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Layered Social Injustice: The Dislodgement of Jewish Communities in Mattapan, Dorchester, and Roxbury During the 1960s

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LAYERED SOCIAL INJUSTICE:

THE DISLODGEMENT OF JEWISH COMMUNITIES IN MATTAPAN, DORCHESTER, AND ROXBURY DURING THE 1960s

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Abstract: This article examines the role of housing discrimination in dislodging certain Boston Jewish communities during the 1960s, complicating conventional narratives of "white flight" by highlighting the impact of anti-Semitic housing policies on the migration of Jewish community members. Over the course of two years, the Boston, Massachusetts neighborhoods of Mattapan, Roxbury and Dorchester experienced drastic demographic change, transitioning from predominantly Jewish to predominantly Black areas. While traditional depictions of white flight focus on racist ideologies and fears of diversification as impetuses for the large-scale migration of white residents, this article suggests that structural forms of anti-Semitism including housing discrimination, unsupportive federal policies, realtor profiteering and physical violence against Jewish communities also played a role in the migration of Jewish residents from these neighborhoods.

Introduction

At the beginning of the 1960s, the Boston neighborhoods of Mattapan, Roxbury, and Dorchester were predominantly Jewish. Jews had dwelled there for decades, since the turn of the 20th century. Once deemed the Jewish 'mother neighborhood,' the traditionally-rooted area where hundreds of thousands of Jews had settled transitioned into a majority Black population in just two years between 1968 to 1970. By 1973, Jews had almost disappeared in the area.

By the conventional narrative, as in Richard Rothstein's *The Color of Law*, this is a classic example of "white flight."[2] At first glance, this drastic racial change seems to fit into the

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[2] Richard Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America* (New York, NY: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2017), 93-98. Richard Rothstein argues for the federal responsibility in the segregation of Black people in the United States. He argued that the federal programs post-Great Depression were unconstitutional, and thus the segregation is in some ways de jure instead of de facto segregation purely built on local prejudice and individual will. In the book, he argues for forms of compensation made on a federal level for the suffering of Blacks today due to the unconstitutional acts in the 20th century that forced a second-class citizenship on Black Americans. White flight was a phenomenon he mentioned from page 83-98 in which white residents, in fear of devaluation of their property, moved out when Black people moved into their neighborhoods.

characteristics of white flight—real estate agents targeted Mattapan, Roxbury, and Dorchester for their predominantly white population and induced a panic of 'negro infiltration' in order to profit from selling devalued estates at a high cost to Black residents. That, nevertheless, was not the full truth.

The disappearance of the Jewish population in Mattapan, Dorchester, and Roxbury cannot be readily attributed to 'white flight.' Rather, it had to do with a conception of layered injustice to the Jewish minority. Unlike other cases of white flight, many Jews were not being pulled into new suburbs but were instead pushed out through various processes. There was a discriminatory notion that targeted Jewish neighborhoods first from the Home Owner's Corporation, a federal organization in the 1930s, which later paved the way for an inconsiderate local program launched by the Boston Banks Urban Renewal Group in the 1960s. Then, with leniency in federal and local policies, realtors used a scheme known as blockbusting to scare away Jewish residents. As a result of blockbusting, antisemitic-leaning violence escalated between Jews and other residents. Those acts, combined with a lack of care from established Jewry, ultimately dislodged Jewish residents in the Boston neighborhoods of Mattapan, Roxbury, and Dorchester.

Even though there were signs of discriminatory practices and real-estate oppression, it is important to note that this paper does not intend to draw any sentimental parallel between the dislodgement of the Jewish community and the racism and segregation that African Americans experienced in the housing market. As the paper explains in a later section, the Jews still enlisted help from their communities in their struggle against violent crimes, albeit a lack of active care persisted among most of the Jewish leadership. This paper examines how the dislodgment came to be and aims to address an underemphasized aspect to the conventional narrative of white flight.

