in court receivership; racial conflict and violence stemming from the 1974 federal school desegregation decree; and near financial collapse. Sam Tyler, President of the Boston Municipal Research Bureau, spoke to me about the fiscal challenges Mayor White faced with the Tregor lawsuit in 1979 and Proposition 2½ in 1980 and the crippling effects of these events on Boston’s finances:

Tregor was a defining moment for the city because Mr. Tregor owned an office building in Boston and he sued the city because he felt he was being disproportionately assessed. The courts ruled in his favor, and that led to a determination that the city owed something like $35 million in abatements. This was coming around the same time that the city was faced with proposition 2½ [tax cap], which also occurred during the White administration. That resulted in substantial reductions in property tax revenue. So the combination of Proposition 2½ reducing the property tax revenue and this new burden of paying substantial increase in abatements forced the city to the only course of action it had, which is to seek home-rule petition authorization from the legislature to borrow to pay off these abatement costs.

White weathered these fiscal storms, due in large part to the economic growth period of the late 1970s, which enabled him to focus on commercial development in the downtown. As Larry DiCara writes, “Mayor White had few options left, so he started to sell city assets. All those public parking garages…were in prime downtown spots. The lots were
sold, the garages were knocked down, and new high rise buildings took their places. As a result of the financial crises brought about by the Tregor decision and Proposition 2½, he closed police and fire stations in the early 1980s” (DiCara 2013:124).

Resistance in the city’s neighborhoods to the policies favoring downtown growth and deterioration of the schools, parks, and business districts led to a call for greater political participation and a sharing of downtown prosperity throughout the city. Several ballot initiatives emerged as a result late in Mayor White’s term. In 1977 a district representation ballot question was introduced. This was an effort to expand the engagement of the neighborhoods in the political process, especially the growing communities of color. In 1977 the initiative lost—in part because predominately white neighborhoods like Charlestown and South Boston saw the measure as a way to elect more blacks to the city council. But in 1981 district representation won; and in 1983 two further initiatives received overwhelming support from Boston voters: “linkage,” a measure to “tax” downtown development to benefit development in the neighborhoods (over White’s veto); and a petition to create neighborhood councils to provide a greater voice for residents of Boston in policies that impacted the city’s neighborhoods.

All three ballot initiatives passed. District representation was implemented in the 1983 municipal election, and late in 1983 then–City Councilor Bruce Boling was able to forge a limited linkage ordinance over the initial objections of Mayor White and the business community (Vennochi 1983d). The neighborhood council measure became a point of disagreement during the 1983 mayoral election over provisions allowing for veto power by councils on development projects, and it was ultimately implemented in 1984
by Mayor Flynn. This measure remained contested, however, in several neighborhoods over the potential supplanting of civic associations by neighborhood councils and the powers afforded the same. Out of this contest arose a Coalition for Community Control of Development (CCDD), which sought greater authority over growth. The coalition was broad based and included organizations with leadership from Mel King’s mayoral campaign from many Boston neighborhoods. The coalition proposed a city ordinance to institutionalize community control and veto power by the neighborhood councils, but it was defeated by the city council in 1990 (Clavel 2010:83).

The 1983 municipal election included district representation for the first time since 1951. The city council was transformed from a nine-member at-large council to a body with four at-large members and nine district representatives, and the school committee from a five-member at-large body to one identical to the city council. This effort to establish greater participatory democracy was the first major success in this regard since the period where the business elites and reformers in 1949 sought to dismantle the political machine control of then-Mayor James Michael Curley and the Irish.

After the 16-year mayoralty of Kevin White, there was significant movement for change in City Hall. Nine candidates were on the preliminary election ballot in 1983, and more than 169,039 residents went to the polls in October 1983, vaulting Mel King and Ray Flynn into the final election in November (Annual Report of the Election Department, July 1, 1984). The dynamics and significance of this election in the city’s history are explored in Chapter 3. The final election could be termed a “critical election”
because of the significant engagement of the electorate, with 70 percent voting for a new
direction for the city (Key 1955).

Raymond L. Flynn served as the 52\textsuperscript{nd} Mayor of Boston from 1984 until 1993,
when he resigned to become the Ambassador to the Vatican. Flynn’s election was the
result of a populist campaign that focused on issues and concerns of Boston’s
neighborhoods about social and economic injustice. Flynn and his administration
inherited a growing distrust of municipal government and remnants of the racial turmoil
that engulfed Boston during the busing crisis that had begun in 1974, as well as the
growth machine coalition development policies of the past several decades and unstable
city finances resulting from the 1980 Proposition 2½ tax cap ballot initiative.

These problems led to deteriorating schools and neighborhood services, growing
income disparity, increased housing prices, and poverty in Boston’s neighborhoods.
Having campaigned on a platform of social and economic justice, and a commitment to
share the wealth of the downtown economy with the neighborhoods and their residents,
Flynn put together a coalition to govern the city based on his campaign platform. While
grappling with issues of education, poverty, immigration and racial conflict, his
administration was faced with the withdrawal of federal government support to cities
under the presidency of Ronald Reagan.

The election of Flynn was complicated by the fact that in the final election he
defeated the first African American serious contender for the mayor’s office, Mel King,
who received over 90 percent of the black vote. Coupled with the fact that Flynn had
been an ardent busing opponent, issues of race would be an important touchstone for his administration (Medoff and Sklar 1994, Clavel 2011).

Flynn’s successor, the late Mayor Thomas M. Menino, became acting mayor on July 12, 1993 when President Bill Clinton appointed Flynn Ambassador to the Holy See (Vatican). As President of the Boston City Council, Menino assumed the role of acting mayor.

Tom Menino grew up in Hyde Park, the son of a machinist and a mother who ran an informal settlement house for new immigrants. He worked for a period as an insurance salesman, but his first foray into politics was working on the campaign of city council candidate Joseph Timilty. (Later, he would work on Timilty’s three campaigns for mayor against Kevin White.) Menino also traveled to Pennsylvania on behalf of presidential candidate Jimmy Carter and he helped run Carter’s field organization in 1976 and 1980, during which time he says he “took to politics” (Menino 2014:30). With the help of city councilor Joe Timilty, Menino landed a job at the Boston Redevelopment Authority, where he was responsible for relocating businesses along the path through Boston’s neighborhoods of the proposed I-95 inner-belt highway project—a job Mayor White would later fire him from because of his support of Timilty against White. Menino was elected to the Boston City Council from the Hyde Park/Roslindale District Five in 1983, the first year of district representation (Menino 2014).

Mayor Menino continued to face many of the challenges that emerged in the 1980s and oversaw a continued transformation of Boston into the 21st century. He left the
mayor’s office to take a position at Boston University in January 2014 after 20 years in office, the longest-serving mayor in the city’s history.

The roles of the three governing regimes of Kevin White, Ray Flynn, and Tom Menino, and the actions they took concerning race, economic development, and inequality will be explored in detail in later chapters.

*The Growth Machine and Economic Transformation*

*I mean I look back to the ’60s, we grew up in the ’60s, came of age in the ’60s. You know urban riots, decaying downtowns, white flight, exacerbated by busing. We grew up thinking that cities were dying and boy I wish I had seen the way things were going to turn out because Boston didn’t die.* (Dennis Kearney interview)

*The Growth Machine:*

Boston didn’t die, but it was fundamentally scarred by growth machine efforts to set in motion an economic revival based on downtown development. Probably the biggest scar was the urban renewal of Boston’s West End in the 1950s and 1960s, following the “slum clearance” demolition in the New York Streets section of the South End between 1955 and 1957 (Kennedy 1992, King 1981, Gans 1962).

The growth machine was comprised of the local power structure, led by real estate interests, or “place entrepreneurs,” which joined with other corporate interests, government, and labor to promote the fundamental transformation of the city (Gendron and Domhoff 2009). John Mollenkopf (1983) argues that the rise of the growth coalition was the Democratic Party’s response to urban industrial transformation during and following World War II. The “political entrepreneurs” developed “a kind of banker
government” to support redevelopment and transformation of the urban core into a hub of post-industrial administrative and service centers (1983:139).

Scholars disagree about the precise nature and structure of growth politics. Clarence Stone (1989) theorizes that urban regimes govern through a process of collaboration by institutional leaders (government, business, labor, religious, and non-profit institutions). He characterizes the governing model as “the social production model” (1989:8). While most agree that the primary goal of the urban regime or growth machine is to promote economic development (Peterson 1981), scholars such as John Logan and Harvey Molotch, along with Richard Gendron and G. William Domhoff, view the process and purpose of the coalition as exploiting land use to maximize the private profit that accrues to the dominant coalition partners in the urban regime. How this process led to the urban renewal plans executed between 1950 and 1970 in Boston is explored in Chapter 4.

The Boston Redevelopment Authority (BRA) was designated as the city’s planning agency in 1952 through city ordinance and later by the provisions of Chapter 652 of the Acts of 1960 by the Massachusetts Legislature. The BRA published a number of plans that would lay the foundation for the urban renewal and neighborhood demolition that would follow. The General Plan for Boston (Boston Planning Board, 1950) described the West End as an “obsolete neighborhood” and laid out the vision for the future “New Boston.” Building upon the 1950 plan, the BRA—now the city’s planning agency—published the “1965–1975 General Plan for the City of Boston and the Regional Core” in 1964. This plan, among other things, builds upon the strategy to
replace the West End with a more aggressive approach to urban renewal (General Plan for Boston 1950, General Plan for Boston 1965–1975).

The redevelopment team of city leaders was aligned with powerful business interests under the leadership of the Boston Coordinating Committee, led by Brahmin Ralph Lowell. Known as the “Vault”—because members met in the basement of the Boston Safe Deposit Bank, which Lowell led—the committee rallied behind the growth coalition urban renewal plans of Mayor John Collins. They were joined by the major daily newspapers and the Roman Catholic Church to fundamentally transform the city and property relations within it.

**Economic Transformation:**

In the middle of the 20th century Boston was a troubled city; a city “dying on the vine,” as *U.S. News & World Report* put it (Neyfakh 2012). Businesses and residents had been fleeing, and the economy was in disarray. The Brookings Institution’s study of the largest cities in the U.S. ranked Boston as a distressed city in decline (Bluestone and Stevenson 2000). Racial turmoil erupted following the 1974 court-ordered desegregation of the Boston Public Schools; white flight, which had begun as early as the 1950s, accelerated; and Boston’s neighborhoods were facing disinvestment, arson, and a sharp increase in crime. The loss of manufacturing jobs contributed to the economic decline. “Nationwide, the proportion of employment in nondurable manufacturing has fallen by half between 1950 and 1990; from 14 to 7 percent. But in the Boston area, in the same period of time, it has fallen by better than three-fourths: from 21 to only 5 percent” (Bluestone and Stevenson 2000:13).
Boston Between 1980 and 2000

The period between 1980 and 2000 in Boston was marked by significant immigration and substantial economic growth. This post-industrial period was distinguished by the growth in the professional and service industries and the redevelopment of parts of the city's downtown area and many inner-city neighborhoods. An analysis of the labor market transformations of this period shows that the loss of employment in manufacturing was replaced in the 1980s and 1990s by an expansion of jobs in the technology, finance, and service sectors—which were growing faster than the overall employment rate across the U.S. (Bluestone and Stevenson 2000). This industrial transformation led to a growing income divide in the “New Boston” and across the nation because of the disparity between the education and skills of many former industrial workers and those required by these growing sectors (Medoff and Sklar 1994, Wilson 1978, 1996). According to Peter Dorringer, former director of the Institute on Employment Policy at Boston University, “The Boston economy reflects very sharply what we’ve come to think of as the two-tier economy, technical and managerial jobs, jobs connected with the financial and health sectors and high-wage businesses are growing, but are often taken by commuters, and also substantial growth in less-skilled jobs like restaurant and hotel work, building service work and health care, but these are ‘low-wage dead-end jobs’ that don't yield high incomes for people or the prospects for high incomes” (Wald 1987).

In sum, Boston’s economy was fueled by downtown growth in the 1980s alongside the deterioration of services and disinvestment in the neighborhoods. How civic, political, and community leaders responded to these issues—particularly in the
creation of broad civic engagement and the development of local economic institutions during the period under study—is investigated through the stories of key business and civic leaders in the chapters that follow.

**Changing Demographics and Immigration:**

Boston’s population demographics underwent significant change between 1980 and 2000, resulting in the city becoming a majority-minority city for the first time in 2000. The most significant growth was in the population of new immigrants. During this period, the percentage of blacks/African Americans remained relatively unchanged, while there was a dramatic influx of Hispanics and Asians, as displayed in Chart 4.

![Chart 4—Racial and Ethnic Breakdown for Boston’s Population, 1980–2010](image)

Source: U.S. Census Bureau: BRA Research Division Analysis

The composition of Boston’s immigrant population was different during this period than at the turn of the last century, and the immigrant populations were at their
highest levels since that time (Chart 5). Whereas early immigration was largely from Europe, the majority of immigrants were now coming to Boston from Asia and Latin America. From 1990 to 2007, 69 percent of Boston’s foreign-born residents were from either Latin America or Asia (BRA 2008, 2011).

As Chart 5 suggests, Boston far exceeded both Massachusetts and the United States for the percentage of foreign-born residents since 1850. How city leaders responded to the social, political, economic, and cultural changes of the massive new immigration will be explored in later chapters.

Poverty and slums have been issues in Boston since the first new immigrants arrived. Small groups from across Europe came to Boston through the late 18th-century and “from 1835 to 1865 ‘the stream of emigration’ continued to ‘flow with unabated rapidity,’ little affected by conditions in America and by 1850, about 35,000 Irish were domiciled in the city; five years later there were more than 50,000” (Handlin 1969:52). Excluded from the merchant economy led by the Brahmins during the
industrialization of the late-19th century, the uneducated immigrants were relegated to low-wage jobs as laborers and house servants. The transformation of many of these immigrants into middle-class homeowners is an American success story. But the other story is the migration of poor African Americans to Boston and cities across the country and the effects of race and poverty in impeding such a transformation for this and other minority populations. “In 1984, the white poverty rate was 13 percent, while 29 percent of blacks, 40 percent of Asians, and 50 percent of Latinos lived below the official poverty line” (Medoff and Sklar 1994:23). Charts 6 and 7 show the poverty rates for select racial groups for 1980 and 1989. The data demonstrate that by the end of the 1980s poverty was significantly reduced in Boston, though wide racial and ethnic disparities in poverty rates continue to the present. The implications of poverty and income inequality between 1980 and 2000 are explored in later chapters for their influences on civic life, urban politics, and policies.

**Chart 6: 1980 Boston Poverty Rates.**
Source: The Boston Foundation, 1989
This dissertation explores the issues of race and ethnicity through detailed analysis of several major events in the city and exploration of how these events were interpreted and responded to by both residents and governing regimes.

**Growing Inequality:**

Gentrification of many Boston neighborhoods and growing inequality has also shaped the physical and social fabric of Boston during the period under study. Bostonians have experienced changes to their way of life resulting from immigration and demographic changes, as well as the process of cultural accommodation.

As a result of growing inequality and gentrification, the class composition of Boston has changed significantly over the past several decades. In 2009, the top 5 percent of Boston earners accounted for 25 percent of total annual income, while the bottom 20 percent earned just 2.2 percent of the annual total (The Boston Foundation 2011, Chart 7)
This dissertation explores the implications of growing income inequality and the responses of each governing regime to address this issue.

![Chart 8: Share of Aggregate Income by Quintile, 2009](chart8.png)


**The Role of the Governing Regimes:**

Political leadership has played a role in either facilitating or impeding changes to the urban way of life in Boston through implicit or explicit policies and governmental actions (e.g., urban renewal, policies dealing with racial conflict, housing and real estate policies and practices) in the context of national and international economic change. Alongside the changes in the local culture of Boston, there have been leadership transitions during the period under study. From 1980 to 2000 there have been three governing regimes: the mayoralty of Kevin H. White from 1968 to 1983, of Raymond L. Flynn from 1984 to 1993, and of Thomas M. Menino from 1993 to 2014. This modern era provides the framework for this study of Boston.

In Chapter 7, I will make the case that the policies and actions of each governing regime during the period between 1980 and 2000, together with racial, immigration, and
economic changes, have characterized a transformative period in Boston’s history. This dissertation provides an empirical window into the decision making of each regime. It integrates the perspectives of political leaders, business leaders, civic leaders, and citizens and explores how organized politics and the policies that emerged have affected the domains of widespread immigration and racial conflict, public education, and wholesale change in the city’s economic base during this period. It shows that responses to the changes that occurred at the end of the 20th century have led to a transformation of the economic, social, and political landscape of the city.

The dissertation examines some of the key questions raised before the public during this period. It explores how these questions were addressed and discusses the roles the key civic actors played in the debates, controversies, and governance during this period in the city’s history. The ultimate point of this dissertation is to provide a chronicle and a sociological analysis of how politics and policy making have changed, and how Boston’s transformed civic customs have created a new way of life in the 21st-century. Theories about political power, governing regimes, and racial and ethnic conflict guide this exploration and provide insights into what happened and why.

The sociological significance of the research lies in the exploration of the roles of the governing regimes through case study methodology. This approach allows a rethinking and expansion of the conventional wisdom on the etiology of current issues and problems in Boston. My hope is that this may help in finding solutions.
CHAPTER 3

The 1983 Race for Mayor of Boston—Populism Defeats the “New Boston”

None is as enigmatic a political figure as Ray Flynn of South Boston, a man described simultaneously as a conservative, a liberal, and a socialist, for whom the most accurate label may be “populist” (Karagianis 1982).

Politics in Boston

This chapter explores the backdrop to the 1983 mayoral election and the resultant transformation of the governance of the City of Boston. The 1983 election is framed by “critical election theory,” and mayoral leadership and community power are analyzed using regime theory as a theoretical guiding framework. Regime theory suggests that in order to successfully manage a complex urban city, coalitions must be built between the governmental and non-governmental actors. “The study of urban regimes is thus a study of who cooperates and how their cooperation is achieved across institutional sectors of community life” (Stone 1989:9).

In Boston, politics is considered a blood sport. Once the Irish wrested the mayor’s office from the Brahmins in the early 20th century, a series of Irish mayors built patronage machines as well as the infrastructure and the skyline of the city. Most notable among the Irish leaders of the 20th century was James Michael Curley. Much has been written about the “mayor of the poor” and the “rascal king,” but the undeniable consequence of Curley’s defeat in 1949 was that it made way for the emergence of the era of the growth machine in Boston. Over the next three decades, a series of pro-growth mayors—John Hynes, John
Collins, and finally Kevin White led the city out of its postwar recession and began the process to transform the city, its economy, and its politics.

In many respects, the opposition to the growth machine coalition of 1950–1980 and the emergence of black politics in Boston during the same period led to what V.O. Key has termed a “critical election.” According to Mel King, who had run for mayor in 1979, finishing third, there were three stages that led to the emergence of black politics in the city: the service stage, during which black residents were dependent upon white largesse; the organizing stage, which saw the assertion of black power; and the institution-building stage, during which the community created organizations to both provide services and build neighborhoods through development (King 1980, 1986). This community activism coincided with growing opposition to the policies of the growth machine, and as John Mollenkopf writes: “First, though the neighborhood activism during the 1960s and 1970s did not halt the postindustrial transformation of U.S. cities, it did undermine the local pro-growth coalitions, and neighborhood activism ended large-scale clearance projects.” Coupled with the emergence of tenants’ rights organizations, as well as feminist and gay and lesbian advocacy groups, a kind of progressive politics began to take shape in Boston.

But as V.O. Key writes, how these changes would “manifest in the voting…[in] an election type in which the depth and intensity of electoral involvement are high, in which more or less profound readjustments occur in the relations of power within the community, and which new and durable election groupings are formed”—which conditions he terms the theory of “critical elections”—is a question explored in this dissertation. The story of the
1983 election for mayor of Boston, with which this chapter starts, fits Key’s theory based upon the factors he describes and are explored below (Key 1955).

Prior to the 1983 election, Kevin White had been Mayor of Boston for 16 years, having first been elected in 1967. He served four terms and in many respects came to be identified with Boston’s skyline alongside the concurrent deterioration in Boston’s neighborhoods, race relations, housing, and schools. In his last term he was described as a “loner in love with his city,” in part because he became so isolated from the citizens and leading institutions of Boston. As UMass labor historian James Green wrote:

While White tried, not too successfully, to avoid responsibility for the busing conflict, his housing and development policies continued to generate grass-roots opposition, and the mayor could not escape responsibility for those policies. Indeed during White’s first three terms, Boston became a prime example of a city in which neighborhood residents mobilized against pro-business development policies (Green 1986 in From Access to Power: Black Politics in Boston)

If, as Clarence Stone writes, “Politics in the form of the governing coalition shapes policy, and policy also shapes the regime” (Stone 1989:164), then politics shaped Boston’s development policy and also the opposition to that policy, which led to an election to succeed White in 1983 that would be very different from those of the preceding years.

**The 1983 Preliminary Election for Mayor**

The mayoral race of 1983 was shaping up to be quite a battle royal. Incumbent Mayor Kevin White was widely expected to run, but no one really knew for sure. After White’s close reelection battle in 1975, most observers believed White had tired of the job. Although he won reelection handily in 1979, 1983 was different. According to one interviewee knowledgeable of the legal and development issues at the time:
Bill Weld, who was then the US attorney, basically forced Kevin out. He may have even given a signal that if White didn’t run for re-election he’d stop this aggressive manhunt of trying to find some evidence that Kevin White was on the take.

To add insult to injury, the *Boston Globe*, on which White could usually rely for support—in fact, in a break from tradition, the *Globe* had endorsed White in his first bid for the office in 1967—opined in an editorial:

> The Kevin White of 1982, in contrast to the gleam in George McGovern’s eye in 1972, proves Lord Acton’s saying that “Power tends to corrupt and absolute power tends to corrupt absolutely.” Of the half-dozen candidates now running, any of them would be preferable to Kevin White in 1982 (*Boston Globe* Editorial 1982).

As the race was shaping up, nine candidates would be vying for the top two spots on Boston’s non-partisan October 1983 preliminary election ballot. The candidates were City Councilors Raymond L. Flynn and Frederick C. Langone; former city councilor Lawrence S. DiCara; former school committee president David I. Finnegan; Suffolk County Sheriff Dennis J. Kearney; former state representative Melvin H. King; former MBTA general manager and deputy mayor under White, Robert R. Kiley; and two marginal candidates, Michael Gelber of the LaRouche movement and Eloise Linger of the Socialist Workers Party.

With the passage of the district representation charter change in 1981, this would be the first time since 1949 that city council and school committee candidates would be vying for district seats. The elite reformers, who sought in the late 1940s to dislodge Curley’s Irish political machine and control city government on behalf of the growth machine coalition, forged a new political alliance. Cynthia Horan has analyzed the three major changes to governmental structure implemented by the city’s governing coalition prior to
the 1983 election: “devising a new electoral system to wipe out ward politics; enhancing the city’s capacity to plan and implement public redevelopment; and altering the city’s tax structure to attract private investment” (Horan 1990). This had been the path followed by the three previous mayors, but now the 1983 election would create a backdrop for the two progressive candidates, Ray Flynn and Mel King, to challenge Boston’s growth machine coalition. The other major candidates, Finnegan, DiCara, and Kearney, on the other hand, were willing to support the growth coalition interests and were raising significant campaign funds from real estate interests.

The principal beneficiary of the real estate developers’ largesse was David Finnegan. Although first positioning himself as the alternative to Kevin White before White dropped out of the race (with the campaign slogan, “Finnegan or him again”), Finnegan inherited much of White’s political machine, as well as campaign contributors interested in the continuation of White’s downtown development policies. A former member of the Boston School Committee and popular talk show host, Finnegan was consistently seen as the frontrunner in the 1983 race. He had run for mayor in 1979, finishing fourth behind Kevin White, Joe Timilty, and Mel King.

Another contender backed by real estate interests, Larry DiCara, had grown up in Dorchester and attended Boston Latin School and Harvard University. He was elected to the Boston City Council in 1971 at the age of 22. While DiCara supported the district representation campaign both in 1977 and 1981, as a member of the Boston City Council and its president in 1978, he had long been positioning himself for a run at the mayor’s office. He had sought the office in 1979 before dropping out late in the race to take another
shot in 1983. DiCara reflected on his campaign in his 2013 memoir: “For the first time since 1949, the best educated candidate and the most progressive candidate did not win.” (DiCara 2013:181). He was of course referring to himself. Not included in his memoir was campaign information related by one of his strong campaign supporters, Vin McCarthy:

Larry DiCara got his campaign in trouble because his campaign treasurer, Mario Nicosia, who was a major contributor, had bought up most of the South End. But Mario proceeded to buy full-page newspaper ads, listing the ads as coming from the DiCara committee, and that just isn’t allowed under the law. So I had to do a cleanup in the audit of the campaign and at least at that time I didn’t find any direct involvement by the candidate, so he was able to stay in the race. If he had dropped out, I doubt if Ray Flynn would have won the election. The real establishment candidate was David Finnegan, who best I can describe was a 1983 version of John Collins and John B. Hynes.

DiCara also had the support of, in the words of Mel King’s campaign leaders, “a small liberal gentry stratum of gays who supported Larry DiCara (an anti-union, pro-business liberal) in the preliminary” (Radical America Introduction 1984). The Mel King campaign believed they had cornered the entire politicized lesbian and gay community except for this small segment.

Dennis Kearney, the sitting Suffolk County Sheriff at the time of the mayoral election in 1983 and supporter of growth-coalition interests, had served as a state representative from East Boston from 1975 to 1977, representing his neighborhood and Charlestown. Kearney also followed a path from Boston Latin School to Harvard University and was an adept politician who had broad support from his East Boston roots and the Suffolk County Sheriff’s payroll.

Bob Kiley, a former member of White’s administration and for a time the general manager of the MBTA, wasn’t given much of a chance in the race. A New York native, he
would position himself as the reformer who was outside of the ethnic politics that had shaped contests for the mayor’s office. City Councilor Frederick C. Langone also lacked strong support but the colorful twenty-two year veteran of the City Council from Boston’s North End would make the race interesting.

The city charter change of 1981 had created district representation from the at-large system and expanded the school committee from five to thirteen members. Both the city council and school committee members would now be elected from nine newly created districts in addition to four at-large members. The Mel King campaign saw the 1981 district representation ballot initiative as the forerunner to his 1983 campaign. In his 1979 run for mayor, King finished third behind Kevin White and Joe Timilty and bested Finnegan, another of his 1983 challengers, by a mere 184 votes. According to Pat Walker, one of the district representation campaign’s chief architects and 1983 campaign manager for King:

Mel saw that as the launching pad for the 1983 race, that is, that would mobilize enough—that the people who’d traditionally sit out during at-large elections, that they got mobilized turnout for the district elections, that would bring out a broader non-African American base and we would also have a more energized African American base.

After Mayor Kevin White dropped out of the mayor’s contest on May 26, 1983, the nine candidates and seventy-seven-plus neighborhood forums (the exact number is in dispute) energized the electorate. As one interviewee from Chinatown remarked, “it was the first time that there was a mayor’s forum in Chinatown; the first time that the activist sector was involved in a campaign, as before the ward bosses had been running the elections.” There was pent-up demand for change, voter interest and new voter registration were soaring, and turnout was expected to reach an all-time high—in contrast to the
experiences in many other urban areas. The number of new voters increased by more than
20,000 in the black community, and voter registration there went from 48 percent the
previous year to 83 percent in 1983 (Fogelberg 1996, Vrabel 2014).

**Issues in the 1983 Race for Mayor**

All those interviewed agreed that race relations were at the top of the list of concerns for
the next mayor. However, when Boston voters were polled in August of 1983 the vast
majority cited crime as the number one issue for the new mayor (Kenny 1983a). Each
candidate staked out their positions on a wide range of problems facing Boston residents.
The issues debated at the myriad neighborhood forums were broad ranging, from housing
affordability and rent control, job creation, city services, and downtown versus
neighborhood development to linkage, a policy to tax downtown development and use the
funds to build affordable housing. The same poll noted above found that more than 76
percent of the electorate supported linkage, and voters favored rent control by a 2 to 1
margin (op. cit.). Those interviewed recalled that there was a strong feeling in Boston’s
neighborhoods that they had been abandoned in the later years of the White administration
in favor of building Boston’s downtown skyline and Faneuil Hall for tourists. Tom
Menino, who succeeded Flynn as mayor, wrote recently questioning Flynn and King’s
approach to development in Boston:

> Mayoral candidates identified with White lost in the primary. The two finalists
> attacked “the downtown interests” and, to my ear, sounded not just pro-
> neighborhood but anti-development, even anti-business. After sixteen years of
> Kevin White, “development” versus “the neighborhoods” was good politics, but
> was it good policy? (Menino 2014:35)
According to one candidate in the preliminary election, former city councilor Larry DiCara, “There was only really one thing that people talked about and that is how you’d be different from Kevin White. Kevin had outstayed his welcome.” Menino, who was a campaign operative in each of Timilty’s unsuccessful campaigns against White, wrote about White’s vulnerability as these campaigns had perceived it in earlier elections:

We also thought White was beatable because of the “climate of corruption” in his administration…Kevin’s fundraising techniques included forced contributions from contractors and city employees, who paid in cash at a suite at the Parker House.

Several of the preliminary election candidates interviewed reflected on the friendly tone of the race. As former sheriff and mayoral candidate Dennis Kearney recalled in our interview:

So it was pretty friendly until about August when Bob Kiley decided to go negative on Ray and Dennis, figuring that he had to knock us down in order for him to have a chance. But since Ray was polling better than Dennis, he decided to really focus on Ray. Kiley attacked Ray and so it didn’t get testy till like September, but at that point the primary was just a couple of weeks away and but for the most of the race it was pretty friendly. We were all out there doing our thing and it wasn’t that negative a race until the last couple of weeks.

Bob Kiley began an attack on Flynn at an August 17, 1983 debate when he declared Flynn was “on the wrong side of the police lines during the city’s busing crisis.” The issue also resurfaced during one of the three televised debates of the preliminary race on September 14, 1983, when Kiley again challenged Flynn on his role in the busing crisis. Flynn shot back, “During the racial turmoil, I was out in the streets, talking to students and parents, white and black. I didn’t see anyone else there behind me. In 1983, I’ve been criticized for that. If we could go back to 1974, we’d see who the peacemakers were” (Robinson and Kenney 1983).
There were several other notable flare-ups during the campaign. David Finnegan called out Flynn on what he termed a “racist strategy” for distributing different campaign materials in black and white neighborhoods (Robinson and Kenney 1983). The final confrontation between Flynn and Finnegan was on the steps of City Hall during a live newscast several days before the preliminary election.

As Frank Costello, Flynn’s campaign press secretary, who later would assume that role in the new administration, recalled, “On the way over to the press conference, Ray said to me, “Why’s he even calling me a chameleon? What is this chameleon?” I said, “It’s a lizard.” He says, “A lizard?” I said, “Actually, it changes color.” Flynn said he became angry with Finnegan Thursday night just before he confronted him on a WBZ-TV Channel 4 live newscast, when his 11-year-old daughter Nancy heard the radio ad and asked him what a chameleon is (Quill 1983). Setting the stage for the faceoff, the Finnegan ad ran:

Do you know what a chameleon is? A chameleon is an animal which changes its color to fit the place it’s in. Can you think of any politicians like that? Well, take Ray Flynn, for instance. In one place he’s been for the ERA and in another place, he’s been against it. He was for capital punishment, and then he moved a little and came out against it. He’s been for and against Ed King. For and against Ronald Reagan. For and against hiring more cops. He even distributed two different brochures in one neighborhood.

Flynn’s response on live TV ran as follows:

David Finnegan, here in Boston, is the candidate of the rich. There are many people who are poor, who are looking for housing, who want to walk the streets in safety, who can’t find jobs, whose children can’t get educated. David Finnegan is taking all the money from the downtown interests, something that has been fundamentally wrong in this city for the longest period of time. This is not going to be a campaign for the rich and David Finnegan representing their interests. Ray Flynn is going to fight that every step of the way. David, I’m going to tell you that
building in back of us is not for sale. That building belongs to the people of this city, the people that our parents brought to this country to fight for integrity and honesty in government. It’s not for sale, David. I’m not going to allow it to be for sale and I’m going to fight it every single step of the way (Excerpts from WBZ-TV Interview 1983).

Each candidate had a different take on the faceoff. Listo Fisher, Finnegan’s press secretary, said of Flynn: “He’s falling apart. He’s falling apart.” And Peter G. Meade, a member of the White administration and Finnegan adviser (and later the BRA director under Mayor Menino), shook Finnegan’s hand and said: “Congratulations, I think you just won the election.” Flynn’s press secretary, Francis J. Costello, said the Finnegan ads represented a “desperation tactic from a candidate groping through innuendo to find a spot in the preliminary election.” After the interview, Finnegan said that he thought Flynn “lost his cool.” Flynn disputed that, saying: “I just tried to state what my position was. What he was stating was something I just wouldn’t sit still for” (Vennochi and Kenney 1983).

While Flynn and Finnegan were jousting on City Hall Plaza, Mel King was with Jesse Jackson and 800 supporters in the South End’s Concord Baptist Church, declaring that his “Rainbow Coalition” had already changed Boston (Vennochi and Kenny 1983).

The common wisdom was that David Finnegan, former president of the Boston School Committee and Dorchester native, would be one of the two finalists. Finnegan had secured broad support from several key factions, including the real estate and downtown business interests. As a result of his presumed frontrunner status, the political machine of the departing Kevin White jumped on board with Finnegan when White declined to seek reelection. The biggest surprise to the old guard was that Mel King, former state
representative from the South End and a lifelong political activist, would have a chance. As DiCara put it during our interview:

I don’t think anybody started out to figure that Mel would be in the final because the black community traditionally has had lower turnouts in preliminary elections. Mel did extraordinarily well, not only among black people, wherever there might be, but among young people, educated people. I mean, when he ran in ’79, he’d got like, 17,000 votes, something like that. When he ran in ’83, he got 48,000.

So when Flynn and King were the top vote getters in the preliminary election on October 11, 1983, common political wisdom was turned on its head. Flynn (48,118) outpaced King (47,848) by a mere 270 votes, each gaining support from 28 percent of the electorate and winning 11 of the city’s 22 wards, thus making it into the final. Many believe that the “chameleon incident” helped propel Flynn into the final election past Finnegan to face King. The “critical election” demonstrated the “profound readjustments in the relations of power within the community” (Key 1955:4) and a sharp and durable realignment away from the growth machine coalition politics of the previous three administrations: 56 percent of the electorate in the preliminary election supported either King or Flynn over the more traditional real estate–backed candidates.

The strongest reaction came from Boston Globe cartoonist Paul Szep in his depiction of Dame Boston (symbolizing the Vault, or Boston’s corporate leaders) fainting and being rescued by Mel King in a dashiki and Ray Flynn in a scally cap—one of which populist candidates would soon be Mayor of Boston.

Mayoral Candidate Ray Flynn—“Pockets of Coalitions”

As a state representative and later as a city councilor, Ray Flynn built up his organization with shoe leather and press releases. The son of a longshoreman and a cleaning lady, and
raised a Roman Catholic in predominately Irish South Boston, he developed an early sense of social and economic justice both from his family and his religious upbringing.

From the age of 12, Flynn had a singular focus on sports, learning to appreciate their value at South Boston High School, where he was a basketball star. Later he helped build the Boston Neighborhood Basketball League with Kenny Hudson, an NBA referee and general manager of WILD radio station, serving Boston’s black community. At a chance meeting in 1974, two days into busing, Flynn and Hudson talked about playing together on the Roxbury Moulton’s basketball team, at which time Flynn was the first white player on the club. They spoke about the fact that the teams played in each other’s neighborhoods without racial tensions. Flynn and Hudson convened a secret meeting with the leaders of sports teams in South Boston and Roxbury the first Saturday after the schools opened in 1974. As Flynn said at the time, “Maybe the kids will listen to me more as Ray Flynn the athlete instead of Ray Flynn the state representative.”

Subsequently, he and Hudson continued the effort to engage sports leaders to find racial peace during busing (*Boston Globe* 1975).

Flynn spoke about playing sports and the issue of race:

I mean I was drawn into politics with sports. I started a basketball program, it may seem insignificant, but I started the basketball program, I started a softball program in South Boston. I ran into several brick walls, I learned that you don’t get anything done unless you’re politically connected, unless you have political instincts, political motivation, unless you can get things done you know how to do it, you know how to position politicians to make them feel that there’s something in it for them, let them throw out the first ball, and putting their name on the Moakley Club on the back of their shirts, you know, calling it something that is a political benefit to whomever. That was my introduction through sports, and sports is wholesome and it’s clean, it’s not, you know, vote for me because I’m going to be able to cut corners to get your development done. You know it’s here
I’m helping your kids, I’m starting this program I’m getting the playgrounds fixed, you’re going to have a childcare program over here, guys can bring their kids down there, can play softball just coming back from Vietnam, you know all these different things.

Flynn was elected to the state legislature in 1971 and soon became known as the “jock legislator.” In his first term he quickly began to expand his base from sports to issues of concern to both his South Boston district and constituencies across the city and state. He spearheaded a bill to provide education to handicapped kids in the state—Chapter 766, as it became known—commenting at the time, “Do you realize that there are 10,000 kids in this state who aren’t being schooled because they are both physically and emotionally handicapped?” (Collins 1972). As Flynn told me:

The coalitions were really not the coalitions you might think they were. What were the coalitions? The coalition was me playing basketball over Roxbury Boys Club, where I knew half the kids in Roxbury. I mean I wasn’t a Southie pol to them; I was the first white kid ever to play on an all-black semi-professional basketball team. I wasn’t a Southie pro-life politician connected with the church, that was before any of that. I mean there was no pro-life issue at the time, there wasn’t even a busing issue at the time.

Flynn was elected to Boston City Council in 1978, and drew initially on his home base of city council campaign support in South Boston to launch his mayoral campaign. As Mary Nee, a South Boston neighbor and family friend who would later join the administration, recalled:

The first meeting the campaign had was down at the Boston Harvard Tennis Club. There was Brian Wallace, Jack McDonough, Peter Welsh, Jay Carney, Larry Dwyer, myself, and maybe a half a dozen other people. It really was an extension of Ray Flynn’s city council campaign team, which was all local homegrown folks, that was the nucleus that started the campaign.
Flynn went on to tap into other coalitions, including the pro-life activists with whom he shared sentiments about abortion. He had been visible on this issue previously, having cosponsored the Doyle-Flynn amendment while a state representative. This amendment barred public funding for abortions, a position that won him as many friends as enemies. As Maria Kariagianis, a reporter for the *Boston Globe*, wrote:

> It is because of stands like these that Flynn has been unpopular among liberals, blacks, and feminists—groups he must win over if he is to become mayor. Yet in recent years he has tried to change and broaden his image (and has begun to succeed). He has championed so-called progressive issues like rent control and moved closer to the black community. He has developed alliances with political figures like State Representative Melvin H. King of Roxbury, a liberal black, and former City Council member Rosemarie Sansone, a feminist (Karagianis 1982).

In his opposition to court-ordered school busing, Flynn had always been seen as a moderate and constructive force, unlike many in his home district who were identified with the racially charged anti-busing organizations. Flynn framed the issue as one based not upon race but class, a theme he would carry throughout his political career. As reported by the *Boston Globe*:

> Flynn says he and his family have been physically and verbally attacked because of his views and actions. A few years ago, Flynn helped prevent an attack on a black couple by a crowd of angry whites outside the State House. He was the only white politician to attend the funeral of Levi Hart, a 14-year-old black boy shot by a white policeman. Several years ago, he led a demonstration against the Ku Klux Klan, when the organization tried to open a storefront in South Boston. And after voting for a city Human Rights Commission, he was called, a "nigger lover" in hate brochures anonymously distributed during the 1978 campaign (Karagianis 1982).

His populist framing of issues of race led many progressive Fair Share organizers to flock to his campaign team. Neil Sullivan and Tom “Alex” Bledsoe, two Fair Share organizers, had joined his city council staff to begin organizing for a run at the mayor’s
Fair Share, a grassroots social and economic justice organizing group, was founded by Michael Ansara, a veteran of the anti-war movement and Students for a Democratic Society. A number of Fair Share organizers formed the nucleus of the field apparatus of Flynn’s campaign, focusing on such issues as affordable housing and rent control, linkage, and lowering utility rates. In the populist organizing style of veteran community organizers like Saul Alinsky, the politics of both Fair Share and Flynn were aligned with the goal of replacing divisive social issues with policies aimed at redistributing wealth to the poor and needy. Flynn initially didn’t want to be associated with Fair Share, “but then I saw them fighting against the utility hikes, and I knew that Boston Edison had all of a sudden started charging my mother an extra $6 a month on her bill, so I joined with them on that issue and other things too” (Vrabel 2014:209). Former campaign aide Harry Grill summed up Flynn’s style in dealing with populist issues: “He was like a Fair Share leader.”

Flynn also drew on the network of leaders of the community schools and community health centers. Mayor White had created the community schools, which were overseen by boards of neighborhood leaders, but later, in his final term, he tried unsuccessfully to close them. Because of Flynn’s support for the community schools and health centers as a member of Boston City Council, the local councils that ran these organizations now gave Flynn a natural network of additional support.

Other progressive allies included the Massachusetts Tenants Organization, which was engaged in a battle to save rent control in Boston. As former state representative and housing activist Tom Gallagher said:
Ray Flynn had far and away the most concern for issues affecting poor people and the average working person. He’s showed concern for the forgotten sector, the people in the neighborhoods, the people in the public housing projects, the people who are perceived as not voting and therefore having no clout (Karagianis 1982).

Michael Kane, a Mel King supporter said of Flynn:

He had built up a following—part of which was his own base in South Boston. He pretty much had attracted all the good people in South Boston. He had all of those votes with him—kind of a Catholic left undercurrent…It was no accident that he had a photograph of Mother Theresa on the wall of his city council office. His moral vision was really not that different from Berrigan’s. He was really strong on most of the right issues (Clavel 2010:209, n 58).

Flynn also had strong support from organized labor, and he received the first union endorsement in the campaign from Local 26 of the Hotel, Restaurant, Institutional Employees and Bartenders Union on March 13, 1983. Flynn reflected on the endorsement fight:

Mel King deserved the endorsement of Local 26 because most of them were black. Most of the people were black and Hispanic. Some people who are doing the catering were white mothers—single mothers. How did they swing my way? When they were picketing and demonstrating the building of new hotels that were going up non-union under Kevin White, I was down there. And I showed up with coffee and two dozens of doughnuts and gave it to the people on the picket line. After the third day, I met with the picketers and I said ‘I promise you one thing, when I’m Mayor of Boston, no hotel is going to be built unless it’s union.’ That was it.

While many progressives supported Flynn, others were wary. Activists in the Mel King campaign believed they had the moral high ground and were critical of the progressives who supported Flynn over King:

The only leftists who supported Flynn, to our knowledge, were whites, largely white men at that, oriented to a social-democratic perspective, and connected either with unions or organizations committed to a “populist” strategy. Even within this grouping, women active in local tenant organizing failed to rally strongly behind Flynn when the Boston Tenants’ Organization endorsed him.
Whatever the actual numbers, the more important questions are what definition of “left” or “progressive” would allow support for Flynn in the name of social change. The only logic that makes sense of this position is one that expects social change to be led and defined by white men. (*Radical America* 1984:3)

To those on the left of politics in Boston there was considerable angst associated with the race between King and Flynn. The leading housing organization, the Massachusetts Tenants’ Organization and its leader at the time, Lew Finfer, describes the process and rationale for their endorsement of Flynn, which was viewed by many as the most significant endorsement in the campaign up until that point:

Community groups usually don’t endorse candidates but we said “we’re losing; we’ve got to show some strength.” So we developed a tenant ticket in 1981 and Flynn helped us accomplish much of what we did in ’82 and ’83, and so in ’83 we made the difficult decision through a poll of our membership to endorse. It was very contentious and most of our membership had experience with Flynn because Flynn was a champion for passing stronger housing laws, he was like the biggest champion in the city council. The vote was about 68 to 30, it was a pretty large margin, but I think objectively it was because we had more white members than minorities and people’s experience was they’d seen Flynn fight for our cause.