Buffer Areas Created by Home Owner's Corporation

The federal policies in the 1930s laid the foundation for dislodgement in the Boston neighborhoods of Mattapan, Roxbury, and Dorchester by making the majority Jewish areas a buffer zone to prevent African Americans from moving in. In the wake of the Great Depression in the 1930s, the Home Owners' Corporation (HOLC) was established by the Federal government in hopes of stabilizing the housing market. In the following decade, HOLC proceeded to create residential maps across the U.S. for more than 200 cities to rank the "mortgage security" of lending to neighborhoods. The HOLC staff used data and evaluations organized by local real estate

professionals in each city not only from the standpoint of the quality of housing and rent values, but also of the racial and ethnic identity of residents. Neighborhoods receiving the highest grade, A, were colored green and deemed minimal risks for banks and other mortgage lenders when they were deciding upon areas for safe investments in the city. Neighborhoods that received the grade B were colored blue and considered "still desirable," C neighborhoods were colored yellow and considered "definitely declining," and D neighborhoods were colored red and considered "hazardous."[3] These maps that helped set the rules for nearly a century of real estate practice are otherwise known as the "redlining" maps.

The HOLC agents adopted a white, elite point of view to grade the neighborhoods. Languages such as "infiltration" were used to denote "subversive," "undesirable," "inharmonious," or "lower grade" populations. Among those deemed inharmonious racial groups were African Americans, Italians, Jews, and Asians. Cases in which Jewish neighborhoods were given a lower rating were not uncommon across the United States.[4] In the case of the Jewish population in Mattapan, Roxbury, and Dorchester, the three areas were marked yellow as C9, C10, and C11 respectively in HOLC reports, despite their good standing in public infrastructure and housing prices.[5] These reports relegated Jews to a secondary citizen class.

According to the HOLC, Mattapan was an affluent neighborhood with an average annual income between "$3000-$6000." According to a report created by the HOLC, it was "considered [a] high class Jewish section with good transportation, schools, shopping centers, [and it was] near Franklin Park with free facilities." A neighborhood with an average income higher than most B-rated area was classified as C11, the reason for this being that "this area has been predominantly Jewish for several years and market is now limited to this buyer [and] mortgage funds are limited

[3] Robert K. Nelson, LaDale Winling, Richard Marciano, Nathan Connolly, et al., "Mapping Inequality," *American Panorama*, ed. Robert K. Nelson and Edward L. Ayers, accessed May 6, 2021, https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining/#loc=5/39.1/-94.58&text=intro.

[4] Nelson et al., "Mapping Inequality."

[5] As HOLC resources later reveal, all three neighborhoods were considered part of Dorchester while being independent neighborhoods. To avoid confusion, the three neighborhoods, in the context of HOLC maps and later resources, should be viewed as an entity as the Jewish majority neighborhoods in Dorchester. The paper does not intend to draw distinctions between the three neighborhoods because the complexion is not conducive to understanding the primary resources and undermines the emphasis on dislodgement. If interested in the specifics of Jews' demographics in relation to other racial groups in each neighborhood for more context, suggestions for reference include Isaac Fein, *Boston — Where It All Began: A Historical Perspective of the Boston Jewish Community* (Boston, Massachusetts: Boston Jewish Bicentennial Committee), 1976, and Gerald Gamm, *Urban Exodus: Why the Jews Left Boston and the Catholics Stayed*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press), 2001.

because of occupants but financing is no problem on sales."[6] The report reflects the kind of language that was prevalent throughout the HOLC reports as mentioned: while financing, facilities, and housing prices were not an issue—and the average income was on the higher side—the neighborhood was considered "definitely declining" from the perspective of white HOLC staff members on the ground that Jews were inharmonious due to their culture and perceived secondary whiteness. Such a concept was present in the other two reports as well.

Roxbury and Dorchester, areas C10 and C9 respectively, presented a similar story. According to the HOLC report, Roxbury had "good transportation, schools, churches, etc. [and it was] adjacent to Franklin Park with free facilities." However, the area had an "infiltration" of Jewish people.[7] Dorchester, area C9, had "desirable section of good houses with all conveniences [and] rapid transit" with average income between "$2,000-$5,000." The report even said that "the entire area enjoys a fairly good reputation locally." It was rated C: it had an infiltration of "Jewish threatening."[8] Noticeably, there was a B-rated area inside Dorchester with similar income and terrain. The only difference, however, was a white population without Jewish presence.[9] In these reports, terms such as "infiltration" perpetuated a negative connotation that treated Jewish people as secondary citizens, if not altogether foreigners. Stating that Jews infiltrated areas of Mattapan, Roxbury, and Dorchester facilitated the conception that Jews were enemies who invaded these areas in Boston and needed to be pushed out. These reports stated an obvious preference for the Anglo-white population by prioritizing their mortgage security. In this light, the ratings were not given fairly by the standard of the estates' quality, but by the ethnic group dwelling in the area, which is crucial to the understanding of buffer zones.

Recent reports done by the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago on the effects of HOLC maps analyzed the fallout of rating neighborhoods as C, "definitely declining". C-rated areas, often established between B- and D-rated areas, served as buffer areas in case of "Negroes infiltration." When Black integration took place in the late 1960s, C-rated areas were the first to experience integration. According to the report, there was a steady increase in the segregation gap from 1930

[6] HOLC "Area Description" report for C-11, Boston-Dorchester (1938), in Robert K. Nelson, LaDale Winling, Richard Marciano, Nathan Connolly, et al., "Mapping Inequality," *American Panorama*, ed. Robert K. Nelson and Edward L. Ayers, accessed May 6, 2021, https://dsl.richmond.edu/panorama/redlining/#loc=5/39.1/-94.58&text=downloads.
[7] HOLC report for C-10, Boston-Dorchester.
[8] HOLC report for C-9, Boston-Dorchester.
[9] HOLC report for B-8, Boston-Dorchester.

until about 1970 or 1980 before declining thereafter. The timeline fits the context of the Jewish dislodgement at the end of the 1960s when Black neighborhoods started to shift. While Mattapan, Roxbury, and Dorchester had 0% Black population in the 1930s, these neighborhoods experienced drastic changes in the late 1960s, transitioning into Black majority areas. The report also stated that "D areas, [usually Black neighborhoods,] became more segregated than nearby C-rated areas over the 20th century. There is a striking similar pattern between the C-rated areas that bordered B-rated areas as well, where "there were virtually no black residents in either neighborhood type prior to the maps."[10] This further backs up the fact that in the case of Jews living in Mattapan, Dorchester, and Roxbury, their neighborhoods were chosen by the federal organization for gradual integration throughout the middle of the 20th century. In this sense, these three areas were used as buffer areas between D- and B-rated areas to prevent African Americans from moving directly into B-rated areas.

How did the integration come about? It is essential to first note that, different from how later newspapers would simply refer to the Jewish population as 'white' in many instances, the HOLC maps identified Jewish people as comprising a lower-grade white population. The setup of maps—making Jewish neighborhoods C-rated buffer areas separating white and Black Americans—was the first step in turning Mattapan, Roxbury, and Dorchester into Black-majority neighborhoods. What later expedited such a process was an inconsiderate local program called B-BURG.

B-BURG

Boston Banks Urban Renewal Groups (B-BURG) launched their program with an intent that stemmed from a federal policy called the Federal Urban Renewal Program. The Federal Urban Renewal Program, first started in the 1950s, was aimed towards eliminating slums and ghettos and replacing them with improved housing and developed areas for low-income families. Despite its well-intentioned appearance, B-BURG had various devastating effects on cities across the United States. In many areas, it was "a program that enabled local officials to simply clear out Black neighborhoods." James Baldwin, a director who visited San Francisco in 1963 on his journey to film a documentary about racism, commented on the program after interviews with Black residents

[10] Daniel Aaronson et al. "The effects of the 1930s HOLC 'redlining' maps" (Working Paper, No. 2017-12., Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago, 2017), 5.

in the area: "Urban Renewal means 'Negro Removal.'" [11] In the age of the civil rights movement, the federal government unleashed this program that worked against the people it was supposed to protect.