Flynn formally announced his candidacy for Mayor on April 27, 1983 in front of the West Broadway (D Street) public housing development, pledging a “campaign of solutions” (Kenny 1983). Flynn would later reflect on the symbolism of the announcement at a distressed public housing development in South Boston:

I announced my candidacy at the D Street project, and don’t ever underestimate that announcement. What the hell did that announcement mean? I stood right at the corner of D Street and Broadway, looked across the street, what did I see? I saw our police station closed. I looked over to my left, I saw our fire station had been deactivated. I looked up on the other side the street, I saw the drug headquarters of Whitey Bulger. And I looked at the housing authority over my shoulder that had been taken over by the court for mismanagement and neglect. Nobody knew what the hell I was doing. I knew exactly what I was doing. Everything was there. People are still asking me, why you announced in there, even—to be honest with you [Campaign Manager] Ray Dooley said don’t
announce in there. He wanted me to announce it in Parker House like everybody else did.

According to campaign aide and later policy advisor Neil Sullivan, “The coolest decision was to announce for the office at the West Broadway housing development because it said this was about poor people, and this would be about poor people regardless of race, and race was the other major issue you had to deal with at the time.”

I was not involved in Flynn’s campaign at the time, although I was present at the announcement because I was then serving as the Director of Community Organization at the housing project’s multi-service center. I had met City Councilor Flynn on several occasions, including one when, after running the Boston Marathon in 1982, he jogged to the top of Mission Hill to view a rough cut of a film I was producing on public housing. The film, *Down the Project: The Crisis of Public Housing* was about race and housing policy and chronicled the demise of the D Street and Columbia Point housing projects. On the ride home (he could barely walk down the three flights of stairs, having frozen up after his marathon run) Flynn asked me my thoughts on the key issues facing the city’s neighborhoods and about my work in public housing; and told me that he was planning on running for mayor and hoped I would support him. He struck me then as a person who cared about the poor and the downtrodden, and that impression would ultimately propel me to get involved in his campaign later that year as the coordinator of the Mission Hill neighborhood where I lived. As the neighborhood campaign coordinator, I was responsible for bringing together the neighborhood’s diverse population in support of Flynn’s candidacy. Mission Hill at the time was populated by long-term Irish residents,
as well as a large population of Hispanics and African Americans, who lived in the neighborhood’s two public housing developments. The Irish–Puerto Rican neighborhood activist coalition did the campaign work of door knocking, stand outs, and poll work which helped propel Flynn into the final election in November of 1983. (While we ultimately lost Mission Hill to Mel King, we engaged a broad cross-section of the community in the effort.)

**Mayoral Candidate Mel King—“The Rainbow Coalition”**

Mel King had a very different political trajectory than Ray Flynn. As an African American whose parents came from Barbados and Guyana, he grew up in the multi-ethnic South End of Boston. His father was a union organizer on the docks and his mother was active in Church and women’s groups. King’s career began as a teacher, and later he became part of the settlement house movement. Like Flynn, he actively organized neighborhood youth in sports leagues in an effort to divert them from gangs. King had first-hand experience of the impact of Boston’s first urban renewal project. His family lived in the so-called “New York Streets” area of the South End, which in the mid-1950s was the first section of Boston to face the bulldozers (King 1981).

As a community organizer in Boston’s neighborhoods of color, King saw firsthand the failures of the public schools. He ran unsuccessfully three times for a seat on the Boston School Committee in 1961, 1963, and 1965 (King 1981:28). After failing to get elected to the school committee, he ran for state representative in 1973 and won, becoming one of the few African Americans serving in that legislative body. I had worked on King’s campaigns for state representative while a housing organizer living in the Fenway neighborhood of
Boston. King ran for mayor in 1979, surprising most observers by coming in third with 17,490 votes, behind incumbent Kevin White and perennial challenger Joseph Timilty.

Following his 1979 mayoral defeat, part of King’s strategy for 1983 was to use the city-wide charter reform referendum of 1981—which expanded the Boston City Council and Boston School Committee from being entirely at-large bodies to each having nine district representatives and four at-large members—thereby expanding his base into neighborhoods that had not supported him in the past. As Pat Walker, King’s campaign manager, explained:

Mel saw the district representation campaign as the launching pad for the ’83 race. We hoped to mobilize enough of the people who’d traditionally sit out during at-large elections and mobilize them for the district elections, that would bring out a broader non-African American base to go after and a more energized African-American base because people saw him as their representative.

King built his 1983 campaign with strong support from the black community and communities of color as well as from left-wing progressive activists, including leaders in the women’s and gay and lesbian rights communities. His campaign was called the “Rainbow Coalition,” a term later appropriated by the presidential campaign of Jesse Jackson. The work that King had done both in the South End of Boston, fighting displacement, and across the city on issues of racial conflict and education coalesced a strong and loyal following. As José Massò, a leader in Boston’s Latino community and popular radio personality since 1975 with his WBUR show ¡Con Salsa!, remembered, many leaders in the Latino community saw Mel King as the leader of the “progressives and we saw the future as a coalition representing the city’s diversity.” Another King supporter, East Boston resident and former head of the Urban Edge CDC Mossik Hacobian told me:
His was the first political campaign I got involved in. We were part of the Mel King Rainbow Coalition. It was a breakthrough at the time for Mel to have a campaign office in East Boston. That was pretty bold at the time to have a black politician have a presence in East Boston. Mel’s candidacy was an opportunity to deal with the question of racism in Boston. So it’s not like I’ve ever been a real engaged political activist. It was just it seemed like a good thing to do to support. The stuff that he said was very inclusive; it was about the Rainbow Coalition that’s bringing everybody together. So this whole injustice of the rich kind of exploiting the poor, it seemed like Mel’s campaign was kind of dealing with all that stuff. It was refreshing to see that in a place as big as Boston, that you could have a black finalist in an election.

King’s coalition included groups that historically had been marginalized or ignored in Boston politics. As May Louie, a founding member of the Chinese Progressive Association, explained, 1983 was her first electoral campaign and she was part of the field apparatus of the Mel King campaign:

It was the first campaign that the Asian activists were really immersed in. We learned to do all the traditional work. It was probably the first time in a political race in Boston that there was literature in Chinese. We wanted the community to vote in an informed manner for the interests of our community. We wanted to know where the candidates stand. Historically there is this internal tension within the community about traditional forces and the old guard with the rising young activist grassroots along with the grassroots right. Because the old guard is—it’s also the ward bosses. So, we kept seeing the community shrink and yeah, so I think all of that was part of a lead up. And the ’83 mayor’s race was the first time that the activist sector was involved in a campaign. So the ward bosses had been sort of running the elections I think in—was it in—I want to say—it must have been in ’81 that we did—that we passed a district elections council, right.

Other leaders, particularly those in the African American business community, while supportive of King, had concerns. Flash Wiley recalled in an interview a conversation he and other black leaders had with King:

When Mel decided to ran again in ’83 he came to a group of us in the business community, Mel Miller being one of the key opinion makers was there along with some other folks to talk about how he could get us on board. We pretty much told him, this may sound silly to you, but if you start looking like a mayor and you
look serious, put a coat and tie on and I think you’ll get a lot more serious attention to what you’re saying. Some of the things you say, many things you say, we can go along with but we’re business guys so we don’t go along with everything you say but at least we know we’ll have access.

The Mel King progressive activists saw themselves as the “true” progressives in the 1983 election. As they wrote in their analysis of the election for *Radical America*:

Though all white, we are a varied group. What drew each of us to such an unusual level of commitment and unanimity was the chance to be involved in a broad-based, multi-racial coalition which seemed open to us as socialists, as feminists, or as lesbians. “For once I did not have to deny any part of my identity to work in a political campaign—let alone an election.” The campaign seemed to be a social movement with receptivity to radical ideas that allowed us to overcome long-standing skepticism about the usefulness of electoral politics. (*Radical America 1984 Introduction*).

Despite the conflicts in ideology and political strategy, race did not appear on the surface to be an overarching issue either in the preliminary election on October 11, 1983 or in the final contest culminating on November 15, 1983.

After the preliminary votes were tabulated on October 11, 1983, the son of a longshoreman and cleaning lady from South Boston, Ray Flynn, would be facing off in the final election against an African American South End political activist and former state representative, Mel King.

On the surface, with a white candidate from Irish South Boston and a black candidate from the integrated South End, it would seem that race certainly would be an issue in the final campaign. Both men recalled in 2008 their somewhat different perspectives on race as a campaign issue:

Flynn recalled:
I think the issue of race made an enormous level of progress in the ’83 mayoral campaign. It wasn’t contentious, it wasn’t divisive; we discussed the issues on their merits. As mayor, I was able to support a human-rights ordinance. I was able to integrate public housing in South Boston. I don’t take credit for it, believe me. I give credit to Mel King. I give it to the people of the city who were tired of the division of the past. We had just gotten over school busing, which was the most contentious, divisive period of time in this city’s history. People forget that, because they weren’t around at the time. But as far as I’m concerned, the city’s come a long, long way.

And King added:

Race is *always*—that's a strong word—either an issue or related. The proportion of people who are low-income is higher among folks of color. And so the history of denial, the problems with the schools—the majority of the students in these schools are young people of color. Let me just put it this way. If housing access is limited and if the young people see their families being moved out because they can’t afford to live in this neighborhood, and they look around and see it’s them and their friends and people who look like them being moved out, then you have to understand that race is a part of what is going on. The young people who’ve been killed and impacted by the violence have been black and Latino, by and large. You ask if things are better, improved, et cetera. It’s interesting: there were fewer of us dying when there was more overt racism than there are now, when it’s really subtle (Reilly 2008).

King and Flynn’s recollections and perspectives in 2008 really weren’t much different than how each felt and ran his campaign in 1983. King told me more recently in an interview that he believed that people felt the 1983 election made a difference in race relations in the city:

I get asked that question and the feedback that I get from people that I meet around the city, is they say yes. That it made a difference in the city in the kind of campaign that we ran they thought it brought the city closer together. They felt that they had more access to different parts of the city than they did before.

Flynn went on to win the mayor’s race, beating King 65 percent to 35 percent on November 15, 1983 in a turnout of over 201,118, or 70 percent of the electorate. This was
the largest turnout in Boston’s history since the 1949 election, when the city’s population exceeded 801,000—238,000 more than in 1983. As Mel King told me in the South End:

Given the racial climate and polarization in the city over an extended period of time, the campaign became a way to show that the process and the people could come together in a campaign and take it across the city. That to me was one of the significant aspects to have a coalition made up of a cross-section of folks where the issue was access for all, including race, gender, and age. That was the highlight of it. The night the results came in I walked into the ballroom and saw all those folks out there and I asked them if they knew what the results were of the election. It made me understand that we won something—we didn’t get to be mayor but there was something different that happened in the city as a result of people coming together. I was a candidate—a whole lot of people felt that they were a candidate—they participated and a lot of people took real ownership of the campaign.

Based upon the intensity and extent of electoral engagement, the 1983 mayoral election was a “critical election” in the history of Boston, one which was to begin the process of realignment of priorities and bring a new optimism to the city. As Flynn and his supporters knew, however, his tenure as mayor would not be without its challenges, especially around issues of race relations after defeating the first African American finalist in the city’s history.

**How Did Flynn Win?**

As discussed above, a number of factors let to Flynn’s victory. He had been running for mayor since his election as an at-large member of the Boston City Council in 1977 and had a record having worked on issues across the city. While he maintained a strong base in his home neighborhood of South Boston, his focus on issues impacting poor and working-class residents of the city’s neighborhoods resonated. Drawing from his “pockets of coalitions” from housing organizations, pro-life groups, labor, Irish leaders, community groups, and
neighborhood activists, Flynn built a team that could transcend traditional politics in Boston. As Peter Drier recounts, “Flynn needed to get liberal organizer activists, Fair Share, Mass Tenants’ Organization people on his side, knowing that he couldn’t be elected mayor with the angry working-class whites from South Boston, Charlestown, and Dorchester.” Others shared similar memories, as then–Roxbury resident and Mel King supporter Flash Wiley told me:

Ray Flynn came to our community, asked if he could come to speak to our community because he was planning on running for mayor and he wanted to talk, find out what our needs were and sort of get a sense of us. So Nixon went to China and Flynn came to Roxbury.

Larry DiCara campaign supporter Vincent McCarthy recalled:

Even during his campaign, when he was running against Mel King in the final, Ray had no reason to expect to receive any significant number of votes in the black community, but he went to every candidates night in the black community, he shook every hand that he could, he was very gracious to them and of course that paid off after the election immediately because people felt safe with Ray as mayor, so Ray became the mayor of the black people, the gay people, and the wealthy people had to put up with him, that’s the best way you can say it.

And as Flynn himself reflected, “If you have confidence in yourself and you believe in yourself you want to meet as many people as you possibly can, and express to them who you are. Beacon Hill, Roxbury, Bay Village, South Boston, it doesn’t matter, gays, blacks, Brahmin Yankees, Irish Catholic, Southie. It doesn’t matter.”

While Flynn campaigners attributed the victory to the “rag-tag coalition of poor whites and poor blacks and a lot of labor” and having run a fierce campaign, mayoral candidate Larry DiCara offered a different conclusion:

The question was who were going to be the two finalists and most of us knew, but we wouldn’t have said that publicly at the time, we knew that if one of the
finalists was Mel King then the other person would be mayor. Most of us thought Finnegan would be in the final.

Ken Wade, Roxbury coordinator for Mel King’s campaign and a South End activist, said at the time, “The mayoral election in ’83 was a turning point in the city’s history. Both of the candidates who made it to the final election symbolized Boston’s desire to get beyond the past” (Rezendes 1991). When I interviewed Wade in Washington, D.C. he remembered that both Flynn and King had strong records on the issues:

It looked like given the things that Ray ran on and the things that Mel ran on, it seemed we had two candidates that were very similar in terms of where they were on the issues. For them two to be the folks in the final suggested that the city had kind of turned the corner. I think that probably if you look back on it, that’s probably true. Kevin White—served 16 years and in 1983 there was a lot of concern that there wasn’t a lot of focus on stuff in the neighborhoods. Both Ray and Mel, I mean that was part of their agenda, they both thought that the community needed to be more involved in the development decisions that affected their communities. They had strong affordable housing platforms. You know, they obviously thought that the schools needed attention. There were a lot of similarities actually.

Perhaps *Boston Globe* columnist David Nyhan best summed up the sense of the city when he wrote on October 13, 1983 following the preliminary election:

It couldn’t have been closer. One thin vote separated Ray Flynn, a craggy-faced Irish battler from South Boston, Rocky with Shamrocks, and Mel King, a brawny, bald, bearded black activist who brought his dashiki from the streets to the State House. They spent barely $200,000 each, besting three rivals who spent a combined $2 million. Flynn and King ran mirror-image campaigns on ground-floor economic issues: housing, jobs for the underclass, dignity for the poor. They had virtually no TV ads except for a few at the end. They retailed their way into the final on unrelenting evocations of the aspirations of the dispossessed. They rose together on the hopes of the poor, the near-poor and a working class that felt left behind in Kevin White’s glitzy downtown. Neighborhood people, trying to keep their block from sliding into urban desolation, took a stand for Flynn or King. This pair is virtually interchangeable on racial harmony, jobs for the poor, strict controls on condo conversions, and better public housing, in a town where one-tenth of the people live in mainly substandard public projects. The chosen
alternatives: the tireless populism of Flynn, the Joe Six pack of the field; or the dignified determination of the impassive and imposing King. Flynn came out of Southie battling abortion and busing, and molted into a little-guy hero on rent control. Like King, he became a symbol for change. Empowerment of the poor and working class was their twinned theme (Nyhan 1983a).

Others felt that Flynn won because of the issue of race coupled with the Mel King campaign organization’s failures. As the Boston Globe’s Nyhan commented, “His [King’s] runoff campaign was a sociological triumph but a political disaster. His quixotic self-imposed $150,000 campaign spending cap deprived him of any serious radio and television ads. Some ill-conceived remarks about anti-Semitism and Fidel Castro backfired. He got 29 percent in the preliminary, but only 35 in the final” (Nyhan 1983b).

The Boston Globe poll two weeks before the final election reported that:

Since King’s nomination three weeks ago there has been considerable political speculation that some voters would not consider his candidacy because he is black. That perception appears to be supported by the polling data. For instance, a third of those sampled did not “strongly disagree” with the following statement when it was read to them: “If a black person is elected mayor of Boston, it would be bad for the city.” Among the 65 percent of those polled who strongly disagreed with the statement, King led Flynn by 52 to 37 percent. But Flynn held a commanding lead of 73 to 10 percent among the 32 percent who agreed with the statement or expressed only mild disagreement. Irwin Harrison, the president of Research Analysis Corp., explained yesterday that the question was designed to test resistance to a black candidacy. “Anyone who did not strongly disagree with the statement is at least partially receptive to such arguments,” Harrison said. As evidence of that phenomenon, Harrison noted that, even among those who expressed mild disagreement with the statement, Flynn held a 67 to 12 percent margin over King. Sentiment on the issue, however, appears to have changed since the question was asked during a poll conducted for The Globe in August. Then, only 51 percent “strongly disagreed” with the statement, compared with 65 percent last week. The survey also disclosed that King’s politics are unsettling to some voters. More than a third of those sampled said they believe King “is too much of a radical.” Only 6 percent said that of Flynn, who holds positions similar to King on many of the economic issues that face the city (Robinson 1983).
In assessing why Mel King didn’t win the election, King’s campaign chairman J.D. Nelson offered, “Both candidates conducted a good high-class race. It appears that a lot of people did not see real differences between Mel King and Ray Flynn. A lot of people have indicated that it was a different choice. So, we were not successful in showing that there are some real differences. But not only that, I guess you have to say that if people perceived that there were no differences, they went with their natural inclinations. That is, they voted for their own” (Jordan 1983).

Moving Into the Mayor’s Office

Flynn was elected the 52nd Mayor of Boston by a populist coalition at a time in the city’s history when there continued to be significant racial conflict and social and economic disparities between the neighborhoods and the downtown. Todd Swanstrom defined urban populism as “Saul Alinsky–style community organizing carried into the electoral arena” in writing about the administration of Cleveland Mayor Dennis Kucinich. Key features of urban populism and progressive cities are the redistribution of wealth and power and democratic participation, but not necessarily changing people’s value systems or challenging them on divisive social issues. The goal is rather to displace the social issues with economic ones (Clavel 1986, 2010, Swanstrom 1985). This would be the approach the new administration would take to governing Boston. As the Boston Globe reported in poll results just days before Flynn was to be sworn in, “56 percent perceive racial tensions as “as bad as ever.”” The poll also indicated that “77 percent of those polled believe Boston’s public schools do a bad job of preparing city children for the future” (Kenny 1983).
While Flynn was elected with a plurality, the Boston Coordinating Committee or Vault (the nickname for Boston’s corporate leadership) was suspicious of him and his administration, opposing his election initially and later a number of his significant policies, including linkage. As David Farrell of the *Boston Globe* wrote before Flynn was sworn in, “Ray Flynn won on a pro-neighborhood plank that was, in many respects, anti-business. The Vault’s problem is not so much that Flynn is opposed to business leaders. Rather, it is the likelihood that some of Flynn’s supporters who have been named to the various task forces he has established are likely to take a hard line against the downtown forces and exert great pressure on Flynn to do likewise” (Farrell 1984). In rejecting the “growth machine”—which was responsible for the transformation of Boston, having paved the way for the growth of the downtown economy with lucrative tax breaks for developers, often at the expense of the urban renewal of Boston’s working-class neighborhoods—Flynn instead took a “managed-growth” approach to development in the city.

This strategy was contested between downtown and neighborhood interests in the city. Flynn saw development as a vehicle to accomplish his redistributive agenda through building affordable housing and creating jobs for Boston residents. The actions of his progressive governing coalition demonstrated that it was not ultimately necessary to align with the business community during the economic boom years of the 1980s. However, the recession of the early 1990s slowed the ability of the city to aggressively pursue the shared economic development agenda that had reduced poverty and helped ease racial conflict in the previous decade.
Leadership and Governance

Most of the Flynn administration’s newly appointed community and political activists did not have a clue about how to run the city government. As Jerry Rubin, a campaign worker and later housing staffer, told me, “Governing is more complicated than campaigning. One of the things I’m very proud of the administration is that I feel that we governed pretty close to how we campaigned.”

Mayor Flynn had a concept of his role as the city’s new leader. He was omnipresent, arriving at every fire, every incident of racial violence, and every community meeting in his first term. He even rode the snow plows. This was part of a clearly articulated strategy to change the dynamic between City Hall and the neighborhoods of Boston, and the new mayor recognized this as one of the biggest issues he would face coming into City Hall in 1984:

Well, the obvious one was the alienation of the neighborhoods. People felt betrayed, their voice wasn’t being heard. Yes of course there were political operatives in the neighborhoods who were answerable to City Hall, to the Mayor. But the people didn’t feel that way. And I always felt that good policies are good politics as well, and the more people you could bring in, those are less people that would feel alienated.

As mentioned earlier, Flynn had won the mayoral election by cobbling together “pockets of coalitions,” so the challenge of putting together an administration that would represent all these interests was an early test.

Neil Sullivan, who would first assume the title of Director of the Mayor’s Office of Neighborhood Services and later Policy Advisor, recalled, “The critics and skeptics were convinced that this collection of longshoremen and leftists would bankrupt the city.”
This concern was probably heightened when Flynn appointed his campaign manager and former Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) leader, the late Ray Dooley, as Director of Administrative Services. As such, Dooley was the chief financial and administrative officer for the city, overseeing the treasurer, auditor, budget, labor relations, and personnel functions of the government.

Another challenge would be how to include both the conservative neighborhood and political leaders and the band of progressive activists recruited for the campaign, while at the same time living up to his promise of creating a diverse city administration. As Mel King supporter Flash Wiley told me, “Well, the first thing he did was he made two historic appointments. He made the top two financial guys in the city black guys who had been Mel King’s supporters. So George Russell became the treasurer of the city and Leon Stamps became auditor to the city.” Commented King supporter Ken Wade, “I think it’s pretty clear that the Flynn administration worked very hard to change the perception of the city to do more to get more people of color involved in significant roles within the administration, and that hadn’t happened under Kevin White. He clearly paid that attention to broadening ties with folks in the community.” According to those interviewed, Flynn reached out to King supporters to join the administration, including Wade himself, Mel King’s Roxbury field coordinator, who remembered the outreach: “There were overtures made about whether there would be any interest and at that point, I didn’t have any interest in working for city government at that time. I was content to play the role of the outside advocate continuing to push things from that perspective.” He continued to explain why no significant number of King political activists joined the administration:
I think it might have been a combination of loyalty to Mel, even though Mel didn’t really send that signal. There were still some issues there that they weren’t able to figure out how to work out. I do think that it might have been many of the activists thinking back then that a better role would be to be on the outside, you know continuing to push the issues and the agenda that way.

Others were more direct in their assessment of why King’s supporters hadn’t joined the administration. As King campaign manager Pat Walker recalled:

In terms of working with the Flynn people, you know some of this is a little bit color moved by the post situation, but you know frankly, Ray Dooley didn’t want to work with us afterwards. I think he didn’t think he needed us. I’m not sure why, but we had a meeting him and Neil Sullivan. I said, “Well, here you are. You guys got the power. How can we work together?” And it was like a bunch of platitudes, and well let’s get together and we could do this post-election analysis and this and that. I pursued that for about a year or so but Dooley was clearly in control and I think he wanted to minimize his exposure on the left. He was more concerned with the right side, the more Irish traditional working-class base.

Another Mel King campaign organizer from the Latino community, Pablo Calderón, offered a different point of view, describing the approach Flynn took thus:

Once he got elected he made it his number one priority to come out to all of us that were organizing for Mel to sit us down and say, “Hey I want to work with you guys, I want you to become part of my administration. This is what the city needs.” So he didn’t see it as a threat, he outreached to us to see how can we incorporate some of the Latino leaders in his administration, and then he stared hiring people, Félix Arroyo, David Cortiella, I could give you a list of about 30 Latino people he appointed. He opened a lot of opportunities for us, so therefore it didn’t become a what are we going to do to overthrow this man, and we knew that he was genuine.

John Connolly, Flynn’s development advisor, summed up the approach Flynn took:

He was trying to get enough players inside the tent that he would be able to communicate with all of the players outside of the tent satisfactorily. Big constituencies, small constituencies, and work important ones and the less important ones. That’s what he was looking for and that’s what he got. He got Neil (Sullivan) out there talking to everybody a quarter of an inch left of the center and
myself and Stephen (Coyle) and other people were doing the development stuff. I mean people were spread out all over the place.

Added Bart Mitchell, an aide to Connolly:

Well, a lot of it was playing out among the different people within City Hall. It wasn’t happening just outside, it was happening inside the building, which means a lot of fun because daily, it would be—are we for rent control? How much are we pushing to create rules that will last after we’re here? How much are we just going to try to get good things done? So, I think that at times Connolly became the yang to the Neil Sullivan and Peter Dreier ying. He was afraid he’s going to go saying yes to everything that the Mel King camp wanted to prove that the progressives have sway here and can get things done and this isn’t just that the Southie guys run the show.

Peter Dreier, an early supporter of Flynn who became his housing advisor, recalls efforts to organize the “leftist” faction in Flynn’s new administration and bring on staff Mel King supporters:

The mayor and Joe Fisher (Flynn’s top aide) made it clear we weren’t to hire any of the Mel King people. I wanted to hire Mark Draison to work for me, and I was told by Joe Fisher I couldn’t. Mark was active in the King campaign. That happened to a few people and a bunch of us, I think Neil and I and a few other people, wanted to hire Ken Wade at some point. There was just an enormous amount of suspicion of bringing in people that weren’t loyal to Flynn. As we used to say, he didn’t have the wet suit on. He wasn’t in the tank.

So in an effort to try to coalesce the progressive activists in the administration

Dreier organized a meeting in the early days to create a strategy to implement their goals:

I organized a meeting at my apartment, probably the first six months of the Flynn administration. I invited a bunch of people to strategize how we’re going to do inside or how we’re going to organize ourselves as we were working as a wing, a faction. How we’ve got to reach out to the people that opposed us who could be useful to us. I didn’t like a lot of this. I never liked Michael Kane because he was an asshole, but yeah they could be useful in helping us push Flynn. There were two exceptions: both people didn’t want to do that, they didn’t want to be seen as divisive and we didn’t want Flynn to know we were conspiring. They were timid, I thought, about they were looking out for themselves. I don’t know. I don’t want to cast any aspersions but I felt a little bit isolated.
So there was a concerted strategy in the early days by the majority of the new team of leaders in City Hall to avoid political divisions by focusing on getting the entire team to follow the lead of their new mayor. According to campaign aid and policy advisor Neil Sullivan:

We went after race, we went after finances, we went after city services, and we watched the neighborhood cleanups, community organizing to make the neighborhoods better. We went on service campaigns, Ray Flynn’s on snow plows; no one has ever been as ready for a snow storm as we were in January of 1984, ever. So we kind of identify, these are the areas where we are going to stake our leadership claim, as mayor.

And when it came to racial violence, Flynn followed through on his promise to respond to incidents, personally visiting victims of racial violence, also according to Sullivan;

It was Ray Flynn for every racial incident the first year. To bring the noise, to bring the attention, to bring the focus on that. And basically say we are going to end this thing called racial violence which has persisted in this town for over six years. We went after it, we did it, and we got it done.

Jim Jordan, former reporter with the *Bay State Banner*, aide to Flynn during his first term, and later Director of Strategic Planning for the Boston Police Department, summarized Flynn’s approach this way: “He took the power of the mayor’s office and focused on civil rights.”

The mayor’s leadership style and philosophy were both key to the changed public discourse on race relations and the tangible results that were realized in dealing with the issue. Flynn viewed his role in governing Boston this way:

A city, you don’t govern, what you do is you guide. You try to bring out the best in people. Even if you can bring out the best in people you got to bring in—show
them the most hopeful part of their life and if it’s not going to be—if they can’t achieve if, if you can’t achieve it, then at least I’m going to show you something that I might be able to say something to you that impresses you that is going to help with your children, your family. I think that’s how you guide, govern the city.

And his personal philosophy was also evident in the approach he and his administration took to the issues of the day, including race relations. He personally appeared at nearly every racial incident and promoted racial harmony at every opportunity. From the first Martin Luther King, Jr. celebration of his administration at Faneuil Hall, Flynn recounts a speech given by 11-year-old Robert Rodney at a city-sponsored event. The event was held at the city’s Parkman House, the second large community event held there since Flynn took office. Using the Parkman House for community events was a divergence from the practice of former Mayor White, who used the facility, located on the exclusive Beacon Street, for private events. As Flynn recalls:

And the kid got himself so worked up after he delivered this Martin Luther King speech, “I Have a Dream,” speech on January 15th. And he didn’t know what to do, so there was this real awkward, awkward moment where he didn’t know what to do. So there was a whole group of us, the Cardinal’s there. So he turns around, he comes walking over to me and he hugs me, and like a mother would do with a scared child. And of all these people, there were a lot of black people on that stage that he could have walked over and he could have hugged. But what he decided to do was coming walking over and he hugged me. I’ve thought of that a hundred times, why me and why not his teacher or whatever it would be. Well that to me was one of the most meaningful symbols of—you know, I knew right there and then, I didn’t need to read an editorial, I didn’t need to look at the election results, I knew I had made it in Boston. I knew that I was his mayor.

Flynn’s governing philosophy, while consciously placing an emphasis on racial harmony, also brought a laser focus to class issues in the city. As a populist leader he promoted broader themes of social and economic justice. He often spoke about the effects of
poverty and championed the cause of the homeless both in Boston and later nationally as head of the U.S. Conference of Mayors’ Committee on Hunger and Homelessness. In summarizing his political philosophy, he discussed the three pictures that adorned the walls of his large office in City Hall that overlooked Faneuil Hall:

St. Francis house, we helped them build that St. Francis homeless shelter and they invited me down for breakfast one morning and the homeless people were all there. And they presented me a picture, and it’s a Dorothy Day picture. And it’s entitled “Christ in the Bread line.” Now I had that, if you walked in my door, if you walked in the Mayor’s office, immediately to the left. There were no political pictures there except one picture there of Hubert Humphrey on the wall. But I had no pictures of myself or any of that, never did. I had a picture of a young black fella who gave this Martin Luther King address over at Faneuil Hall—mesmerized the place. That’s my politics right there in that picture. There are the two pictures. I thought that, you know, I never bothered to explain it to anybody. The only person if they chose to look at it they would have seen it. But that’s what this, when you walked into the office, that’s what the office was about.

In an effort to expand the “tent,” Flynn populated the administration with people from all the “pockets of coalitions” that got him elected and with others who had been with opposing campaigns and were politically astute. He even hired failed city council and school committee candidates, believing that they had the political sense and constituencies that would expand the reach of the new administration. Of course, building the governing regime was not without its challenges. As Sullivan noted:

We accomplished so much together, yet, all the while, we did not see ourselves as anything other than a rather loose coalition, held together by our respect for Ray Flynn as a person and as a leader. Some of us called ourselves “Real Americans”—openly proud of that identity. Some of us were called “Sandinistas” and, as you know, we never really objected to the label, because we were young and we did see ourselves as revolutionaries of one sort or another. You defined the Flynn era, the ten years from 1983 through 1992, perhaps the most exciting and progressive ten years in this or any city’s history. In a mere ten years, you moved this city forward some thirty years or more. No group of people ever had more fun, winning a campaign or governing a city.
Community Empowerment and Engagement

As expressed in his inaugural address at the Wang Center, from the first day of the new administration, Flynn pledged that:

Ours is to be a time of rebirth in Boston's neighborhoods. A new generation of neighborhood leaders will begin the process of decentralizing the delivery of services. Our theory of government will be trickle up, not trickle down. Let the word go forth that starting today, there will be only one interest group with special influence in city government—you, the people in the neighborhoods of Boston. (Inaugural address, January 2, 1984)

This pledge was a clear signal of a change in the way city government would respond to the neighborhoods.

Mayor Kevin White had narrowly won reelection in 1975. That election, according to most observers, fundamentally changed the mayor and his governing approach. Although he won, he believed that the city questioned his leadership. From that point forward, he vowed never again to be politically vulnerable. White began to consolidate the power of his office, and in 1977 proposed changing the city charter to give him more authority. The charter changes proposed would give the mayor control of the school budget, enact district representation (reversing the 1949 change to at-large elections), and transform the electoral process for mayor and city council from non-partisan to partisan, thereby providing a clear path for White to consolidate control. As the Boston Globe said, the proposed changes would give White “political immortality” (Boston Globe 1977:12).

The charter reform movement ostensibly emerged following the April 1976 beating of Ted Landsmark on City Hall Plaza. White appointed a “committee on
violence,” which soon thereafter morphed into the “Committee for Boston,” headed by White ally Edward J. McCormack. Ironically, Landsmark, who at the time of the charter change proposal was the head of the South End Project Area Committee (SEPAC), claimed that a member of White’s administration threatened their group if they opposed the charter change proposals. Recalling White’s response to his assault, Landsmark went on to say, “I am terribly disappointed with what he’s come up with. He has used the opportunity to enhance his own political power. And that’s a travesty” (Robinson 1977).

The home rule petition, “The Boston Charter Reform Act of 1977,” was approved by the City Council and sent to the legislature; in February 1977 it was defeated (Weinberg 1981, Robinson, 1977).

Flynn was determined to chart a new course for the city. Through the creation of the offices of constituent and neighborhood services, meetings were held across Boston, beginning within the first month of the new administration. As I said at the time, during the first community meeting held in Mission Hill, “Tonight’s meeting is a step toward involving the community in solving neighborhood problems. It’s something local residents feel hasn’t been provided in some time by city government” (Quill 1984b). Neighborhood councils were endorsed overwhelmingly in a 1983 referendum, which asked, “Shall the City of Boston establish democratically selected neighborhood councils in each neighborhood of the city which could approve, initiate, or veto new development in their neighborhoods?” Thus the neighborhood councils were initiated in the first year of Flynn’s administration as vehicles to improve connections between City Hall and
neighborhood leaders. Neighborhood cleanups, crime watches, development planning groups, and a range of youth programs were quickly established by the administration.

The implementation of neighborhood councils was not an uncontested endeavor. While there was strong support for them across Boston, during the initial neighborhood meetings convened by Flynn many established neighborhood groups such as the Beacon Hill Civic Association and the Neighborhood Association of the Back Bay opposed the formation of yet another group that would, in their view, diminish their power. In neighborhoods such as Roxbury and Jamaica Plain, while there was strong support for neighborhood councils, neighborhoods activists wanted the councils elected and armed with veto power over development—something Flynn was not willing to cede, as he had stated during the mayoral campaign. As a result, as Flynn was implementing neighborhood councils, a new group led by community activists, including many members of Mel King’s Rainbow Coalition, formed the Coalition for Community Control of Development to press Flynn on veto power. Nowhere was this issue more prominent than in Roxbury, where following the leak of a draft BRA Dudley Square redevelopment plan, the Roxbury Neighborhood Council and the Greater Roxbury Neighborhood Authority, along with the elected officials, demanded control over development, including veto power. As Muhammad Ali-Salaam, a former BRA staffer leading the Dudley planning effort at the time, told me:

The veto power was a very big deal because it basically they were asking to become a development authority like the BRA and you just couldn’t have it if they wanted to be assured that nothing would happen unless they agreed or had a sufficient input that would be fine, but there was no way we were going to give up veto—give them veto power.
BRA Director Stephen Coyle told me about convening a meeting for the Roxbury community with Mel King, which was attended by more than 100 community activists who were concerned about the BRA’s proposed development strategy for the neighborhood:

For all of the first year there was major opposition to whatever we were doing. We briefed the mayor’s staff about the draft plan we had for Roxbury, and one of them leaked it to the *Boston Herald*. We brought Mel King and a hundred people, leaders of Roxbury together. Mel King at the meeting says, “What if I were mayor, what if Mel King is mayor and he sent this black dude in to Southie saying he’s going to put all this development in there? So what we have is a white Irish mayor sends a white Irish guy in here. That’s why we were angry.” My response was, “Look. I don't know anything about that. My family was originally from Southie. My first nine brothers and sisters were born in Southie. When the family was evicted by the predecessor at the BRA to build a project, they were homeless for almost a year. I don’t have any love for governments or for the BRA. My relatives would roll over laughing if they knew I was running the agency.” I said “but the test is going to be, whether you like it or not, we’re going to try to develop because development is needed and jobs are needed. The ways it’s been none for the last 30 years or longer, that’s not how Ray Flynn’s going to do it. There’s going to be projects here. People come and work on those projects. There's going to be housing built. You're going to build it.” So basically we laid out the alternative vision.

The band of young city activists brought into Flynn’s administration had populated the ranks of the major city departments and were enthusiastically changing the face of city service delivery, grappling with issues of violence, and responding to the myriad unmet needs in the city, ignored by the previous administration. There was a high expectation that Flynn would deliver and do better for the neighborhoods. The challenges were difficult, as Ted Landsmark recalled:

When I was working in the Flynn administration, one of my jobs was to try to reduce the violence rate, and in particular the murder rate in the city. And I was young and naive at the time, so when the mayor came to me and said, can you do
this? I said, oh sure, and I went off and thought to myself, what am I thinking, I don’t know how to reduce the murder rate. Well, one of the things we knew was that if we had the right kinds of street workers, out in neighborhoods, during the right hours—that is to say at night and particularly on weekends—they would be able to work with the young people who are most prone to get involved with violent activity. And we created this group of street workers.

Increasing youth outreach and street workers, creating the Safe Neighborhoods Campaign, and engaging the black ministers were key components of the strategy that had Flynn out there personally in response to every incident of racial violence and trouble in Boston. The strategy seemed to be working and was reflected in the *Boston Globe* poll where, “A remarkable 43 percent of respondents said they have personally met Flynn; the number climbed to 46 percent among minorities” (Aucoin 1991). At the same time, the late 1980s saw an increase in the prevalence of crack cocaine, rising gang violence, and a high homicide rate. These took their toll on the popularity of the mayor and the feelings of security and safety in the neighborhoods.

**The Economy and Jobs**

Flynn was elected on the pledge to bring the benefits of downtown development to the neighborhoods of Boston. Nothing had more impact on this goal than the implementation and expansion of linkage as a housing, economic development, poverty reduction, and race relations strategy. The linkage ordinance adopted just before Flynn took office was changed when he became mayor. The new law would require developers of over 100,000 square feet of commercial space to contribute $6 for every additional square foot of development: $5 to a Neighborhood Housing Trust and $1 to a Neighborhood Jobs Trust for job training. Following challenges by Jerome Rappaport, controversial developer of
the West End, Flynn filed a home rule petition to create legal protections for the policy. These are explored in Chapter 4.

The Boston Residents Jobs Policy (BRJP) required developers to hire 50 percent Boston residents, 25 percent minorities, and 10 percent women on all city-assisted development projects. Soon after taking office, the mayor issued an executive order extending the policy to private construction projects requiring city approval. Coupled with the BRJP, linkage, which had been opposed by Mayor White and the development community, was an important tool for addressing rising housing costs, particularly in low-income neighborhoods.

Near the end of his 16-year term, after having vetoed the linkage ordinance approved by the Boston City Council, White appointed an advisory committee to develop an alternative linkage proposal. Two members of the committee, Albert Wallis and Emily Achtenburg, were the lone dissenters against the weak measure White was supporting.

Candidate Flynn opposed White’s plan during the campaign because it was weak and would not help the city address the housing crisis. Once Flynn was in office he aggressively defended linkage against developer challenges and moved quickly to expand the exaction on projects. Flynn’s relationship with the business community was described by his former chief of staff Nancy Snyder as his “not having tremendous respect for the business community…he would engage with the business community, usually an in-your-face, kind of here is what you need to do. In his [Flynn’s] view, the business community were taking more out of the city than they were giving back…they weren’t his people.” Flynn’s liaison to the business community, Rosemarie Sansone, adds, “His
relationship with the downtown business community wasn’t good. That’s not to say that
his relationships to the boards of trade in East Boston, Hyde Park, Roslindale, or Jamaica
Plain, which were grassroots, weren’t good, because they were. The downtown business
community wasn’t a group of people he wanted to spend a lot of time with…wasn’t
where his heart and soul was.” And Peter Dreier, the mayor’s housing advisor, put it even
more bluntly, “I always knew that there was a part of Flynn’s gut that hated bankers and
rich people.”

Flynn adopted an approach to the business community that was based on how he
could extract benefits for Boston’s neighborhoods—much more so than as an alliance
with the growth machine coalition. For Flynn, linkage was seen as more than a housing
and training fund—it was a symbol of his values and a way to promote economic justice
and racial harmony. As Neil Sullivan told me:

It becomes the principle that speaks into the race issue indirectly even as it speaks
to the development issue. Stop fighting across the races, somebody else is getting
rich while you are beating each other’s brains out, change it up, change the
culture, and change the climate. And that’s old style from this era’s perspective
organizing, it’s not the issue, it’s the enemy that communicates your message. So
we consciously tried to dissemble race as the enemy and substitute for it
corporations and rich people. And Flynn loved it, because that is how he felt. It
always comes back to the primacy of Ray Flynn.

Those interviewed described linkage and the Boston Resident’s Jobs Program as
vehicles that successfully moved beyond the symbolism to produce thousands of low-to-
moderate housing units, as well as training and job opportunities for neighborhood
residents. During the late 1980s these efforts were having a direct impact upon poverty in
Boston. Family poverty went from 18 percent in 1980 to 11.5 percent in 1988 due to both
increased employment and active government programs to reduce poverty for all racial and ethnic subgroups (Center for Labor Market Studies 2013, Hayes 1989, Osterman 1991). Osterman’s study for The Boston Foundation found that from 1980 to 1989, overall poverty among Boston families fell to 19 percent, from 23.5 percent. Among single parents, poverty decreased to 40.5 percent, from 60.5 percent, and among single individuals, the poverty rate fell to 5.9 percent, from 22.5 percent. The breakdowns by race reveal the most about who was left behind as the economy flourished. Among white single parents, the poverty rate declined to 25.7 percent from 56 percent over that period. For black single parents, there was a decline to 35.2 percent from 59.9 percent (Osterman 1991).

Beyond linkage, efforts to empower Boston’s neighborhoods of color were fraught with difficulties. On the one hand, a number of African American activists believed that creating a conflict with the city administration would provide the best hope for improving opportunities for their community. Some proposed that sections of Roxbury, Mattapan, and Dorchester secede from Boston and that they create an independent city to be known as Mandela. This effort was vigorously opposed by the mayor and his administration, along with a large number of African American religious leaders and the business community. Although the measure was defeated in a referendum in November 1986, it highlighted the continuing debate on race relations and equality as unfinished business in the city, revealing divisions not seen since busing in 1974. As noted by Boston Globe columnist Robert Jordan, “Mayor Flynn won because the 3-1 vote against secession allows him to continue working toward his goal of bringing the black
community into the city’s economic mainstream. If the non-binding referendum passed—

Boston’s racial problems would have escalated” (Jordan 1986).