In Mattapan, Dorchester, and Roxbury, this program worked not only against the Black population in Boston, but also against the Jews. When the federal program began, many bankers formed a local consortium and announced the B-BURG program. For bankers, Mattapan, Dorchester, and Roxbury were an opportunity to respond to the racial crisis of the 60s and display their good citizenship without taking on much risk themselves. Their approaches, however, were highly problematic.

B-BURG, an alliance of 22 saving institutions, was established in 1962 and remained relatively inactive for its first five years. Roughly $1 million dollars of loans were distributed to help finance home rehabilitation in Roxbury's Washington Park area. It was not until 1968 and 1969 that it gained immense impetus from Boston mayor Kevin White. In a report done by the *Boston Globe*, between August and October of 1969 alone $3 million worth of home loans were distributed by B-BURG. More than $2 million in home loans were distributed between November and December of the same year. At the year's end, applications amounted to $3.57 million in total for the beginning of the next year. At the end of the report, it was asked: "are these men being charitable?" The response from B-BURG representative was this: "there's no gamble of our dispositor's money involved…the Federal government is assuming the social risk."[12]

[11] Brent Cebul, "Tearing Down Black America," *Boston Review*, July 22, 2020. http://bostonreview.net/race/brent-cebul-tearing-down-black-america.

[12] Peter B. Greenough, "BBURG spells home loans for Hub blacks," *Boston Globe,* January 31,1969. https://www.newspapers.com/image/434635515/?terms=BBURG%20spells%20home%20loans&match=1.

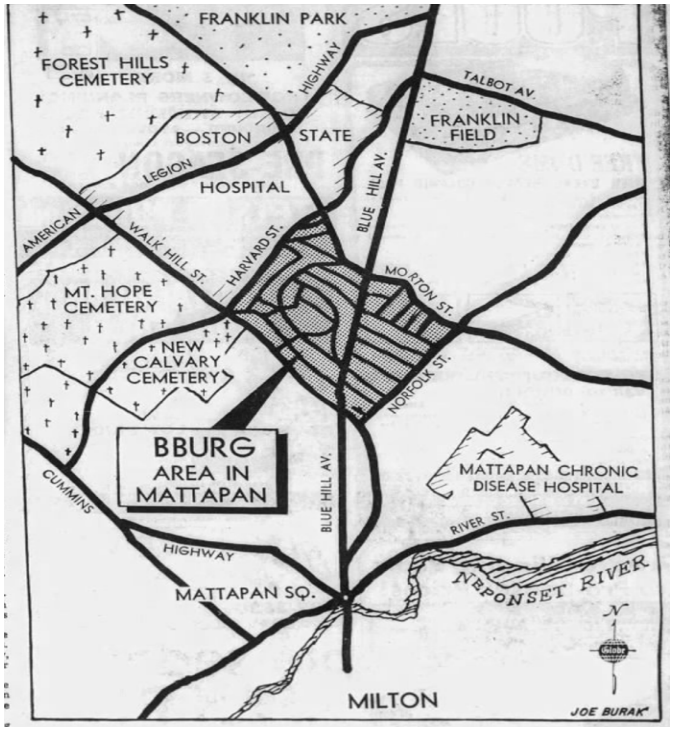

Figure 1. *BBURG AREA IN MATTAPAN*. Photographs in "In Mattapan…BBURG Line," *Boston Globe*, April 7, 1972. B-BURG's efforts lapped over all three areas of Dorchester, Roxbury, and Mattapan. Through a collective effort of B-BURG, the line was drawn running from the South End, through Roxbury and part of Dorchester, into Mattapan.