In response to the secession effort, Mayor Flynn called for:

Unity and common purpose, a house united, standing tall. While in other cities this might be dismissed as rhetorical flourish, Mr. Flynn, who wrote the speech himself, was alluding to a history of racial discord and a proposal last summer to carve out 12.5 square miles of Boston, including all its predominantly black areas, as a new city to be called “Mandela.” The vote implied that racial separation here was not as bad as it might have seemed during the school busing crises that shook the city a decade ago. Boston has often been described as two cities, though the traditional division has not been between the races but between the colleges and universities and the work-a-day city (Wald 1987).

The Mandela succession campaign and the issues of racial polarity are explored in greater detail in Chapter 5.

Around the same time, efforts by a local neighborhood group, the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI) was having an important impact upon neighborhood redevelopment. After several years of organizing to clean up vacant lots, reduce crime, and rid drugs from their neighborhood, activists petitioned the Boston Redevelopment Authority for the power of eminent domain to assemble enough vacant property to build affordable housing. Unheard of cities across America, DSNI was seeking the power that had been wielded by government, including Boston, to clear urban areas of poor people and develop the land for the well-to-do (Kennedy 1992, Medoff and Sklar 1994, Boston Globe Editorial 1988).

In another demonstration of Flynn’s efforts to promote minority economic development, he backed a first-in-the-nation parcel-to-parcel linkage plan that required members of a development team to be 30 percent minority. Flynn and the BRA argued
that "the city’s reasoning is based on data showing that four city-owned garages sold to
developers in 1983 spurred $800 million worth of development projects, but none of the
developers were minorities and that while government has tried to improve the status of
minorities, poverty remains in minority communities" (Frisby 1986a). These two major
initiatives will also be explored in greater detail in the following chapter.

Boston was changing racially and ethnically in significant ways between 1980
and 2000. Flynn’s response was to reach out to the new immigrant communities by
appointing liaisons in the Office of Neighborhood Services. Previously, under White, the
city employed a liaison to the Hispanic and gay and lesbian communities. Flynn
continued those positions, but expanded the staff hiring to liaise with the Asian,
Vietnamese, Cambodian, Haitian, and Cape Verdean communities, which were growing
fast in Boston’s neighborhoods. On the appointment of the Cape Verdean liaison, Flynn
said:

Diversity is what makes Boston great. There are strong values in the Cape
Verdean community that should be connected to all levels of government. There
will be someone at the other end of the phone that shares those values and will
provide access to city services for a growing population in Boston (Boston

The number of Cambodian and Vietnamese refugees making Boston their home
was also rapidly increasing. As I said at the time of Mayor Flynn’s appointment of
liaisons to those communities, “The murder of a third of the Cambodian population under
the brutal Pol Pot regime remains a recent memory. We need to break down the barriers
of deep distrust so that people realize that the government can be an ally as opposed to an
adversary” (Kerstner 1988).
The percentage of whites declined precipitously in the 1960’s and 1970’s, from 68 percent of the population in 1970 to just fewer than 50 percent in 2000, while the black population remained relatively unchanged at about a quarter of the city’s total, and there was major growth in the numbers of Hispanics and Asians moving into Boston’s neighborhoods. Boston went from a majority white city in 1980 to a majority-minority city in the 21st century (BRA 2001).

While positive gains were made in economic opportunity for Boston residents between 1984 and 1990—through increased affordable housing development, the Boston Residents Jobs Program, and increased hiring of minorities at all levels in city government—the recession of 1990–1991, coupled with the impact of the Reagan/Bush policies, began to take hold during the end of Flynn’s tenure at City Hall.

The Flynn administration’s focus on economic justice and racial conflict and harmony, as well as the related key policy debates, will be further developed and analyzed in subsequent chapters.
CHAPTER 4

The Growing Divide—and a New Social Contract for Economic Justice

My metaphor has always been you want to choke the private sector and squeeze them just to the point where they can still breathe but not to the point where they’re dead. And that—I saw my role as trying to help figure out where that point was where they could still breathe and they were complaining that “you’re killing me,” but they were still alive and they were not going to die. (Peter Dreier interview)

This chapter examines the policies that framed the response to poverty, housing costs, and economic development in Boston. Inequality and economic development and redistribution draw upon growth machine coalition theory and theories about progressive city governments, which help to understand what happened during this time period and why.

Urban Renewal and the Growth Machine

John Mollenkopf credits the growth machine, led by Boston’s bankers and business elites, with transforming the central city through urban renewal (Mollenkopf 1983). Reverend W. Seavey Joyce, then Boston College’s vice president of community relations, who later served as president from 1968 to 1972, was key to starting the process. He expressed his goals thus in an interview for the film Mission Hill and the Miracle of Boston: “In 1954 we needed some new building in Boston, we needed a skyline.” As a first step, in 1954 he initiated the Boston College Citizens’ Seminars as a vehicle “to bring together the Yankees who owned the city’s economy and the Irish political leaders who ran the city” (Broadman 1978). The seminars, held at the First National Bank of Boston, created the opportunity for a series of meetings (later described as
“acrimonious”) between the interest groups. From these meetings, the growth machine coalition emerged. Then-Mayor Hynes addressed the first meeting of the group, stating, “The only way that decay and blight may be uprooted is by a complete physical change in the affected neighborhood or area”—no doubt referring to both the West End and the North End, which were poor and working-class immigrant neighborhoods at the time. These meetings launched the era of urban renewal in Boston (Mollenkopf 1983:159).

Later, the “Vault” was formed as the coordinating arm for the business community—appropriately so named because of its clandestine meetings in the Boston Safe Deposit and Trust Bank. The growth machine coalition overpowered the immigrant neighborhood of the West End, in large part to the insular nature of their peer group culture and consequent lack of understanding of the forces at work to transform the neighborhood, as Herbert Gans (1962) describes in his classic portrait, Urban Villagers. Gans relates how, without the political power to stop the ultimate destruction of their community, the West End was totally cleared in less than 18 months, much like the “New York Streets” section of the South End had been destroyed several years earlier (Gans 1962, King 1981). The North End, Charlestown, and South Boston neighborhoods would not undergo similar “redevelopment,” in part due to the resistance and the political power of these largely Irish communities (O’Connor 1993). Roxbury would later experience urban renewal in the Washington Park section because of the support of the leading political figures of the district at that time, Otto and Muriel Snowden.

The Vault provided the forum around which business elites could unify their urban renewal and redevelopment policy. Their strategy was to remove poor and
working-class residents from the central city and assist government leaders in the public arena to obtain the necessary support for their agenda. Resistance to the growth machine coalition policies intensified in Boston, as well as other urban areas, through the development of a “kind of militant community activism” (Mollenkopf 1983:184).

The South End was the major urban renewal target in the waning days of Mayor Collins’s administration, but neighborhood opposition slowed the process. Led by community activists such as Mel King, whose family was displaced in the New York Streets urban renewal process of 1955, the Community Assembly for a United South End (CAUSE) challenged the continuation of urban renewal. The taking over of the Boston Redevelopment Authority’s site office in the South End in April 1968 was followed by the occupation of the South End urban renewal parcel that came to be known as “Tent City” (Clavel 2010, King 1981).

Although Kevin White campaigned promising a new approach to growth in the city, he later would change course when he was elected mayor. The growth machine coalition assembled by Mayor White was in many ways similar to that of both Mayors Hynes and Collins before him. The downtown experienced a rapid pace of economic growth, promoted by the real estate and financial business leaders. It was estimated that from 1960 to 1976 Boston increased its office capacity by 17 million square feet, or nearly 40 percent. From 1979 to 1982 the city absorbed $1.5 billion in private development capital, and another $2.7 billion in projects were underway and scheduled to be completed by 1986—an annual construction rate of 2.2 million square feet. Projections for 1987 to 1992 indicate that office construction in Boston would occur at a rate of 1.9 to
2.4 million square feet per year (Linkage Report 1983). As James Jennings and Mel King wrote in their book *From Access to Power: Black Politics in Boston*:

> During his tenure Mayor White performed his political-managerial responsibilities superbly; he adopted and implemented policies that favored the powerful and wealthy and hurt the poor. His major accomplishment was the development of an atmosphere that was considered positive by big business interests; most of the mayor’s more important actions were taken at the expense of those at the lower end of the socioeconomic ladder (1986:61).

The growth rate in the downtown continued to price working class families out of the housing market in the city; and resistance to the growth machine coalition policies of the White administration and distrust of the Boston Redevelopment Authority led to a new level of political discourse in the election to succeed him in 1983.

**Rising Housing Costs and Poverty**

In the period under study, 1980 to 2000, Boston experienced a housing affordability crisis. During the 1970s and into the early 1980s, then-Mayor Kevin White made some attempts to address the issue through rent control (which he later tried to eliminate under pressure from the Boston Real Estate Board). Boston was a city of renters, who represented approximately three-quarters of the people in the city. The era of downtown development, following the urban renewal debacle in the West End and the pitched battles in the South End, Charlestown, the North End, and South Boston (though the latter three neighborhoods were largely able to hold off the incursions of the Boston Redevelopment Authority urban planners), put tremendous pressure on the city housing stock. Working-class families were increasingly being priced out of their neighborhoods. This was a major issue in the 1983 mayoral and city council elections. Both King and
Flynn ran on a platform of supporting rent control and leveraging the benefits of downtown development to build affordable housing in Boston’s neighborhoods. Now, after Flynn had won with widespread support from housing activists, he needed to deliver on his promises.

According to a report commissioned by the White administration in 1969, rents for the poor, elderly, and blacks were rising at an average rate of 23 percent annually in Boston (Riddell 1969a). Increasingly, Boston’s poor, working-class, and minority families were being forced out of the city. By 1990 Boston was one of the most costly cities in the nation. The rapid pace of development in the city drove the increase in housing costs and created a critical housing shortage (Keating, 1986, Muzzio and Bailey, 1986; Bluestone and Stevenson 2000). The lack of housing affordability, coupled with an increase in the in-migration of poor southern blacks, contributed to the persistence of poverty and housing segregation. As Peter Dreier, Flynn’s housing advisor, explained:

The big issue was the city’s rising housing costs. Boston was a city of renters; about three-quarters of the people in Boston rented their homes. Boston had huge price increases, and working-class families were being pushed out or their kids couldn’t afford to buy homes in their neighborhood. So there were all these efforts to gentrify the city and then Kevin White tried to do away with rent control. The guy, who had once said, “When landlords raise rents Kevin White raises hell,” was now turning his back on that, and so there were fewer protections.

According to a report prepared for Mayor White by his 30-member Linkage Between Downtown Development and Neighborhood Housing Advisory Committee in October 1983:

This rapid growth in downtown development would seem to indicate that Boston is a prosperous city. A look at the demographic and housing statistics for Boston tell another story:
Boston’s population had the fifth lowest median household income of the country’s thirty (30) largest cities.

The share of persons in poverty status in Boston was twice that of the metropolitan area.

More than twenty percent (20%) of the residents of Boston in 1980 were in “poverty status,” a five percent (5%) increase from 1970.

Fifty-eight percent (58%) of households in Boston were of low and moderate income in 1980 according to guidelines of the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The rental housing stock, upon which seventy percent (70%) of Boston households rely, is aged and increasingly troubled.

Affordability of housing is a major problem, particularly for Boston’s tenants. In 1980, almost forty percent (40%) of Boston’s renters were paying rent in excess of thirty percent (30%) of their income. This rent burden, especially for lower income renters, is an indication of an “affordability gap” as property owners with an aging, inefficient housing stock are unable to find tenants with the means to pay for it (Linkage Report 1983).

As rents continued to escalate throughout the 1980s and the number of units converted to condominiums continued to increase, the affordable housing crisis accelerated, thus exacerbating poverty in the city.

**Poverty in Boston**

Poverty in Boston increased from 16 percent in 1970 to 20 percent in 1980. As Charles Kenny wrote in a special report, “Poverty Amidst Affluence,” for the *Boston Globe* in 1985:

For many of Boston’s residents, however, the city’s “booming economy and population revival point to very good prospects for growth as a place to work and a place to live,” says a Boston Redevelopment Authority report completed in June of this year on the future of the city’s poor. In the restrained language of demographers, the report states: “The transformation has been largely downtown-oriented, however, and fewer of the benefits have yet flowed into the poorer neighborhoods where most of the city’s population lives. While Boston was achieving new records of growth in employment and development investment,
poverty was spreading in the city’s neighborhoods.” The report calls Boston a city of “poverty amidst affluence” (Kenny 1985b).

As Mayor Flynn said at the time:

A person seeing Quincy Market at 5 o’clock on a Friday night would say, “Wow, what a thriving, bustling city we live in,” but you have to get on the Red Line and see those people getting off at Fields Corner and going into the bank and cashing their checks. What’s the take-home pay? It’s not enough. They bring that envelope home, and they’ve got to pay rent and food and heat and kids’ education (Kenney 1985b).

As a result of the high costs of housing, poverty in Boston was on the rise during the White years. In 1975 the number of families in poverty was at 12 percent, gradually reaching 21 percent in 1985 (City of Boston Archives, nd). Factors contributing to the escalating poverty included rapidly rising housing prices and the immigration of low-income new immigrant families. The 1985 BRA Household Survey provides the following findings on income by race and ethnicity:

Households headed by a white householder had a higher mean household income in 1984 than households headed by black or other minority householders. The average household income of white householders was $25,750.... Households headed by black householders had an average household income, at $18,150, significantly lower than the white households. Mean household income for white households increased 3.5 percent between 1979 and 1984. At the same time, black households did not change significantly, falling from the 1979 mean of $18,400, in 1984 constant dollars, to $18,150 in 1984.

The BRA survey report further stated:

The distribution of household income by race and ethnicity highlights the disparity that exists among the incomes of these different groups. While 28 percent of all Boston households earned less than $10,000 in 1984, only 22 percent of white households fell into this category, which was significantly lower than non-white households, with 35 percent of black households and 43 percent of other minority households reporting incomes below this amount. Twenty-two percent of all households earned greater than $35,000, with 27 percent of white households earning this much, but only 14 percent of the black households at or
above this level. Although there was no significant difference by race in the proportion of households reporting their largest source of income as wages and salaries, a greater proportion of white households reported Social Security benefits, veterans benefits, pensions or annuities as their largest source—20 percent—higher than any other race. A higher proportion of black and other minority households reported unemployment compensation, SSI, AFDC, or welfare payments as their largest income source (O’Brien and Oriola 1985).

Poverty and the housing crisis were fueled by a combination of market forces, local and national public policies, social forces, and demographic change in the city.

**Changing Demographics, Redlining, Blockbusting, and Racial Conflict**

Boston, like urban areas across the country following World War II, was changing demographically. The shifting population of the city created a climate of fear in many neighborhoods. As Bob Consalvo Flynn’s education advisor told me during our interview:

> There was still, there was that whole, them and us thing. And people, you had the blockbusting in Hyde Park down by Ross Field. That was really traumatic for Hyde Park. And people were nervous about minorities moving into their neighborhood. That really did a lot of damage to Hyde Park, that blockbusting by the real estate industry and the banks.

The rapid racial and ethnic change in Boston has been characterized by some as “a tragedy for Boston as great as the destruction of the West End.” As one young white woman, a lifelong resident of Wells Avenue in Codman Square, remembers, “The neighborhood was changing almost before our eyes, blacks were moving in in droves—to be honest with you, it was pretty scary. Like everyone else, my father was deathly afraid of his property value going down, and for his safety. It was a frightening time” (Rosenbaum 1991).
The level of disinvestment and housing abandonment throughout Boston’s neighborhoods was rapidly increasing. The practice by banks of “redlining” certain areas of the city was well established in Boston. The practice can be traced back to the government’s Home Owners Loan Corporation (HLOC), which was initiated as part of Roosevelt’s New Deal. HLOC mapped 239 cities, using the color red to identify neighborhoods “deemed to be ‘hazardous’ and ‘dangerous’ where banks had stopped issuing mortgages altogether or charged exorbitant fees and interest rates. A new and ominous real estate and banking term was coined: redlining” (Pietila 2010:61). In Boston the practice was widespread. As Michael Reiskind, a Jamaica Plain activist and head of the local historical society, told me:

The Jamaica Plain anti-redlining committee was formed to encourage banks that had the deposits of the people living in the neighborhood to lend back to the people they had taken the deposits from. Local housing or community reinvestment by banks which is a federal law but it started in Jamaica Plain, and then the Jamaica Plain leader of that committee became head of the state committee, Massachusetts Urban Reinvestment Advisory Group, MURAG.

In the Roxbury, Mattapan, and Dorchester neighborhoods, where the practice of redlining was coupled with dramatic racial succession and housing abandonment, local banks formed the Boston Banks Urban Renewal Group (BBURG). Developed, in part, with the push of the White administration, BBURG was seen as a response to the growing unrest in black communities across the nation and on the surface, an effort to expand black homeownership. The implementation of BBURG, launched in 1968 by 22 banks and other savings, loan institutions, and cooperatives, was what then-Mayor White called “a major new urban program for Boston which teams private capital and expertise,
governmental coordination and planning, and self-directed economic development by the poor and provides greatly expanded home ownership in the inner city” (Harmon and Levine 1992:171).

As Lew Finfer, veteran community organizer, recalled:

When I first got to Dorchester, Colombia Road had this code word that was the dividing line in 1970 between the black and white communities. Everyone was very conscious about, what streets were starting to get integrated and that was really big in terms of—and it was the end of the BBURG [Boston Bankers Urban Renewal Group] which had pushed a lot of people out and created all distrust. BBURG really hurt race relations because it led to all this deterioration. Over 1,000 homes were foreclosed and a lot of them became abandoned houses.

The program can best be described as reverse redlining, where a geographic area was included for mortgage lending. As then–City Councilor Tom Atkins said, “I’d heard of redlining—the practice of denying mortgage loans in predominantly minority areas—but never before had I encountered it in this variation—where federally insured money was provided to minorities only on the condition that they buy where the bankers told them to” (Ibid 272). Some argue that the resulting eradication of the Jewish neighborhood in Mattapan was merely the unintended consequence of good intentions, though others argue that it was a conscious scheme. Whether conscious or unintended, the program led to the blockbusting in the BBURG-defined area that between 1968 and 1970 resulted in the overturning of the 50-year Jewish settlement of 90,000 in favor of 120,000 black residents who moved into the area (Ibid 9).

Peter Canellos summarized the results of the BBURG program in a 1988 Boston Globe article thus: “A group of Boston banks, with the encouragement of Mayor Kevin White, launched a $27 million minority-housing program that ended up wiping away old
Jewish Mattapan and adding “redlining” and “blockbusting” to the Boston vocabulary. The racial turmoil the program engendered presaged the busing crisis six years later” (Canellos 1988b). The policies and process was documented in The Death of an American Jewish Community (1992), the urban sociological study by Hillel Levine and Lawrence Harmon, as several people I interviewed noted. According to Bill Walczak, former head of the Codman Square Health Center:

Codman Square was always a dividing line between Jews and Catholics. So you know over in the 1960s the Jews were replaced by blacks. The Catholics had no use for the Jews. I remember people telling me about back in the ’30s and ’40s they would have what they call Jew hunts on Friday nights. The Catholic kids would get together, go down to Franklin Field and look for Jewish kids to beat up. So there was no love lost there and when they left there were blacks in there but you know it was a tougher crowd. So you know the fights had begun, it was already a nasty situation. People were really scared how the blacks moved in and they saw this line moving. I remember Templeton Street, which is now Mantinea Lydian Way, there was an instance in the mid ’70s where a black family would move in to a three-decker and that house would be firebombed the night that they moved in.

Janice Bernstein, a former Mattapan resident, does not agree that BBURG had good intentions nor that it was an accident, saying, “Policy makers from the period have blamed real estate agents. Real estate agents have blamed the program. Both speak of ‘unintended consequences.’ They mapped us out and they killed us.” She and her husband recalled becoming aware of the program “when real estate agents showed up on our doorstep in 1968 announcing that 2,500 black families were about to move into the area. They’d say, ‘Your neighbor across the street is selling to blacks. I thought maybe you’d be interested in selling’” (Canellos 1988b).

The White administration didn’t seem to have a clue about what was going on in the neighborhoods as a result of the real estate and banking policies. As White told
Levine and Harmon, “I didn’t know the neighborhood was dying. I wouldn’t have let that happen. The Jewish community was not making noise. Such swift change and they were not making noise. I missed this completely like you would a child off to the side in a large family” (Levine and Harmon (1902:270). The result was foreclosures and housing abandonment. The impacts of the policies were still being felt years later according to Canellos, “Even now, twenty years later, the decay is unabated. Many three-deckers have been torn down and others boarded up and abandoned. Most of the stores that closed in the late ’60s have never been reopened.” As housing activist Lew Finfer told Canellos, “Well over 1,000 of the 2,500 mortgages handed out were foreclosed.” He said he blames the banks, real estate agents, and federal inspectors: “The banks never exhibited a willingness to help families keep their houses. Instead, they instituted ‘fast foreclosures’ and got paid through federal mortgage insurance” (Canellos 1988b).

The devastation lasted for decades, as noted by former BRA project manager in Grove Hall Muhammad Ali-Salaam as he recalled Flynn’s reaction viewing aerial photographs of Blue Hill Avenue:

My memorable moment with Ray was when he came up to the ninth floor [BRA offices] and was walking down the corridor and he stepped into the conference room outside of my office, and in the conference room I had wallpapered the room with aerial photographs of Blue Hill Avenue, and the aerial photographs told the picture of devastation. Ray walked and he looked at the picture and he said, “What the hell is this, Hiroshima?” And I said, “No, Mr. Mayor, this is Roxbury. This is Blue Hill Avenue.” He said, “You’re kidding. We have to do something about this.”

During the White era Boston’s housing crisis had snowballed. Thousands of public housing units were abandoned, and arson for profit was on the rise. In his study of
arson in Boston, James Brady, Director of Boston’s Arson Strike Force, wrote about how he developed a sociology of arson at the time, using demography and urban economics:

It demonstrates that arson is essentially a consequence of economic decisions undertaken by the banking, real estate, and insurance industries, as well as the racketeering operations of organized crime syndicates. I argue that routine profit-making practices of banks, realtors, and insurance companies lead to the processes of abandonment, gentrification, and neighborhood decline which destabilize urban communities and provide the context and motivation for several varieties of arson. (Brady 1983:1)

Concerns about affordable housing, poverty, and racial conflict dominated the 1983 mayoral election and set the stage for change after Kevin White’s departure. As Flynn entered office and was faced with these inherited elements of an urban crisis, he was determined to implement policies aimed at achieving some semblance of economic justice for Boston’s neighborhoods and their poor and working-class residents.

**An Economic Justice Agenda**

“*Millionaires don’t need mayors, poor people do.*” (Mayor Flynn quoted in Rimer 1993). One of the hallmarks of the Flynn administration’s development policies was an effort to manage Boston’s downtown with an emphasis on what Flynn termed social and economic justice. As he articulated frequently, his administration’s development policies would be framed by his belief that economic growth must be tied to economic justice, jobs, and affordable housing for the poor and working-class residents of Boston’s neighborhoods.

As previously discussed, Boston’s economy had undergone a transformation in the post-World War II period, first as a consequence of deindustrialization and federal highway and housing policies and later as a consequence of urban renewal. The growth
machine coalition that took root in Boston following the defeat of the Irish populist mayor James Michael Curley in 1949 was firmly entrenched throughout the administrations of Mayors Hynes, Collins, and White. The cumulative effect of this political and economic shift in Boston was evident in the deterioration of Boston’s neighborhoods, in particular the housing stock.

**A New Housing Policy for the People**

Probably the most controversial housing policy in Boston was rent control. Rent control was implemented in 1968 as a result of significant pressures in the rental housing market. “In Boston, rents have gone up 34 percent since 1959—increasing more than in any other major city in the country except San Francisco” (Riddell 1969b). The Boston rent control effort began as a result of protests by elderly Allston and Brighton residents that students were driving up housing prices by 30 to 100 percent annually. Boston began by devising an interim local rent plan, which was met with controversy and challenged by the real estate industry. Throughout 1969, the city council and mayor grappled almost daily with implementing a more comprehensive rent control strategy. Following a ruling by the State Supreme Judicial Court, a home rule petition was enacted in 1970 that gave Boston (and other large cities of more than 50,000) the power to regulate rents. The law overcame the lobbying of the real estate industry and passed largely due to the efforts of then-Governor Francis Sargent and South Boston State Senator John Joseph Moakley, who rescued the legislation from the jaws of defeat. The local ordinance allowed the city to control rent increases and evictions. Mayor White appointed a five-member rent board
to oversee the process for an estimated 60,000 rental units, about a quarter of the city’s rental housing stock.

Mayor Kevin White, originally a strong public supporter of rent control, had sought to strengthen the effectiveness of the law in the early 1970s. White claimed in a 1975 reelection ad, “When landlords raise rents, Kevin White raises hell.” But after his narrow reelection victory in 1975, bowing to the pressure of the real estate industry, White approved vacancy decontrol, effectively gutting Boston’s tough rent control provisions. As a result, in the course of several years, an estimated 40,000 units were decontrolled. Over the objections of tenants’ groups and a number of members of the city council, including Flynn, White sought to continue vacancy decontrol in 1979. In fact, his changed attitude to rent control dated as early as 1976, when he has been overheard saying, “Rent control stinks” (Rogers 1979). Housing therefore became a major issue in the 1983 campaign to succeed White.

Candidates Flynn and King were strongly pro-tenant and supported reinstituting strong rent control. The other candidates, especially those with the strong backing of the real estate industry, opposed rent control. Larry DiCara “in 1972 and 1975 supported rent control measures proposed by tenant advocacy groups but in 1979 and 1981, according to records kept by the Massachusetts Tenants Organization, DiCara voted against stronger rent control proposals and an eviction ban during condominium conversions” (Vennochi 1983c). He was courting the real estate industry for his 1979 mayoral run and was rewarded with the second-highest political contributions from the industry in 1979 and 1980. He would ultimately drop out of the 1979 mayoral race but was reelected to the
city council as the highest vote-getter, subsequently leaving the city council in 1981 to position himself for his 1983 run at the mayor’s office (DiCara 2013, Vennochi 1983c). Both 1983 mayoral candidates David Finnegan and Dennis Kearney voiced support for the weakened regulations in place at the time, which had been gutted by Mayor White, but did not support Flynn’s or King’s call for a return to full rent control.

Once elected, Flynn launched an effort to restore strong rent control in Boston. Six months into his administration, on June 26, 1984, he submitted a proposal to the City Council which would end vacancy decontrol and reinstate full rent control, as well as control condominium conversions, which were rapidly accelerating by 1984. Flynn said at the time that his proposal “has nothing to do with being liberal or conservative and everything to do with wanting to help poor and moderate-income people. A vote against it will further exacerbate the housing problem in Boston” (Vennochi 1984d). The proposal would have expanded coverage to 85,000 units, half the city’s housing stock, and would have exempted two-and three-family houses. The vacancy rate at the time was only 3 percent, and during White’s tenure the city had lost more than 18,000 units, largely due to condominium conversions, which became part of the next wave in the gentrification of Boston (Vennochi 1984d).

The majority of the City Council opposed Flynn’s proposal, owing more allegiance to the real estate industry than to tenants or the mayor. The real estate lobby actively opposed the legislation. As Peter Dreier, Flynn’s point man on the rent control legislation, recounted:
The real estate board cleverly elected Tom Hines to be their president, thinking that he had some connections to Flynn or had back channels to Flynn. He called me up like the first week I was there and he wanted to take me out for lunch, and I had a policy that I wouldn’t let anybody pay for my lunch. So we met at the Bostonian Hotel for breakfast. I had never been there before so it’s a good symbol of our naïveté and inexperience. I get there and, you know, at the time I was a poor college professor and all of a sudden I’m eating this like $14 omelet. He said, “Look can we work this out (rent control)?” I said, “What are you looking for?” What he was looking for we couldn’t give him, basically a really weak law. I had enough bravado to say, “Look, we’re going to win,” and I tried to pretend I was incredibly self-confident, we’re going to win this so if you want to negotiate fine but, you know, we’re going to win so what can you give us. I think he knew that I was bluffing because he talked to all the council members and he knew, and Jerry Rappaport was working really hard behind the scenes. He gave Flynn a lot of money after Mel King was in the run-off but Flynn gave it back, but it showed me how he operated. He was giving out cash. Jerry Rappaport was giving out cash to the council members. I saw him give Flynn an envelope with cash in it and Flynn gave it back; good for him. Anyway, so the first test of Flynn’s populist thing was rent control and we won maybe 60 percent of what we wanted. So, one problem was the community groups like City Life that supported Mel, didn’t want to help Flynn get rent control passed. There was still that anger.

This demonstrated the uncertainty the progressive flank in the administration had in light of the tremendous influence of the real estate lobby and growth coalition in influencing city policy. Jerome Rappaport, former staffer to Mayor Hynes and later who would come to epitomize the growth coalition, having led the destruction of the West End, would now stop Flynn’s rent control efforts and later challenge his proposed linkage ordinances. In light of Flynn’s bill being watered down by the city council, the Massachusetts Tenants’ Organization charged that:

The city’s real estate interests have spent at least $182,000 to defeat rent control and condominium conversion legislation brought before the Boston City Council this year. Seven of 10 councilors who received real estate money voted “against tenants.” In response, Michael Rotenberg, president of the Rental Housing Assn. of the Greater Boston Real Estate Board, said: “You don’t buy a councilor’s vote by a political contribution. At the very best, it gives you opportunity and access.” Rotenberg said it is difficult to make a connection between a contribution and a
councilor’s position on rent control, noting that District Councilor Bruce C. Bolling (Roxbury) received more real estate interest money than District Councilor Thomas M. Menino (Hyde Park-Roslindale), yet Bolling backed Flynn’s plan and Menino did not.

John Logan and Harvey Molotch suggest that the growth machine coalition “must influence government decisions if they are to maximize returns from their holdings and they must also make campaign contributions (or bribes) to public officials” (Logan and Molotch 1987:157). In Boston that approach seemed to be working.

The Boston City Council responded to the real estate industry by rejecting Flynn’s housing package and sent him a weakened bill, which leading tenants’ group the Massachusetts Tenants’ Organization (MTO) called “voodoo rent control.” The MTO asked Flynn to veto the measure, but although he sought during his first year in office to fulfill his campaign promise regarding rent control, he realized that the City Council was poised to block his plan and he would need to reach a compromise to salvage the majority of his housing plan (Vennochi 1984e). In the negotiated compromise with the city council, the new law would limit rent increases in some 65,000 units of rental housing and prohibit evictions of low-income and elderly tenants for the purpose of condominium conversions.

This was the first realization by Mayor Flynn, his staff, and progressive supporters that, while he may have won control of the mayor’s office, the real estate industry had control of the City Council. Those interviewed provided a mixed sense of the results of Flynn’s first major defeat. Head of the MTO at the time, Lew Finfer, said
that the new housing law was “a significant step forward,” though at the same time citing Boston’s severe housing shortage and booming real estate market:

Many tenants are still not covered, the 12.5 percent rent-increase ceiling, twice the rate of inflation, is too high, and a strong enforcement agency is needed. Even the weakened measure was adamantly opposed by the real estate industry leaders who were able to muscle enough votes in the city council to defeat Flynn’s measure. According to Michael J. Rotenberg of the Rental Housing Association, “The real estate industry views the ceiling on rent increases as ‘rent control through the back door,’ and the ban on some evictions would stop owners from realizing the optimal value on their property by converting to condominiums” (New York Times 1984).

In our interview, Finfer reflected on the loss, wondering whether Flynn and his staff had done all they could to get the law enacted, and reflecting on the nature of his relationships with Flynn’s cadre of progressive activists who had joined the administration:

That was also interesting learning for me about our colleagues and friends. A lot of them went to work for Flynn, but there was this point when the thing was lost where they did this press event, with District 1 City Councilor Travaglini—we had really worked on Travaglini because he was the swing vote. We had really big meetings in the North End with all the Italian ladies who were getting pushed out, and they were really pushing him. So we thought we’d win. Someone told me Jerry Rappaport called up and put the squeeze on him [Travaglini] and he was willing to be squeezed and we lost. To move on, the Flynn people had some kind of press event around some positive part of the bill and they did it with Travaglini. I remember like chasing Flynn and the media with two of the elderly North End leaders and then I kind of felt like where are my friends, where is [Ray] Dooley and Neil [Sullivan]. It helped me learn that this is about a public relationship. Their guy is the mayor and that’s their job to move on with him and even if they wanted to do more or wanted community groups to succeed, that was not on top of their agenda. So, it was kind of a painful lesson because I kind of felt like why aren’t they dealing with this or why aren’t they talking with us about this. They’re just moving on and trying to make it look better than it was. So, that was a lesson.

Others agreed, as John McDonough former state representative and housing activist put it during our interview:
The sense was Flynn didn’t push as hard because he probably believed that he couldn’t win and he didn’t want to lose on a fight because that makes you look weak. Then the City Council feels like they are in control you and they don’t have to pay attention to you. So instead of pushing for rent control I think the focus of attention for groups like City Life was to push for the expansion of affordable housing with some kind of subsidies and government controls.

The theme of conflict between the Mayor Flynn’s goals and his ability to implement them to the standards held by some of his earliest supporters would repeat itself throughout the early years of the administration. As Peter Dreier, Flynn’s housing advisor at the time, recalled:

Flynn also knew that he would look weak if he lost it because all the people at the Globe and the Herald they were testing him to see whether he could really be a mayor who could get things done. So, in retrospect it was the worst of all possible worlds. My first test was rent control and I lost it. I learned a lot from that experience, which was the fact that Flynn won on a pro-rent control platform; it was one of his big issues. It was one of the defining things in the campaign; he was going to bring back strong rent control, and everybody who worked on the campaign knew that was what he said. But once he got elected there were a lot of voices in the administration that basically said to him, “Okay you got elected, you don’t have to follow up on that.” So I thought, okay we won; now we’re going to use the political army that got him elected to mobilize to get this legislation through a pretty hostile city council. I had one-on-one meetings with every council member except Jim Kelly. I was trying to figure out like what do I need to get their vote and I could tell pretty early on that they all thought they could beat Flynn on this because they were hearing, I don’t know how exactly, but they were hearing from their buddies. I was set up, it was a set up though not intentionally, but it was a set up to lose and we won a few things and we had to spin it a victory and it was hard to do that.

So while Flynn put the best face on the early defeat, saying, “It showed a commitment to the poor and elderly that eviction will not be tolerated in our city” (New York Times 1984), he moved on to other battles.
Redistributive Policies

Ray [Flynn] had a social contract theory that the city moves ahead, that everybody moves ahead together. (Stephen Coyle, former BRA Director, interview)

Flynn followed a path implementing redistributive policies, using his power and bully pulpit to force developers to do what they would not have done out of generosity—make a profit while at the same time supporting his social and political agenda. This strategy of employing the progressive cities theory tactics used in several other cities (Clavel 1986, 2011) was not without its detractors, both within and outside the administration. The most prominent of these redistributive policies was linkage. Flynn, according to a number of former city officials, used linkage as a tool to fight poverty and slow the process of poor people being pushed out of the city.

Linkage: Sharing the Benefits of Downtown Growth with the Neighborhoods

Flynn campaigned in 1983 on a platform of economic and social justice. During 1983, then-Mayor Kevin White, bowing to the real estate lobby, resisted implementing a linkage programs. Local activists, led by Mass Fair Share and the Massachusetts Tenants’ Organization, had organized a ballot initiative in support of linkage. The City Council approved the ballot initiative, and over the veto of Mayor White the question appeared on the ballot in the November 1983 election, asking voters, “Shall the City of Boston require developers to rehabilitate, develop, or partially fund one unit of low-to-medium-cost housing for each unit of luxury housing created, or for every 1000 square feet of office or hotel space which is placed on the market?”
In response to the inevitable, White appointed a commission to study the issue, led by Bolling and White’s long-time ally Edward McCormack, former Massachusetts Attorney General and a man White helped enrich as a developer in the waning days of his term. The commission initially recommended a $2.50-per-square-foot exaction for projects over 50,000 square feet. The proposal drew a harsh response from activists, and the commission later agreed to a $5.00-per-square-foot exaction for projects over 100,000 square feet (with the first 100,000 square feet to be exempt) to be paid over a 12-year period. While housing activists and Flynn opposed this proposal, Bolling believed that it was a way to move the issue forward (Vennochi 1983d). The Greater Boston Real Estate Board had actively opposed the measure following approval by the City Council of the measure.

Linkage was a hot button issue in Boston. The city’s neighborhoods were deteriorating while the downtown was booming with new construction of office towers. There was a particular crisis surrounding the availability of affordable housing. Without strong rent control measures, housing pressures were escalating, and there was no coordinated city response at the time. A poll taken in the summer of 1983 found that by an overwhelming majority, 76 percent of voters, supported linkage—by which downtown real estate projects would contribute funds for housing and commercial areas in Boston’s neighborhoods (Kenney 1983b). White knew that linkage was inevitable, and after he declined to run for reelection in May of 1983, the issue dominated the mayoral forums and debates. Of the nine candidates running for mayor, all except former School Committee President David Finnegan endorsed some version of linkage. Later, even
Finnegan backpedalled, saying he would negotiate linkage with developers while calling linkage, “a tax of dubious constitutionality” (Kenny 1983c, Quill 1983).

After the mayoral preliminary election on October 11, 1983, in which Mel King and Ray Flynn, the two strongest proponents of linkage, had finished in the top two spots, Mayor Kevin White announced within three days after the election that he would support linkage. He supported his commission’s recommendation that favored a $5.00-per-square-foot exaction on projects over 100,000 square feet to be paid over 12 years. Flynn called the proposal “an important first step. . . . however, the formula for payment of the linkage fee set by the advisory committee would generate approximately $2.5 million per year, rather than the $5.5 million per year which our formula would have generated” and City Councilor Bruce Bolling, who co-chaired the advisory committee along with Edward J. McCormack, termed the committee’s recommendation “a compromise report,” but “one that will insure that there will be some tangible spinoff with downtown development that will enhance housing development at the neighborhood level” (Vennochi 1983d). So in the closing days of White’s mayoralty the Boston Zoning Commission approved a watered-down version of the linkage measure, one which was the most palatable to the development community and likely to face a court challenge.

When Flynn assumed office in 1984, linkage was a unifying policy in his diverse administration. While his advocacy for strong rent control prompted behind-the-scenes divisions inside the administration, linkage would be a vehicle for Flynn to implement his aggressive affordable housing agenda. The development team and the neighborhood
activist members of the administration saw linkage as a key resource during a period of dwindling federal dollars to cities.

The administration’s efforts were put on hold when real estate interests, led by controversial developer of the West End urban renewal project Jerome Rappaport, challenged the linkage law in court in June of 1985, claiming that the law biased the city zoning process in favor of developers who could make higher payment. Mayor Flynn and BRA Director Stephen Coyle aggressively battled the Rappaport challenge. Linkage was key to Flynn’s ability to unite Boston’s neighborhoods and respond to the downtown-neighborhood disparities, issues that were a cornerstone of his campaign in 1983. When on April 4, 1986 Massachusetts Superior Court Judge Greenburg struck down linkage provisions in the Boston zoning code, calling linkage an “illegal tax,” Mayor Flynn vowed to appeal the decision, saying that he would fight to go to the Legislature if necessary to preserve linkage as “an honest and equitable way to reach out to those who have been left behind amid unprecedented growth” (Kennedy 1986).

There was no way Flynn was going to take the fight sitting down and potentially lose $35–$40 million from 13 proposed projects (Kennedy 1986). Flynn said in response to the lawsuit, “Economic growth must mean economic justice for those who have not shared in Boston’s prosperity. What my administration is about is helping people who have been left behind” (Powers 1985a). Led by the new director of the Boston Redevelopment Authority, Stephen Coyle, the city challenged the decision. Like Flynn, Coyle saw linkage as part of the “social contract” between the various interests in the city, telling me in an interview in his office in Washington, D.C.:
Flynn asked me about linkage, and I said it’s a social contract theory. So Flynn says, “what you’re trying to say is we let downtown development occur in a dramatic way,” because it was six billion dollars. It was a huge surge in downtown and institutional growth, “if and only if, at the same time we’re investing in affordable housing projects.” So I took the mission of Ray’s social contract thinking that you must convert development into an enterprise for the community. It’s jobs, the dollars for linkage meant you’d achieved minority and community hiring goals, and we did in record numbers. Having downtown development as it happened from 1977 until when Ray came in, if you put a million-square-foot building, lots of people will work and nothing went out to the neighborhoods, you created a further distancing from the emerging downtown and the emerging economy in the community. If you put a hundred affordable housing projects in the ground across the communities, built by people in the communities, it’s just a totally different world. So Ray had a social contract theory that the city moves ahead, that everybody moves ahead together.

Not all members of the development community supported the challenge, at least in public. Saying he had no problem with linkage, Donald Chiofaro, the developer of International Place, a project scheduled to pay $8 million in linkage fees, stated, “I build office buildings in downtown and the better downtown and the city work, the better my investment works. Linkage funds will help create housing and job training that will improve the city” (Frisby 1985b). BRA Director Steve Coyle was also adept at “convincing” members of the development community, particularly those with projects pending approval, to support the mayor’s agenda. As he told me during our interview:

Rappaport, who was the controversial developer who tore down the West End, and to his credit, he had rallied the development community [against linkage]. You have to have awareness of political outcomes and consequences being the BRA Director. It’s not a game of monopoly. I knew that certain developers who were in the pipeline had more force, they were new. Jerry [Rappaport] had been the John Connolly [development advisor] to Mayor John Hynes. Then he created a plan for the West End and ran out and won the bid to develop it. He used HUD financing. He had an amazing skill with the BRA to get everything he wanted. But Don Chiofaro, Roz Gorin, Ed Sidman, Ronnie Druker, these were new people, they weren’t the old Boston. So I thought let’s promote this new group of developers and let’s get them to back linkage, so that within the real estate
community, there would be at least two factions. Those who would coalesce with Jerry’s leadership and block linkage saying “it’s a tax, it’s illegal,” and the others who were saying, “Hey, it’s part of the social contract, it’s what you pay to grow. The BRA’s going to meter approval so we could get ourselves in the ground and leased before we get flooded” And that was the equation.

In 1985, Flynn proposed to increase the linkage fee, fearing that the current value of the fee was not adequate to build much-needed affordable housing. He also added an additional fee for job training. He met resistance on three sides: community activists, the development community, and the city council. Community activists believed that he wasn’t raising the formula high enough. Members of the Boston Linkage Action Coalition—an organization of tenants’ groups and Mass Fair Share, from which many Flynn staffers had hailed—wanted Flynn to increase the linkage payment to $10 per square foot, force developers to pay it before beginning construction, eliminate the exemption for projects under 100,000 square feet, and force developers of luxury housing projects to also pay linkage. On the other side, many members of the downtown business community shared prominent businessman and developer Robert Beal’s point of view: “When the original formula was put in place, most of us said, fine, it’s like a mosquito bite. It may itch a little, but it’s not overwhelming. But don’t do it to the point where you get a case of malaria” (Frisby 1985b). Then-head of the Greater Boston Real Estate Board J. Thomas Marquis opined, “The concern is that the door is open now. First, we had linkage. Now, we have extended linkage. What happens when we have extended-extended linkage? At what point does the market turn around? At what point do you kill the golden goose?” (Powers 1985b). But as Peter Dreier mused in an interview, he saw his role on behalf of the mayor this way:
My metaphor has always been you want to choke the private sector and squeeze them just to the point where they can still breathe but not to the point where they’re dead. And that—I saw my role as trying to help figure out where that point was where they could still breathe and they were complaining that “you’re killing me” but they were still alive and they were not going to die.