Behind the seemingly proud achievement and quick growth in loans given out was the beginning of the destruction of Jewish neighborhoods. This was not done by bankers, mayor Kevin White, and federal support alone; real estate agents' blockbusting efforts were the main drive. [13]

In retrospect to the detrimental effects of B-BURG, federal official James J. Barry from HUD (U.S. Housing Department of Housing and Urban Development) commented: there was the "notable exception of predominantly Jewish neighborhoods in Mattapan-Dorchester, most of Boston's white ethnic neighborhoods remained outside the line…. the drawing of the line by banks acted as a catalyst to activate the fears and prejudices and inevitably created a fertile ground for unscrupulous realtors." [14] Although it is possible that the commentary was an attempt by the

[13] Blockbusting will be explained in detail in the next section. In short, blockbusting happened across the U.S. as real estate agencies made easy, lucrative profits off fear. Realtors spread fear as they set up the illusion that many Black residents were moving into the area; they went as far as breaking into others' properties to reflect the sharp decrease in security in the area. It was noted in "Confession of a Blockbuster," *Metropolitan Real Estate Journal*, May 1987.

[14] Kevin Hartnett, "HUD official tells of Boston Blockbusting," *Boston Globe*, April 9,1972. https://www.newspapers.com/image/435263310/?terms=HUD%20official%20tells%20of%20Boston%20Blockbusting&match=1.

federal official to evade responsibility for the Federal Urban Renewal Program, other parties involved shared similar notions that B-BURG's line and realtor practices targeted Jewish neighborhoods.

Janice Bernstein, a Mattapan resident, recalled hearing about B-BURG from a *Boston Globe* article done by Peter Greenough in 1968 and wrote that blockbusting had already begun then, with rumors flying as early as 1967.[15] Carl Erickson, vice president of the Suffolk Franklin Savings Bank that headed BBURG, defended the planning as "purely a matter of economics." "The lines were arbitrary," Erickson further explained, "and not designed to avoid Italian and Irish neighborhoods where resistance to blacks as neighbors could arise."[16] The Mattapan Organization (TMO), primarily comprised of Jews and Catholics with a five percent minority of Black people, had been trying to address the issues by organizing residents and frequently calling to inform them that TMO could stop the blockbusting campaign in 1968. The Real Estate Licensing Board, nonetheless, told the residents that there was no law against blockbusting. [17] B-BURG was certainly conducive to the blockbusting that drove out many of the Jewish residents of Mattapan, Roxbury, and Dorchester. There was a lack of control on realtors' behaviors at the federal level, which is crucial to understanding the extensiveness of the blockbusting.

What is blockbusting? How did it get out of hand? Contrary to the good intentions of B-BURG, blockbusting was the main drive behind the dislodgement of Jewish residents.

Blockbusting

In *The Color of Law*, Richard Rothstein introduces blockbusting as an activity in which profiteering real estate agents spread fear of "Negro invasion" in hope that white homeowners would succumb to the scaremongering and sell the estate at discounted price to speculators. The realtors would aim to persuade white families that their neighborhoods were becoming African American slums by "making random telephone calls to residents of white neighborhoods and asking to speak to someone with a stereotypically African American name like 'Johnnie Mae'" or

[15] Janice Bernstein, "Crisis in Mattapan—an Inside view", *Boston Globe,* April 25,1972. https://www.newspapers.com/image/435244377/?terms=Crisis%20in%20Mattapan%E2%80%94an%20Inside%20view&match=1.

[16] "The BBURG Line in Mattapan", *Boston Globe*, April 5, 1972. https://www.newspapers.com/image/435239649/?terms=The%20BBURG%20Line%20in%20Mattapan&match=1

[17] Bernstein, "Crisis in Mattapan."

arranging "house burglaries in white communities to scare neighbors into believing that their communities were becoming unsafe." [18] This strengthened the white supremacist sentiment that African-American integration would cause devaluation and safety hazards. As white owners sold their estates at discounted prices, African-Americans purchased estates at an inflated price due to their high demand for good housing that the market failed to initially supply.

Blockbusting occurred across the U.S. as real estate agencies made easy, lucrative profits off of fear. This was certainly the case in Mattapan, Dorchester, and Roxbury, though the blockbusting story here was a bit different due to additional bank redlining. In an anonymous trade journal from May 1987, the writer offers the details of how he sold Mattapan, Dorchester, and Roxbury estates in the late 1960s. He became friends with some real estate agents while looking for a property in Dorchester, and his friends asked him to join them as "[he] can make ton of money [off blockbusting]." His friends explained that the bank had planned to find an area where minorities were going to be financed and even get a house with no money down.[19] There were many clients, and River Street in Mattapan was the prime target. While the bank drew strict lines as to where it had planned to launch campaigns to aid minorities, real estate agents decided to expand the area. The writer was told that as long as they scared the residents, they could get any listing they wanted. Real estate agents "had fun" and even competed in the kinds of "outlandish threats" they could make people believe in. The realtors described the threats that they made through phone calls:

> Some of the milder things were: property values are going down, you're going to get a thousand dollars less next month than this. Market values really didn't decline that much. They did decline slightly, but the thousand dollars a month, or whatever figure you picked — that was something you pulled out of the air...We weren't subtle about it. You'd say, how would you like it if they rape your daughter, and you've got a mulatto grandchild? I remember one particular family where this little girl was about twelve years old and blonde, she was a very pretty little kid. And I used that on them, and it did sway them. They sure as hell sold! I even used it once on a son, the little boy would get raped. Whatever worked, I would try to use… There were instances of housebreaks that were arranged only to scare people out. That was the worst.[20]

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[18] Rothstein, *The Color of Law*, 25, 156-7.
[19] "Confession of a Blockbuster," *Metropolitan Real Estate Journal*, May, 1987, in *The Death of an American Jewish Community: A Tragedy of Good Intentions*, ed. Hill Levine (Lexington, Massachusetts: Plunkett Lake Press, 2012), 3, Kindle Edition. This is in the context of the 1960s Civil Rights movement and the Boston Bank's B-BURG program that meant to help minorities. Numerous amounts of loans with federal support caused this phenomenon.
[20] Lawrence Harmon and Hillel Levine, *The Death of an American Jewish Community: A Tragedy of Good Intentions* ((Lexington, Massachusetts: Plunkett Lake Press, 2012), 4, Kindle Edition.

Nobody was arrested for these actions. In the writer's opinion, the sellers they hurt "asked for it" because they were bigoted and ran from the house on their own terms, writing that "the whole areas [in Mattapan] went from white to black in a matter of month."[21] Realtors, in response to the B-BURG program, sold properties to buyers who did not need to put any money down for the estates, and they utilized residents' fear for safety and their children to prompt them to move. They had been able to make exorbitant profits not only on speculation, but also on commissions from the bank on the sales of almost entire neighborhoods.

What came after blockbusting were complex sentiments surrounding the issue of integration. Local media such as the *Boston Globe* published various reports covering the blockbusting and the complex sentiments, dedicating pages to the housing issues in Mattapan, Roxbury, and Dorchester. One article addressed the instability in neighborhoods due to the increasing numbers of "Negros" in comparison to the neighborhoods in 1960, twice the number in Dorchester (23,107 as to 10,968) and triple the number in Mattapan (54 as to 145). Such statistics indicated to instability and change: "once again, the old fears and prejudices are renewed," the article stated, "change has meant racial incidents—a fight on Lucerne St., shotgun blasts fired through the windows of a Hamilton St. home occupied by Negroes, a fight on Washington St."[22] Racial tensions started to occur between Jews and African-Americans. In this article, Jews targeted their African-American neighbors due to racially-constructed fear that the integration of African-Americans would turn their neighborhoods into slums. That, nevertheless, was not the full picture.