In early 1986 the BRA approved the mayor’s changes to linkage, changes which would increase the resources available by shortening the payment period required of developers and add job training provisions requiring contributions to a job training trust fund. The changes to the zoning code were now law in Boston, but in order to avoid further challenges Flynn filed a home rule petition, which was approved by the Massachusetts Legislature and resulted in Chapter 371 of the Acts of 1987—legislative authorization for Boston’s linkage program.

Later that year, on August 21, 1986, the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court overturned the April Superior Court ruling against linkage, Flynn said, “This legal victory will allow the people of our neighborhoods to share the benefits of Boston’s booming downtown economy. It will mean job and housing opportunities which otherwise would not have been possible.” Janice Fine, spokeswoman for the Linkage Action Coalition said at the time, “As far as we’re concerned, it’s neighborhoods 1, Rappaport 0. We want to make sure that the city shores up the ordinance to prevent future litigation.” At the time of the ruling, the BRA estimated that the city would begin reaping nearly $40 million in linkage payments starting in 1987 (Kennedy 1986).

As of 1986, in addition to Boston and San Francisco, linkage exaction policies and housing trust funds had been initiated or considered in Santa Monica, Miami, New York City, Denver, Chicago, Hartford, Honolulu, Minneapolis, Seattle, Oakland,
Cambridge, MA, Toronto, and London, among others (Muzzio and Bailey 1986). In Boston, the ruling would allow the administration to continue its aggressive affordable housing push. In his 1986 State of the City address, Flynn established a goal of breaking ground on 3,400 new or rehabilitated housing units in 1986 and expanding the linkage concept to parcel-to-parcel linkage, which would link parcels in the downtown to parcels in Roxbury and require minority developer equity participation in the projects.

As BRA Director Coyle explained about parcel-to-parcel linkage, “It’s about capital formation in the communities of color.” In his September 25, 1986, Resolution to the BRA board, setting the framework for the parcel-to-parcel linkage program linking the Kingston-Bedford garage in the downtown Chinatown section of Boston with the vacant Parcel 18 in Roxbury, he wrote: “Over $7 billion was invested in Boston in the last nine years. In addition, the city has approved $3 billion in private downtown development projects since mid-1984; employment growth has followed quickly behind capital investment.” He went on to document that poverty was increasing and that employment for minorities was at its lowest in the downtown economy, with only 16 percent of minority resident workers employed downtown. Even more striking, Coyle concluded, “there has not been a single minority developer engaged in the private development of large commercial projects in the city of Boston” (BRA Parcel to Parcel Linkage Memo 1986).

A particular focus had been the city disposition process for surplus parking garages. Of the five municipal parking facilities sold by White in Boston in the early 1980s, generating an estimated $843 million, none had gone to minority developers or
had provided minority developer equity (BRA Parcel to Parcel Linkage Memo 1986). Flynn and Coyle’s goal was to change that equation and not only provide opportunities for wealth creation in communities of color but also develop a parcel in Roxbury that might not otherwise elicit development interest. As Coyle said at the time, “The plan, which joins public land with mostly private financing, will help build a neighborhood economy in Roxbury. There are now 9,000 jobs in Roxbury, and this development would add another 3,500. Meaningful social progress will take place in Boston if minorities have access to the development economy. We are talking about minorities owning $100 million’s worth of this project. It will change Boston” (Frisby 1986b).

With linkage now in place, the BRA continued to approve the large-scale projects proposed by developers for downtown, some of which had been initiated under the White administration. This “managed growth” approach would yield construction jobs and expand the city’s service economy. Late in 1984 the BRA reviewed and scaled back ten major development projects, while at the same time requiring that developers make best-faith efforts to comply with the Boston Jobs for Boston Residents policy then in place and hire 50 percent Boston residents, 25 percent minorities, and 10 percent women.

In announcing the completion of the review of the ten projects, which were estimated to add up to $1.3 billion in new investment in the city, Flynn said:

The creation of Boston Jobs for Boston Residents through balanced growth remains a foremost commitment of my administration. The real significance is what these projects mean in terms of jobs—25,000 permanent jobs and 12,000 construction jobs. Frankly, until today, development in Boston has only been beneficial to a small number of people. Our neighborhoods lagged behind downtown because our people simply did not receive their share of Boston’s new jobs. My intent is to build an economic life in this city that includes all its
citizens. We are inaugurating a new development policy for our city. We are beginning an era in Boston when development downtown translates into jobs and economic benefits for the people of all the neighborhoods of our city. The paradox of prosperity in our downtown and poverty in our neighborhoods can now be addressed (City archives press release and Flynn talking points 1984).

The *Boston Globe* editorialized at the time, “To its credit, the Flynn administration has also demonstrated that it is possible for the city, which for too long handed developers a blank check, to gain from downtown development (*Boston Globe* Editorial 1984d).

Chart 9 highlights the development of downtown office space between 1980 and 1998. During Flynn’s tenure, 1984–1993, downtown developments provided significant resources for affordable housing projects in Boston’s neighborhoods both through linkage and through construction and permanent jobs for Boston residents.
Affordable housing production in Boston benefited from both linkage and Flynn’s focus on getting units in the ground. As Chart 10 indicates, housing starts rapidly accelerated beginning in 1984 and continuing through 1987 and then leveled off until 1998. Driving Flynn’s focus in part were the goals he had set in his 1986 State of the City address when he announced a goal of 3,400 new units of housing for that year. To achieve this, Flynn convened weekly meetings of all the agencies that in any way played a role in housing development. The BRA, the Public Facilities and Inspectional Services Departments, as well as the Office of Neighborhood Services, were involved. Chaired by his development advisor John Connolly, department heads were required to report weekly on permitting of new housing starts. Flynn would personally direct his departments to improve their performance if they were not meeting his goals or expediting the housing production process.
Housing starts goals were also set for subsequent years, and both 1986 and 1987 saw the goals exceeded. In 1986, the goal was 3,400 new housing units started in Boston, and the city got 3,715; in 1987, Flynn called for 4,000 new units, and the city saw 4,064 new permits issued. Melvyn Colon, then at the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative, said, “the goals were valuable as ‘internal marching orders’ for city departments. The goals have speeded up disposition of city land through Public Facilities, as well as broken down some of the backlogs in Inspectional Services for building permits and variances” (Malone 1988c).
But the administration was also dealing with other issues in battling the housing crisis. The role of banks in exacerbating the crisis, and the administration’s response post-1987, is discussed in the next section.

A major dynamic operating in the housing market during this period was that large numbers of residential units were being converted to condominiums. Between the early 1970s and 1983, it is estimated that Boston lost 18,000 rental units through abandonment and condominium conversion. As Lew Finfer, head of the Massachusetts Affordable Housing Alliance said about Flynn’s housing production strategy, “The mayor should be commended for what he’s doing, but the City Council has consistently rejected any attempts to preserve the city’s housing stock with stronger rent control or condo conversion control laws (Ibid). How bank lending practices were instrumental in facilitating condo conversion and gentrification is discussed in the next section.

But linkage was firmly entrenched in Boston during the Flynn administration. In 1989 a Boston Globe story called linkage part of the landscape in Boston. As Peggy Hernandez wrote:

Six years later, after amendments to city zoning laws, court challenges and modifications, linkage is no longer a political buzzword. While many developers, as well as institutions engaged in expansion projects, resent the program, they accept the fact that linkage payments are part of the negotiating process to obtain city building and zoning permits. Today, developers of 41 commercial projects have committed to paying more than $76 million in linkage, according to the Boston Redevelopment Authority’s figures last month. Of that amount, $28.4 million has been earmarked during the past six years for construction or rehabilitation of 2,900 housing units, 84 percent of which are slated to be sold at rates intended to be affordable to low- and moderate-income families. Of those 2,900 units, according to the BRA, about 1,800 have been completed and 80 percent are considered “affordable.” “If you step back and look from 1983 to 1989, you see linkage has gone from theory to projects, concept to reality,” Coyle
said. “It has become a real force for housing in Boston. Everyone should take a measure of satisfaction in what’s been done and resolve to do more.” Linkage has “been almost a lifesaver for Roxbury,” said Ken Wade, chairman of the Roxbury Neighborhood Council. “The level of affordable housing in this community would not be accomplished had it not been for linkage.” Added Tom McIntrye, vice president of the Bricklayers Nonprofit Housing and Development Corp., which has built linkage projects in Mission Hill and Charlestown, “Affordable housing is a big mosaic, and you couldn’t get to the batter’s box without linkage. It’s seed money that community groups need to solidify a whole development project” with mortgage lenders (Hernandez 1989).

And as former BRA Director under Menino, Tom O’Brien, told me in an interview:

I think Mayor Flynn instituted the program around linkage, which is a big change. But now it has really become institutionalized. It is set in Boston and will never go away. It’s the law of the land, really, to a certain extent.

The data best makes the point: “Since the inception of the linkage program through June 2000, $58.2 million has been awarded to various affordable housing projects. Through 1999, this funding allowed the construction or renovation of 5,979 housing units in 89 projects in the City’s neighborhoods. Affordable housing units for low- and moderate-income residents comprise 80 percent (4,812 units) of this total” (BRA Report 2003).

After Flynn left office in 1993, pressure mounted for Menino to not only continue linkage but to expand it. Menino convened a group of developers and housing activists, who recommended increasing the linkage fees. According to the Neighborhood Housing Trust, which administers the linkage funds, the Massachusetts Legislature approved a home rule petition in December 2001 that increased the affordable housing linkage fee to $7.18 per square foot and increased the job training linkage fee to $1.44 per square foot.
Provisions in the law required an additional increase in 2006, and at that time the affordable housing linkage fee was increased to $7.87 per square foot and the employment linkage fee to $1.57 per square foot (Report of the Neighborhood Housing Trust 2011). Critics still contend that even this increase did not match inflation and that fewer funds were available then than when Flynn expanded the linkage law in 1986.

The Banks Versus the Community

During the Flynn administration, the role of banks would emerge as a major issue, and responses of the governing regime and the community would intensify. Banks were continuing their redlining practices of previous years, and the actions of the Boston Urban Renewal Bankers Group in Mattapan a decade earlier had not been forgotten. As discussed previously, housing affordability in Boston was a major problem. “By 1987, the Boston area had the largest gap between earnings and house prices of any of the nation’s fifty largest metropolitan areas. Other banking practices, however, gave a distinctly racial dimension to Boston’s housing affordability problem: in low- and moderate-income white neighborhoods, readily available bank credit fueled the speculative frenzy of gentrification and condominium conversion that reduced the ability of long-time residents to afford to continue living in their own neighborhoods” (Campen 1992:39).

Flynn would take a number of steps during his tenure to get the banks to respond to Boston’s neighborhoods. These included: implementing a linked-deposit ordinance, which would measure the level of bank investment and guide where the city placed its funds; calling upon banks to divest holdings in South Africa; attempting to restrict
condominium conversions; accelerating the production of affordable housing, particularly on city-owned land; and, most importantly, getting the banks to create a mortgage lending fund in direct response to their discriminatory lending practices, as documented by the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston’s 1989 report, as well as the Boston Redevelopment Authority’s study released later that year.

In 1988, the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston had begun secretly preparing a report on mortgage lending in Boston’s neighborhoods. The report was obtained and leaked to the media, which on January 11, 1989 led with the front-page headline in the *Boston Globe*, “Inequities are cited in Hub mortgages: Preliminary Fed finding is ‘racial bias,’” reporting that:

The study, titled “Expanding the Potential of the Community Reinvestment Act: The Case for Affordable Housing in Boston,” analyzes mortgage figures in 16 neighborhoods for 1985 and draws upon statistics from a five-year period, 1981–85, to factor in demand variables such as median purchase and rental prices, housing mix, historical turnover rates and physical condition of the neighborhoods. “Even after taking into consideration variation in demand, lending bias appears to be a significant factor, explaining why fewer than expected one-to-four family mortgage loans are made by banks and thrifts in minority neighborhoods in Boston,” the study says. One set of figures shows that if race were not a factor in lending in mortgages for one- to four-family houses, there would be a 113.4 percent increase in mortgages in Mattapan/Franklin Park and a 109.4 percent increase in Roxbury. The same table indicates that mortgage lending would decrease by 62.8 percent in West Roxbury, 44.9 percent in South Boston, 39.7 percent in Charlestown, 37.4 percent in Roslindale and 32.4 percent in Hyde Park. “Thus, long after the passage of the CRA, banks and thrifts continue to compete more aggressively in white neighborhoods in Boston and leave the minority neighborhoods to the mortgage companies,” the study says. “Boston has become a city with significant unmet credit needs for affordable housing, and continues as a city with significant racial lending bias (Marantz 1989a)
There was a loud community outcry, and Flynn and his administration needed to figure out how to respond. Peter Dreier, Flynn’s point man on housing issues was indicated by one person I interviewed as having been responsible for leaking the Fed study to the *Boston Globe*, which Dreier denied. Dreier recalled his conversation with Flynn:

I’m going to hire this guy from Minnesota to come in here and do a study of redlining, and if so we can get a lot more money into these poor neighborhoods you want to help. And the never quite spoken message, I don’t think I ever said it explicitly, but you need to get black voters for the election and this is the way to do that. So he agreed. And he was a little wary; he wanted to know how is this going to help white folks in Dorchester and South Boston. “Is this only going to help black people?” And he said, “Make sure it also helps some white people. Not the rich white people but the working-class white people.” I said it would, although I was not totally telling the truth. So, he was right to be a little wary about the divisive politics of it.

The Fed study led to a significant and quick response from Mayor Flynn and his team. Under the direction of Stephen Coyle, The Boston Redevelopment Authority, with advocacy from Flynn’s Housing Director Peter Dreier, was pushing for its own study of mortgage lending. The BRA board originally rejected funding the study, but the day following the release of the Boston Fed study Flynn wrote to then–BRA chairman Robert Farrell, saying:

I am deeply disturbed by recent published reports that . . . Boston banks may be discriminating on the basis of race and geography in their lending practices in Boston’s neighborhoods. Many Boston residents remember the devastating impact that such practices, known as “redlining,” had in Boston’s neighborhoods during the 1970s. They created economic and social chaos. We cannot tolerate discriminatory practices by banks, or other financial institutions, in Boston’s neighborhoods. The very fabric of our neighborhoods is at stake. My administration has worked hard to develop affordable housing for Boston residents in every neighborhood of the city. I would be very upset to learn that
some of Boston’s lending institutions may be working at cross-purposes with this goal (Marantz and Hanifin 1989).

The BRA board then reversed their decision under pressure from Flynn.

So Dreier succeeded in getting the BRA board to hire Charles Finn to conduct its own study of mortgage lending in spite of several of the BRA board members’ having opposed the study. There was disagreement within the administration—as Dreier explained, there were some administration officials who thought, “You’re going to piss off the bankers. You’re going to need them for other things.” As Dreier described it, “This was national news; this was the New York Times. So, Flynn was now in the middle of this swirling controversy, and he was on the right side, although there were people who didn’t agree with him. Once it got to that point, they couldn’t stop it because now it had a life of its own.”

A group of community advocates formed the Community Investment Coalition (CIC) to press the banks to respond to the findings of first the Fed report and later the one conducted for the BRA. Lew Finfer, one of the coalition lead organizers, spoke to me about disagreements between coalition members:

At some point, it would be how militant to be, but then surprisingly Gus Newport who was the head of DSNI, he wanted to make a deal. We were focused on an affordable mortgage program, but then things were written into the proposal around housing financing and banking services and branches and all that, which was good, but our number one priority was a new mortgage program that would enable people to buy homes.

There were other disagreements, as reported by the Boston Globe:

The rift developed last week when the Massachusetts Association of Community Development Corporations, which develops nonprofit housing statewide, declined to join the newly formed Boston-based Community Investment Coalition. The
community coalition is comprised of the Greater Roxbury Neighborhood Authority, Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative, Massachusetts Affordable Housing Alliance Home Buyers Union, and Hotel and Restaurant Workers Union Local 26. The association, which has 49 member corporations statewide, decided it could not endorse the coalition’s plan setting as a priority the credit needs of Roxbury, Mattapan, and Dorchester (Marantz 1989b).

Dreier recalled clandestinely coordinating with members of the Community Investment Coalition. He recalled telling Lew Finfer, “I’m about to issue a report on behalf of Flynn demanding one billion dollars over the next years in loans, philanthropy, new branches. Why don’t you ask for two billion?”

As Roxbury community activist Ken Wade remembered in our interview:

We formed that coalition to press the banks for change. That included at that time, which is a pretty unprecedented agreement because while the studies were done on home mortgages, we felt that we had to have a broader agreement with the banks than just the mortgages which had been done in a lot of other places. They just focus on the mortgage thing and we kind of saw it that we had to do something much more comprehensively. It had to deal with economic development, housing as well as mortgage lending. So we crafted kind of a three-part program, and the city and the community folks kind of worked in tandem on that. Obviously, by the city weighing in, in the way that they did, it was no question, helped create additional leverage to push things in the right direction. Because you know the banks could have gone off and just cut the deal with the city, which happens—could have happened but did happen in other places.

The heat on the banks continued when the Greater Roxbury Neighborhood Authority (GRNA) released its own study in August 1989 threatening to file a federal lawsuit against the discriminating banks. The GRNA study’s findings were similar to that of the Fed study:

- The most mortgage money received by residents of a high-income black tract was almost seven times less than the least amount of mortgage money granted in a high-income white tract.
A predominantly white, middle-income tract in East Boston received 10 times more mortgages than a predominantly black, high-income tract in North Dorchester.

A white tract in North Dorchester received nearly four times more mortgage money than a black tract in the same neighborhood that had a higher median income.

Predominantly white South Boston and East Boston tracts received six times and eight times more mortgages, respectively, than a black Roxbury tract that had a higher median income and higher median house value (Hanafin 1989).

The Community Investment Coalition followed suit, releasing a “Community Reinvestment Plan” that called for $2.1 billion in investment by the banks over a 10-year period. The plan included calls for rehabilitating 8,800 units of rental and cooperative housing and financing 3,400 new units. It also called for the opening of a total of 15 branch offices and 15 automatic teller machines in Roxbury, Mattapan, Dorchester, Jamaica Plain, and the South End (Marantz 1989c). The issue upon which the city and the CIC agreed was the need to supply below-market mortgage loans. But on that point the bankers continued to balk.

In the fall of 1989, Flynn signed an executive order establishing a linked deposit program to guide investment of city resources in Boston banks. The Boston Globe reported at the time:

In a move aimed at encouraging lenders to correct inequities in lending patterns, Mayor Flynn yesterday said the city will begin steering its financial deposits to banks showing a commitment to meeting the credit needs of minority neighborhoods. The mayor said he will sign an executive order creating a “linked deposit” program, under which the city treasurer must evaluate a bank’s performance on home mortgages, small business loans and other services before selecting it for municipal deposits (Saltus and Marantz 1989).
In usurping a city council initiative, Flynn was working hard to get in front of the mortgage lending crisis.

Late that year, following the original draft leaked to the media earlier in the year, the Boston Federal Reserve Bank released the final report. Entitled “Geographic Patterns of Mortgage Lending in Boston, 1982–1987,” the report was based on a statistical analysis of about 48,000 real estate transactions during those years in Boston’s sixty neighborhoods. Unlike previous Boston lending studies, it included data on loans made by private mortgage companies and by banks outside the metropolitan area. The study found that lenders were granting 24 percent fewer home loans in Boston’s black neighborhoods than in white neighborhoods, and that the discrepancy existed even after discounting other factors in black neighborhoods, such as lower incomes, less wealth, lower-valued housing units, and less housing development (Marantz 1989d).

Flynn’s response was swift, and he then met with the leaders of the major banks at the city-owned Parkman House. Dreier remembers Flynn saying to the bankers:

“I can be your best friend or I can be your worst enemy. I want a billion dollars,” and they were like “who is this punk telling us a billion dollars,” and he continued, “You got to do it together, I don’t want like one bank coming out alone.”

There was major concern by both the city and the CIC that the bankers would make an end run and announce a plan unilaterally. The banks had held three community forums and were trying to figure out how to proceed with a plan without committing to below-market-rate mortgages to low-income black families. As another Flynn aide Bart Mitchell recalled from his conversations with a leading banker: “These people think we’re gonna cave in to blackmail. We will never cave in to blackmail. We will never do that, they’re just
wrong. What do you think we have to do to close this deal?” The stage was set for the final showdown in late 1989.

Flynn proposed a “Boston Neighborhood Reinvestment Plan” in an effort to broker a deal with all three sides, in an attempt to achieve a compromise between the CIC proposal of $2.1 billion and the Mass Banker Association plan that had been released without financial commitments. The Flynn plan called for:

$150 million in equity investment in affordable housing, the construction and financing at flexible terms of 3,000 units of affordable housing, $500 million in discounted mortgages for first-time Boston home buyers, $75 million in neighborhood economic development, and ten new branch banks in minority and underserved neighborhoods.

Flynn’s plan expanded the focus beyond Boston’s minority neighborhoods to include South Boston and Charlestown as well as Roxbury and Dorchester. This speaks to the ongoing role played by race in all aspects of city governance. Flynn had always looked at economic issues in purely class terms, but issues of race could not be avoided, and proposing legislation to benefit only minority neighborhoods would potentially provoke a racially biased response from Flynn’s base constituency. Flynn’s expanded plan was in part responding to the situation described by “Councilors and city officials who say that Flynn is facing backlash from residents of white neighborhoods who say that below-market mortgages are a form of affirmative action that will enable low-income minorities to purchase homes in white areas” (Marantz 1989e).

The negotiating environment was clouded by a number of factors. First, there were disagreements between several factions in the community on the issue of below-market mortgage loans. Second, in October 1989 the Stuart incident had ignited racial issues in the
city. (In this incident, Stuart’s white pregnant wife and unborn child were murdered in Mission Hill—Stuart claimed by a black perpetrator.) These issues would cloud the final negotiations into early January 1990, when Charles Stuart, later to be found to have murdered his wife and child himself, jumped to his death from the Tobin Bridge. The implications of the Stuart incident will be explored in Chapter 5.

Third, the release of the BRA study by University of Minnesota economist Charles Finn was delayed by Mayor Flynn and Steve Coyle, hoping to maximize its impact on negotiations, but the delay fueled the controversy further. Finn’s study, finally released late in 1989, showed “Boston’s white neighborhoods received home loans at nearly three times the rate of black neighborhoods of comparable income from 1981 through 1987. The study followed the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston study, published in August, and a preliminary Federal Reserve Bank study, disclosed in January, that showed much the same patterns of lending” (Finn 1989, Marantz 1989f).

The bankers acknowledged that the release of the Finn BRA study had forced them to continue negotiations with the city in an effort to reach broad support, including the issue of below-market loans to the minority community. The bankers had planned to announce a plan without city and community backing in late December, but the head of the Massachusetts Bankers Association said at the time that the BRA study “had thrown everything into confusion” (Marantz 1989g). Flynn was pressing the bankers on several fronts as the negotiations went into early 1990. In addition to below-market mortgages, Flynn had issued an executive order creating the linked deposit plan described earlier.
Not all agreed with the mayor’s tactics. As then–City Councilor Tom Menino, head of the Ways and Means Committee and Flynn’s successor several years later, said at the time:

Many bankers felt betrayed by the release of the study, which was made public as they were making a good faith effort to produce a reinvestment plan and at the same time coping with huge operating losses. “The mayor is taking a major political risk by taking on the banks at this time. Several banks are in serious trouble. I’ve always found that the banks are responsive to the needs of the city. For this to happen at this crucial time is a tough call by the administration. I question nailing the banks at this stage of a financial crisis” (Marantz 1989h).

Flynn and his team pressed on, and on January 10, 1990 an agreement was announced between the banks, the city, and the Community Investment Coalition that included a “$400 million reinvestment plan for the city’s minority neighborhoods and low-to-moderate income homebuyers that includes at least $30 million for below-market mortgages. The breakthrough on the reinvestment plan came after most of the city’s largest banks agreed to provide mortgages at least one point below standard, resolving an issue that had threatened to negate months of talks” (Marantz 1990a).

In spite of this victory, some compromise was necessary that troubled the black community. Years later, Flynn’s former opponent in the 1983 mayoral race, Mel King, reflected on Flynn’s support of the minority community, saying:

In the case of the mortgage scandal, Flynn privately negotiated financial payments from Fleet/Norstar Financial Group without the knowledge of black community organizations that were preparing lawsuits for nonwhite victims. Instead of having a situation where there’s leadership that tries to build community, we have a situation where City Hall uses the divide and conquer method (Rezendes 1991c).

However, Bruce Marks, then–Executive Director of the Union Neighborhood Assistance Corporation, which implemented much of the mortgage lending, attributed
much of the turnaround in mortgage lending to the city’s linked deposit program. Under an executive order signed by Mayor Flynn in 1989, the city increased its deposits in banks with favorable compliance ratings, while freezing or removing deposits from banks that refuse to comply. “I think what you’ve seen is that it used to be a paper tiger but now it has teeth and is really becoming the junkyard dog. Boston Safe Deposit had one of the worst records before; now they’re one of the best. Shawmut used to be one of the worst; now they’re one of the best. The next one we have to stick our fangs into is US Trust” (Walker 1993).

The issue of fair lending practices, however, continued in subsequent years. Despite the institutionalization of the linked deposit program under the Menino administration, a 2002 report prepared by the Massachusetts Community and Banking Council (MCBC) by Jim Campen of UMass Boston concluded, “African-Americans were denied loans three times as often as white applicants were in 2001.” The report also showed that minority borrowers received a lower portion of home purchase loans than in any year during the 1990s. The report also found that: “Although blacks make up 24.5 percent of Boston’s population, they received only 11.5 percent of loans issued. While up from 10.8 percent in 2000, it still was lower than in any year in the 1990s and below the 20.8 percent peak in 1994. Blacks received 708 home loans in 2001, the least since 1992” (Mason 2002, University Reporter 2003). According to author Jim Campen, “Race continues to be an issue. It’s a bigger issue now than in 1990” (Mason 2002). Tom Menino mused in 1989, criticizing Flynn’s approach to the banks: “I’ve always found that the banks are responsive to the needs of the city” (Marantz 1989h), yet ten years after
Menino became mayor, as noted by Campen, racial disparity in lending is a bigger issue than it was before his tenure. Chapter 5 explores how mayors White, Flynn, and Menino handled the thorny issue of race relations in Boston.
CHAPTER 5

Boston’s Racial Politics

Race is the killer virus of Boston politics (Jon Keller 1995); Race is considered the third rail. People talk around it but nobody wants to kind of grab it because it can burn you (Ken Wade interview); You can't cure the sickness without identifying it (Mel King 1990); One of those conversations that some of us choke on a little bit we don’t know if we have racism in Boston (Mayor Marty Walsh 2014)

This chapter explores the issue of race relations during the period under study, 1980 to 2000. Through an examination of the administrations of Kevin White, Ray Flynn, and Tom Menino, it investigates several domains: racial conflict and violence and the governmental response; housing segregation and desegregation, with a particular emphasis on public housing; the secession movement in Boston, known as Mandela after the South African leader Nelson Mandela, pursued by an organization called the Greater Roxbury Incorporation Project (GRIP); and the Carol Stuart case, in which a white woman was murdered by her husband, who falsely claimed the crime was committed by a black man. Chapter 6 continues the discussion about race relations, examining the Boston Public Schools governance controversy of the 1990s.

Theoretical Framework

Urban regime and government communalism theories help in understanding what happened during this time period and why. Mayoral leadership has not been widely researched. Charles H. Levine studied leadership styles and outcomes in his study, Racial Conflict and the American Mayor (1974). He argued that, in communities where there is major racial cleavage, a traditional analysis of urban politics based upon the pluralist model is not adequate and that a new theoretical framework should be employed to
account for community conflict and mayoral leadership, theorizing that racial conflict is not a constraint for mayoral leadership (Levine, 1974:35). I will attempt to demonstrate how the period of racial conflict during the busing crisis of the 1970s provided Flynn with an opportunity to begin the process of racial healing in Boston. Many of those interviewed believed that Flynn was uniquely positioned to address Boston’s history of racial conflict and that, as mayor, he demonstrated growth from his days as a state representative from South Boston.

First, using mayoral leadership as a theory of action can help in analyzing the period of racial conflict between 1980 and 2000, and executive actions can be evaluated in the context of that post-busing era—an era characterized by a highly polarized racial climate as well as the charter reform electoral initiatives of 1981, which were designed to reverse the political exclusion of non-white candidates created in 1949 by the city’s white elite of political and business leaders. This charter reform initiative changed Boston’s elections for City Council and School Committee to a district-based electoral system. In 1983 both bodies included for the first time four at-large and nine district representatives.

Second, urban regime theory helps in understanding how, in order to effectively govern modern cities, coalitions must be built between the government and non-governmental actors, especially the business community. As outlined earlier, urban regime theory and growth machine coalition theory offer two divergent paths for analysis, although they do share some elements, namely their approach to the role of the business community. In Boston, the role of the Vault (the nickname for the Boston Coordinating Committee, a group of prominent bank, real estate, and financial leaders
who met regularly in the vault of the Boston Bank and Trust) can be analyzed as it pertains to the governing coalitions in power between 1980 and 2000, including its impact on issues affecting race relations. Kevin White’s formation first of the Committee on Violence and subsequently the Boston Committee, which included prominent political, business, religious, media, and community leaders, is a prime illustration of urban regime theory’s belief that civic problems are best addressed by a coalition of governmental and non-governmental actors.

Third, the theory of governmental communalism aids in understanding how the hard work of political, business, and civic leaders can help to develop a viable civic culture inside a city. Boston has continued to change in positive ways through the government’s efforts to protect those citizens who face incidents of racial discrimination and hostility and through all Bostonians’ learning how to build a better community—with the understanding that we are all more alike than different (Monti 1999).

Finally, I hope to bring to light and analyze strategies designed to reduce racial violence in urban areas. While many scholars, researchers, and political leaders have grappled with this problem, developing a multifaceted and coherent strategy has eluded our national and municipal leaders. What happened in Boston between 1980 and 2000 did not eliminate the problems associated with racial conflict, but lessons learned from this time can help inform and potentially serve as a model for the building of a comprehensive strategy to address these issues. Such a strategy would consist of bringing together executive leadership, including police officials and including expanding civil
rights laws, with the active engagement of community and economic development leaders.

**History of Racial Conflict in Boston**

Boston has a long history of struggle around racial conflict. The city was home to the abolitionist movement, it was a stop on the Underground Railroad, and it was visited frequently by leaders such as William Lloyd Garrison (editor of abolitionist newspaper *The Liberator*), Frederick Douglass, and W.E.B. Du Bois. The black population in Boston remained small until the period between 1940 and 1960, when the population tripled to 63,165, according to J. Anthony Lukas, author of the Pulitzer Prize–winning *Common Ground* (1985:61). Lucas characterized Boston’s race relations as relatively harmonious during that era, although black residents were generally confined in the mid-twentieth century to three areas: The Hill, an area near Franklin Park; Crosstown, an area of the South End near Massachusetts and Columbus Avenues; and Intown, an area of Lower Roxbury (Ibid:60).

By the 1970s, race relations had deteriorated, and the black population had become marginalized and segregated. Ted Landsmark, a civil rights leader who was attacked on City Hall Plaza in 1976, the year of the bicentennial, and who later became a senior city official in the Flynn and Menino administrations, explained:

> Something was happening somewhere in the political and cultural structure of the city such that the housing authority, the police department, the fire department, the school department, were all under federal court orders to integrate and open themselves up. And what I also realized was that if you look below the level of public agencies, that in fact going around Boston there were no black people selling suits downstairs in Filene’s Basement, and oddly enough if you went into most bars in town—unlike New York—there were no people of color who were
waiters and waitresses. There were no black bartenders except in Roxbury. And there were no black bus drivers, and there were no African Americans working in construction—and in fact in most of the key areas where people might earn a living as a working-class person in Boston. There was no access—so that what was going on in the schools in fact represented the first step of a pattern of exclusion of groups of people, African Americans, from access to the economic resources they needed to have a decent life in the city. And that had been going on for a period of time, that in fact—and this is the thing that a lot of my African American friends don’t like to hear—there was a lot of complicity with that in that black community.

Landsmark summed up the feelings of many about the polarized nature of race relations in Boston. Dennis Kearney, former State Representative and Suffolk County Sheriff, who was also a 1983 mayoral candidate, reflected on the issue of race in the city telling me in our interview:

What I hear all the time when I visit other cities or when other people visit Boston, you don’t see the minority population. I walk around Boston, most days I don’t see black people, whereas if I were in D.C., I walk outside on the street New York, not just black minorities, you know it and you see it. It’s not the same in downtown Boston.

And according to Dorchester Codman Square community leader Bill Walczak:

Race relations weren’t great before busing. It went nuts after busing. The absolute horrors of shootings and stuff like that. I mean people were terrified of black people east of Codman Square and you know you couldn’t blame them. Their experience was that when black people moved in, the neighborhood went to hell and then white people had to move out. So I mean you look at it and you say does it justify a fire bomb? Yeah absolutely not but what was the city’s response?

Hyde Park resident and former Flynn administration official Bob Consalvo adds:

And people were nervous about minorities moving into their neighborhood. That really did a lot of damage to Hyde Park, that blockbusting. And so a lot of people with kids and everything really felt it. The white people just felt that their community was changing and they didn’t like it. That is normal racial stuff. You had the violence at the time with the whites and blacks and the Ted Landsmark kinds of incidents—the kid that got beat up and died, they pulled him out of the car during the busing period. So all of that was there and it just disrupted everybody.
And it was kind of like an underlying current of distrust and upset, people were upset that their lives were changing.

Boston was a city undergoing significant racial succession in the period between 1960 and 1980. The “Great Migration,” coupled with federal and state housing policies, as well as private investment policies and decisions helped fuel this change. During Kevin White’s 16-year mayoralty, changes were experienced by both black and white neighborhood residents, and racial divisions were commonplace. One political analyst referred to race as the “killer virus of Boston politics” (Keller 1995). This chapter will explore what the three top city leaders between 1980 and 2000 did, and did not do, to address issues of racial conflict in the City of Boston during this period. It starts with a look at the mayoralty of Kevin White, whose tenure preceded the period under study but whose policies set the stage for an examination of that era.

**Kevin White and Race**

“One of Boston’s thorniest problems continues to be the exploitation of racial animosities by demagogues. By and large, they have been able to operate without a direct challenge from the city’s highest government leader...action and results have been sadly lacking.” (Boston Globe editorial 1980b)

Throughout most of his sixteen-year tenure as mayor, Kevin White was viewed very favorably with respect to his efforts to respond to the issue of race relations and conflict in the city. He began his first term at the height of the Civil Rights Movement, at a time when racial conflict was exploding in cities across America. In June of 1967, outgoing Mayor John Collins had faced a test with the takeover by angry mothers of the Grove Hall Welfare office—a test that by all accounts he failed miserably, since riots followed
for several days (Tager 2001, Lukas 1985). As Hubie Jones, head of the Roxbury Multi
Service Center at the time, recalled in an interview:

When Collins was mayor, in June of 1967, the welfare rights mothers protest, we
have a riot for four days, I mean a real riot, four days. And at the time before the
thing erupted, the mothers for adequate welfare, who created a sit in, asked
Collins to come out and talk to them. He says no, I conduct city business at city
hall. So they say oh really, and so the damn thing escalates. At that moment you
knew that, as powerful a man as Collins was, and he was a powerful man, that he
probably had made a tragic mistake and this was not gonna be fun running the
city anymore. And he suddenly decides to leave.

Following Collins, Kevin White, who had faced School Committee President
Louise Day Hicks from South Boston in the 1967 mayoral election final, was swept into
office—many believe as a repudiation of Hicks’ “you know where I stand” brand of
demagoguery. Louise Day Hicks was a leader of a school committee that was embroiled
in a battle with the Massachusetts Board of Education over desegregating the Boston
Public Schools following the passage of the Racial Imbalance Act of 1965.

Mayor White is credited by many for being attuned to racial issues in the city. His
handling of the aftermath of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King in April of 1968
and his deft management of the James Brown concert held in Boston the day following
King’s assassination have been widely cited. While sporadic unrest occurred in several
areas of Boston, this was nothing compared to the riots that erupted in more than 160
cities across the country. Mayor White worked closely with leadership in the black
community, in particular City Councilor Tom Atkins, the first African American to be
elected to the city council since the 1949 charter change, to calm the tense city (Tager
White had national ambitions, and by 1970, according to those interviewed, he was ready to move up. He ran unsuccessfully for governor in a challenge to republican Francis Sargent in which he was soundly defeated. As he told reporter Lawrence Harmon, “You know where my mind was in 1970? I was going to be interplanetary leader. The next step is the governorship” (Harmon 2013). He also shared the same story with me, stating that in 1967 when he became mayor of Boston, “I was going down to go up. I saw myself as an intergalactic leader.” By all accounts, his failed bid to be George McGovern’s running mate in 1972 and the busing crisis of 1974 took their toll on Mayor White and his interest in the job of mayor. While he did run for reelection in 1971 when he handily defeated Louise Day Hicks and in 1975, when he narrowly defeated State Senator Joseph Timilty, and again in 1979, when he handily bested Timilty, he was not the same man as when he came to office in 1968. White’s efforts during his first two terms in office earned him the support of more than 80 percent of the black electorate in each of the mayoral races of 1967, 1971, and 1975 (Weinberg 1981:92). But after the election of 1979, White’s focus turned to building the “world class” city he envisioned, while racial violence and race relations were regulated to lower on the list of the mayor’s priorities.

As former Boston Police Commissioner and head of the Community Disorders Unit Francis “Mickey” Roache told me:

What was going on in Boston went far beyond busing and blockbusting. I recall the school opening in the fall of 1977. I had a pretty good feel of desegregation because I was on the street all of the time. And what happened, that year, the police were gone, the MDC, no police were inside, [the school’s] detectives were gone. And the issue really had died down dramatically.
As Commissioner Roache said at the time:

I was looking at all these incidents of assault and vandalism, and much to my surprise realized that we had no idea what the racial problem was or how serious it really was. There was a pattern of racial crimes in certain neighborhoods no one was aware of. The reason they had been victimized was because of their race. The race problem had moved out of the schools and into the streets and neighborhoods of the city (Ribadeneira 1988).

Out of the turmoil in the schools and the neighborhoods of Boston, the Community Disorders Unit (CDU) of the Boston Police Department was born on April 7, 1978, the first such unit in the country to specifically address racially motivated hate crimes. That year, 607 racial incidents were reported. The charge for the CDU then, as it is today, according to the Boston Police Department, is for district personnel to refer incidents to the CDU if elements of bias- or hate-motivation are detected at the initial reporting stage. These cases are then screened and investigated by the CDU to determine whether bias against the victim based on race, ethnic/national origin, religion, and later sexual orientation was a factor in the incident. After screening and investigation, all cases are classified into one of three groups: Hate Crime includes those cases that CDU determined to be hate crimes; Miscellaneous includes those cases that have indicators of hate crimes, but not enough to be conclusive; and Non-Hate Crime includes those cases that are determined not to be hate crimes (BPD 2008 Crime Summary Report).

Mayor White, who had faced significant racial turmoil in the city during his first three terms, was viewed by many as a strong leader on race relations. In his 1980 inaugural address, heading into his fourth and final term, White claimed to place a high priority on responding to racial violence. In the inaugural address he said in part:
First, to combat racial violence we will govern with no tolerance for racial intolerance, posturing, politicking, temper tantrums, which have permeated and distorted our aims in the past, will be given no license or legitimacy in this city. Simply stated, racism in any and all of its ugly manifestations won’t be condoned and it will be confronted directly and aggressively by this government.

But by the end of the summer of 1980, the *Boston Globe* editorialized about White’s leadership failures in addressing racial conflict. Writing in one editorial, “Mayor White: Sounds of Silence,” the newspaper opined:

By his own criteria, the beginning of Kevin White’s fourth term as mayor of Boston has been something of a failure. In his inaugural address last January, White declared that curbing racial violence was a top priority of his administration. Eight months later, the city is wracked by an epidemic of street violence, much of it with a racial tinge that is without local precedent (*Boston Globe* editorial 1980a).

Just over a month later, in another editorial, the *Boston Globe* asked, “Where is Mayor White?” stating:

One of Boston’s thorniest problems continues to be the exploitation of racial animosities by demagogues. By and large, they have been able to operate without a direct challenge from the city’s highest government leader…action and results have been sadly lacking” (*Boston Globe* editorial 1980b).

White would go on to appoint several commissions including, the Committee on Violence and the Boston Committee, whose members included the mayor, Roman Catholic Cardinal Medeiros, First National Bank Chairman Richard Hill, and Davis Taylor, Chairman of Affiliated Publications, which owned the *Boston Globe*. In large measure, the 16-year mayoralty of Kevin White was defined as much by race relations as it was by the burgeoning skyline and Faneuil Hall marketplace. Racial conflict was thrust onto center stage with the 1974 federal court busing decree and would never really leave. White’s handling of the attack on Ted Landsmark in April of 1976 on City Hall Plaza
was widely criticized, as was his management of various racial attacks and incidents of improper police behavior—most notably the James Bowden case. Bowden was a black employee at Boston City Hospital, who was shot by two white Boston police officers in 1975. Bowden’s family filed a civil suit against the city and was awarded a jury judgment, which White refused to pay. Then in 1979, high school football player Daryl Williams was shot and paralyzed by a sniper while he scrimmaged with his team in the all-white Charlestown neighborhood.

White’s relationship with leadership in the black community was something of an enigma. White used fear as a tool to keep black leaders’ support according to James Jennings and Mel King, who wrote:

Fear was described as one of White’s most important political resources by every black elected official in Boston—one stated that fear of political and economic reprisals is what helped to maintain the paternalistic relationship between some black leaders and city hall. He explained that since the economic foundations of blacks in Boston is so dependent on white power structures; black leaders were not willing to participate in political activities that might be viewed as threatening by the White machine (1986:62).

Hubie Jones, former director of the Roxbury Multi Service Center and dean of the BU School of Social Work told me how Mayor White responded to a group of black leaders concerned about racial violence during busing at a meeting at Freedom House in Grove Hall:

So Kevin White had a very hard time. It all broke apart during desegregation, even with his allies. In the middle of it he went to a Freedom House meeting, and the black community jumped all over him because he wasn’t providing enough safety for the kids. And he picked up his coat and said “I’m not taking this crap from you people. You don’t know what I am up against. Goodbye!” and he storms out of Freedom House. So there was this schism between black leadership that had worked with him and he lost his grip on the black community.
Many believed that White was at a loss dealing with race issues in the city:

“According to observers he often seemed insensitive. Once, during the 1975 campaign against State Senator Joseph Timilty, when a reporter asked him why he hadn’t worked harder to hire more blacks to high positions in city government, he responded, “Well, I have an answer for you. Vote for someone else” (Larkin 1983).

Raymond Flynn and Race

Flynn summarized his commitment to improving race relations in Boston, calling his desire to unite the city “the single most important goal of my life” (Vennochi 1984h).

Ray Flynn grew up in the predominantly white South Boston neighborhood, attending South Boston High School, where his skills on the basketball court led to a scholarship at Providence College. When he returned to South Boston, he played briefly for the Boston Celtics before pursuing a life in politics, becoming known as a leader in the anti-busing opposition to the 1974 federal court decision while a State Representative. Flynn explained to me:

Nobody understood the people of South Boston during the busing. They wanted to lump them together and call them racist. They weren’t racist, they were just concerned people; concerned parents like we all are about our children. From my perspective, it had nothing to do with disliking black people for me. Why would I be playing on an all-black basketball team in Roxbury, why would I be hitchhiking to Harlem to play on the Harlem playgrounds against black kids, because what, I don’t like blacks? No I love basketball, and I wanted to play against the very best. And they were the very best, and I wanted to go out and beat them.

A 1983 poll, released on the cusp of Flynn’s inaugural, indicated the city racial climate was as bad as ever, Flynn knew he had to take bold and decisive action.

According to the late City Councilor Bruce Bolling:
He [Flynn] has restored to the city some of the credibility lost under the previous administration, especially in terms of race. He’s setting a high tone on race relations. [Police Commissioner] Roache is particularly strong on race. These are very important signals, and Boston needs that right now. I think he’s doing well (Kenny 1985).

Nancy Snyder, Flynn’s former chief of staff, recalled:

I think that he was very committed to really convincing people that it was an administration that was going to be open to the needs of the black community, and as a result, particularly because he was from South Boston, he worked very hard, again, both symbolically and with content around reaching out to leadership in the black community, making appointments from the black community, being very present in the black community, and working on issues that were important to the black community. I think the race stuff was really important to his legacy, and so he didn’t shy away from really difficult issues related to race. He embraced them, he was very careful and thoughtful around politically who he needed to have in the room, you know, what order you need to roll things out on. And I think one of the reasons he really trusted Mickey Roache was because Mickey was also from Southie but Mickey, you know, was someone who was very good on race issues and had a lot of relationships. So I think he picked who worked on these issues very carefully as well.

The chief executive of another major city saw the issue in the same way as Flynn. As former San Francisco mayor, Diane Feinstein commented at the time: “Generating a new attitude and spirit is one of the most significant contributions a mayor can make to a city. It’s also one of the most difficult things to accomplish. If Ray Flynn has given Boston a new feeling of forward movement, he’s already come a long way” (Kenney 1985a).

Flynn’s role as racial healer was not embraced by everyone. Many in Flynn’s hometown of South Boston were openly hostile, frequently calling him “nigger lover,” and he was often referred to derisively as “Sugar Ray” (apparently after black boxers Sugar Ray Robinson and Sugar Ray Leonard). Flynn would fall back on using sports to
address issues of racial conflict, and the results often paid off. At the site of racial tension in Dorchester’s Wainwright Park, “Flynn organized a celebrity basketball game, pitting neighborhood kids against a team which included the mayor himself, as well as former Celtics players Dave Cowens and Mal Graham” (Kenny 1985).

Flynn summarized his commitment to improving race relations in Boston by calling his desire to unite the city “the single most important goal of my life” (Vennochi 1984h). Several of those interviewed thought that Flynn placed such a high priority on race relations because of the perception many people had of his role as an anti-busing leader. He tried hard to change the image of both himself and the city from that associated with the turbulent busing period and refocus on helping all poor and working-class people by ending racial conflict and providing jobs, housing, and economic opportunity. According to Bill Walczak former director of the Codman Square Health Center and community activist who spoke to me about race relations in the city, “The issue was that white people needed to change their attitude and maybe it was a white guy that really needed to lead the charge on this.” As Vin McCarthy, a prominent Boston lawyer and leader in the gay community, observed:

Ray Flynn healed the incredible scar tissue that existed throughout the city over the busing crisis, as simple as that. And one couldn’t—would not have expected the guy coming out of South Boston that had been on one side of the busing issue, who had been a spokesperson for the South Boston impacted people, that he would be the instrument to bring the healing, because it just embarrassed people of the city, I mean they were just, you know, sick of it and by the time it got through and the city was a joke in the rest of the country, being called the Mississippi of the North, people wanted it to end.
Police Engagement and Enforcement

Flynn sent a clear signal to the city and to the police department with his first actions concerning race relations in Boston. He took steps to pay a court-ordered judgment against the city in the case of James Bowden, 25, a black Boston City Hospital worker shot and killed by two police officers in 1975, by personally delivering a check to Bowden’s widow in March of 1984—after former Mayor White had ordered Police Commissioner Joseph Jordan not to pay the jury award. A *Boston Globe* editorial opined, “One of the more mean-spirited and unexplainable episodes in this city’s recent history has come to an end—a moving and a very classy end—with Mayor Flynn’s quiet delivery of a check for $843,498 to the widow of a black man shot by two white police officers nine years ago” (*Boston Globe* editorial 1984b). Following this incident, a top aide began to negotiate a termination of the contract with Police Commissioner Jordan, seeking to replace him. The mayor spoke about the qualifications he would look for in a new commissioner: “Honesty is something I am deeply concerned about and I think the first requirement would be honesty; then sensitivity to the diversity of the city’s population; then professionalism and competence” (Frisby 1984).

Early in his first term, Flynn contacted his boyhood friend and South Boston neighbor Francis “Mickey” Roache, who was head of the Boston Police Department’s Community Disorders Unit (CDU). Roache described to me his recollection during our interview, “This is a big one because the Mayor first of all says, ‘What can I do to help the CDU?’ Because I think he kind of sensed what was really going on. Mayor Flynn,
before he was mayor, I had never seen an elected official show up as he did on every racial incident that was in issue in any community. And that is startling.”

From the City Hall policy perspective, there was a need and an opportunity in the ensuing months before a new police commissioner would be named to respond aggressively to each and every racial incident in the city. According to Flynn policy advisor Neil Sullivan:

It is kind of where we learned the art of the crackdown. We cracked down on that, (racial violence) and we cracked down on gang leaders nine years later, and that was a federal crackdown, we invoked the first direct indictment, that federal prosecution against gang leaders, as we tried to grapple with the gang stuff, the second big issue. But racial violence, we had the tool, we had the civil rights law that Mickey [Roache] had advocated for, that allowed sentencing if a racial epithet was used, and we just came down on it mercilessly for a year. And that was it; it broke the back of racial violence, and ended it.

Mayor Flynn, holding a series of community forums to solicit recommendations on the qualifications for the new Police Commissioner, heard loud and clear that what was needed was a person who could respond to the pressing issues of racial conflict in the city. On February 1, 1985, following Commissioner Jordan’s resignation, he appointed Francis M. Roache as acting Police Commissioner, the appointment becoming permanent on March 13, 1985 (Quill 1985). Roache had a track record as head of the CDU to continue the department’s aggressive assault on racial violence, as well as strong relationships with religious and community leaders. “His appointment is indicative of the high priority the administration has toward molding a department that takes seriously the need to protect all citizens despite color or class,” said Reverend Charles Stith, a prominent religious leader, then of the Union United Methodist Church. “Mickey’s
credentials are outstanding in terms of his reflecting real sensitivity to the major public safety issue in Boston—racial violence” (Marantz 1985). Martin Walsh, former Regional Director of the U.S. Department of Justice’s Community Relations Service during busing, added “that by making good on the court judgment [referring to paying the Bowden judgment] and naming a new police commissioner, Flynn helped establish his concern for the city’s minority communities” (Witcher 1986).

Integration of Public Housing

When Flynn took office, the Boston Housing Authority (BHA) was in state court receivership. Overseen by Judge Paul Garrity (no relation to Judge W. Arthur Garrity, who oversaw the federal receivership of the public schools) and court-appointed receiver Lewis “Harry” Spence, Flynn was faced with the integration of the Bunker Hill housing development in Charlestown—a result of several black families reaching the top of the long waiting list. When tenants learned of the planned move-in of several black families, a community meeting was organized, and Flynn called upon the CDU’s director Sergeant Francis “Mickey” Roache for a plan. Sergeant Roache put together a public safety and media plan for the mayor, who then asked me to convene a meeting in Charlestown. Flynn was told by Roache, “It is going to take some meetings with you and some other key people to convince the media that these are five ordinary families moving into a better housing situation. And that is all it was. They were really eligible. That is the key.”

The same meeting was attended by the head of the Boston Committee (a group created by Mayor White to focus on race issues in the city, which was headed by future Flynn administration official, attorney Frank Jones) and then Police Commissioner
Joseph Jordan. Jordan, according to Sergeant Mickey Roache who was present, stood up at the meeting and said, “Hey listen, I talked to my detectives OK, and they said there is no way blacks are going to move in here; because if they do they are going to be mowed down with machine guns on the street.” Flynn would not accept this. He convened multiple small meetings with the tenant, community, and religious leaders, many of which I organized, to both explain the plan and enlist their support. Mayor Flynn said at the time:

The low-key planning was absolutely crucial to this. It shows to me there is no problem too difficult to resolve…Change has to begin somewhere, and the first step is always the most difficult given the city’s sorry history The broader issue here is that people are coming together in a very positive, potent message. I think the people in Charlestown are pleased to be involved in this part of Boston’s history. It’s not perfect and has a long way to go, but it’s encouraging (Chavez 1984).

The move went smoothly according to both those interviewed and media accounts, but that would not be the end of controversy about integrating public housing in Boston. The everyday life of Bunker Hill, virtually all white and Irish Catholic for forty years, changed in 1984, and that change carried continuing dissention.

During October of 1984, Judge Paul Garrity held a hearing on the mayor’s request to return control for management of the Boston Housing Authority (BHA) to the city administration. Prior to receivership, the BHA was governed by a five-member board, with four appointees made by the mayor and one by the governor. Flynn had proposed that direct management of the BHA should be the responsibility of the city, with the mayor appointing an advisory committee, which would include a tenant representative. I attended the hearing on October 18, 1984, at which Judge Paul Garrity was considering
the request of the city to end the court receivership of the BHA. In a private conference before the hearing, Garrity expressed concern to me because Flynn was expected to appoint Doris Bunte, an African American state representative from Boston, as administrator. Bunte had been a member of the BHA board previously and had been fired by Mayor Kevin White for failing to comply with his wishes. I implored Judge Garrity to base his decision about returning control of the BHA to the city on the fact that Flynn wanted to provide the leadership to the BHA, not on who he may or may not appoint. As Flynn requested, Judge Paul Garrity reluctantly returned control of the BHA to the city, and Flynn proceeded to appoint Doris Bunte administrator.

Commenting on the appointment of Bunte, former state representative, public housing tenant, and member of the BHA board, a *Boston Globe* editorial opined, “The selection of Bunte is one of great boldness” (*Boston Globe* Editorial 1984c). At her announcement ceremony, Bunte identified three priorities for the BHA: Maintenance, maintenance, and maintenance. She also made steady progress building on the efforts of the receiver, Harry Spence, in stabilizing public housing, which was at that time home to more than 10 percent of the city’s population. Flynn, in keeping with his established practices, dispatched long-time loyal aide Larry Dwyer to work alongside Bunte to keep an eye on the politics. (This was a practice he would repeat with many agency appointments).

In the fall of 1987, as Flynn was in the final week of his first campaign for reelection against City Councilor Joseph Tierney, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development was about to withhold critical federal funds, criticizing the city for
failing to integrate the public housing developments in South Boston (primarily the all-white Mary Ellen McCormack development)—“for failing to exercise an option in the agency’s tenant selection process that allows them to give preference to minorities on the waiting lists for Charlestown and South Boston at any time” (Malone 1987). In an interview with the Quincy *Patriot Ledger*, Flynn announced his intention to integrate the South Boston housing developments. The next day the *Boston Globe* reported: “Flynn pledged to move black tenants into the South Boston projects even if he encounters political opposition in the neighborhood where he makes his home. When asked how he would handle possible disruptions caused by black families moving into predominantly white projects in South Boston, where the city met with much resistance during school desegregation, Flynn responded, ‘Well, I’ll do what I did in Charlestown. I’ll appeal to the good people of South Boston’” (Malone 1987).

He chose the *Patriot Ledger* to leak the story because he knew it was the primary news vehicle for South Boston residents, who had long abandoned the *Boston Globe* because of its support for court-ordered busing and the way they felt treated by the *Globe* in 1974. Following a *Boston Globe* column on June 16, 2009, in which columnist Adrian Walker wrote, “Flynn announced his housing project integration plan in the *Patriot Ledger* of Quincy, as if he wanted to hide it from his constituents,” Flynn responded in a June 20, 2009 letter to the editor:

Nothing could be further from the truth. I announced that I would integrate public housing in South Boston days before the final election in the 1987 mayor’s race. I stood before my friends and neighbors and stated my intentions because I did not want to come to them after the election with the plan. I said that public housing integration was required by law, and that it was morally the right thing to do. This
very public announcement cost me the vote in my own neighborhood, and it made
the peaceful integration of South Boston public housing possible (Flynn 2009).

While Flynn resoundingly defeated challenger Tierney on November 3, 1987, he
lost South Boston’s two wards by about 400 votes out of 10,000 cast. Neighbors reacted
to the election: “‘He wasn’t responsible for forced busing and we’re just getting over that,
but he’s to blame for this forced housing and all the problems that are going to start all
over again,’ said a 42-year-old plumber. A 31-year-old woman who lives in the West
Broadway housing project said, ‘As long as they don’t move me out, I don’t care who
they move in next to me. She voted for Flynn without reservation’” (Blake 1987). Flynn
reflected on the situation during an interview, comparing integration of public housing
with the desegregation of the schools:

Well it was two different things. One, in many respects the integration of the
housing was more difficult because people were expecting the worst. I was
warned, [Federal Court] Judge Joe Toro and I talked about this, and Judge Toro
said to me “This is going to be hell; Boston is going to turn into an inferno.” And
I said, “No it’s not, because we’re in control. Who do you think I have working
these neighborhoods? Who the hell do you think is out there, somebody that
doesn’t know these people? They are them.” I had these people working in the
neighborhoods like you and all these other people, what the hell were you there
for? You knew everybody, you had credibility, and you had trust, confidence.
You were there because you had a track record; you had a track record of
credibility established with the people. They trusted you, and that’s what it was all
about. We had people in all of the neighborhoods that were trusted and they knew
that City Hall wasn’t going to screw them because that’s not who we were.

Former Policy Commissioner Mickey Roache summarized in our interview,

“Integration, I think, was one of Mayor Flynn’s greatest achievements.” But not everyone
agreed. Notably Judith Kurland, appointed by Flynn to head Boston City Hospital,
commented:
Housing segregation was also a problem, public housing segregation was deliberate. In terms of housing, I thought Ray Flynn really had plans about housing, I mean he came from South Boston, which has a strong link between public housing and political leadership. I mean if you look at the leadership of the city, especially the leadership that came out of South Boston, an awful lot of those people came up out of public housing. The ability of families in South Boston to stay in public housing for generations made for a different kind of culture about public housing, and I think a different kind of support for public housing, much more like a European model, which actually is a good one. The culture and the political support for public housing was extraordinary, and I think Ray Flynn became part of that. But I always look at people who have phenomenal political capital and where they were using and where they will expend it. He had phenomenal political capital, look at how easily he got reelected. He didn’t use it around issues of race; he gets and takes a lot of credit for the desegregation of the South Boston housing projects. But I know what the HUD regional office was telling him, he had to do it. He is saying just wait until after the election. I mean that isn’t leadership, that’s accommodation for something that was going to happen anyhow.

Ray Flynn clearly would disagree. According to his account:

But no one ever believed for one minute that we weren’t going to level with them, be honest with them and do what’s in their best interest. Now they may disagree with us, and as I said to the people before the integration of housing, “you know I wanted to let you know, you may disagree with us, and you should. You like this town, you like the way things are going, you don’t want any change, you don’t want any uncertainty in your life I understand that. I perfectly agree with you, I’m just telling you this: I have a different decision to make. I have a law, I’m facing the law. And I have to do what is morally right. I have the law, and I have my conscience, and I can’t ignore either of them.” Now I can do what they did in busing, I can ignore the law and I could ignore what is morally right, and I can just say, that asshole judge, it’s all his fault. But that’s not what we chose to do, that would’ve been the easiest thing to do. I gave myself a death wish when I went down there to the project and I told them what I was going to do. Then I went over to St. Monica’s and I told them what I was going to do, and I had every politician in town knocking the hell out of me. I knew I’m definitely going to lose South Boston; I may lose half the city. But nonetheless, how the hell could I possibly integrate public housing without telling these people before the election. What was I going to do, say, “vote for me because I’m your neighbor and I’m your friend, and you remember me playing Little League, and I used to coach your kid, and were all buddies over here?” And then say to them after the election, “oh by the way thanks very much for that overwhelming vote, you know I got 89 percent of the vote here, I won every single ward and precinct in Boston, as I did in the previous election,
but now I have something to tell you. I perhaps should have told you yesterday, but I wanted you to vote first. And what I want to tell you is we’re integrating housing.” Then there would have been trouble, Don, then for all the right reasons. They would have said, “you lying son of a bitch.”

The integration proceeded mostly peacefully. There were some incidents, however, and as the CDU reported, many of these were connected to racially motivated hate crimes.

*Mandela and the Secession Effort*

After working for nearly three years into his first term to transform racial relations in the city, Mayor Flynn believed that progress was being made—through economic development, increasing jobs for minorities in construction and in City Hall, the integration of public housing, and policing and community empowerment strategies. But the level of progress remained a major concern to many residents of the predominantly black neighborhoods of Roxbury, Mattapan, and Dorchester, and the Mandela effort of 1986 seemed to offer an opportunity to effect radical change.

In the summer of 1986 a “self-proclaimed small group of intellectuals, carpetbaggers, with no constituency in the community” (Kenney 1987a) proposed to carve out 25 percent of Boston’s land area and 22 percent of the city’s population, more than 90 percent minority, into a new city called Mandela. Arguing that in order for Boston’s black community to succeed economically they would have to “control their own land,” the organizing effort would follow the path of the Black Nationalist movement advocated earlier by one-time Roxbury resident Malcolm X. Early in his career, Malcolm X followed Nation of Islam leader Elijah Muhammad’s teachings that white society enslaved and kept African Americans from achieving political, economic,
and social success. Like the later Mandela effort in Boston, Black Nationalists fought for a state of their own, separate from one inhabited and governed by white people.

The two principals in the effort, Andrew Jones and Curtis Davis, formed the Greater Roxbury Incorporation Project (GRIP) and obtained the necessary 5,000 signatures to put the non-binding measure on the November 4, 1986 municipal ballot. Jones said at the time, “Our community is at a crossroads, we have to decide whether we want to fight for political access within Boston and what that’s going to get us, or whether to establish our own community” (Kenny 1987a).

Flynn and many in the city’s black, corporate, and religious communities were concerned. They believed that the proposal was divisive and would turn back the progress Boston was making. As Charles Kenny wrote in his two-part series for the *Boston Globe* in 1987:

Flynn took the Mandela proposal very personally. He told some of his department heads that it was the worst thing to confront the city since the busing crisis. He saw it as a grave threat to his efforts to unite Boston, an idea that had been the central theme of his campaign for mayor. In thousands of speeches and discussions throughout the city during more than a year of campaigning, Flynn said over and over again that his intention, if elected mayor, was to bring the city together. For him to have done anything but strenuously oppose Mandela would have seemed wildly out of character (Kenney 1987a).

The black community was divided on the Mandela secession question, as on many issues. The majority of the elected black leadership supported the ballot initiative, and leaders of the prominent black churches vigorously opposed it. As Hubie Jones a leader in Boston’s black community recalled during our interview:

But it was all becoming a part of the web. With this Mandela thing, let’s take this part of his city under our control, and it took off for a while until the mayor
realized whoa, this could be trouble, and he got the power structure of the city to shut it down.

The secession plan was placed on the Boston municipal ballot in 1986 and again in 1988. Both times it was defeated, though the margin of opposition narrowed from 3 to 1 in 1986 to less than 2 to 1 in 1988. In 1989, GRIP organizer Andrew Jones, not giving up after the second defeat at the polls, sought to have the legislature approve a ballot question for the voters that would authorize a charter commission to study of the issues of creating an independent city. The measure was not adopted. State Representative Byron Rushing, who had supported the ballot and introduced the charter commission legislation at the State House, said at the time:

> The desire to break off from the city should not be considered a criticism of the Mayor [Flynn]. It’s criticism of a lot of mayors. It’s a criticism of the disenfranchisement and powerlessness of this community. You can’t say the state of municipal services in Roxbury can be blamed on one administration. It’s blamed on a series of administrations that did not have this community as its priority (Hayes 1989).

As Flynn policy advisor Neil Sullivan commented:

> And race goes from racial violence to a really peaceful period among the races, to surviving Mandela—we dealt with Mandela; we got through that, a great wrestling match. And everybody threw a couple of small blows, but no one was trying to take anyone else out. And then it was unleashed by ‘stop and frisk’ and Stuart, which was the great slippage.

Reverend Joseph E. Washington, senior adviser on equal rights to Mayor Flynn and pastor of the Wesley United Methodist Church in Dorchester, said at the time:

> “Boston is slowly, surely, and inevitably opening up to minorities and women.

Politically, I think that the establishment understands that in order for this city to work, it
has to change its image. And that the leaders of the city are trying to include rather than
exclude now. It’s not good political strategy, and it’s not good business sense.”

“Stop and Frisk” and the Stuart Case—“The Cruel Hoax on Boston”

Following the election of 1987, Flynn entered his second term in office facing major
issues, including the completion of the South Boston public housing integration and
rising violence in some of Boston neighborhoods due to gang wars and the scourge of
crack cocaine which plagued cities across America. The murder rate (which is proxied for
the overall level of violence in the city) had increased dramatically—rising from 75 in
1987 to 152 in 1990. The administration was looking for a strategy to respond to what
had become a youth gang problem.

In 1988 the Boston Police Department created the City-Wide Anti-Crime Unit
and had begun to use the tool of direct indictment through the Armed Career Criminal
Act. According to former Police Commissioner Mickey Roache, “We sat down with U.S.
Attorney Wayne Budd and developed a strategy on the real violent offenders, [and
passed] the Armed Career Criminal Act, which gave a three-year mandatory off to jail,
and they went.” Coupled with the “stop and frisk” policy instituted following the murder
in 1988 of 11 year-old Darlene Tiffany Moore who was shot while sitting on a mailbox,
suspected gang members could be randomly searched, the police were beginning to get a
hold on the gangs. But the new policy, while promoted by the police department and
many community leaders, had its detractors both in City Hall and in the community. The
implications for race relations were a concern for policy advisor Neil Sullivan:
First, “stop and frisk” raised it as being a black youth problem, because black youth were searched and white youth were not. So it was the return of race as a community differentiation that was part of daily life. Now we were a black and white city. It was all black and white, race was everything. We were gone when race was no longer an observable black and white issue.

The stop and frisk policy elicited widespread anger and criticism from black elected officials, who believed it created a double standard based upon race. As State Senator Bill Owens commented:

The stop-and-search practice was infuriating, not only because we believed it amounted to a dangerous infringement of civil rights, but also because it divided leadership in the black community. Ray Flynn has pitted whites against blacks, and blacks against blacks. It’s been the hallmark of his mayoralty (Rezendes 1991b).

Ironically, many in the African American community, led by the Interfaith Ministerial Alliance, did not oppose the stop and frisk policy until the aftermath of the Stuart incident in 1990. As black community leader Hubie Jones told me:

In fact it was ironic, there was a press conference about two weeks before the Charles Stuart affair, and black community leadership all stood behind him. So we gonna keep our community safe, people were terrified. Tiffany Moore, little 11-year old girl got shot on a mailbox; violent youth stormed into Morningside Baptist Church; and the leadership stood behind the mayor and Mickey Roache on “stop and frisk.” Charles Stuart happens and these same people where now on the mayor's case about going into Mission Hill, ravaging Mission Hill, looking for the so-called black perpetrator.

Immediately on the heels of the stop and frisk controversy, in October 23, 1989, race relations in Boston took a turn for the worse when Carol Stuart, a pregnant woman returning with her husband Charles from childbirth classes at the Brigham and Women’s Hospital in Mission Hill, was murdered and her husband seriously injured, allegedly by a black perpetrator. Charles later identified a black suspect, Willie Bennett, as the shooter in a police lineup. However, in statements later made to police by Charles’s brother
Mathew Stuart identified Charles as the shooter. On January 4, 1990, Charles Stuart committed suicide by jumping off the Mystic Tobin Bridge, and the issue of race reached a crescendo in Boston. The response to the shooting by the Mayor and police department was widely criticized after it was learned that the perpetrator was not black after all.

According to policy advisor Neil Sullivan, “Because Ray Flynn said call out all the detectives, he overreacted to the “white moment,” and we own that one. It’s incredible what that moment meant.” However, as then Police Commissioner Roache in our interview disputed the actual impact of the police response, stating:

Mayor Flynn announces that any and all resources in this department will be available to do everything possible but people got the impression there was going to be an army. What do you have, about 14, 15 detectives citywide? We are not putting an army out there.

Additionally, the Boston Police opposed the decision by the Suffolk County District Attorney to arrest suspect Willie Bennett on unrelated longstanding minor charges, as Commissioner Roache reacted:

No, you’ve got to be kidding me. But they were like, one was like a traffic thing, and other things. And they probably had been sitting around for ages. But unfortunately they fabricated it. Then they lied in the Grand Jury. But then they finally got it right, but we got killed for it.

The city was duped. The mayor, media, police, and the public bought into Charles Stuart’s hoax. It was agreed by those interviewed that this was a tough moment in the city’s history. But as Flynn recalls it:

We had a press conference and Senator Ted Kennedy stands up and says “this is your mayor, this is my mayor, he’s going to keep this city together, he’s going to keep this community together and I’m with him 100 percent,” and that’s what we did. Nothing happened. I mean, when you think about it. I was in Los Angeles after Rodney King, with Mayor Tom Bradley and all the race riots and all that
stuff. We had nowhere near, we never had anything like that. We never had a racial incident of serious significance that I’m aware of in the 10 years that we were in City Hall.

Many in the black community disagreed with Mayor Flynn’s assessment. As community leader Hubie Jones put it, “I think he lost a lot of currency with the black community. But he got reelected big time.” Civil rights activist Ken Wade added during our interview:

Yeah, it sets some things back a little bit, at least in terms of the way that the police handled the search for the perpetrator. Then, to have it end up as it did. Obviously, the Mission Hill community in particular just felt totally besieged. It was another one of those situations where they felt there’s a little bit of a rush to judgment. That did cause some consternation. I don’t think it totally threw things back to where they were in 1983. Just a setback as is bound to happen in any city, you got to have two steps forward and a step back every now and then, so I don’t think that that necessarily put the city back on a different kind of path.

In exploring the impact of the Stuart incident on the progress of race relations in Boston, Flynn policy advisor Neil Sullivan offered:

It would be wrong to say that it undid the gains, but setback would be the word. It suddenly divided us along racial lines, black and white. It was…the gang violence had been building, the homicides were piling up, crack was real and affecting everything, but it never was visited on white people, until it seemed to be that night. There’s collateral damage to progressive change and there’s collateral benefit to bad moments. The collateral benefit was, ok we don’t know everything, and we don’t have this thing under control. But we did good. We were solid. We had control of the city. But that dynamic, which was this powerful theme within the city, we didn’t have control of that. But we eventually got control of it.

Not everyone agreed with Sullivan’s assessment of Flynn’s tenure. Charles Stith, a prominent religious leader and although a strong ally of Mayor Flynn’s on many issues, said:

With Ray Flynn we’ve gotten a lot in the way of government by press conference, but he does no heavy lifting. There is nothing that you can point to that Ray Flynn
has done to further the agenda of opportunity, equality, and harmony that had its genesis in the Ray Flynn brain trust (Rezendes 1990b).

Others were similarly blunt in their critical assessment of Flynn. Joyce Ferriabough, a political consultant and then-president of the Black Political Task Force, said:

Flynn has gone from a virtual hero in the black community to a position where his tactics and his sensitivity on racial issues have become open to question. Somehow, during the second term, racial relationships have taken a turn for the worse.

Former State Representative Mel King of the South End, Flynn’s opponent in the 1983 mayoral election, put it more harshly:

The mayor is providing as much tension in this community as there has ever existed in all the years I’ve been around. As a result of his approach and his politics, there’s more divisiveness in the community than ever before. I’ve always said that one of the mistakes people constantly make is to say that race relations have improved simply because whites and blacks aren’t throwing bricks at one another. The things that are more critical are those having to do with the economics of communities (Rezendes 1991c).

One issue in the aftermath of the Stuart case was that many black leaders wanted an apology from Flynn for what they considered the overreaction by the police. As Louis Elisa, head of the Boston chapter of the NAACP, said at the time:

The mayor owed an apology not just to Mission Hill, but to every black person in the city of Boston who was traumatized and victimized by political hysteria. Every white person was looking at every member of the black community as a possible killer (Rezendes 1990c).

Elisa looked at the Stuart case as “The watershed event. From that point on, people began to wonder whether the mayor was committed to equal justice under the law and equal treatment for people of color” (Rezendes 1991c).
Jim Jordan, one-time press officer and aide to Flynn and later Director of Strategic Planning at the Boston Police Department under Flynn and Menino, told me:

When the Stuart thing broke it was the issue that swallowed everybody. It showed the magnitude of the issue of racial violence. The slightest mistake blew up. You have to remember that the news media, for the first time they did the remote broadcast with their microwave satellite antennae and every time we moved we were in this science fiction–looking environment, we’re not used to it. So every move the police made was being covered live. And no one knows what to do about that and no one knew about the international media—we had a press conference in front of the headquarters and we had 30 organizations there. With Stuart everything was magnified and because it’s race, it certainly showed one thing, race was still an important matter. It’s obviously an important matter to be dealt with all the time in the city. The true thing that later there’s a bit of a victory—that district is much more tuned into enforcing civil right laws.

Finally, the Boston Globe assessed Flynn’s record in responding to Boston’s communities of color, suggesting that “Despite the disaffection expressed by King and most of the minority elected officials in the city, a statistical analysis shows that Flynn has made progress in integrating public housing developments, hiring nonwhites for city jobs and encouraging private developers to give jobs to minorities” (Rezende 1991c).

Flynn education advisor Bob Consalvo summarized the mayor’s focus on race relations when he recounted to me what he told the mayor:

I’m sick of race, everything you do you are talking about race, and it is driving me crazy and it is driving a lot of people in the city crazy. He said, “it is the most important issue and I’ve got to keep doing it.” He was serious about it, he may have had lots of other quirks, but he was serious about it. And he was able to pull it off, I think by the strength of his personality. It didn’t solve the problem, because look at what happened with that guy, the Mission Hill thing.

As he prepared to depart for the Vatican, most observers gave Flynn high marks on improving race relations during his near-decade tenure as mayor:
During the busing crisis and well into the ’70s, Boston's neighborhoods loomed in the national imagination as war zones, peopled by grotesque extremists of many stripes. Then came Flynn, with his mild manner, emphasis on fairness, and devotion to simple values. He represented the best of Boston, most leaders agreed. Flynn appointed more minority officials; built much affordable housing in distressed minority neighborhoods; and spoke out early in his tenure against racial violence. “Boston has had a very bad national image for race relations,” said black political consultant Joyce Ferriabough. “Racism isn’t gone, but there’s a better feeling in the city. Flynn has tried hard to create a level playing field. There’ve been some blots, like the Stuart case, but improving race relations is part of his legacy” (Canellos 1993).

Flynn’s 1983 mayoral opponent Mel King disagreed, but he put some blame on members and leaders of the minority community:

King chided black residents for investing blind faith in Flynn’s ability to deliver prosperity to their neighborhoods, and he criticized black and Hispanic leaders for their inability to agree on a wide range of issues, from the Police Department’s stop-and-frisk policy to Flynn’s school referendum campaign. “Fighting racism in a house divided is draining, and we are a house divided” (Rezendes 1990b).

In conclusion, dealing with racial conflict and race relations was a contested undertaking for Flynn, with many observers giving him high marks but many activists in the black community criticized his approach and the fact that violence and poverty continued to be pervasive in their community.

**Thomas Menino and Race**

*Mayor Menino asked to name the best thing he had done for Boston, “My Number 1 thing is bring racial harmony to the city.” Referring to the bitter battles in the 1970s over school busing, he added, “We don’t have the nonsense that we used to have because I don’t tolerate it”* (Seelye 2012).

When Thomas Menino was sworn in as acting Mayor on July 12, 1993, race relations in Boston were far from settled. Menino’s predecessor, Ray Flynn, played an active, almost obsessive role in working to bring racial harmony to the city. Menino did not follow a
similar path, being characterized by many as a more cautious politician. While acting mayor and a candidate for the full-time job, acting Mayor Menino according to Peter Canellos of the *Boston Globe* would need to be prepared to deal with the fact that “the threat of a racial blow-up in this still-desegregating city is omnipresent. Former Mayor Raymond L. Flynn devoted much of his administration to easing the threat, but it still sits like a raven on the shoulder of whoever leads Boston” (Canellos 1993). Canellos described the night acting Mayor Menino received a phone call about racial violence in Charlestown:

For Menino, Tuesday’s phone call led to a night of monitoring police activities following the stabbings and melee involving groups of whites and Hispanics in Charlestown’s Bunker Hill housing development, while debating constantly whether to make an appearance on the scene—as Flynn no doubt would have. For Menino’s mayoral rival, state Rep. James T. Brett, news of the Charlestown incident conjured up memories of similar incidents in his native Dorchester, after which Brett stepped in to quell tensions. Unlike Flynn, who came out of the crucible of South Boston, where racial issues were played out in the open and politicians made stark choices, Brett and Menino have generally stood above the fray, acting as healers and facilitators when conflicts broke out in Dorchester or Hyde Park, which Menino represented on the City Council. City Councilor Charles Yancey (Mattapan) suggests that for this reason, neither candidate is well prepared to be mayor. The mayor, Yancey said, must be an overpowering moral force against racial violence. “Incidents of intolerance must be challenged by the next mayor—and challenged incessantly. That will set the tone. The next mayor will be the person who sets the tone of the whole city” (Canellos 1993).

Menino did recognize the undercurrent of racial conflict when in 1994 he responded to Hyde Park neighbors’ complaints about black youth in the neighborhood:

People talk about crime, but that’s just a smoke screen. They say crime, but they mean race. It’s the most important issue we face as a city. If I haven’t done one other thing when I leave office, I hope I can say I’ve helped us learn to live together as a city (Mooney 2005).
When he was running for city council in 1983, Mayor Menino believed racial conflict in the city was an issue in the mayor’s race and he shared his thoughts in an interview in his Boston University office:

The mayors’ race in 1983, I think you know better than I do, race was a big issue, it was very big—it divided the city. It was an uncomfortable city for minorities. Flynn did a decent job on that, bringing people together. There were still a lot of people left behind. The city’s minorities back then were just African Americans. Now there are Cape Verdeans, Dominicans, and El Salvadorians. We have a so much different minority population. Latinos are the fastest growing group, I think it’s 17 percent of the population of our city, so they’re the fastest growing. How do you integrate them in the mainstream of Boston? That’s a challenge. That’s a real challenge. We’re going to be a successful city if we create opportunities.

As mayor, Menino would have to deal with the ongoing integration of public housing, particularly in South Boston. While his friend and ally the late City Councilor James Kelly had continued to oppose integration of the city’s public housing developments, Menino distanced himself from Kelly, saying:

I can’t speak for any other politician, but the city is more diverse than it’s ever been, it’s changing, and we have to learn to live with that change. I think we’re doing better than when I took office, and we’re going to keep doing better (Walker 1994a).

Howard Husock, a filmmaker who made a documentary on Menino’s first city council campaign in 1983, recalled that Menino viewed issues of diversity in familial rather than racial terms:

Because he relates to other people’s families, the idea of race hatred doesn’t occur to him. He relates to these families, the two-income families moving into the neighborhood. If the neighborhood was going to change he wasn’t going to fight that—he understood that would have been absurd. (Walker 1994b)

Former Mayor Tom Menino explained to me his approach to dealing with racial issues in the city, reflecting on the Stuart incident described earlier:
You know I always believed you got to be out there, but that we overreacted instantly over that [the Stuart incident]. I’m not criticizing anybody for it. But I always try to be moderate and try to be as honest I could to the public and not call it racial, it was racial, but I wouldn’t do it. I wouldn’t divide the city. You know the mayor is the titular head of the city. Whatever he says, people believe. I may have been wrong but they believed it.

Menino believed that calling an incident racially motivated would divide the city and seemed to distance himself from the approach of his predecessor, Flynn. He recalled the reaction early in his first term when he described a firebombing in West Roxbury, which many thought was racially motivated, aimed at terrorizing a black family from buying a house there. Early in his first term as mayor, Menino said at the time:

Those are serious accusations to make, and if they’re true, we’re going to stand up and say, “We won’t tolerate this; we won’t tolerate such horrendous acts. We’re going to prosecute as far as we can” (Nealon and Zernike 1996).

The following day, the mayor and the police department began to soften their response and back off their initial statement describing the incident as a hate crime. When the community gathered for a service several days later, Menino was there:

The city is working with the black family to help them find a new home and the mayor walked away from reporters who asked him if his public comments may have fueled speculation that the fire was racially motivated. “My statements didn’t influence the situation, this is the community’s night. This community was hurt and now they’re trying to stand strong together” (MacQuarrie 1996).

He told me that “he got killed” on calling the West Roxbury fire racially motivated and that the only one who defended him was Monsignor Helmick, pastor of St. Theresa’s Church in West Roxbury, as Menino recalled:

When I first became mayor, they built a new house in West Roxbury. A black family bought it. It was firebombed. I knew it was a firebomb. The fire department knew it was a firebomb. The neighborhood said no, no, no, it is an accidental fire. I got my head kicked in. The only person that stood up for me was
Monsignor Helmick from St. Theresa’s Church. He stood up and said, “The mayor’s right. This is a racial incident.” We took it very seriously.

During Menino’s mayoralty, from 1993 through 2014, several racially motivated incidents received widespread attention. In reviewing the period from 1993 through 2000, the question of racial harmony is very much contested. Menino was not particularly visible on issues of racial violence and conflict during his 20-year tenure, often leaving other city officials to respond. In 2000 the Boston Globe did a special report titled “As Reported Hate Crimes in Boston Surge, Prosecutions Drop.” Boston Globe reporter Judy Rakowsky argued that the Community Disorders Unit (CDU), the first in the nation, “is a shell of what it used to be, undercut by political pressure from heavily voting South Boston.” (Rakowsky 2000).

Rakowsky went on to report that:

Despite a sharp rise in hate crimes in recent years, the CDU is locking up a shrinking proportion of offenders, records show. Reported hate crimes in Boston have jumped 57 percent, from 276 in 1993 to 433 in 1999—nearly the highest level since the state’s hate-crime statute was enacted in 1980. While the number of complaints has spiked up, the percentage that resulted in criminal charges being brought dropped from 21 percent in 1993 to 9 percent last year, a reduction of 56 percent.

She reports that the late then–City Council President James Kelly, a close ally of Menino and outspoken critic of the CDU, acknowledges much of the responsibility:

The squad definitely has a lower profile. “Let sleeping dogs lie.” I relayed my concerns to a number of people in authority [in the police department] and maybe behind the scenes [District Attorney] Ralph Martin played a role.

The unit’s first commander, Sergeant Francis “Mickey” Roache, who was later appointed police commissioner by Flynn in 1985, is widely credited with bringing
attention to the ongoing issues of race and in addressing the racial conflicts in Boston’s neighborhoods. As the late City Councilor Bruce Bolling commented:

There’s no question that the CDU has had an important role in helping this city turn the corner on race relations. It has investigated cases of concern to the minority community and has allowed certain incidents to get the light of day. They have made some tough but necessary calls that have helped the city to get over the traumatizing period brought on by desegregation (Ribadeneira 1988).

Commanding the CDU through much of Flynn’s term as mayor from 1980 to 1993 was Sergeant William Johnston. Rakowsky interviewed then–Deputy Superintendent Johnston, who wrote in a memo March 14, 1996 to then-Commissioner Paul Evans about the CDU under Menino:

It is rather embarrassing that the unit for which we have been held in such high esteem, for which we are a national model and which we can thank for clearing our reputation as the most racist city, has become the black sheep of the department. CDU detectives have been put aside, largely ignored by Police Department supervisors and treated as if they had done something wrong.

The political power of South Boston was cited as the principle cause for the dismantling of the CDU by Johnston and others. The local South Boston Tribune called the CDU “Caucasian Detainee Unit,” and the CDU was a constant topic in the newspaper from 1993 to 1997, during the integration of public housing developments in the neighborhood. As Rakowsky reported:

In June of 1994, John Ciccone, director of the militantly anti-busing South Boston Information Center, praised the legal maneuvering of Steve Lynch, who was elected state representative that year before later becoming a state senator (and later member of Congress). Attorney Steve Lynch has once again come to the rescue and will represent free of charge 16 Old Colony residents served with civil injunctions based on CDU investigations to stay away from hate-crime victims, Ciccone wrote in his column. Ciccone warned the CDU to back off, writing in May 1994 that the squad “is just getting themselves in deeper and deeper.” He called for disciplinary action and transfer of every detective on the squad. “The
pressure is on the CDU and it will continue to mount,” Ciccone wrote. “Their contempt for South Boston will be their downfall,” he said in a column that announced a June meeting with top police officials to air complaints about CDU. They are in a battle that they won’t win. But by June 30, Ciccone’s mood had brightened, and he gave an upbeat account of what had happened at the meeting eight days earlier with Superintendent Boyle and Captain Tom Crowley of the South Boston police district. Ciccone said that he, Kelly, and other Southie leaders had been assured by Boyle that he would personally look into all the complaints they had (2000).

While City Hall was incredulous and Police Commissioner Paul Evans and District Attorney Ralph Martin disputed the story and its findings, the Globe’s editor Mathew Storin defended its accuracy, as did deputy managing editor Ben Bradlee, who stated:

This was a carefully documented story about the decline of a once nationally recognized detective unit that served as a bulwark against racism in Boston. The article showed how the Police Department neutered the Community Disorders Unit under pressure from South Boston leaders, and how the prosecution of hate crimes in the city in recent years has fallen sharply, even as the number of reported incidents has spiked up (Thomas 2000).

Commenting on the Rakowsky report at the time were former Police Commissioners Roache and Bratton, and former Mayor Flynn:

Roache, who was the CDU’s first commander and served as police commissioner from 1985 to 1993, said that the unit has always been a target. “The people in CDU, they need protection so nobody can get at them,” said Roache, now a city councilor at large. “You don’t abandon the people who make a difference.”

William Bratton, who succeeded Roache as commissioner before leaving to take the same job in New York, said: “The CDU sent a very strong message at a time in Boston when the white community was getting out of hand in terms of expressing itself in violent acts. The people may still have their racist attitudes, but you certainly can control the behavior. That’s what you can use the police and the law for.” Former Mayor Flynn said he did not always agree with CDU, but he thought it was important to hold press conferences to announce its annual reports. “There was a real need to send a clear message that the city would be governed by one set of rules and laws,” Flynn said in a recent interview. “If you think those
problems are behind you, that's when they're going to escalate. It’s a never-ending challenge” (Rakowsky 2000).

Jim Jordan, Director of Strategic Planning at the Boston Police Department under Flynn and Menino, shared with me his thoughts about civil rights and hate crime enforcement, “The true thing is that later there’s a bit of a victory that the Boston police districts are much more tuned into enforcing civil right laws,” implying that it wasn’t a lack of enforcement but rather a central part of the work of the police.

There is no record that I can find of Mayor Menino commenting on Rakowsky’s story or ever holding a press conference to release or discuss CDU incident reports, something Flynn did regularly. Many believed that Menino had an easier time as an Italian-American dealing with race issues than his predecessor Flynn, who was an antibusing leader from South Boston. As Reverend Eugene Rivers, a Menino ally, commented at the time:

Flynn brought the racial baggage of South Boston to the city, and it clouded his ability to develop a coherent racial consensus. Menino, as an Italian-American, brings a very different sensibility that is not shaped by the same polarization that characterized the Irish in Boston. Flynn had phobic responses to Yankees and blacks (Walker 1994b).

Menino said in 1994, his first year as mayor, “This is an issue people don’t want to confront. The groups are changing—they’re not Italian and Irish anymore, they’re coming from areas that are depressed. If we don’t face that challenge, we’ll have a society of haves and have-nots” (Walker 1994b).

There were several other high-profile race-related incidents that Menino would face during his tenure, including a number of lawsuits. First, the case of Reverend
Accelyne Williams, the 75-year-old minister who died in a botched police drug raid at his home on March 25, 1994, just a couple of months into Menino’s first term. The Boston Police Department concluded in a report on their investigation that “the death of Reverend Accelyne Williams was a tragic accident” (Goggin 1994).

Initially, while conceding the raid was a mistake, Police Commissioner Paul Evans did not issue an apology to the Williams family, saying at the time, “This is a tragic incident and we deeply regret the incident. It is too early in the investigation [to issue an apology]. If an apology is necessary we would make that.” Mayor Menino said at the time only that he had extended his sympathies to the families of the victim and, “I have asked the police commissioner for a full report. I hope to have it on my desk as soon as possible” (McGrory and Locy 1994).

Former Mayor Menino discussed the incident during an interview when I asked him if there were any specific racial incidents he recalled during his tenure as mayor:

Just a couple of times, like when we raided the wrong apartment with the minister. [Police Commissioner] Paul Evans calls me up, it’s a Friday afternoon, and he asks me, “what kind of a day you having.” I told him, “I’m having a great day. I’m ready for the weekend.” He says, “after I talk to you mayor you are going to have a shitty day.” So he explained to me what happened. He says, “What do we do?” I say, “Be honest about it. Let’s tell people exactly what happened.” I told him to get on the phone and call of all the so-called black leaders. I’ll make some phone calls. I went to the NAACP dinner that night; I explained it and apologized for it. If you look at the incident, what saved us is that we apologized. Nobody ever apologized for mistakes like that before. We were sensitive to the issue. I never really had a bad racial thing when I was a mayor, not really, no.

Many credited Menino and Evans for how the incident was handled. By apologizing, they helped diffuse the anger in the black community and, as Menino told
me, “Nobody ever apologized for mistakes like that before,” implicitly referring to Flynn and the Carol Stuart case when Flynn was criticized for not issuing an apology.

Menino and the Boston Police Department were heavily criticized in how they handled several other high-profile incidents. When black Detective Michael Cox was allegedly beaten by white fellow officers during an incident in Dorchester, several investigations were launched by the police, the state district attorney, and the U.S. attorney’s office. Cox also filed a civil suit against the officers and later, the city (Rakowsky 1996). As Brian McGrory wrote for the *Boston Globe* about the city’s handling of the Cox case:

> The quiet rustling coming from the city government is the sound of Mayor Thomas M. Menino and Commissioner Paul Evans seeking cover from controversy, protecting themselves at the expense of the city. Four years after Cox was beaten unconscious by his brethren cops, city leaders have barely acknowledged a problem and, consequently, have done virtually nothing in search of a solution. Finally yesterday, Evans expressed publicly what he has long alluded to in private: a strong desire to settle the civil rights suit brought by Cox against the city. “I don't dispute the fact that Michael is a damned good cop who suffered injuries,” he said. Menino told a gathering of *Globe* editors and reporters that the Cox case “was an occasion we’ll never be proud of. It’s not a happy day, a good day, for the Boston Police Department” (McGrory 1999A).

And McGrory went on to report that Menino was rejecting the settlement with Sergeant Cox:

> In the four years since, the injustice has spread from the scene of the crime to the corridors of power all across this city, where the police commissioner, the mayor, and various state and federal prosecutors have proven themselves either inept at reining in the Police Department or indifferent toward the brutality that sometimes comes out of it (McGrory 1999B).

> The Reverend Eugene Rivers, one of Menino’s strongest supporters when he was elected mayor, would call for an independent commission to investigate the racial
incidents in the Boston Police Department—a call the mayor and commissioner would reject. Rivers would point to several incidents that he believed were racially motivated:

Rivers, an activist minister and cofounder of the Ten Point Coalition, appealed for the commission in the wake of three flashpoints that he says have raised tensions in the department—the placing of a noose over the motorcycle of Lieutenant Valimore Williams, a black commander, last month; a lawsuit filed May 21 by officers alleging they were passed over for promotion because they are white; and the 1995 beating of Sergeant Michael Cox, a black officer, by fellow officers who mistook him for a suspect. “Things are tight. The racial climate is tense,” said Rivers, who called for the commission during an interview at the *Globe*. “This was clear in the Cox case, and it was clear in the Williams case. Before there is a bigger problem, the city should be preventive and pro-active by convening a commission of independent players that can assess the state of race relations in this department” (Latour 1999).

Despite Menino’s comments to me that “I never really had a bad racial thing when I was a mayor, not really, no,” he had said at the time of these incidents, “Is there racial tension in the police department? All society, everywhere, has racial tension. I don’t think it’s the degree that people are trying to make it” (Vasquez and Robertson 1999).

By comparing the approaches to racial conflict by Mayors Flynn and Menino, it has been demonstrated that there is a need for a strong and consistent focus and public discourse on the issue in order to avoid slippage. While Menino made statements about racial conflict in the city, and it was clear that he had a strong personal opposition to discrimination of any kind, the evidence suggests that he chose a different path than his predecessor. It is understandable that his style and approach differed from that of Flynn, who came to the mayor’s office at a time of ongoing racial conflict and had something to prove as a South Boston resident and an opponent of busing. In contrast, Menino did not
face the same constraints as a former city councilor from Hyde Park and someone who inherited the mayor’s office at a time of relative racial stability in the city.

Notwithstanding these understandable differences, Menino’s tenure can to some degree be characterized as failing to pursue aggressive policies to address the worsening tensions in the city. The Boston Globe editorialized in 2000 about what they termed the “Prosecution Gap” under the Menino administration:

A tough response to bias crimes defined the administration of former Mayor Raymond Flynn, who sought to heal a city fractured by racially motivated attacks on minorities. In today’s multiracial city, however, the perpetrator is just as likely to be a member of a racial minority as white.

However, discrimination was an issue that Menino cared about deeply. When Menino was asked about what was an issue personal to him, he cited racism:

Racism. I will not tolerate it…that’s the interesting thing about my life. I was in the first grade—I will always remember this. It’s only a little thing, but I will always remember it….My name is spelled M-E-N-I-N-O, unlike the “Manino” that’s on the mushroom jar…And the first grade teacher told me that my parents didn’t know how to spell my name—that the Italians couldn’t spell. So she changes the spelling. And I went through the first grade with my name spelled wrong…That’s a little thing. But it’s always stayed with me…And I will never tolerate people being discriminated against (Menino 2014:59).

Mayor Menino did achieve some notable successes during his tenure. Menino and the Boston Police Department were extremely successful in reducing gang violence in Boston—the issue that replaced racial violence as a top city priority. Working with the Ten Point Coalition, a group of ministers in the black community, the police worked closely with the organization to address the needs of disconnected young people and combat growing youth violence. The key elements of the strategy included collaboration with community partners, strict enforcement of laws, and targeted interventions with
juvenile offenders. Menino knew youth violence was escalating in the city and he knew
he could not solve the problem alone:

Menino reached out to the Ten Point Ministers by having “get to know each other
dinners” at his home in Hyde Park. Ray Hammond, Gene Rivers, and Bruce Wall
and others would join the mayor and his wife, Angela, who would make a big pot
of spaghetti for them. They’d sit around the dinner table and talk politics,
education, and religion, and what was happening in the city. The mayor wanted to
build a true bond with the ministers. He knew how strong the influence of black
ministers was in minority communities. He also really admired that these
ministers were willing to work on the streets (Jackson and Winship 2006:14)

The successful partnership with the Ten Point Coalition became a national model to
reduce youth violence and was dubbed “The Boston Miracle.”

Mayor Menino also placed a high priority on the assimilation of new immigrants,
expanding the efforts initiated by Mayor Flynn described in Chapter 3, and in 1998
created the Office of New Bostonians to help ease the assimilation of new immigrants to
the city. He also responded to discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, and
transgender (LGBT) citizens of Boston. Ann McGuire, former Flynn Liaison to the Gay
& Lesbian Community and Menino’s 1993 campaign manager and head of human
services in his first term, recounted the mayor’s response to the U.S. Supreme Court
decision that allowed the South Boston Allied War Veterans to exclude gay and lesbian
marchers from the annual St. Patrick’s Day parade in South Boston:

When Tom Menino was elected, he was getting a tremendous amount of pressure to
march in the St. Patrick’s Day parade. After he becomes mayor, we have this new
organizational structure—the cabinet. There were six chiefs, and he was going to
take it out to all the neighborhoods. The mayor and the six of us would go out and
we’re going to sit there and answer whatever question. I was chief of health and
human services. Charlestown High School was the first place we went. It’s packed,
standing room only, people were asking questions. One of the guys raises his hand
and he goes, “How come you’re not marching in the St. Patrick’s Day Parade?” The
mayor said, “You know you have to stand up for what you believe and if you start doing stuff against what you said you believe in, no one will ever believe you. So I want you to know my word out there is good that I will not march in that parade.” And do you know what happened? Everybody in the place clapped. I mean it was amazing to me because here was a guy in Charlestown, you know how important your word is that he’s going to stick to his word. Menino, he got a tremendous amount of pressure when he was elected to march in the St. Patrick’s Parade in Boston, tremendous amount of pressure. And you know what he did? Nothing, he never did it.

Added 1983 mayoral candidate Dennis Kearney:

You know time heals all wounds. Ray Flynn had it tougher; however, I give Tom Menino equal marks, even though he hasn’t had it as tough because he has affirmatively held the line and he’s done a great job on racial relations. You know on a whole bunch of things like not marching in the South Boston St. Patrick’s Day parade because gays were excluded, I mean that was heroic.

What is surprising is that much of the increase in hate crimes in the late 1980s to early 1990s was attributed to the fact that police only began recording attacks against gays and lesbians in about 1990. This may account, in part, for the rise in the incidents highlighted earlier in this chapter.

Conclusion

This chapter showed that actions of the Flynn administration, the police, the community, and religious and business leaders contributed to a reduction of racial violence and increased racial harmony and tolerance in Boston during his tenure as mayor. Looking at the incidents of hate crimes (those that were racially motivated) between 1984 and 1993, a clear pattern emerges. While down from a high of 607 in 1978, the first year of the CDU, the number of racial incidents decreased sharply in the first two years of the Flynn administration but began to climb in 1987, around the time of the integration of the public
housing developments in South Boston. Looking at the racial incidents of the early 1990s, Michael Rezendes reported for the *Boston Globe*:

Citywide the number of reported civil rights violations decreased from 273 in 1990 to 218 last year [1991]. Police officials said that among the few increases in reported civil rights violations were rises at two predominantly white South Boston public housing developments, where the number of minority residents has gone up over the last four years. At the West Broadway development, the number of reported civil rights abuses rose from 11 in 1990 to 34 last year. And at the Old Colony development, the number of alleged civil rights assaults increased from 15 to 20 (Rezendes 1992).

As the *New York Times* offered in assessing Flynn’s performance after winning his third term in office in 1991:

In his first two terms, Mr. Flynn was widely given credit for easing racial tension that had grown out of a conflict over court-ordered school busing in the mid-1970s. Although he had opposed the busing himself at the time, Mr. Flynn as Mayor made a concerted effort to reach out to Boston’s black population, opening predominantly white housing projects to blacks. He restored many of the city’s neglected neighborhood parks. And he increased the number of blacks, Hispanics and Asians on the city payroll to 22 percent from 6 percent. Minorities make up 35 percent of Boston's population (Butterfield 1991).

In assessing the approach to race relations and racial conflict by the regimes of White, Flynn and Menino the evidence shows significant differences in governing approach, style and outcomes. Each regime had to confront racial conflict during their time in office, and the approaches each took were based on more than personalities but on governing style and political philosophy. Government communalism suggests that in order for the city and its people to protect those citizens who face incidents of racial discrimination, hard work is required of political, business, and civic leaders to develop a more tolerant and accepting city. The evidence demonstrates that there is much work to be done in this regard in Boston.
CHAPTER 6

“Death at an Early Age”—The School Governance Contest

I took Jonathan Kozol’s seminar at Yale who talked about what was going on in the Boston Public Schools. We would listen to recordings of what was being said about black kids who were enrolled in the Boston Public Schools. And there were at that time elected school committee members who would in a public meeting call all the black kids monkeys and describe them in the most disparaging of terms, and it was quite clear that whatever levels of disparity that existed as between the resource allocations that the city was prepared to make towards supporting kids and educating kids in Boston, that those disparities were not accidental. (Ted Landsmark interview)

This chapter explores the issue of race relations and the Boston Public Schools governance controversy. It discusses school desegregation efforts and the lingering aftermath of the 1974 court-ordered desegregation of the public schools. I think it’s fair to say that there isn’t a person interviewed as part of this study, or anyone who was alive during the busing crisis of the mid-1970s, who doesn’t have an opinion or who doesn’t bemoan the negative impact the period has had on Boston, its schools, neighborhoods, and reputation—even forty years since.

Race and Public Education

This section briefly traces key milestones in the history of public education in Boston and the political battles over education reform. Particular emphasis is placed on the proposals to alter the governance structure of the Boston Public Schools during the 1989–1991 time period, although there have been numerous attempts to change the governing structure of the schools in the twentieth century.

Scholarly educational research became prominent in the middle of the twentieth century and focused primarily on equality, including the racial achievement gap, test
scores, impacts of segregation, violence, school dropout rates, college access, matriculation, and graduation rates (Anyon 1997, Blau and Duncan 1967, Carter 2003, Collins 1971, Conant 1961, Cronin 2008, Farkas 1996, Horvat, Weininger and Lareau 2003, Jenks 1992, Jenks and Phillips 1998, Karabel and Halsey 1977, Kozol 1967, 2005, Lareau 1987, Lareau and Horvat 1999, McLeod 1987, Sadovnik 2007). When educational researchers have talked about urban education, the dominant discourse from the mid-twentieth and into the twenty-first century has been about inequality of opportunity and disparities in achievement based upon race, class, and ethnicity. These have become central issues in the way we talk about the mission of schools and how they serve the public (Kozol 1967, 2005, DiMaggio 1985). This discourse complements the earlier notions that cities are disorganized and problematic places which need schools as important institutions to respond to and address the dysfunction and disorganization (Park, Burgess and McKenzie 1925, Boyer 1992).

The rise of the various urban and educational schools of thought has generally followed such events as: periods of industrialization and immigration; the political activism that emerged in the 1960s, together with the economic decline of cities and the urban financial crisis; and postmodernity and the economic transformation of urban areas, which today centers on issues of race and class (Gans 2009). The debate on Boston’s school governance structure provides a background for understanding the intersection of race and politics and how the urban regime managed the conflict.

The Progressive Era reformers of the late 1880s to the early 1900s pushed for significant changes in the management of the Boston schools. This era of reform was
characterized by a movement toward centralization and professionalism, as well as the expansion of the high school, creation of the kindergarten, and replacement of the decentralized, patronage-based school boards (Labaree 1988, Emirbayer 1992). Boston schools followed the centralization/decentralization historical path that other districts experienced from the Progressive Era until the 1960s.

There have been repeated attempts to remove all control of school governance from the electorate in Boston—to take politics out of public education. Proposals emerged in 1944 and 1970 to abolish the elected school committee (Cronin 1973). It was not until 1991—following two decades of debate over school performance characterized by charges of a failing system as well as governance controversies—that Mayor Flynn proposed and the Boston City Council, state legislature, and Republican governor approved a home rule petition for the appointment of school committee members by the mayor. The proposal was opposed by minority elected officials but was ultimately signed by the governor. The governance change required a referendum after five years, which in 1996 was overwhelming approved by Boston’s voters (Portz, Stein and Jones 1999, Reville 2007). The discourse on race and power that emerged during the implementation of the mayor-appointed school committee, and has continued since, is investigated in this chapter. Boston’s black political leadership contested the governance change, though it was broadly supported by black ministers as well as the leadership of the white business community. This controversy over school governance is a particularly important window into local politics, since Boston was a city that had undergone the racial and political turmoil associated with school desegregation in the 1970s.
Busing in Boston

Boston’s school desegregation ordeal was an exorcism, following which the resolution of other stubborn civil rights problems became possible. (U.S. Department of Justice official Martin Walsh quoted in Levine, B. 2005:179–180)

Busing, or desegregation of America’s public schools, remains both a contentious and unfulfilled social endeavor. The dominant ideas of the school desegregation movement took shape first in response to the Supreme Court decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), which held that “separate but equal” facilities (in this case, railroad passenger accommodations) met the constitutional test of the equal protection clause of the Constitution. *Plessy* therefore reinforced the longstanding practice of maintaining segregated educational facilities, although a number of jurisdictions had long abandoned the practice.

Not until the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, when on May 17, 1954, Chief Justice Earl Warren issued the decision of the unanimous court, were racially segregated schools outlawed:

> We conclude that in the field of public education the doctrine of “separate but equal” has no place. Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal. Therefore, we hold that the plaintiffs and others similarly situated for whom the actions have been brought are, by reason of the segregation complained of, deprived of the equal protection of the laws guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment (National Archives 1954).

While de jure segregation “in the field of public education” was outlawed in 1954, the court did not prescribe a remedy that would transform the education system in the more than twenty states where educational segregation was allowed. Following on *Brown* a year later, the court was concerned that progress was not being made in dismantling segregated schools and in 1955, in what is known as *Brown II*, the Supreme Court further
elaborated on its ruling, requiring desegregation proceed with “all deliberate speed.”

*Brown v. Board of Education* did not overturn *Plessy*, and in other societal domains segregation continued. For more than a decade school boards resisted desegregation, and not until President Lyndon Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act into law on July 2, 1964 was the “separate but equal” doctrine of *Plessy v. Ferguson* overturned.

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 paved the way for more aggressive federal intervention to implement its and *Brown*’s provisions. In 1971, in the case of *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education*, the Supreme Court ruled that busing was an allowable tool to achieve desegregation if it did not endanger the health or safety of children or significantly impinge on the educational process. In providing Federal Districts Courts with one legal framework with which to achieve desegregation, the era of busing was born.

Boston, like other large metropolitan areas, underwent a dramatic demographic shift following World War II, fueled by the “Great Migration.” The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights found that “Boston’s black population increased substantially between 1960 and 1970. Their numbers rose from 63,165 to 104,707. This was a 65.8 percent increase over a period of time when Boston’s total population declined by 8.1 percent” (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights Report 1975). Black immigration, coupled with federal highway and housing policies that facilitated “white flight” and suburbanization, led to increasing housing and school segregation. In an effort to address the issue, in April of 1965 then–Massachusetts State Commissioner of Education Owen Kiernan issued a report on racial imbalance in Massachusetts. Known as the Kiernan Commission, the
authors of the report, entitled “Because It’s Right Educationally,” identified fifty-five racially imbalanced schools in the state, forty-five of which were in the City of Boston (Formisano 1991:34). The outcome of the commission’s findings was that on August 18, 1965, the Massachusetts legislature adopted the Massachusetts Racial Imbalance Act, making Massachusetts the first state to pass such a law. The law defined racial imbalance as a school with more than 50 percent non-white students, and the state required the Boston School Committee to address imbalance in its school system without prescribing specific methodologies (Formisano 1991, Masur 2008).

The Boston school district had been plagued by inequalities between white and black segregated schools, described by Jonathan Kozol in his book *Death at an Early Age* (1967), in which he chronicled the plight of students attending a segregated and overcrowded ghetto school in the Roxbury neighborhood. As a teacher who was later fired for reading students a passage from a poem by Langston Hughes, Kozol experienced firsthand the injustice of segregated education in Boston.

Minority parents had long sought remedies from the all-white Boston School Committee, to little avail. So when the state passed the Racial Imbalance Act in 1965 many liberal reformers thought change was in sight. The all-white school committee both resisted and ignored the state law. The leaders of Boston’s black community were not prepared to wait any longer for action from the school committee and in June 1963, 3,000 black students boycotted the schools (Cronin, 2008). Boston’s de facto segregation and the unwillingness of political leaders to address it led the NAACP to file suit on March
15, 1972 on behalf of 15 black parents and 43 children. The case came to be known as

After hearing the case for more than two years, the storm erupted on June 21, 1974 when Federal District Court Judge W. Arthur Garrity, Jr. issued his ruling concluding that the Boston School Committee and the school department “had knowingly carried out a systematic program of segregation affecting all of the city’s students, teachers and school facilities, and had intentionally brought about or maintained a dual school system (*Morgan v. Hennigan*, 1974. p. 410). The ruling would require, in Phase I, that students from two of Boston’s poorest neighborhoods, white South Boston and black Roxbury, be bused to schools across town. As author Michael Patrick McDonald recalled:

There could have been a lot of things done, but it’s very strange to say the least that in the first year of busing in Boston in 1974, it’s very strange that Phase I of the plan was to only involve Roxbury, the poor black neighborhood of Boston, and South Boston, a neighborhood that we later found out held the highest concentration of white poverty in America. So, to pit those two neighborhoods against each other was a really bad idea and of course violence broke out, and the riots in South Boston would happen at the end of my street, something that the kids in the neighborhood all were excited about.

Busing in Boston, and nationally, followed the Civil Rights era when blatant patterns of racism and inequality were becoming more apparent. In Boston, increasing housing segregation, resulting from city and federal policies, and the rapid in-migration of African Americans and Hispanics, coupled with what Federal Court Judge Arthur Garrity found was intentional racial discrimination in the assignment of children to schools in Boston, created the perfect storm.
There is near unanimous agreement that busing had a negative impact on education in Boston, but—as U.S. Department of Justice official Martin Walsh, quoted earlier about Boston’s school desegregation ordeal, termed it—it was “an exorcism, following which the resolution of other stubborn civil rights problems became possible” (Levine, B. 2005:179-180).

At the time of Judge Garrity’s decision, Mayor Kevin White was in his second term, having been reelected in 1971 with the overwhelming support of Boston’s black community. The final election was a rematch against his 1967 opponent, Louise Day Hicks, who had left the School Committee and became a member of the Boston City Council. Then–State Representative Ray Flynn, who had opposed Garrity’s order, at one point compared busing and the subsequent police response in South Boston to “The Soviet takeover of Budapest in 1956. They take our schools now they take our streets…This is the most degrading thing to South Boston” (Formisano 1991:77). Later reflecting on the history of busing, former Mayor Flynn told me:

You had the politics, Mayor White he just didn’t know what to do. His administration had no idea what to do. The business community was paralyzed, completely paralyzed. The Catholic Church didn’t know what to do; they were making all the wrong statements, at the wrong time to the wrong people. Cardinal Medeiros had no idea what this was all about. He makes this comment, “Catholic church schools will not be used as havens to people avoiding attending integrated schools.” Well that was never the issue, and it was a real put down to people, and it was unnecessary, and it was insensitive and he just didn’t have to say it, but he did. Then the appearance on City Hall Plaza by Ted Kennedy, thinking that he’s going to go over there and speak to the anti-busing people, I mean I wasn’t there, they weren’t my people, just completely off the mark. And I talked to Eddie Martin [Kennedy staffer] and I said years later, “Eddie, what is this?” He said, “Ray a huge mistake. A huge mistake.” For all intents and purposes, Don, it was the end of his presidential ambitions.
Former Mayor Menino, who had been a monitor at Hyde Park High School during busing, recalled the impact of busing on Boston during our interview:

Boston was a city that was divided. It was a city in crisis. I was in the corridors of Hyde Park High during busing. I know what it was like. Kids were throwing rocks at priests. People were standing in the middle of Cleary Square praying and saying the rosary.

Former Sheriff and 1983 mayoral candidate Dennis Kearney remembers the busing period, during which he was a state representative whose district included East Boston and Charlestown, two neighborhoods not impacted in Phase I of Garrity’s order. Kearney recalled:

In ’74 it was just Southie, but Charlestown and Eastie was ’75, September of ’75. When I took office in 1975 and all of ’76 right through re-election—two years the dominant issue was busing. That was everything. My whole focus was not statewide or state issues, it was busing and the issues that spun off of that in my legislative district. I mean obviously, East Boston and Charlestown were all white. The busing decree ripped at the fabric of community and family that existed. You had people in Eastie that never left Eastie, never came into Boston, people from Charlestown the same. You know their communities and their schools and the connection between the two were central to their identity. And then you have government telling them, well, no longer, those schools that are such a connection to your community and your family are no longer your schools and we’re going to send you to other parts of the city and we’re going to bring kids from other parts of the city into your schools. My view of the world is that the busing order didn’t recognize that connection and the degree to which it ripped that sense of neighborhood and that was what really offended, that’s what people were reacting to and then of course on top of that it was a racial issue as well because they were being hit over the head and told you can no longer go to your local school. All those neighborhood community-oriented institutions and family connections that are so important to you don’t matter anymore.

The institutions of family, church, and school are important to Bostonians. It wasn’t that white children in the city’s schools were getting a quality education. As former City Councilor and 1979 and 1983 mayoral candidate Larry DiCara recalled:
At that point in time at South Boston High School was all white, Dorchester High School was nearly all black and Hyde Park High School was genuinely integrated. In all three schools, facilities were horrible and the ambitions of the children were not much better. So one thing I figured out early on is this fantasy world that poor white people lived in was that if you went to Charlestown High, Southie High, Eastie High, and all the kids were white, that the educational environment you will find was absolutely bullshit and I figured that out early on which is not what people wanted to hear, by the way.

And Michael Patrick MacDonald agreed:

For the most part, the busing plan in the ’70s really put up stronger walls than Southie had ever had before and caused the dropout rate to surge. The percentage of kids from Southie High that went on to college was only 10 percent before busing. Busing was only taking poor people and sending them to each other’s shitty schools.

Left out of the equation in busing were many Asian and Latino students, who faced similar concerns and threats as a result of busing and the attendant racism. As May Louie, Chinatown activist and member of the Chinese Progressive Association recalled in our interview:

In the Asian American and Latino communities the kids were part of the busing because they were part of the mix of how to do the numbers, but they weren’t protected in the court order because the court order was black and white. And so in ’75 when busing hit the elementary school level, Chinese immigrant children were bused to South Boston and their school buses were stoned. So, the kids were throwing up. I mean these are the babies right, and they don’t speak English, they don’t know what’s going on, and so some us who are English speakers help form a Chinese Parents Association. We worked with some of the immigrant parents and helped them articulate a set of demands that they needed in order to feel that their children would be safe. So, the women quickly ceased sending their children into situations where they were emotionally traumatized and physically endangered. They organized a 90 percent effective boycott of the schools to force attention on the issues and won some of the demands, which included Chinese bilingual transitional aids and bilingual bus monitors.

Many had questioned Mayor White’s abandonment of two institutions serving the poor and minorities in the city—public schools and public housing—wondering if this
was not part of an actual strategy. As the *Boston Globe*, in an examination of White’s four terms in office, stated:

He was praised and pilloried for his role in busing. While some charge that he walked away from the problem, his staff points to the more than 250 “coffee klatches” that he held with families around the city in an effort to ease tensions. The fact that he was beholden to a federal judge for the operation of the city schools was, some suggest, both his fault and his nemesis (Larkin 1983).

Then–State Representative Ray Flynn, like the overwhelming majority of his neighborhood, opposed busing. Flynn recalled the impact of the decision by the federal court:

After busing the city never recovered, the schools never recovered. The great economic ladder to climb out of poverty, people like us, was public schools. I mean I think I’m the only Mayor of Boston that ever graduated from public schools. White didn’t, Menino certainly didn’t, I don’t know where Hynes went, I think he went to B.C. High. But you know you never had the identification and association with schools by the mayor.

And as Mayor Menino wrote in 2014:

Busing was intended to end school segregation, but it promoted re-segregation with only a brief stop at integration. Schools that were 40 percent minority in 1979 were nearly 90 percent minority two decades later. The 1980 census revealed that a third of the white and black families with children under eighteen had fled the city. Eight thousand fewer people lived in South Boston and thirteen thousand fewer in Roxbury. Support for Garrity’s plan among blacks had fallen to 14 percent. Busing left Boston’s schools segregated by race and class (Menino 2014).

When Flynn came into the mayor’s office in January 1984, both the schools’ school assignment plan and the housing authority were in court-ordered receivership (schools by the federal courts and the housing authority by the state courts). On the first week of his administration he visited several schools. In February 1984 he met with the State Board of Education, saying he was prepared to lead on education. Flynn told the
board, “I hope to see, in the near future, public education returned to the city. We have to build up confidence that we are, in fact, serious about moving public education forward” (Boston Globe editorial 1984a). As former Flynn chief of staff Nancy Snyder recalled:

I think Ray Flynn’s view of all of that was that the White administration had ducked some of the most important city services—some of the most important institutions and services that a city provides, education and housing. And part of his statement in the first year was not only are we going to accept these things out of receivership, we’re going to embrace them, we’re going to lead them, we’re going to make them better because that’s what a city does, that’s what a mayor does. You know you don’t hide from difficult challenges, you know you tackle them, and so I think that coming out of receivership, I think that that was part of the frustration—okay, coming out of receivership, I’m going to accept this thing but I have no power on the school issues so you know I need to do something about that. And so a lot of that is what drove the whole appointed school committee debate.

**Governance of the Boston Public Schools**

Governance of the public schools in Boston (and nationally) has had a contested history. During the Progressive Era (1880–1920) reformers were intent upon taking the politics out of public education and they pushed for changes in governance structures across America. In Boston, the effort led by the Brahmin and the business elite class sought to take school governance out of the hands of the Irish political machine led by Mayor James Michael Curley and other ethnic politicians. The school board was changed from a ward representation system to an at-large system of five school committee members, where it remained until the charter reform of 1981 was enacted. In 1984, the first year of the charter change, the school committee (and city council) was comprised of four at-large representatives and nine district representatives, and many hoped this would provide greater responsiveness to parents and children and better reflect the diversity of the city’s changing population.
When Flynn assumed office in 1984 he immediately sought to address the issue of education, although he quickly became frustrated. As former Flynn chief of staff Nancy Snyder told me:

I think he was incredibly frustrated around schools because he didn’t have the leverage necessary to make the changes that he had to make if you were going to make progress around schools. I think he understood; he lived the whole education problem; he was someone who really believed that education was the key in transforming people’s lives and it was incredibly frustrating that in his view the elected school committee and the superintendent were really all about the school system for adults and not the school system for kids. He found that incredibly frustrating and found that he really had no political leverage.

There was no agreement in the administration on how much of a priority the issue should be and how much political capital to expend on the school department. As then–education advisor Robert Consalvo remembers telling the mayor:

I said to Flynn, “Why are you bothering with the schools. You could be a great mayor if you just left them alone and do all the other things that you were doing.” He said “Bobby, if I don’t do something for those kids I couldn’t live with myself.”

In 1989, Mayor Flynn appointed an 11-member Advisory Committee on School Reform, chaired by Hubie Jones, then-Dean of the Boston University School of Social Work and a leading activist in the black community. As Jones recalls:

Ray Flynn asked me to chair his school reform panel. And I knew what the deal was. And I agreed. And the deal was he wanted an appointed school committee. I think he had become totally upset with the elected school committee in terms of what they weren’t doing. Okay and so he got that, I took a lot of hits in the black community for taking democracy away, taking our vote away. And for the folks of color on the school committee, this was leverage they have for whatever they wanted to do, so they have different kind of leverage than the school committees under Hicks and that crowd, but still that was leverage. That was political currency. But in fact they weren’t doing their job. It was a better to have the mayor, based on what we had with White, to have an engaged school committee, and a mayor
engaged with the school committee and trying to get the schools to improve. It’s was going to be controlled by the mayor. Period!

Following the release of the Advisory Committee’s report on May 1, 1989, in which Jones and the committee members proposed a seven-member school committee to be appointed by the mayor, Flynn said:

Whatever political capital is necessary to put on the line to do it, I will, and go out there even if it’s against initial popular opinion to chart a new course. I’m not a cautious guy. I never have been. I don’t know what the political consequences are, I’m just going to give these kids, the schoolchildren of Boston, the best fight I can give them (Howe 1989).

Former mayoral candidate Larry DiCara added his voice to the debate:

Any mayor who can bring some order to the schools and establish some standards is a candidate for canonization. The danger is great. The danger is off the charts. This is a crapshoot, and the future of the city is on the line. But if I were sitting there, I’d take the risk (Ibid).

Mayor Flynn proposed a non-binding referendum the fall of 1990 to eliminate the elected school committee in favor of one appointed by him. The effort was risky, since a poll taken earlier that year by the Vault showed that 61 percent of the electorate disapproved of increased mayoral control of the schools. Flynn led the creation of a political action committee, the Better Education Committee, and put his field organization in motion. It was an uphill battle, with leaders in the minority community actively opposing his efforts, as former Boston NAACP head Jack E. Robinson said about the referendum at the time:

The black voting population in Boston is being asked to vote away their vote. With blacks and minorities fighting and dying all over the world for this precious right, Boston’s blacks are being sold a bill of goods. No one denies that the Boston public schools and public education universally need some drastic reforms
but, however urgent the need, the quest and possession of freedom to vote transcends all options of expediency (Lewis 1989).

And the *Boston Globe* initially editorialized against the appointed school committee, opining:

A century ago, when the Irish began to exert political power in Boston, the politically dominant Yankees, in alliance with business interests, tried to brake that progress by transferring governmental power from City Hall to the State House. It is troubling that as the black community edges toward political power, the now-dominant Irish, in alliance with business interests, would try to brake that progress by withdrawing the right to vote for School Committee members. In rebuttal, Mayor Flynn and his supporters argue that the appointing power can be used to ensure a better representation of the city’s racial and ethnic cross-section on the committee. That argument would be more impressive if Flynn’s inner circle were not so dominated by white males, most of them Irish. The mayor deserve the community’s thanks for making the city’s schools so central an issue in this year’s election. His proposal, however, is undemocratic and badly flawed. The Globe urges a “no” vote on this referendum. (*Boston Globe* editorial 1989)

With polling going into the vote showing the measure down about 70 to 30 percent, the referendum won by a slight margin, 50.8 percent to 49.2 percent, winning by a mere 636 votes. As Larry DiCara pointed out, “It was the first thing that united Roxbury and South Boston in a long time; they both voted against it.” Following the referendum, Flynn was set to forget about pursuing the reform, thinking “people are not for this” (Wen and Hernandez 1989).

Although Flynn did temporarily abandon his goal of changing the school governance structure, in an effort to win some reform victory in the face of the widespread political opposition, policy advisor Neil Sullivan proposed to Flynn a modified deal, with five members to be appointed by the mayor and four elected at-large. Sullivan describes trying to close the deal with the opposition:
I had my crazy mixed-board proposal, that five would be appointed by the Mayor and four would be elected. And I got [School Committee President] O’Bryant to agree to do it and I got Flynn to agree to it. I arranged a Sunday morning brunch here at Doyle’s. And we sat in that booth right over there, waiting anxiously for O’Bryant to come, and he walked in with [School Committee member] John Grady. And Flynn just said to me, “It’s off. I will deal with the head of the black patronage machine in the school system; I will not deal with the head of the white patronage machine. I will not do a deal with these two guys.” The brunch was just a disaster. And that meant that Flynn moved away from anything until we orchestrated the meltdown; the high school meltdown.

Flynn became increasingly frustrated with the progress in the schools and he proposed a home rule petition based upon the recommendations of the 1989 Hubie Jones report, which was widely opposed by the black elected leadership, the Boston Teachers Union, and many community activists. The City Council, in a surprise to many, supported Flynn’s proposal following what Sullivan referred to as the high school meltdown:

The School Committee kept fucking up. We agreed to set up a commission to decide which of the high schools would be closed because there were 4,000 vacant seats. The School Committee voted that the commission would be allowed to make the decision and then on the eve of the commission report, which recommended the closing of Hyde Park high school, [School Committee members] Peggy Davis-Mullen and John Grady leaked it to the Herald and blew it up. So the buffoonery involved in that is what reheated the issue and moved the city council to get it done.

Flynn had forged a coalition with the business community and the media (the Boston Globe endorsed the takeover in January 1991 after having first opposed it during the 1989 referendum) in order to get the legislation passed by the City Council. Not all members of his administration agreed with moving forward with the takeover. As Robert Consalvo, his education advisor, recalled:
If he wasn’t serious about it I don’t think he would’ve done that take over thing, which I told him at the time I thought was a mistake, personally a mistake for him because then he would own the schools and then he could never fix them. It was like this big battleship just set on automatic pilot and you could not get into the inner sanctums of the education system of the school department to force any changes. Black leaders, and this is not negative, had control of the school system at the time, it was their system. They wanted it to be their system and it was their system. And they ran it. And any white person really had very little say in what went on. You couldn’t break into that at all. Understandable because the white Irish had it for years and you couldn’t break into it. In fact [School Committee member] John O’Bryant said that to the mayor at one time, he said, “It’s our turn now.” Flynn asked, “why can’t we do better? Why are you doing this?” He said, “It’s our turn now, our turn to run the system.”

There was strong support for the takeover from the business community in Boston, who saw the dysfunction in the school department as an obstacle to students’ successfully entering the economy. The business community had long advocated on education issues, having spearheaded both the creation of the Boston Private Industry Council and the education reform group known as the Boston Plan for Excellence. As Sam Tyler, President of the Boston Municipal Research Bureau, who quarterbacked the business community support for the appointed committee, recalled:

We had been trying between 1978 and 1991 to define the role of the school committee and the superintendent in a way that the school committee was clearly just a policy body and not involved with operations. I think the end result of all that also is the fact that the superintendent in Boston is probably the most powerful superintendent in the country, statutorily, but in 1978 the head of the custodians, the head of the school facilities and the business manager all reported directly to the school committee. The superintendent really was just the chief academic officer not the chief executive officer. We continued our efforts to strengthen the role of the superintendent as the chief executive officer and further defining and limiting the role of the school committee. And finally we supported the bill that authorized the appointment of school committee members, and that was passed in 1991 and took effect January 1992. Why did we get involved? It was just part of the culture of the business community in Boston to be engaged in support of public education.
The next challenge for Flynn was to get the Legislature to pass and Republican Governor William Weld to sign the home rule measure. The Legislature was not always supportive of one of its former colleagues, Ray Flynn, and the Black Legislative Caucus was set on killing the home rule petition. As one progressive white legislator, John McDonough, experienced at the time:

I had a district, it was two-thirds African American and Latino, I had all these folks who were part of my team, totally opposed to an appointed school committee. I just couldn’t defend the elected school committee. It was a thoroughly politicized body that was focused on its own electoral self-protection and jobs. So I sided with Flynn. One Monday night I was watching that TV show Northern Exposure, it was 10:00 o’clock. All of a sudden I heard some noise outside on my street in Jamaica Plain and there was a caravan of cars, they were beeping horns and turning their lights on and off directly in front of my house. They were all part of the former school committee member Gerald Anderson political organization and they were picketing my house. So I just felt there was very little progress possible when they were in the way. Many said to me, “you are disempowering the community, you are disempowering the one place where folks of color owned power.” I said, “Yeah, but to me it’s not about them it’s about the kids.”

The appointed school committee home rule measure was adopted by the Legislature, in the Senate by a 22–13 vote and by 96–52 in the House, with a provision that there would be a requirement for a binding referendum as to whether to return to an elected school committee five years after the implementation of the appointed board. The next challenge was to get the approval of Republican Governor Bill Weld. As Sam Tyler president of the Boston Municipal Research Bureau remembered:

It was one thing getting it through the city council but then when it got to the State House, Governor Weld was thinking that this might be a problem, particularly in the African American community, to take away the right to vote, which was what this was doing. He thought that it might be a good political move to oppose this bill and gain favor with parts of the Boston population. So it was some business leaders, particularly those who were very active in the Republican Party, that sat down with
the Governor and really made it clear that this was too important to the city. This is not an issue that he should be playing politics with, and in the end he supported it.

In addition to the support of the Republican business community leaders, a key part of the drama was the support of the *Bay State Banner*, Boston’s newspaper of the black community, and the Interfaith Ministerial Alliance, which represented twenty churches with more than 20,000 members. Following a State House press conference by the black ministers in support of the legislation, led by Nation of Islam leader Minister Don Muhammad, the following day the Senate approved the measure with then–Senate President Tom Birmingham, the bill sponsor, saying:

The Republican switch was due to a weekly newspaper serving minority neighborhoods and an organization of minority religious leaders that called for the abolition of the elected school board just hours before the Senate convened. There had been a suggestion that the black community was monolithically opposed to the petition. I think the intervention of leaders, the *Bay State Banner* and the ministers belied that (Rezendes 1991a).

Senator Bill Owens, a vocal opponent of the bill, countered, “The significant factor was that the Vault got into it and had various campaign contributors contact senators. I don’t think the ministers had any influence. I think they saw a win coming and rode the wave of a win” (Rezendes 1991a). Neil Sullivan recalled getting Governor Weld to agree to sign the legislation over the opposition of the black elected officials:

That’s when Governor Weld said, “OK, I’ll sign it.” We were entitled to certain considerations by the new Governor because of our opposition to John Silber, the famous J.J. Foley’s beer lift on the front page of the *Herald*, the implicit endorsement. The Mayor just didn’t like that Silber guy at all. So Flynn got the appointed school committee out of that beer.

On July 5, 1991 Governor William F. Weld signed the legislation after much anguish for fear of alienating the black community. He said at the time:
The Boston school system is in desperate need of fundamental change. The case for a systematic overhaul of the system has been well documented by educators, parents, and students. Simply put, students in the Boston public school system are losing their opportunity for education and any hope for a meaningful and successful future. It is clear that the current situation is unacceptable (Lehigh 1991).

Sam Tyler, head of the Boston Municipal Research Bureau, applauded the Governor’s action, saying at the time the change was in the best interests of Boston’s students. “This will provide a school board that will serve as a more cohesive, accountable policy body that will more decisively act on the education issues facing the city” (Lehigh 1991).

Implementing the governance change would be a test for Flynn and those he appointed to the seven-member committee. In 1992 Flynn made the appointments, and Boston entered into another turbulent period in the history of the city’s school system. Flynn was acutely aware of the racially charged nature of those first appointments given the nature of opposing arguments. He appointed two blacks, two Hispanics, one Asian, and two whites, thereby quelling some dissent from black elected officials. The school committee elected an African American as the chair, and this was the first time in history that an Asian had been a member of the school committee.

As the new members were beginning their first term, they inherited the School Superintendent, Lois Harrison Jones, an African American woman hired by the outgoing elected body in May of 1991. Flynn and his former education advisor Robert Consalvo, who became executive secretary to the new school committee, regularly clashed with Superintendent Harrison Jones. As Consalvo recalled in our interview:
I remember one time sitting down with Reverend Ray Hammond from the Ten Point coalition because they wanted to talk about our relationship with [Superintendent] Lois Harrison Jones and I told them, these are your kids and nothing is happening. You know what they said, I’m not kidding, “She’s one of us.” And I could understand that. “She is our only hope,” they said.

The issue of race continued to polarize school politics and limit the reforms that the mayor and new school committee sought to adopt.

Virtually all those interviewed had strong feelings about the governance change, which generally broke down along racial lines. The Boston School Committee was referred to as “a joke”, “hard to take seriously”, “a circus”, “dysfunctional,” and both those for and against the abolition of the elected committee acknowledged that election to the committee had played a role “as a political stepping stone” and a platform that gave people of color power. Vin McCarthy shared his thoughts about the impact of the school committee dysfunction:

Structurally, the school department was the sore thumb stuck in the city where they weren’t doing their job and everybody who was smarter who had the money was sending their kids to parochial or private school or they moved to the suburbs.

Those who opposed the measure in many cases saw the move by Flynn and the business community to “take away the vote” and make the mayor a “czar” as disempowering people of color in the city. Many pointed to the history of the schools—segregation and desegregation efforts had left a significant level of distrust between the communities of color and the city government.

Flynn was appointed by President Clinton to be Ambassador to the Vatican and resigned his post in July 1993, one and one-half years into the new school committee’s term. Harrison Jones was still superintendent, and Mayor Menino then became
responsible for moving the schools forward. He received a lot of pressure to keep Harrison Jones as school superintendent but he was determined to take the Boston Public Schools in a new direction.

In 1996, as required by the original 1991 law, a referendum was held to determine whether to return to an elected school committee. In the minority community, sentiments were still raw from Flynn’s 1991 campaign to appoint the board. As Joyce Ferriabough put it:

In campaigning for an appointed body in 1991, former Mayor Raymond Flynn successfully co-opted much of the black clergy, opening wounds between black ministers and elected officials that have still not healed. So tender are feelings that a meeting of black activists and elected officials is planned for later this month to discuss amicable ways to disagree on the referendum issue (Walker 1996).

The referendum was actively supported by new mayor Tom Menino, leaders of community, religious, and business organizations, and a return to an elected school committee was rejected by 53 percent of the voters with only 23 percent favoring an elected committee and 23 percent leaving the question blank (Avenoso 1996). The results indicated that “Throughout the city, 69 percent of the voters opposed returning to a 13-member elected Boston School Committee, but in the two black wards, 43 percent of those who voted on the referendum supported maintaining the appointed committee, which was only 5 percent higher than in 1989. In the 13 overwhelmingly white wards, 72 percent of those voting on the referendum supported maintaining the appointed committee, up from 51 percent in 1989” (Taylor 2001:12).
Former Mayor Tom Menino shared with me his thoughts about the value of the appointed school committee, a proposal that he supported as a city councilor and actively campaigned to maintain as mayor in the 1996 referendum:

Oh that was a savior. The old school committee was a swap shop. The custodians’ union ran it. The teachers’ union ran it. All the unions ran the school committee because the guys running for school committee had to get campaign funds, and where did they get them, the unions. So they weren’t dealing with issues that affect the kids. They were dealing with issue that affect the unions, and that was a wrong thing to do. The appointed school board, these members on there can never be elected and all they want to do is serve and they’ve done a decent job. There are some issues also, but they’d done a good job. They devoted a lot of time to it and I think that was a savior of our city. I’d probably say that we were able to move the city schools forward and people have confidence in the schools. Go back to ’83, ’84, the people didn’t have any confidence in the schools, classrooms were empty, we couldn’t hire teachers. I remember when I first took over as mayor, I had to go down to a job fair down in Florida to recruit teachers. They didn’t want to come to Boston. We had to go to Panama to get math teachers. The following year, when the job fair opened, we had 3,000 applicants. Things have turned around.

When I asked Menino why he believed that some black leaders continue to oppose the appointed school committee, he told me:

Simple thing, the right to vote. But is the right to vote more serious than a person’s education and the kids’ future? I doubt that. Kids’ future is more important. They want to have an elected school board because they maintain control of the patronage. That’s wrong! I don’t care where you come from or who you are. That’s wrong! It’s the education of children, what goes on in that classroom, what goes on School Street, what goes on all over the city. That’s what it’s all about. If you have the school system that works, your city works and you know we reduced the dropout rate from 19 percent to I think 6 percent now. That’s a huge drop.

Menino admitted that he could have done more on public education, saying in our interview:

When I left office there are things that people say I didn’t do. Like could I have done better on schools? I could have done much better on schools. No question
about that. Schools have come a long way but still are not perfect. Schools are still an issue for us.

I think many members of the fast growing Latino community would agree with Menino’s assessment. Pablo Calderón, Mel King supporter and former Flynn staff member told me during our interview:

Well, the number one issue is the poor work around education. The poor job that the schools are doing, they are still doing the same thing today. In the ’70s, we had probably about a 12 percent high school dropout rate every year in the Latino community. Last year, the numbers came out, 51 percent of Latino students are dropping out of our high schools. I mailed it to Mayor Menino and said to Mayor Menino, first of all what do you think would happen today if I mailed this to the mayor of Brookline and said to the mayor of Brookline 51 percent of your population is dropping out, you don’t think there would be a total uproar. And I said what really hurts me is that I read this, I held this article for two weeks, there was not one uproar by you. And of course he sent me one of these apologetic letters saying you know I’m trying my best and blah, blah, blah.

Clearly, there is much unfinished business in the Boston Public Schools. Mayor Kevin White let the courts take over the schools; Mayor Ray Flynn expended enormous political capital and took control of the school committee; and Mayor Tom Menino continues that practice, at one point early in his tenure—at his 1996 State of the City Address—boldly proclaiming:

I want to be judged as your mayor by what happens now in the Boston Public Schools. If I fail to bring about these specific reforms by the year 2001, then judge me harshly (Anand 1996).

When I asked Mel King about his assessment of the quality of schooling in Boston, an issue he spent his entire career fighting to address, he told me:

We don’t have in the city a citizenry that says all the children are our children. For me one of the things that hasn’t happened is that we have not become a city where we want all the children to succeed and will challenge the mayor and others to make it happen—it shouldn’t be just the parents of the children. This is
something that has not come together in the city. We have a mayor who said give me control of the schools and in 19 years hasn’t done it.

How all three mayors and mayoral takeover of the schools have impacted the educational chances of the largely poor and minority kids who attend Boston Public Schools remains a largely contested question, one which resonates across urban America. Two questions must be examined: whether mayoral takeover works to improve public education; and, specifically, whether the change in school governance structure from elected to appointed improve public education in Boston.

**Does Mayoral Takeover Work to Improve Public Education?**

Is mayoral takeover of public school governance an effective reform strategy? Boston was the first major urban school system to undertake mayoral takeover in 1992. Since that time, a host of other cities have joined suit: Chicago (1995), Cleveland and Baltimore (1998), Detroit (1999), Oakland, Washington, D.C., and Harrisburg (2000), and New York (2002) each have moved to a mayorally appointed school governance structure, often bitterly contested by the teachers’ unions (Ravitch 2010, Wong 2003). Analysis and debate on the success and improvement in urban school districts with mayors in charge remains inconclusive.

Several leading educational researchers place little or no value on school governance. Jean Anyon suggests, “Forms of mayoral or other control; state and federal rules and regulations; and policies funded or unfunded do not make a district. Describing how these work does not yield an adequate understanding of the problems, issues, or solutions that are possible” (Anyon 2009:3). Anyon suggests a critical theoretical
approach that looks at the underlying causes of structural inequality. Diane Ravitch is also not a believer that “elected school boards are obstacles to reform” or in the power of school governance to improve schools. She states, “Mayoral control is not a guaranteed path to school improvement,” citing the 2007 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) tests showing that the cities with highest scores had elected boards and two of the lowest had mayoral control for more than a decade (Ravitch 2010:91).

Others such as Kenneth Wong see mayoral takeover as one strategy in the face of major structural issues, including poverty and race that have correlated with student achievement. While he presents the overall evidence as inconclusive, he develops an empirical analysis that suggests mayoral takeover districts exhibit higher-quality student performance in the lower grades and at the lowest performing schools, increased accountability, reduced conflict, including racial conflict, greater civic engagement, and more effective financial management (Wong 2002:7:21).

What factors should we examine when we look at the success or failure of mayoral takeovers, a simple analysis of the test scores and improvement in closing the achievement gap? Should the analysis include the level of civic engagement (Portz, Stein and Jones 1999); political and public support for education; the skills and longevity of leadership (Reville 2007); or the winning of the Broad Prize in Urban Education for most improved urban public school system as Boston did in 2006 and New York in 2008?

Did the Change in the School Governance Structure from Elected to Appointed Improve Public Education in Boston?
Only a couple people I interviewed suggested that governance change has not had a measurable impact on education quality and accountability. According to education advisor and, for a short period, secretary to the mayoral appointed school committee in 1992, Robert Consalvo reflected on the question of whether the governance change has improved the schools:

No I don’t believe it did. In fact I was opposed to the governance change, but I had to keep my mouth shut. I believe if you track the education stories before and after the governance change, the curve would go down steeply. There would always be stories about education, being that the school committee was so crazy, now you couldn’t find stories. In fact, The Globe one time wrote a story about how there were no stories in education anymore. And I think the appointed board, did it make a difference? No. I think MCAS (Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System—standardized tests) made a difference; I don’t think the appointed board made a difference. There was less fighting, less nonsense, but the schools were the same. The test scores were always at the bottom, even then. They are better now, and they are better now because the MCAS forced them to be better. There is no other reason, there is not a single other reason why they are better. It is not (former school superintendent) Payzant, it is not this person, and it is not the person before. It is once the MCAS came in the people couldn’t hide anymore, and that is why they are better. And they are not even good yet, but they are better, because of that.

Long-serving City Councilor Charles Yancey, an opponent of the appointed board, shared his thoughts about the appointed school committee during our interview:

I was very concerned that the appointed school committee would actually take away from the voters the ability to determine who our educational leaders will be and concentrate the powers within the mayor’s office. And I would argue that does not remove politics, it just changes politics, and the mayor will have a nominal amount of powers with regards to the school committee. And I think my predictions have been borne out because many parents today don’t feel that they have any real connection to the Boston public schools. This idea of leaving all the decisions up to the mayor through his appointed school committee, I don’t think was a good one because no mayor has a monopoly of knowledge or wisdom, and at least within the elected school committee you have individuals who’d be far more aggressive and fighting for resources for the schools than the appointed one because by definition, the appointed school committee is not going to challenge
the appointing authority for its budget. Sure enough, there were major cuts and
the school department in terms of the number of teachers, in terms of facilities,
and it is rare that we have any member of the appointed school committee come
before the city council on the budget. That was unheard of under the elected
school committee. But, I think in terms of what the city and the voters of Boston
gave up and what they got in return, I think the voters lost out.

Ted Landsmark summarized the current state of education in Boston commenting:

And in terms of the basic demographics of Boston, easily 85–90 percent of people
who live in Boston today didn’t live here during busing. The vast majority of
people who live in the city today have no direct recollection of busing. So the
interesting thing is that what drives the conversation about busing is vestiges, it is
primarily a historical artifact. It is not the fact that most of us who live here today
still are angry and bitter about what went on, it’s a very small number of us who
were actually here at the time. So to a large extent, when people look at schools
today, and what they see as deficiencies in the education system, there is a
handful of people who want to blame busing, but basically the deficiencies are
there because we perpetuate certain distinctions within all of our public schools.
And so one can argue that in many respects the same level of racial isolation and
class isolation that existed in Boston in 1976, when I was attacked, continues to
exist today.

The lingering racial conflict following school busing provided a challenging
environment for significant education reform in Boston. Race has been the third rail of
Boston politics and was center stage in the school governance debate. The history of
school desegregation provided the background and the major obstacle Flynn encountered
when he took on reform of the school committee. From the perspective of regime theory,
was the mayor a central actor in the final outcome, or was it the set of relationships he
helped coalesce around the goal of reforming educational governance in the city? Did
Flynn, as Clarence Stone has suggested, have “power over,” defined as social control, or
“power to,” defined as social production, to reform the school system? (Stone 1989).
These are questions I will revisit in Chapter 7. Did Flynn exercise “power over” those who opposed the elected school committee? I would suggest he did not, in this instance, have “power over” the central actors in the debate. The Mayor assembled a coalition of influential actors, which might be termed “power to” achieve the desired end result of replacing the elected school committee with an appointed one. He brought together the business community through the Boston Municipal Research Bureau, which also brought on board the Vault. Many saw the motivation of the business community as self-serving—insuring a pipeline of competent workers for their enterprises. However, their role helped frame the issue as economic rather than racial. Flynn also enlisted support in the media coalition including the *Boston Globe*, which initially opposed the referendum, writing: “His [Flynn’s] proposal is undemocratic and badly flawed. The Globe urges a “no” vote on this referendum” (*Boston Globe* editorial 1989). Later, however, the *Globe* reversed course and endorsed the plan.

The key players in this contest appear to have been the highly visible and trusted Hubie Jones, the black ministers of the Interfaith Ministerial Alliance, and the *Bay State Banner*, which also editorialized in favor of the change at the eleventh hour. With their support, Flynn was able to undermine the efforts of the black elected leaders’ opposition, portraying them as looking to protect the status quo at a time when, coming out of the turbulent 1970s, it was clear the city’s educational system needed improvement.

Probably the 1985 epilogue written by Jonathan Kozol for his 1967 best-selling book, *Death at an Early Age*, best summarizes the outcomes of busing and education reform in Boston:
I have often been obliged to ask myself whether the publication of this book did very much to lessen the injustices it describes. *Death at an Early Age* appears to have had some effect in heightening the pressure that would lead in time to the court-ordered integration of the Boston schools; even this may prove at last to be a Pyrrhic victory. Today we see an integrated underclass in Boston in the process of gestation. Poor whites, poor blacks, and poor Hispanics now become illiterate together.

Much needs to be done to break the cycles of poverty and the growth of income inequality in Boston if, as statistics show, those who remain poor and out of the economic mainstream are largely people of color in Boston’s still-segregated neighborhoods. Chapter 7 explores the lessons I have learned about Boston moving into the twenty-first century.
CHAPTER 7

Transformative Moments in Boston—Entering the 21st Century

The Ray Flynn legacy has yet to be determined, yet to be written maybe, but a lot people are forgetting about what a difference he made at his time. On the racial side, racial harmony side, on the economic development side, on spreading the wealth side. Flynn made a difference in transforming the city of Boston (Fletcher “Flash” Wiley Interview).

This final chapter seeks to demonstrate, through the qualitative investigation undertaken for this dissertation, that the period in Boston between 1980 and 2000 was, sociologically, a transformative period in the city’s history. More than 60 personal interviews, archival research, and study of the “civic diaries” of the time have uncovered what I believe is a sociologically relevant story characterized by: three distinctive political agendas during the respective terms of the three mayors in power between 1968 and 2014; rapid demographic changes in the racial composition of the city, with an influx of foreign immigrants rivaling that of a century earlier; and an economic transformation that heralded Boston’s emergence as a post-industrial city. Boston has emerged as a stronger city, in many respects, than it was in the 1970s and 1980s. There remain, however, significant issues of race and class facing the city’s people.

In exploring the central research question—How did each of the governing regimes of the City of Boston between 1980 and 2000 respond to and shape race and ethnic relations, inequality, economic development policy, and public education governance?—I found evidence that the municipal government had the ability to, and did, promote greater social tolerance than it did economic equality. The Flynn administration in particular worked to reduce poverty, improve education, eliminate or lessen racial
conflict, and increase economic opportunity for city residents. It also tried to democratize
decision making in municipal affairs. However, the impact of these efforts on the period
under study was affected by their being sandwiched between the White and Menino
regimes, both of which pursued a growth machine path that led to greater, even
unprecedented, concentrations of wealth among the city’s residents. The Menino
philosophy of “build it and [the builders] will…create jobs” (Menino 2014:175) did not
work for the majority of Boston residents, who did not benefit from growth in either the
construction of new office buildings or permanent well-paying jobs inside those
buildings. As Mel King pointed out in our interview, even in the case of the police station
being built in the heart of Roxbury, “we weren’t getting the jobs.”

The climate of open racial hostility in the city did fluctuate during the period
under study—hate crimes decreased under Flynn but later escalated under Menino. The
approach Flynn took, as Neil Sullivan recounted, was “to bring the noise, to bring the
attention, to bring the focus” on racial violence. Jim Jordan told me, “Flynn took the
power of the mayor’s office and focused on civil rights,” which made a significant
difference in the city’s mood and manner of conducting its racial affairs. Menino took a
very different approach, consciously refusing to speak about racial conflict for fear it
would divide the city. Menino defended this approach, saying, “I always try to be
moderate and try to be as honest I could to the public and not call it racial; it was racial,
but I wouldn’t do it. I wouldn’t divide the city.” While racial incidents increased during
Menino’s administration, particularly with the integration of public housing in South
Boston and across the city, race was no longer part of the public discourse. An
unprecedented period of apparent civic peace and quiet came over the city during the period under study (Monti 2013).

The 2013 campaign for Mayor of Boston saw race emerge as an election issue once more, with half of the dozen contenders in the preliminary election being persons of color—none of whom made it to the final runoff. When pressed, the two white Irish finalists both acknowledged the prevalence of persistent institutional racism in the city. But the lack of much “noise” about race during the campaign was a tribute to all the hard work that had been done in the past to produce a calmer and more even-tempered way of discussing racial differences. It will be the job of Mayor Walsh to choose his own path to confront this issue.

This dissertation’s academic contributions center around the extent to which resistance to the traditional growth coalition model, coupled with policies based on progressive cities theory, impacted poverty and inequality in Boston during Mayor Flynn’s tenure. To put this question in a broader context, can a vocal class-based populist approach to confronting racism and racial conflict be effective in addressing interracial tension as well as economic inequality? Monti (2013) doesn’t think so. He believes that the more congenial turn in Boston’s civic culture took place despite the continuation of marked economic inequality, and that this improvement had to happen before the issue of economic inequality could be addressed more forthrightly. I disagree, based both upon my own experiences and the clear, quantifiable outcomes in both arenas during the 1980s. Income inequality, poverty, and racial peace were at the top of the agenda during Flynn’s term and, through prioritizing these issues, his administration showed positive...
gains in each arena. I now turn to the summation of the evidence that supports these claims.

In analyzing the three thematic theoretical domains—mayoral leadership and community power; inequality, economic development, and redistribution; and race relations, racial conflict, and public school governance—supported by a rich case history and using a historical-sociological lens, I find that there were significant transformative policies and practices instituted during Flynn’s tenure that have shaped Boston to be the city it is today. The three thematic domains will be discussed in turn.

**Theme One: Mayoral Leadership and Community Power**

In exploring mayoral leadership and community power in Chapter 3, I used urban regime theory and critical election theory analysis to understand and interpret my experiences, the interview material, and archival data.

Clarence Stone categorizes four ideal types of urban regimes: maintenance or caretaker regimes, which support the status quo and focus on delivery of basic services; development regimes, which pursue policies identified with growth machine coalition theory; middle-class progressive regimes, which seek to negotiate community benefits as part of the development process; and lower-class opportunity regimes, which pursue a redistributive agenda to alter the actions of the private sector without stifling investment. The redistributive agenda has been the central strategy of progressive regimes (Clavel 2010, Stone 1989, 1993). Urban regime theory suggests that in order to successfully manage a complex urban city, coalitions must be built between the governmental and non-governmental actors. The data points to Flynn’s having created governing capacity
through the effective political management of the “pockets of coalitions” that led to his election in 1983.

The 1983 mayoral contest, highlighted in Chapter 3, came down to a contest between Mel King and Ray Flynn, the two candidates of the nine who ran as self-described populists. Both Flynn and King were in fact different kinds of urban populists. Todd Swanstrom, writing about Mayor Kucinich of Cleveland, defines urban populism by what it tries to accomplish and how: “Urban populism tries, at first, to displace the divisive social issues that arose in the 1960s around race, religion, lifestyle, and sex, with fundamental economic issues. The claim is that issues like busing and abortion divide natural political allies; urban populism attempts to displace the growth issue with the distributive issue” (Swanstrom 1985:122-123).

The contest did break down on racial lines, however, with the King campaign characterizing its candidate as a “transformative populist” who emphasized and celebrated diversity and “explicitly introduces derived ideology in a process of mutual education of coalition members, and targets as its central goal the transformation of consciousness through empowerment” (Kennedy, Tilly and Gaston 1990:302). In essence, transformative populism’s central focus is to fight racial oppression and promote self-determination. King’s campaign strategists characterized Flynn as a “redistributive populist,” by which they implied that he sought to “build unity by emphasizing what people have in common and downplaying or even overlooking differences such as race; such populists value community organization as a means to the end of redistribution of
resources and economic justice” (Kennedy, Tilly and Gaston 1990:306). I suspect on that charge Flynn would plead guilty!

Flynn campaign worker and later housing aide Jerry Rubin ruminated on the failure to broaden the alliance with the King campaign:

I don’t believe in revolutionary politics as an organizing strategy. Now could you have an alliance between race-based politics and populism, progressive populism? I think yes. In some ways we did, I think the Ray Flynn campaign had deep roots in the African American community, in some ways deeper than Mel King’s campaign. So I think you can bridge white economic populism with the perspective of race which has its own set of dynamics even independent of class. But can you bridge progressive populism and revolutionary theory? I still believe in class-based populist organizing, that’s still my perspective and I think that that it can cut across race lines.

Following Flynn’s election in 1983, the transformative populists saw themselves as a “movement in opposition,” which would play itself out on numerous fronts during Flynn’s mayoralty.

Flynn was able to expand his political reach through policies that unified a racially fractured city of diverse community, political, and business leaders (Stone 1993). Unlike Stone’s insistence that the business elites are a necessary participant in the governing coalition, Flynn chose to broaden his administration’s reach into neighborhoods and constituencies that had not supported him in the 1983 election in favor of a focus on courting the business community. In fact, his aggressive push early on in his administration for both rent control and linkage created strong opposition from the business elites in Boston. This was particularly true of rent control, which was opposed not only by the representatives of the larger realtors, the Greater Boston Real Estate Board, but by the majority of the Boston City Council as well as some conservative
members within the Flynn administration itself. Linkage was a different matter altogether. Broad political consensus, excepting the real estate industry, had emerged in reaction to the development policies of Flynn’s predecessor, Kevin White. Following the period under White, during which the mayor had sought to centralize power and control on both the development front and the delivery of city services for political purposes, the city was ready for a new type of leadership.

Urban regime theory would characterize the Flynn administration as a middle-class progressive regime because of the “focus on such measures as environmental protection, historic preservation, affordable housing, the quality of design, affirmative action, and linkage funds for various social purposes” (Stone 1989:19). Flynn had the active political support of the electorate to implement his redistributive policies and this gave him the power to go well beyond redistribution both symbolically and in his actions. Early and throughout his administration Flynn supported progressive causes such as a Human Rights Ordinance to protect gays and lesbians; he aggressively pursued the removal of city funds from banks doing business with South Africa; he fought for the expansion of home mortgages to the low-income neighborhoods of Boston, particularly the communities of color that had been denied access to capital; he expanded services to the homeless and for people with AIDS; and he instituted jobs and training policies that favored Boston residents, minorities, and women. As Vin McCarthy told me, “Ray became the mayor of the black people, the gay people, and the wealthy people had to put up with him.”
Symbolizing Stone’s “alternative social production mode of power,” Flynn had “power to” rather than “power over” the city (Stone 1989), and he derived that power from tapping into his “pockets of coalitions” encompassing housing organizations, pro-life groups, labor, Irish leaders, community groups, and neighborhood activists. Effectively managing these coalitions helped him, over his decade-long tenure, to implement policies that transformed participatory democracy and enabled some redistribution of the economic benefits of growth.

**Theme Two: Inequality, Economic Development, and Redistribution**

In analyzing Boston city government’s response to poverty, income inequality, housing affordability, economic development, and redistribution policies in Chapter 4, I drew upon growth machine and progressive cities theories.

Growth machine theory posits that the growth imperative results from the control by elites of the political process to enhance land values and corporate profits. The goal is to maximize exchange values at the expense of use values. This was evident during the period of urban renewal in Boston when neighborhoods were destroyed in favor of higher and more expensive land uses benefiting the wealthier Bostonians.

The role of mayor is one of broker of who gets what, who gets rich, and who derives maximum benefit from the city development policy. A focus on growth politics will help discern in which periods between 1980 and 2000 there were changes in this distribution of benefits in Boston and social and economic reform occurred. As Harvey Molotch wrote in *The City as Growth Machine* (1976):
First there is the “symbolic” politics which comprises the “big issues” of public morality and the symbolic reforms featured in the headlines and editorials of the daily press. The other politics is the process through which goods and services actually come to be distributed in the society. Largely unseen, and relegated to negotiations within committees (when it occurs at all within a formal government body), this is the politics which determines who, in material terms, gets what, where, and how (Molotch 1976:313).

As demonstrated, the mayoralities of Kevin White, Ray Flynn, and Tom Menino each pursued different urbanization strategies in building the physical Boston. The growth machine coalition strategy was in full swing at the end of White’s final term as he sought to place his personal imprimatur on Boston’s skyline, with the goal of building a “world-class city.” He was the sole decision maker when it came to “who got what and how.” This was best symbolized by his having the Boston Redevelopment Authority model room moved to the city-owned Parkman House and summoning developers of major projects there before they received city approval. Flynn’s counter to White’s use of the Parkman House—which Flynn claimed he had never visited before winning the 1983 election, when White invited him and his wife Kathy for lunch—was to use the Parkman House to host community events and hear directly from community leaders on a wide range of issues, including development policy.

Mayoral leadership priorities were transformed during the Flynn era to respond to the electorate’s growing dissatisfaction at the close of the White era. Progressive city government, also taking hold in other cities across the United States, meant, as Flynn put it in his first inaugural speech:

The tall and beautiful buildings which grace our city’s skyline are monuments to a broad vision which every great city must possess. But these towers of granite and glass must not come at the expense of displacement or neighborhood neglect. We
are committed to continuing the progress of downtown revitalization. But we are equally committed to ensuring that no neighborhood in Boston is left behind. We see growth as progress; that progress must be our servant, not our master. The true test of our greatness will be the protection we afford the weak, the needy, the poor—not at some future date, but now (Flynn Inaugural speech January 2, 1983).

Flynn’s progressive city would manage growth for the benefits of the residents of Boston over the special interests that had for too long been the only voice at City Hall. The redistributive populism that Flynn employed resulted in the establishment of policies that remain firmly entrenched in Boston. His BRA director Stephen Coyle characterized Flynn’s transition in his approach to economic development and theory of change as “social contract theory.” Linkage, inclusionary zoning, the parcel-to-parcel linkage program, and the authorization of eminent domain power to the Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative section of Roxbury were all part of Flynn’s social contract with the neighborhoods—reflecting a strategy aimed at sharing power and the benefits of growth. This new social contract also guided Flynn’s housing and economic development team and led to the development and institutionalization of related policies that held up his commitment to the contract.

As discussed in Chapter 4, housing affordability was a key issue in Boston during the decades under study. White originally supported rent control but later succumbed to pressure from the growth machine and implemented vacancy decontrol, which all but eliminated protections against significant rent increases for the majority of Boston’s tenants. The two mayoral finalists in the election to succeed White, Mel King and Ray Flynn, both supported the reenactment of strong comprehensive rent control and regulations limiting condominium conversions, which were rapidly leading to
gentrification and displacement. While I suggest the issue of gentrification is a result of policies of the growth machine, other scholars view gentrification as a process whereby cultural actors have motivations other than the economic, notably social preservation (Brown-Saracino 2009:245).

When Flynn won, he immediately developed a plan to return to full rent control and also include protections for tenants from condominium conversion. As Peter Dreier, Flynn’s progressive housing advisor told me, the real estate interests had captured control of the City Council, and Flynn was unable to get strong tenant protections passed by that body. One of the opponents of rent control at the time was then–City Councilor Tom Menino. Menino, who would go on to become mayor when Flynn resigned, would continue to support the growth machine and oppose strong protections for tenants.

Probably the most significant redistributive policy implemented in the face of opposition by the growth machine coalition was linkage. The linkage policy was established in late 1983 but only reached its full realization when Flynn expanded it in 1985. Challenged by the developer of the urban renewal project in the West End, Jerome Rappaport, Flynn and his BRA director Stephen Coyle aggressively fought back against the growth machine coalition, which sought to overturn the law. Coyle used the development approval powers of the BRA to thwart the challenge and enlist members of the growth coalition, if not as allies, at least as not vocal opponents. The final resolution of the linkage challenge, and the expansion of the law to raise additional revenue, would lead to the creation of thousands of units of affordable housing in Boston’s neighborhoods. Other housing initiatives, notably the use of all publicly owned land for
affordable housing, was a significant change from the previous policy of selling it to the highest bidder; and the redevelopment of thousands of units of public housing during the 1980s would help reduce the city’s stubborn poverty rate. Between 1980 and 1989 poverty in Boston declined from 23 percent for singles to 6 percent and from 25 percent for families to 19 percent, as shown in Chart 11 below (Osterman 1989).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1980 Boston Poverty Rates</th>
<th>% Total</th>
<th>% White</th>
<th>% Black</th>
<th>% Hispanic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Singles</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
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<td>74</td>
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<tr>
<td>Families</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>53</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1989 Boston Poverty Rates</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
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<td>9</td>
<td>23</td>
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<tr>
<td>Single Parents</td>
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<td>26</td>
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<td>79</td>
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<tr>
<td>Families</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All Residents</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Chart 11 Boston Poverty Rates 1980 and 1989 Compared**

Source: “In the Midst of Plenty: A Profile of Boston and Its Poor.” 1989. The Boston Foundation

Neighborhood leaders felt empowered having a seat at the table in both the economic development and revitalization of their parks, business districts, and housing stock, as well as a role in improving basic service delivery. Under Flynn, Boston’s neighborhoods changed dramatically, in terms of both their physical character and their demographic composition. The coalition of left-leaning progressives, together with more traditional union and conservative leaders, worked together to bring a new style of governing to Boston. Progressive cities theories, developed by Pierre Clavel, frame Flynn’s democratization of the historically closed development approval process through
opening the decision making process to neighborhood groups and organizations. The creation of neighborhood councils, planning and zoning advisory committees, and project-specific review panels (such as the Prudential Project Advisory Committee—PRUPAC) are several examples. In addition, in an effort to share the benefits of downtown development with Boston’s poor and working-class neighborhoods and people of color, he expanded linkage, affordable housing production, and, through the parcel-to-parcel linkage program, required minority developer participation in this historic development process.

As discussed in Chapter 4, regime theory and growth machine theory don’t easily apply to governance during the Flynn era, which replaced a strict development regime with a progressive cities regime. The growth coalition that had been in place over the previous three decades was replaced by a managed growth approach with a goal of shared prosperity. This progressive city agenda led to substantive changes in the urbanization of heretofore forgotten neighborhoods through the first comprehensive capital plan in the city’s history, including the building of thousands of units of affordable housing; the reopening, rehabilitation, and construction of new parks, police stations, and fire stations; and other long-stalled capital projects. As Mary Nee told me:

The city had not had a capital plan in twenty-three years. It hadn’t been in the bond market, after proposition 2½; it lost its rating, had literally been out of the bond markets for three, maybe pushing four years. Its ratings were junk, and Ray Flynn inherited a $40 million deficit. The city was virtually bankrupt at the end of White administration, it was hemorrhaging. In order to do the things Ray Flynn wanted to do for the city and for the neighborhoods, he had to solve that financial problem. And he did.
Flynn led on affirmative action in the parcel-to-parcel linkage program in Roxbury. This program linked the last unsold downtown city-owned garage site with a vacant parcel in Roxbury and required minority participation in the development. He held steadfast in negotiations with banks following the race-based mortgage lending scandal, first uncovered by the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, to secure below-market loans for low-income families. He turned city land over to community groups, CDCs, and, in the case of Roxbury, bucked his own BRA board and granted eminent domain power, heretofore used to displace residents through urban renewal, to the neighborhood organization Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative—the first such example of ceding eminent domain power to a community organization in the nation’s history.

There are a number of examples in which Flynn not only used the power of his office to implement redistributive development policies but was also conscious of the symbolic value of his actions. His team worked tirelessly to build the South End neighborhood development known as Tent City, which had been the symbol of failed urban renewal policy when Mel King and South End leaders took over the site on April 28, 1968 to protest urban renewal (King 1981). As King said on March 7, 1986, 18 years later, just before the groundbreaking for the $28 million, 270-unit, mixed-income residential complex, “The people have outlasted their opposition. I have always believed that we were going to be able to get that together. It was the only just thing to happen on that land” (Ball 1986). Flynn received credit for getting the project done and said at the groundbreaking, “Tent City is a significant victory for the people. This is only a symbol of what we want to see happen in Boston—a symbol of building bridges between
Another symbolic victory for Flynn and the city was the redevelopment of the last vacant parcel in the West End, which had originally been designated for Jerome Rappaport, the controversial developer whose plan led to the urban renewal clearance of the West End in the 1950s and 1960s. The BRA de-designated Rappaport, who fought the issue in court. While the suit was pending, BRA Director Coyle had a sign erected on the vacant lot reading, “Coming Soon! Affordable Housing. A public/private partnership,” thereby irking Rappaport, who, Coyle believes, had it removed several times. After a five-year legal battle, the BRA won the suit and designated the Archdiocese of Boston to build 270 cooperative housing units, including a museum about the West End. As Coyle said at the time, “Winning gives us a chance to fulfill a commitment to the people whose neighborhood was destroyed.” Flynn added, “I am pleased that the city has prevailed in each challenge [by Rappaport on linkage and condo conversion] and that we will soon add Lowell Square to the long list of vacant land sites transformed into affordable housing opportunities” (Rezendes 1990c).

For Stephen Coyle, the fight over the West End parcel was personal. As he told me when I interviewed him in his Washington, D.C. office:

Who will ever know the fight we had with Jerry [Rappaport] to keep that land...or the battle I had with my board...or the number of times Jerry got to the City Council to pressure me...or the number of times members of the administration tried to get me to change course...The West End fight was for all the people of Boston who were driven from their homes...my family...my relatives...and the thousands I never knew... It was a fight that had great meaning to those who were swept away...The only person at City Hall who knew about my family being...
evicted was Ray [Flynn]...not even my staff knew...He understood that I would have died first before giving up that fight...so he never bothered me about it...we had just one discussion and I explained about my parents, my Aunt Annie...and about how her daughter Jackie was assaulted in Maverick project after the family moved there...Sometimes you need somebody on the team who doesn't really give a crap about what people think...we shared that trait. Once, when we were in San Francisco, Ray asked me what I thought would have happened if my family had stayed in Southie...I said I didn’t know...He paused then said with that huge laugh of his; “You’d have gone to Stanford... it’s in the cards.”

As Flynn said more recently about Lowell Square, the Rappaport challenge, and the West End, “I wanted to restore some justice for the people of the old West End who had their homes and neighborhood taken from them” (Flynn 2014).

When Flynn left office in 1993 to become Ambassador to the Vatican, Menino inherited precedents established by Flynn in terms of linkage, affordable housing policy, capital planning, and democratic participation. During Menino’s tenure, after the slow-growth period of the early 1990s, the urbanization of Boston accelerated and moved forward unabated, following a return to the growth coalition model of the White administration. The democratization process continued in form only, as Fenway community activist Helen Cox described as she told me about trying to get Menino to engage residents of the Fenway in the development process:

Menino may have started out in the right place when he first came in, but the BRA and the mayor were one and the same. The community felt helpless in dealing with the BRA. It was a constant battle with the administration. Very difficult to get community residents on the project advisory committees [PACs] the administration wasn’t into that. They had a lot of pro-development people, real estate people and representatives of developers on PACs. We once submitted 20 to 30 names and only one was selected. The Flynn administration was more responsive to the neighborhoods than the Menino administration. While that may seem to contradict the sentiments about Menino, who is considered to be a neighborhood mayor, the reality is that the things that mattered to our neighborhood, that were under the control of the BRA, thus his control, were not
pro-neighborhood, they were pro-development. That’s not to diminish other things he may have done. We had big battles with the Menino administration.

Former BRA Director Stephen Coyle suggested, “The community process now is not like the Kevin White era but it’s much less involved than the Ray Flynn era. I don’t know if that’s good.” Michael Reiskind, a Jamaica Plain activist and member of the neighborhood council created by the Flynn administration, shared his views on whether Menino supported the neighborhood council and the participation of neighborhoods in decision making:

Grudgingly. I don’t think he really likes it. I think he sees it more as a way to get information to his administration on what the issues are so he could make decision on them before the neighborhood might.

Reiskind did go on to praise Menino for his work with neighborhood businesses, saying, “Menino put money in the business districts, main streets, saying the business district is the heart of community. Pumping money and organization into the neighborhood business district has turned those around.”

Menino largely governed in the model of a “caretaker regime” early in his 20-year tenure, becoming dubbed the “urban mechanic.” As characterized by Clarence Stone, a “regime devoted to a caretaker style of governance has a much less demanding task than does a regime devoted to an activist style of governance” (Stone 1989:188). This approach had a negative impact upon the creation of affordable housing through linkage in Boston’s neighborhoods, which, as shown earlier, was one of Flynn’s highest priorities.

The city’s linkage program, which assesses fees for commercial and retail developers to finance affordable housing, has produced an average of a third
fewer such units every year under Menino than under Flynn. During Menino’s 6 1/2 years in office, 1,080 affordable units have been built with linkage funds, while 3,096 were constructed between 1986 and mid-1993, when Flynn resigned to become U.S. ambassador to the Vatican (Kurkjian 2000).

As a result of the settling, by and large, of the most egregious racial and cultural conflicts during the Flynn period, Menino was later poised to take advantage of development opportunities, particularly in the education and medical sectors (Eds and meds) because these sectors were countercyclical to commercial development, which had slowed in the early 1990s. The nonprofit institutional sector was allowed to grow almost unregulated during Menino’s tenure. Little in the way of redistributive benefits accrued to Boston residents in terms of jobs; in fact, the enforcement of the residents’ job policy was lax at best. As the Boston Globe reported in 2009:

The proportion of Boston residents, minorities, and women working on city construction projects has dropped sharply since Mayor Thomas M. Menino took office, even as a boom in real estate development brought tens of thousands of construction jobs to the city. City officials say they are reluctant to impose legal sanctions because they fear the law might not survive a court challenge. But workers’ advocates say the mayor wields considerable influence over developers, who must get City Hall approval for their building projects, and should use that power to get more work for residents, minorities, and women. “The law is supposed to create an uplifting opportunity for working residents,” said Kerrick Johnson, director of the Roxbury Builders Guild. “But the working population is losing its toehold. They’re getting driven out.” (Slack 2009).

As Mel King told me in our interview reinforcing the point of lax enforcement of the jobs plan:

I stood up with the Workers Alliance and challenged the police station going up in Roxbury and what they had to do to get jobs there. We weren’t getting the jobs.

Menino, like White, began a process where he personally selected developers for major projects, picking the winners in a style eerily reminiscent of the White
administration. One prominent example is that during the approval of a project in the Back Bay, Menino was said to have drawn the rooftop design on a napkin, which was later incorporated into the approved project—beginning the period of Menino “rooftop” designs (Patton 2012). As a 2009 story in The Boston Globe put it:

> Never before in Boston, and perhaps nowhere else in the nation, has a mayor obsessed so mightily, and wielded power so exhaustively, over the look, feel and shape of the built city. Routine construction projects on remote streets need City Hall approval; prominent towers that limb the downtown skyline carry his mark; independent city boards bow to his will (Slack, Levenson, and Ebbert 2009).

Menino was proud of his iron fist on the development process and the city, saying in his 2014 book, *Mayor for a New America*, “The only check on Boston’s emperor/mayor was the emperor/mayor” (Menino 2014:211).

During this period following Flynn’s exit, Boston’s population grew, fueled by the construction of luxury housing in the downtown and through new immigration, largely from Asia and South America. With the growth of the population, and housing attracting a “new class” to Boston, the city’s income inequality grew to the highest point in its history (Swasey 2014). As BRA Director under Menino Tom O’Brien observed at the time:

> One of the major contributions of Mayor Menino is the development of downtown residential buildings. The restaurants that are there, on Thursday, Friday night…there is a Mercedes parked out front, there are BMWs parked out front, there are very expensive cars, a lot of empty nesters.

While Menino did belatedly issue an executive order early in 2000 for inclusionary zoning—the setting aside of units in luxury housing developments for low-to-moderate-income families—he promoted significant luxury housing development
downtown. In fact, the *Boston Globe* wrote that in late 1999 Menino approved 830 units of high-priced luxury housing without a single contribution for affordable housing:

The new buildings will house more than 830 high-priced condominiums along Boston's skyline, but none will contain, or finance, a single unit of moderate-income housing—even though such concessions were commonplace during the previous administration of Raymond Flynn. Mayor Thomas M. Menino, who has frequently cited affordable housing as one of his main priorities, acknowledged in an interview last week that his administration has been slow to force such trade-offs. “It’s something we should have been doing before now,” Menino said. “As we moved forward, there should have been a percentage of the luxury units set aside for affordable housing.” While receiving favorable treatment from City Hall, some luxury housing developers were providing generous contributions to Menino's campaign committee. But Menino denied that the developers were receiving better treatment from the city. The new condo buildings could have yielded more than 100 affordable units under the rules used by the Flynn administration (Kurkjian 2000).

As Logan and Molotch suggest, the growth machine “must influence government decisions if they are to maximize returns from their holdings and they must also make campaign contributions (or bribes) to public officials” (Logan and Molotch 1987:157).

As the *Boston Globe* reported in 2009, Menino personally selected nearly every developer for every project from a select few:

The boom benefited some more than others. Together, the six most prolific developers built 1 out of every 4 square feet constructed by private developers since 1996—some 9 million square feet of glass and steel and concrete, the equivalent of five John Hancock towers. The developers are partners James G. Keefe and Patrick Lee; Anthony Pangaro; Joseph Fallon; Steven Samuels; Edward Linde; and Edward A. Fish. Together, the six developers, and employees of their firms, have showered Menino with $61,025 in campaign donations since 2005. Menino took the money, despite pledging in 2000 that he would not accept any cash from developers who have business pending before the city (Slack, Levenson, and Ebbert 2009).

Menino would argue, as he did in the *Boston Globe* report cited above, that “What you’re talking about is my integrity, and there is absolutely no price on that, absolutely
none.” One developer’s employees donated $3,000 to the mayor’s campaign just one day before submitting plans to the BRA for approval, though Menino himself claimed, “Donations did not determine my decisions. They were one among many factors. Suppose you had to choose between a proposal from a friend and one from a stranger. Others things being equal, you’d do what I did. You’d favor the friend” (Menino 2014:212). While there may be no direct link, the growth machine developers certainly knew how to be successful.

Did the return to the growth machine coalition model and abandonment of aggressive redistributive policies by Menino facilitate the growth of income inequality? A study prepared by the Brookings Institute shows that “Boston is one of four U.S. cities in which the income of the richest households is at least 15 times the earnings of the poorest 20 percent” (Swasey 2014). Menino did recognize the issue of income inequality, telling me in our interview:

We have inequalities, which is a big issue today, more than ever before. The rich and the poor, there’s a big division in our country, in our city and our world. The middle class is being squeezed out. That’s one of the things I see as the issue of today.

But he didn’t really believe that the city could do much to “reverse the greatest threat to social hope in America, economic inequality. Against inequality, cities do what can be done—pass living wage ordinances, for example—not all that needs to be done. Legislation to address inequality must come from Washington” (Menino 2014:209). The business elites and growth machine in Boston would agree with Menino’s approach to
development: “Build it and they will work. Buildings create jobs” (Ibid 175)—not confronting the question of who will work and what is the quality of the jobs.

The policies pursued by Flynn were largely opposed by the business community, which maintained a cool relationship with him and his administration. Their relationship with the city became warmer when Menino took office, as one prominent business leader, former U.S. Attorney Wayne Budd said at the time: “I think for the last many years they’ve felt they were on the outside looking in, that their presence was not viewed as particularly important. I think the mayor [Menino] is determined to do all he can to assure that companies know they are welcome here” (Walker 1994a). As the Boston Globe wrote following Menino’s election as mayor, “The Ray Flynn era of social justice for the have-nots appears to be giving way to a new era, where the haves and have-nots share equal claim to City Hall” (Canellos 1993). Whether there was equal access for both groups is a significant point of contention.

**Theme Three: Race Relations, Racial Conflict, and Public School Governance**

In analyzing Boston’s racial politics in Chapter 5, it is demonstrated that the urbanism of Boston, the culture, and the way of life, were transformed between 1980 and 2000. The political conflict in the city shifted from ethnicity to race, and later to class, in the period under study. The question I sought to answer was whether the Flynn governing regime was able to make significant progress on race relations and reduce racial conflict. The discussion of public school governance in Chapter 6 sought to answer whether the new public school governance structure was successful in achieving the results that the reformers promised.
The theoretical frameworks used in these chapters were those of government communalism and urban regime theory. Government communalism theory analyzes how the government can help to build community and be more inclusive of those individuals left out of the mainstream civic culture. With race becoming a central issue in Boston following the 1974 court order requiring busing of school children, the handling of school desegregation’s legacy of racial conflict by White, Flynn, and Menino is a central focus of the dissertation. Politicians use the government to make rules that favor the rights of individuals not otherwise protected from harm (Monti 1999). Later in his term, White was seen as aloof from the concerns of the black community, as recounted by Hubie Jones. When asked why he didn’t hire more minorities in significant positions in his administration, White is reported as saying, “Well, I have an answer for you. Vote for someone else” (Larkin 1983).

Did Flynn usher in an era of government communalism and make black residents into black citizens? That is, through explicit policies and actions, was the city government made to work in a way that enabled black Bostonians and the growing immigrant populations to be thought of and treated like every other group or class that had been granted citizenship. Government could help build community by being more inclusive of those left out of the mainstream of the civic culture (Monti 1999). As Flash Wiley recounted, not only did Flynn bring in more blacks to his administration, he also “made two historic appointments. He made the top two financial guys in the city black guys who had been Mel King’s supporters. So George Russell became the treasurer of the city and Leon Stamps became auditor to the city.” Mel King supporter Ken Wade added, “I
think it’s pretty clear that the Flynn administration worked very hard to change the perception of the city to do more to get more people of color involved in significant roles within the administration, and that hadn’t happened under Kevin White. He clearly paid that attention to broadening ties with folks in the community.” Wade himself was reportedly approached with a job offer. Mel King weighed in on the subject, telling me “Flynn took some of the people on my campaign and put them on his staff. The significance was his [Flynn’s] recognition that these people could make a difference in the city.” Flynn was widely credited with bringing more minorities into city government.

The *Boston Globe* reported in 1990: “The percentage of minorities in the municipal work force climbed from 24.2 percent in 1983, the year before Flynn took office, to 30 percent last year. City officials say minorities have benefited as well from a 1988 executive order directing the administration and all city departments to award 15 percent of outside contracts to minority-owned firms. ‘Something has to be said for a program that has 16 percent of city contracts going to minority firms,’ said Rev. Joseph Washington, Flynn’s equal rights adviser” (Rezendes 1990a). As Minister Don Muhammad of the Nation of Islam said at the time, “The mayor is to be commended for the continued integration of housing projects in South Boston and for increasing the number of minorities on the city’s payroll. In my opinion, blacks are walking in South Boston now because some effort was made to get people into housing over there.”

The remnants of the 1974 court-ordered school desegregation and busing under White, and the ensuing racial and cultural conflict, was transformed through very aggressive police response and civic engagement during Flynn’s tenure. As I showed in
Chapter 5, top city priorities were responding to racial violence and working toward the peaceful integration of the city’s public housing in the majority-white neighborhoods of Charlestown and South Boston, as well as enforcement of civil rights violations and hate crimes by the Community Disorders Unit (CDU) of the Boston Police Department. As illustrated in Chart 1 (See Chapter 1), the period of the late 1970s to early 1980s was punctuated by a significant number of hate crimes. In 1984, when Flynn took direct aim at the issue, the number of incidents begin to decline. The data show that in 1991 incidents continued to decline, with a 20 percent reduction from 1990.

The CDU was fully supported by the Flynn administration and proved to be effective in contributing to the decline in hate crimes in the city. It was not without its detractors, however, particularly in South Boston. A frequent critic of the CDU was the late city councilor James Kelly, who said at the time “When the victim is a minority they come down like the Gestapo, but when the victim is white you never hear from them again. There’s a great distrust of the CDU out there” (Rezendes 1992). As described in Chapter 5, some South Boston leaders would continue to resist strong enforcement of civil rights violations. There were periodic increases in hate crimes during the periods of public housing integration as well as later, when Menino took control of the mayor’s office and government support for the CDU was reduced (see Chart 12).
Data was provided by the Boston Police Department, and there were minor discrepancies between
the BPD-provided data and newspaper reports. For the purpose of consistency, I used the BPD
data throughout. All data refers to incidents characterized by the CDU as either “hate crime” or
“miscellaneous.”

The *Boston Globe*, which tracked closely the city release of hate crime statistics,
wrote that in 1992 there was a 20 percent drop in rights violations (Rezendes 1992). Just
several years later in 1994, under Flynn’s successor Tom Menino, the Globe reported that
racially motivated incidents were on the rise in the city. As the 1992 report stated:

Between 1978—when the Boston police became the first department in the nation
to track racially motivated crime—and 1988, reports of bias crimes dropped from
607 to 152 annually, according to department figures obtained by the *Globe.*
Then-mayor Raymond L. Flynn would hold press conferences heralding annual
reports of the CDU. It was used as a model for civil rights training by the FBI,
and within the Police Department the unit was considered a launching pad for star
detectives (Lakshmanan 1994).

Later, as described in Chapter 5, the *Boston Globe* reported in 2000 that under
Menino things had changed dramatically:
Twenty years after Massachusetts became one of the first states in the country to enact a hate-crimes bill, the squad is a shell of what it used to be, undercut by political pressure from heavily voting South Boston. The decline of the CDU is a case study in both the exercise of raw Southie muscle and the erosion of a bulwark against racism that was widely seen as a significant contributor to the cleansing of Boston’s image in the traumatic aftermath of busing in the 1970s (Rakowsky 2000).

As Menino told me during an interview, he resisted calling racial incidents hate crimes because he felt this would divide the city. The question remains: Was the Menino strategy for dealing with hate crimes one that swept the issue under the rug and pretended that it did not exist, or was it simply that his administration was preoccupied with other crime issues?

Flynn would have to confront other racially polarizing events in Boston during his tenure. These included the Mandela campaign—an effort by some in Boston’s black community to secede from the city—and the aftermath of the Stuart incident described in Chapter 5. Both of these issues kept the matter of race squarely in the city’s consciousness.

The culture of the city has undergone a dramatic transformation since the last decades of the 20th century, facilitated by the policies begun in the mid-1980s, which continue today. The cultural transformation through both the Flynn and Menino regimes saw the power of elites and the traditional ethnic machines give way to a more democratic and heterogeneous city. While racial politics have remained important, as shown in the discussion of the governance change of the Boston Public Schools in Chapter 6, Flynn was instrumental in transforming raw sentiments and moving the city to where policies affecting issues of race, ethnicity, and immigration, and the integration of
public housing, could proceed peacefully. The norms that drove the cultural and racial conflict of the past were redefined, and Boston became a more tolerant majority-minority city in the new millennium.

In Chapter 6’s discussion of the school governance controversy, wherein Flynn proposed to change the elected school committee to one appointed by the mayor, I showed that again the third rail of politics—race—would be a major issue in the debate. Notwithstanding having the support of the business community and many civic leaders, including the black ministers, can it be claimed that Flynn exercised “power over” those who opposed the elected school committee? I would suggest he did not, in this instance, have “power over” the central actors in the debate. The mayor assembled a coalition of influential actors, which Clarence Stone termed “power to”, achieve the desired end result—namely, replacing the elected school committee with an appointed one (Stone 1989). He brought together the business community through the Boston Municipal Research Bureau, which also brought onboard the Vault. The role of the business leaders helped frame the issue as an economic rather than racial. Flynn also enlisted media support in the coalition of the Boston Globe, which initially opposed the referendum, writing, “His [Flynn’s] proposal is undemocratic and badly flawed. The Globe urges a “no” vote on this referendum” (Boston Globe editorial 1989), but later reversed course and endorsed the plan. Still, the key players in this contest appear to have been both the highly visible and trusted Hubie Jones, the black ministers of the Interfaith Ministerial Alliance, and the Bay State Banner, the newspaper of Boston’s black community, which also editorialized in favor of the change at the eleventh hour. With their support Flynn
was able to undermine the opposition efforts of the black elected leaders, portraying them as protecting the status quo at a time when, following the turbulent 1970s, it was clear the city’s educational system needed dramatic improvement.

Menino continued the reforms with his own appointed school committee and superintendents. Ken Tangvik, Jamaica Plain activist and former Mel King campaign organizer, shared with me his thoughts on the schools and the appointed school committee:

You know it’s funny because we blamed the schools being a mess on the white Louise Day Hicks types, and now clearly the leadership of the schools is black and brown and it’s slowly getting better. But you have kids in the schools, if you don’t get your kid into an exam school, you’re fucked, your kid’s fucked. The appointed school committee has stabilized the schools as much as we notice how bad the schools are still. Looking back, the appointed school committee was a positive thing, it had to happen. The school committee was a training ground for city council candidates. The committee now is a group of very committed, well-minded people who are trying to do the right thing, but what you are asking them to do is an overwhelming task, to deal with the whole equity issue.

Chuck Collins, parent of Boston Public School students, and author and activist on economic inequality, made the point equally clear:

I do think that the multi-generational inequalities are the big issue, you know…race and class poverty, disparities, how that plays out in education. It’s one place where you can make a difference.

Menino had promised in 1996 to transform the student assignment process. After a lengthy planning effort led by Dr. Theodore Landsmark, Menino abandoned implementing any changes in student assignment. Hubie Jones explained to me why Menino balked at taking on school assignment at that time:

And he wakes up, realizes that there is coming political power in the black community. And he really gets the message when Andrea Cabral beats Stephen
Murphy for the sheriff's job. She took half of Roslindale and Hyde Park against an Irish Catholic sitting city councilor, and two weeks before that we were talking about a new assignment plan that they were gonna ram through, even though they were getting negative feedback from black leadership and folks in the neighborhoods. They were gonna ram it. Cabral wins, and 2 days later they abandoned the assignment plan. So he says whoa. This is a different deal you know. Okay. This political voting power in the black community and I better take heed. And you can see a whole change of behavior going forward. And being respectful of what the black leadership is saying about all kinds of issues. He’s paying attention and respectfully dealing with it. And he goes on to talk all about it—this is a majority-minority city.

Released from the fear of a backlash as he prepared to leave office, Menino did in the final months of his mayoralty embrace a change in the school assignment plan.

Neil Sullivan summarized the transition from White to Flynn and then to Menino in our interview:

No, we were a black and white city. It was all black and white, race was everything. We were gone when race was no longer an observable black and white issue. And race goes from racial violence to really peaceful period among the races, to surviving Mandela—we dealt with Mandela, we got through that, a great wrestling match. And everybody threw a couple of small blows, but no one was trying to take anyone else out. And then it was unleashed by “Stop and Frisk” and Stuart, which was the great slippage.

While Flynn made progress on reducing racial violence and hostility in the city, the problem did not go away. As demonstrated in Chapter 5, Menino took a different approach, refusing to talk about the issue publicly, and the record shows that there was an increase in hate crimes during his tenure. Is the lesson for future city leaders that in order to address the problem you need to publicly confront it? On this point Flynn and Menino would disagree.

Dan Monti eloquently captured the cultural transformation that was occurring in Boston when he wrote in 2013’s Engaging Strangers:
Bostonians have come to practice and embrace a kind of *public civility* in their dealings with each other that makes the city different from the way it used to be. Life in Boston has settled down even as people unfamiliar to the locals have continued to move in. The city is a lot less rambunctious and mean-spirited today, its people not nearly as prickly or openly intolerant. Crime, the great bellwether for how poorly big-city people treat each other, has been dropping consistently for at least two decades now. Something big and important has changed in Boston, something that has nothing to do with how people make a living, how much richer or poorer they are, where they or their parents came from, what religion they practice, and how odd they look and sound. What has changed are the customary ways the different groups living in Boston talk about each other in public and act in each other’s presence (Monti 2013:5).

Following on Monti’s public civility frame, it is clear that Menino worked to respond to the needs of Boston’s communities of color. Every year during his mayoralty he would tour the troubled Bowdoin-Geneva neighborhood on Christmas Eve. He was widely praised in the minority neighborhoods. As Ted Landsmark commented:

> He does not make a lot of fanfare about the work that’s being done, but there is no African-American community in Boston that one can drive through today without seeing dramatic, positive physical changes.

Not all agreed with Landsmark’s assessment, however, as Lisa Martin of Dorchester commented:

> I think that people have been complacent because things have been a lot worse. But from where I sit, things have not changed. When I walk through here, I still see boarded-up housing. Crime in the area is increasing, even when crime [overall] is really down (Irons 2013a).

Kevin Peterson of the New Democracy coalition added:

> Boston’s black community supports the mayor but also feels let down. Menino’s administration has made promises to improve the quality of life in urban areas that have fallen short of community expectations. If you ask the average black person in the city, he or she would say that they have not been overwhelmingly positively impacted during his tenure (Irons 2013a).
While Menino received widespread praise in some quarters of the community, the growth of race-based income inequality is an issue that has not been addressed.

**Academic Contributions and Conclusions**

Boston is a different city than it was in 1980. Each of the three mayors during the period 1980 to 2000 made their own mark during their tenure. The culture of the city has changed, and the city is better for it. There were significant transformative moments in Boston during the period under study. Policies instituted to make Boston more equal in the 1980s have ceded to policies that favor the haves over the have-nots. While the implementation of redistributive policies—policies largely created by the middle-class progressive regime of Flynn—have continued under the development regime or growth coalition led by Menino, the policies however have not been retooled to keep pace with the growing poverty and inequality in Boston. Linkage, the foundation of Boston’s shared prosperity, has not effectively addressed the current affordable housing needs of Boston’s low-to-moderate-income families. Efforts pushed by Flynn to expand protections for Boston’s renters, particularly low-income and elderly tenants, were thwarted first by the growth coalition–controlled Boston City Council and later by the statewide effort to repeal the rent control enabling law ballot initiative led by the real estate industry. Inclusionary zoning policies, which were expanded during the Menino administration, have similarly provided minimal relief from escalating housing costs, which have been driven in large part by the rapid development of luxury housing in the downtown, now expanding to other parts of the city. Finally, the racially discriminatory banking and lending policies that were uncovered first by community activists and later confirmed by
the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, seem to have reemerged as a result of a lack of vigilance by City Hall. As Jim Campen said, commenting on a 2001 report from the Massachusetts Community and Banking Council he authored, “Race continues to be an issue. It’s a bigger issue now than in 1990” with African Americans being denied loans three times more often than whites (Mason 2002, University Reporter 2003).

I have showed how the redistributive policies of the 1980s, coupled with “managed growth” of the city’s economy led, in part, to a significant reduction in poverty. When attention to this strategy waned in the 1990s, poverty significantly increased in Boston, especially among children and families increasing between 1989 to 2011 by 4.4 percent for children under 18 and by 3 percent for families (Sum 2013).

I have also showed that racial tensions and conflict eased during the period Boston became a majority-minority city. The transition from the school controversies lingering from busing to a more-focused set of governance policies for the Boston public schools contributed to continued racial divisions, with—even today—the majority of black residents in the city preferring an elected school committee. Although the city reached the historic milestone of becoming a majority-minority city in 2000, the elusive goal of reflecting the city’s diversity by electing a mayor of color is still to be achieved.

Each arena under study constituted sociologically significant, transformative moments in the city. Through a study of the period 1980 to 2000—through change, conflict, and the public policy enacted—we can better understand the process by which the present was created. There are lessons for Boston’s new administration, and future administrations, to understand—hopefully to embrace strategies to respond to racial
conflict and equal access; income inequality; and protecting the most vulnerable citizens of Boston.

Based upon the foregoing case studies and qualitative research, I suggest an approach to the issues analyzed—race relations, economic development, and inequality. First, to address the growing income inequality and attendant racial inequality in Boston and across America, and drawing from elements of urban regime, progressive cities, and growth coalition theories, there is a need for an aggressive redistributive strategy to reduce poverty. In Boston, this would entail requiring Boston’s corporate and large non-profit institutions to guarantee employment for residents of the city. The current Boston Residents’ Jobs Program policies must first be enforced and then go beyond construction employment to provide permanent jobs from growth. Menino was correct in saying that development in Boston creates jobs, but not enough people in the city are realizing the benefits from growth, other than of course the growth coalition interests, which reap plenty of benefit from unfettered exchange values.

Second, to address racial conflict and income inequality, we as a city need to talk about these issues as well as address them head on. Flynn’s approach to lessening racial conflict and hate crimes was to both use “power over”—using the police and courts to quell conflict, and the “power to”—bringing people together to initiate collective action. Leaders need to publicly address issues of race and racial conflict, not refuse to talk about them for fear of causing divisions. As Mel King told me, the solutions to the historic problems of race and inequality first and foremost require action by the community:
In this country and this city for large numbers of folks, race is an issue. It is imperative if things are going to change in the city for everybody, then a significant push from the community that I believe that can make this place work in ways that it can. Until that gets mobilized and people say they’re deserving, until then I don’t see any change. Unfortunately what will happen is, as the Metropolitan Planning Council survey says, that 30 percent of folks of color will be out of the city, and if we are going to sit by and allow class cleansing, that’s on us. Frankly it’s in our hands.

Boston’s new mayor, Martin J. Walsh, has the unique opportunity to balance the needs of all Bostonians and make Boston a place where all its citizens can realize their potential and share in the prosperity of America’s “city upon a hill.”
POSTSCRIPT

The 2013 Mayoral Election: Moving Boston Forward

We have inequalities, which is a big issue today—more than ever before. The rich and the poor, there’s a big division in our country, in our city and our world. The middle class is being squeezed out. That’s one of the things I see as the issue of today. (Mayor Tom Menino interview)

On March 28, 2013, 20-year-long Mayor Thomas Menino stepped on stage at Faneuil Hall to announce that he would not seek an unprecedented sixth term, saying, “I am here with the people I love, to tell the city I love, that I will leave the job that I love” (Ryan 2013a). At least one city councilor had mounted a challenge before Menino declared he wasn’t seeking reelection, and soon a plethora of candidates would jump in for a chance at the first open seat for mayor in twenty years.

Many were surprised at Menino’s decision, but just a few days earlier he had delivered a speech to the Boston Municipal Research Bureau that sounded to some like he was framing his legacy, stating:

Boston has a “record of success when it comes to connecting residents with necessary technology” and the fact that the city’s housing market grew faster than it has in the last five decades, two of which he was in charge for, by adding 20,000 housing units between 2000 and 2010. “Our test scores are up. Our graduation rates are the highest they have ever been. Our students are out-performing their peers in other big cities,” Menino said during the speech, just days before he announced he wouldn’t run for reelection. “Our schools are better than ever, but they aren’t as good as they will be.” Menino also told the crowd at the annual address that there are more jobs than ever before in Boston, along with a growing rate of development and “more young workers per capita than any other city” (Annear 2013).

Menino claimed to be staying out of the race to succeed him, saying, “I have no plans to pick the person to fill this seat, I just ask that you choose someone who loves this
city as much as I do” (Ryan 2013a). However, he reportedly told his political organization who they could work for in the preliminary election—and city councilor John Connolly was not one of them, having earned Menino’s scorn by announcing a challenge to Menino in February of 2013 before he called it quits. Menino blessed the two who succeeded him on the city council, his Hyde Park neighbors first Suffolk County District Attorney Dan Conley and City Councilor Rob Consalvo. He also blessed his former housing director, African American Charlotte Golar Richie. Not on the list of acceptable candidates for his political organization’s support were city councilors Felix Arroyo, John Connolly, and Charles Yancey; Cape Verdean community activist John Barros; or former Codman Square Health Center director Bill Walczak.

After 30 years with two white mayors, Irish Ray Flynn and Italian Tom Menino, in the mayor’s office, Boston, a majority-minority city in 2000, seemed poised to potentially elect a person of color. Boston is one of two cities among the 25 largest that has never elected a mayor of color (Cooper 2013). Menino talked about this, apparently signaling support for Charlotte Golar Richie, and a number of his political operatives were assisting her campaign (O’Sullivan 2013). He even said at one point during the campaign, “She’s a person of color [and] a woman. The first woman elected mayor of the city of Boston. That would be national news.” He later walked that back and insisted it was not an endorsement (Ryan 2013b).

The media, especially the Boston Globe, wrote about the issue and Kevin Peterson, director of the New Democracy Coalition, unsuccessfully tried to orchestrate Arroyo, Barros and Yancey to clear the field for Golar Richie. The other candidates of
color would not hear of it and were quite offended at the effort. A letter circulated by Peterson sought “to come to a consensus on who is the consensus candidate from the black community.” As Latino mayoral candidate Felix Arroyo said in response to the effort to preselect an acceptable candidate of color, “We have a process for that. It’s election day” (Johnson 2013b).

During the preliminary election cycle, I coauthored an opinion column in the Boston Globe with Andy Sum at Northeastern University, stating that the top priority for the next mayor must be confronting the growing income inequality and reducing poverty, especially among the city’s 36,000 poor kids:

While we have seen impressive results in some neighborhoods being rebuilt and many positive changes in Boston over the past 20 years, including the enriching ethnic, racial, and economic diversity of the growing city, some neighborhoods are teetering on the brink from foreclosures, crime, and a lack of investment. The next mayor must work with our poorer communities to identify how to collectively increase the social and economic capital of the city’s families and raise our neighbors out of poverty (Gillis and Sum 2013).

In addition, the mayoral candidates were discussing the issues of race and class at many of the dozens of forums on the campaign trail. When asked about the state of race relations during the 2013 mayoral election in Boston, Michael Curry, president of the Boston chapter of the NAACP, said, “It’s the elephant in the room none of us want to talk about.” Added James Jennings, a specialist in race and politics at Tufts University, referring to the discussion of racism in Boston, “They uttered a word that has not been part of the public discourse around the social, economic, and demographic challenges facing the city of Boston” (Johnson 2013c).
In the 1983 mayoral race, the last open seat in Boston without an incumbent in the race, the majority of the candidates were reluctant to use the word “racism” in forums and events. The major candidates in that election responded to the question as to whether Boston is a racist city with the following:

DiCara—“Boston’s not a racist city. The city certainly has racial problems. The problems are cultural, they are historic.”
Finnegan—“No . . . . Nobody can deny there are racial problems, racial disharmony. It’s probably the one scar on the fabric of an otherwise progressive city.”
Flynn—“I think there are, like many American cities . . . significant problems, relative to racial relations. However, I think the real problem is economic discrimination.”
King—“Yes. There’s an incredibly high level of racism in the City of Boston. I think it’s important that we begin with the term racism because if we don’t, we are not going to come to the kind of solutions to the problem that Boston requires.”
Kearney—“I think there are definitely problems of racism in Boston, but no more so than in the population at large in the country” (Vennochi 1983a).

So, with the exception of Mel King and Dennis Kearney, the candidates did not want to label the city as racist. The different approaches taken by the final two candidates, King and Flynn, are evident in their remarks. King followed, as discussed earlier, the “transformative populist” approach, and Flynn the “redistributive populist” approach (Kennedy, Tilly and Gaston 1990).

Fast forward 30 years, and half the candidates in the 2013 preliminary election were people of color. As the campaign progressed, as each candidate’s organization sought to capture every vote, the issue of race and “identity politics” continued to overshadow the election. The minority candidates had trouble raising campaign funds,
and pundits consistently raised the specter of a white man becoming mayor of the majority-minority city. As the *Boston Globe* reported:

A united block of African Americans, Hispanics and Asians is not a given. In fact, research on how black mayors get elected indicates a coalition of blacks and liberal whites is more likely to succeed. The basis political math means white voters will decide whether Boston elects a mayor of color (Cooper 2013).

A poll done in late August 2013 in which nearly 60 percent of decided voters planned to support a candidate of their own race compared to 31 percent who said they did not, pointed to the ongoing issue of “identity politics” in Boston (Waxman 2013). This contrasts with the 1983 election, when the two finalists disagreed with the characterization of that race as coming down to identity politics, with Flynn saying later:

This did not happen in 1983 for the reason most people think—so-called “identity politics” based on race—it happened because Mel and I were talking about—and had a record on—the issues most people cared about: affordable housing, condo conversion, using linkage to spread the wealth of the downtown to the neighborhoods. It won’t necessarily happen in 2013, either. It will depend on the two candidates who choose to get behind the issues people most care about—and many of those are still the same issues (Vennochi 2013a).

King, who was propelled into the 1983 final in part due to his overwhelming majorities in the communities of color, said about the 2013 mayor’s race:

Boston is a very different city now. I’m always tickled when I hear the assumption is that people of color can only get votes from minority communities. No one talks about that for the white candidates. No one is asking if there are too many of them. No matter who it is—white, black, Hispanic, or anything else—they’re going to have to secure the backing of a good chunk of the minority community (Lowery 2013a).

King also believed, like Flynn, that more important than the composition of the field is how the candidates address the issues important to people, saying, “The
community is demanding affordable housing, access to high-quality schools, and an end to the ‘lock-’em-up’ prison culture. It’s interesting that most candidates waited until Thomas M. Menino revealed he wouldn’t seek reelection to announce they would run. If folks had that burning desire to change things, why wouldn’t they try to change them while he was in office? If you were going to do it, do it” (Johnson 2013a).

When the votes were counted, the top two vote getters in the non-partisan election were John Connolly and Martin Walsh. Of the 113,000 voters who went to the polls, Walsh captured 20,284 votes, or 18.5 percent of the total, and Connolly received 19,425, or 17.2 percent of the total. Third in the preliminary election was Suffolk County District Attorney Dan Conley, who received 12,775 votes, or 11 percent of the total. The next three finishers were the candidates of color: Charlotte Golar Richie with 15,546 votes or 14 percent; Felix Arroyo with 9,895 votes or 9 percent; and John Barros with 9,146 votes or 8 percent. When all was said and done, the six white candidates received 58 percent of the votes, and the six candidates of color garnered 35 percent of the votes. Although Boston was a majority-minority city, the votes were not there for the candidates of color. Part of the issue may stem from the fact that people of color make up less than half of registered voters, closer to 38 percent. With a total turnout of 31 percent, there was no opportunity for a candidate of color to emerge as a frontrunner with the highest-voting wards of West Roxbury and Dorchester, home bases to Connolly and Walsh, turning out the most voters (Boston Election Department 2013).

The November 5, 2013 final mayoral election would pit two white Irish candidates against one another: Marty Walsh, head of the Greater Boston Building
Trades, and John Connolly, a member of the Boston City Council whose family has a long political history in Massachusetts. Immediately following the preliminary election, both men aggressively courted the endorsements of Golar Richie, Barros, and Arroyo. Connolly and Walsh had garnered few votes in communities of color in the preliminary election. As a Connolly top campaign operative said, once Walsh was able to secure the endorsements of the three top candidates of color, “He [Walsh] reeled off nine endorsements of people of color, and that’s what the race became about. It catalyzed everything.” And according to a Walsh advisor, “These endorsements validated Marty in a way that we couldn’t have done otherwise. Most of these people had an intimate knowledge of both candidates, and every one of them chose Marty, and that speaks to his character. And that was one of the biggest differences in the campaign. They trusted him” (O’Sullivan and Ebbert 2103).

Money, too, became a big issue in the race, in part as a result of the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Citizens United*, declaring that political spending is protected speech under the U.S. Constitution’s First Amendment and thereby opening the door for unlimited expenditures by political action committees, who were not required to disclose their contributors in Boston until after the election (*Citizens United* 2010). This wasn’t an issue in the 1983 mayoral election:

In 1983, money didn’t talk. Candidates Ray Flynn and Mel King could barely rub two nickels together. Yet they emerged as the top two vote getters in the preliminary election. Credible candidates with deeper pockets—former school committee member David Finnegan, former Suffolk sheriff Dennis Kearney, and former city councilor Larry DiCara—went home disappointed. But voters shouldn’t expect underfunded candidates to repeat such a feat this year (Harmon 2013).
In fact, the two finalists, John Connolly and Martin Walsh, spent a combined $9.4 million between their campaigns, with the outside groups spending an additional estimated $3.8 million. Walsh outspent Connolly, receiving a significant portion of his funds from national labor organizations, whereas Connolly received funds from national education reform groups (Lowery 2013b). Also contributing heavily to Connolly were longtime allies and friends of Menino—part of a larger trend of the city’s legal, real estate, and financial sectors, many of whom were leery of Walsh’s strong labor connections. While Menino said publicly right before the election that he wasn’t backing any candidate, “I don’t care who wins” (Abel 2013), reports surfaced about a feud between his son-in-law and Walsh, both residents of the Savin Hill area of Dorchester (Weir 2013). On Election Day, Menino was riding in his home neighborhood of Hyde Park and, according to two independent sources, he gave a thumb down to Representative Angelo Scaccia, a longtime friend and ally, when he spotted him holding a Walsh campaign sign at the mayor’s polling place.

In the final election between John Connolly and Martin Walsh, 142,007 voters went to the polls representing 38 percent of those registered. Martin Walsh received 4,889 more votes than his opponent, taking 11 of the city’s 22 wards and vaulting him into the mayor’s office (Boston Election Department 2013). Race and class were factors in the race. Walsh’s securing the endorsements of the three major candidates of color—Golar Richie, Barros, and Arroyo—made a difference for the Irish labor candidate. As the
Boston Globe suggested in a post-election analysis, minority voters were the key to Walsh’s victory:

…winning neighborhood after neighborhood in communities of color, precincts that neither he nor Connolly did especially well in during the preliminary election. That was the home base for the three candidates of color who earned the most votes during the preliminary. Charlotte Golar Richie, John F. Barros, and Felix G. Arroyo became Walsh allies during the final election, endorsements that appeared to translate into votes at the polls Tuesday. Walsh won in many of the places where Golar Richie, Barros, and Arroyo had their best showing in the preliminary. In September, they captured the most votes in nine of Boston’s 22 wards. Walsh topped Connolly in seven of those nine wards Tuesday. Golar Richie, Barros, and Arroyo, for example, combined to pull in more than 60 percent of the vote in Roxbury-based Ward 12 during the preliminary election. On Tuesday, roughly 58 percent of voters in Ward 12 cast ballots for Walsh, 17 percentage points higher than Connolly. Voters weighed their options a bit differently because Walsh had the backing of not just Golar Richie, Barros, and Arroyo, but most of the state’s elected officials of color. Voters may have disregarded concerns they had about Walsh or believed in his cause even more because Walsh had the stamp of approval from trusted sources (Johnson 2013d).

But beyond race, class issues seemed to resonate in the election as well. Walsh labor supporters began to characterize Connolly as a “son of privilege,” seeking to draw class distinctions between the two Irish pols. As Joan Vennochi of the Boston Globe wrote:

Some Walsh backers are trying to reduce that broad concern to something personal. Fliers that describe John Connolly as a “son of privilege” who “doesn’t understand working class people” are part of an effort to frame this race as “Mahty” Walsh, son of Irish immigrants, versus John R. Connolly, offspring of a well-connected political family. The emphasis on whose roots are more humble also turns the bigger concern—the growing gap between rich and poor—into petty caricature. In CommonWealth Magazine, Don Gillis, who served as executive director of the Economic Development Industrial Corporation during the administration of Mayor Raymond L. Flynn, paints a picture of a city divided by income level. In the midst of an economic boom, 36,000 Boston children live in poverty, writes Gillis. The top 10 percent of Boston’s families earned as much income before taxes as the bottom 75 percent of Boston families combined. Meanwhile, families at the 95th percentile earned nearly 40 times the income of those at the 5th percentile. “With poverty at a 20-year high in Boston, the next
mayor must concern himself with addressing inequality,” Gillis argues (Vennochi 2013b).

As a top person in the Connolly campaign conceded:

He was brilliant—playing the underdog, playing the class divide. At the very same time, he’s pulling every power lever there is, moving the race. I don’t know what we could have done different (O’Sullivan and Ebbert 2103).

The results were clear; class, as did race, mattered in the 2013 mayoral election. Walsh won in precincts with a lower per-capita income ($25,000 compared with $42,000 for Connolly); Connolly won precincts with a higher percentage of children enrolled in private schools (30 percent Connolly to 13 percent Walsh); and Walsh toped Connolly in precincts where residents have lived there more than a year, whereas newcomers went more heavily for Connolly. Walsh overwhelmingly won the blue collar votes and those of people working in service occupations, while Connolly won the support of the white collar and those in management occupations (Economic Justice Research Hub, LLC 2013).

The Legacy of Race in Boston

After the progress on race relations made under the administrations of both Mayor Flynn and Mayor Menino, why was a candidate of color not in the final election and why, forty years after court-ordered school desegregation and the violent reaction to busing, are leading political figures still calling Boston a racist city? In the campaign, John Connolly said about Boston, “There’s racism in all of Boston, systemic, institutional, and structural.” And his opponent Marty Walsh weighed in as well, saying, “We have racism in the City of Boston that we have to deal with. We talk about one Boston, but we don’t see one Boston in the City of Boston right now” (Johnson 2013c).
Discussion of the issues of class and race has been occurring in Boston for some time, but income inequality and racial disparities continue to grow. When Mayor Tom Menino was asked about his greatest achievement as mayor, he cited helping change Boston’s reputation as a bitterly racist city to one that prizes its diversity: “I think I brought people together more than before. Boston was a real racist city at one point. You don’t read about that any more. We gave opportunity to a lot of people in our city that didn’t have opportunity in the past” (Abel 2013). He was right that you don’t read about it anymore…but that doesn’t mean that racism and inequality do not exist in the city. A report in the *Boston Business Journal (BBJ)* in December 2012 claimed:

Boston ranked second among all U.S. cities in the number of hate crimes reported in 2011. Approximately half of Boston’s reported hate crimes were race related, a fact that pokes holes in the idea the city has come a long way since the chaos following mandated school busing in the 1970s (Douglas 2012).

The *BBJ* even went as far as to say, “One could even say Boston is the hate crime capital of the country, at least on a per capita basis” (Douglas 2012).

New mayor, Marty Walsh, spoke about the “elephant in the room” on the campaign trail and has vowed to address it. He said in his inaugural speech on January 6, 2014, “We will expand opportunity so it reaches every person in every corner of our city. We cannot tolerate a city divided by privilege and poverty.” Now as the vice chair of the U.S. Conference of Mayors Cities of Opportunity Task Force dealing with income inequality, Mayor Marty Walsh is taking many innovative steps in that direction. He said at the inaugural meeting of the Task Force in August 2014:

The most important thing that was said at the table or wasn’t said at the table was this isn’t a Democrat thing, this isn’t a Republican thing, this is the right thing to
do and this is a bipartisan effort that we need to continue to move forward. We need to make sure we close that gap (Somers and Temple-Webb 2014).

He recently responded to President Obama’s call to address disparities for young black and brown boys by appointing a task force in Boston for the President’s My Brother’s Keeper initiative, appointing me a member of the advisory committee. And following the recent release of a report by the Boston Public Schools that pointed out the significant educational disparities between boys who were black and Latino and those who were white and Asian, Mayor Walsh commented:

We know that nearly two thirds of the young men in the city of Boston are black or Latino and we know that 78 percent of the males of our student population in Boston high schools are black or Latino, so the success of our school system is riding on how we support them, it’s time to stop talking and time to start taking action. This conversation needs to happen. This conversation is long overdue. These changes that we’re talking about are going to happen in our system. I didn’t run for mayor for the status quo, I ran for mayor to make a difference in these young kids’ lives. To create a truly level playing field and truly a just society.

As I was quoted in 1988, commenting on racial conflict and issues in Boston at that time:

This is the kind of discussion that needs to go on in every neighborhood and in every living room across the city, said Don Gillis, Director of the Mayor’s Office of Neighborhood Services. We need to work together to get the message out that racial violence will be dealt with swiftly and severely (Boston Herald 1988).

It is not only racial violence but, as Mel King told me, also that we need to confront the politics of “class cleansing” in Boston to make our city more just and equitable for all residents.

Boston’s new mayor, Martin J. Walsh, said recently during a conversation following the screening of a new film, SELMA—“One of those conversations that some
of us choke on a little bit is we don’t know if we have racism in Boston. There is a need for a conversation and not just a conversation but with action that follows it. There is a need to have conversations about race in Boston and beyond. We have to go beyond racial lines. The conversation on inequity and inequality in this country has to be discussed; we are having that conversation in Boston.” That is Mayor Marty Walsh’s daunting challenge in the coming years. I look forward to supporting him and future city leaders in responding to our many challenges as we build an inclusive city that works for all our neighbors.

Final Thought—In Memoriam: Mayor Thomas M. Menino

On October 30, 2014 former Mayor Tom Menino passed away after a courageous battle with cancer. The 71-year-old mayor admirably served the people of Boston for more than 30 years, first as a city councilor in 1984 and then as mayor for 20 years, 5 months, and 25 days. I first met Tom Menino in 1984 when we both entered City Hall—he as a district city councilor representing Hyde Park and Roslindale, and I as an aide to incoming Mayor Ray Flynn. Over the course of these thirty years we had many conversations, and even a few disagreements, some of which were captured by the media.

I had the pleasure of interviewing Mayor Menino in June of 2014 for this dissertation project. He was generous with his time and recollections and willing to help, saying to his wife Angela who walked in while we were talking, “Angela, Don is a student doing a thesis.” I last saw the mayor on September 18, 2014 at Boston University, where he presided over a seminar of the Initiative on Cities, which he co-directed. He
was gracious and engaging and gave me a shout out about work I had done while in City Hall. He was telling me, “Don, we are OK,” and we spent time speaking about politics: about how Marty Walsh was doing, about the issues facing the city—his and my favorite topics. I will forever remember our many conversations even though, as some parts of this dissertation demonstrate, we didn’t always on every policy or on all aspects of politics in Boston. We did agree on one thing—our love for Boston and her people. I thank Mayor Menino for his contributions to our city; its public schools, which both my children attended; our neighborhoods—which, as I told him, barely resemble the areas of distress and decay I remember when I worked in the D Street projects in South Boston before heading to City Hall; his leadership following the Boston Marathon bombings; and the loving contributions he made to the diverse people of our “city upon a hill.” Rest in peace Mr. Mayor, you did it your way!
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SUMMARY:
Results-oriented entrepreneurial professional and educator with a proven track record of achievement in leading a diverse range of organizations and in the ability to conceptualize, sell and implement ideas and projects. Successful trainer and educator of public and private boards of directors and volunteers. Ability to apply research and theory to real life social issues and engage students in critical thinking. Strong leader and advocate for socially oriented organizational missions.

EDUCATION:

Boston University, Boston MA, Ph. D. Candidate, Department of Sociology, 2008 -

Harvard Business School, Boston, MA, Program for Management Development, 1993

M. A., Boston University, Boston, MA, Community Sociology Fellow, 1978

B. S., Boston State College, Boston, MA Sociology/Psychology Major, 1974

TEACHING EXPERIENCE:

1977 - 1978  Instructor, Department of Sociology, Boston University, Boston, MA

2009 - 2014  Lecturer and Senior Teaching Fellow, Boston University, Boston, MA
CAS SO 306 Sociology of Boston’s People and Neighborhoods
MET UA 560 The City in the Media: The Sociology of HBO's “The Wire”
MET UA 403 Boston Urban Seminar
CAS SO/AA 207 Sociology of Race and Ethnicity
CAS SO 210 Confronting Persistent Social Inequalities in American Schools
CAS SO 211 Racial, Cultural, Gender, and Social Identities in Urban Classrooms
PUBLICATIONS:


“MAYOR MATTERS: Fair play—An Economic and Social Justice Agenda for Boston’s Next Mayor” Commonwealth Magazine, Boston, MA October 21, 2013

“Poverty must be top priority for mayoral candidates” OPED, Boston Globe, Boston MA August 17, 2013


“Robin Hood mayors”, Commonwealth Magazine, Boston, MA January 18, 2011

Sociological Film: Down the Project: The Crisis of Public Housing by Richard Broadman, John Grady, Don Gillis, John Pennington (1982)

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

1997 - Present  Executive Director, Massachusetts Workforce Board Association, Inc., Boston, MA www.massworkforce.com
Develop and direct statewide association representing 16 private sector-led Boards that are responsible for management of Massachusetts workforce investment system including oversight and leadership for more than $250 million public investment in one-stop career centers, job training, education, incumbent worker training and assistance, school to work initiatives and local leadership development.

1994 - 1997  Executive Vice President, Fall River Office of Economic Development, Fall River, MA
Chief executive for City economic development policy, business financing, development and marketing. Led efforts to attract new industries to the City including negotiation of Tax Increment Financing agreements and other business incentives. Member of the Board of the Greater Fall River Chamber of Commerce and Industry and advisor to the Industrial Development Commission and the Greater Fall River Development Corporation.
1990 - 1994

Executive Director, Economic Development and Industrial Corporation of Boston, Boston, MA
Chief executive of Quasi-public Corporation directing economic development, job training, business financing and industrial policy for the City. Manage operations of three industrial parks comprising more than 200 acres and three million square feet of space housing more than 180 diverse business tenants.

Affiliate Corporations:
Executive Director, Boston Industrial Development Financing Authority
Vice President, Boston Local Development Corporation
Chairman, Boston Technical Center
Administrator, Boston Employment Commission and Neighborhood Jobs Trust

1984 - 1990

City of Boston, Boston, MA

Director, Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Services [1986-1990]
Senior member of Mayor’s staff responsible for service delivery oversight and development including policy, systems development and evaluation; restructured real estate development review process including city-wide rezoning effort; created first Boston multi-lingual outreach effort for Hispanic, Asian, Cambodian, Vietnamese, Cape Verdean and Haitian communities.

Executive Assistant, Inspectional Services Department [1985-1986]
Led agency reorganization and operations policy in City department responsible for building and structures permits, zoning review and inspections, housing and health code regulations following federal investigation and indictments of department employees and business people.

Assistant Director, Mayor's Office of Neighborhood Services [1984-1985]
Responsible for creation of citywide developmental review process; legislative initiatives; public information campaigns and media relations.
OTHER RELEVANT POSITIONS

1979 - 1984  Associate Director and Director of Community Organization, West Broadway Task Force, Inc. South Boston, MA
Led community planning for redevelopment of distressed multi-family public housing development; managed Multi Service Center.

RELATED ACTIVITIES:

Current or Past Member of the Board of Directors:
My Brother’s Keeper-Boston Advisory Committee (current)
Early Education for All Advisory Committee (current)
National Workforce Association
Friends of Young Achievers Public Pilot School
New England Shelter for Homeless Veterans
United States Small Business Administration Massachusetts Advisory Council

“Outstanding Young Leader 1991” Boston JAYCEES
“Anne Wheeler Lifelong Learning Award 2005” Commonwealth Corporation