Contrary to the panic-induced attacks from racist Jews reported in the article, many Jews showed understanding towards African-Americans' need for good housing and blamed realtors and their racist neighbors for the issues. In another article, Mark Israel, a Jewish Community Council staffer, noticed that "when a Negro moves into a street, certain real estate agents will simply call everyone on the street and ask if they want to sell their houses…[there were] a couple of cases where whites wanted to buy and were discouraged…[the councils] are sure going to try to stp this practice in Mattapan."[23] Another article interviewed a couple people from Jewish organizations, who did not fear the fact that more Blacks were moving in as much as they feared

[21]Ibid.
[22] "Dorchester and Mattapan: A Historical Area in Midst of Change," *Boston Globe,* August 3, 1967. https://www.newspapers.com/image/433984722/?terms=Dorchester%20and%20Mattapan&match=1.
[23] "HOUSING PROJECTS," *Boston Globe*, August 3, 1967.
https://www.newspapers.com/image/433984722/?terms=Dorchester%20and%20Mattapan&match=1.

their white neighbors who sold low and "might leave them holding a bag in a Negro ghetto."[24] At its core, blockbusting was an admitted issue, and many Jews formed Jewish organizations for the purpose of protecting property values and fighting against panic selling rather than rejecting Black people from moving in. The most overt effect, nonetheless, was the growing racial tension between Jews and African-Americans. Conflicts gradually erupted into violent crimes that damaged the livelihoods of most in the Jewish neighborhoods.

Violent Crimes

Frequent crimes in the neighborhoods contributed to the dislodgement of many who were incapable or unwilling to move out of Mattapan, Roxbury, and Dorchester. Before the violent crimes of the late 1960s, small skirmishes and signs of Anti-Semitism were not unfamiliar to the Jewish residents. In the early 20th century, there was an undercurrent of Anti-Semitism as tensions grew between Jews and Catholics. In the 1940s, Rev. Charles Coughlin broadcast his hateful messages on a nationally-syndicated radio program, urging his listeners to support "a Christian front" and fight against the tragedies of incorporating [Jews] in public and semipublic institutions.[25] The statement garnered national attention and partially reflected factions in America that did consider Jews to be a lower grade of white, akin to the HOLC maps. In the case of Mattapan, Dorchester, and Roxbury, the Jewish residential area's neighbors were often Irish. Irish youth often displayed vehement contempt towards Jews in Dorchester and Roxbury, viewing them as "Christ killers." Interviews with Jewish youth in the 1940s and 1950s revealed gang fights between the two groups, and organizations such as the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith recorded the many assaults that sometimes involved more than 100 youths fighting pitched battles.[26] With an Irish majority in the Boston Police Department, fights in which Jews prevailed often resulted in court appearances and arraignments. These little skirmishes sometimes also implicated the elderly, middle-aged people, and even children. Such hostility was a consistent

[24] "Mattapan Neighbors Unite to Combat Race Panic," *Boston Globe*, September 15 , 1967. https://www.newspapers.com/image/433983385/?terms=Mattapan%20Neighbors%20Unite%20to%20Combat%20Race%20Panic%2C%22&match=1.
[25] "PRIEST LOOM," *The Cincinnati Enquirer,* Jan 29, 1940. https://www.newspapers.com/image/103444110/.
[26] Internal memo from I. Zack, April 21, 1951, archives of the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, in *The Death of an American Jewish Community: A Tragedy of Good Intentions*, ed. Hill Levine (Lexington, Massachusetts: Plunkett Lake Press, 2012), 21, Kindle Edition.

phenomenon throughout the 20th century until the complete disappearance of Jewish neighborhoods in the Mattapan, Roxbury, and Dorchester areas.

In the late 1960s, most of the tension centered around conflicts between Jews and African-Americans. In addition to the Anti-Semitism in the city, the fast integration of African-Americans into the Mattapan, Roxbury, and Dorchester neighborhoods a result of realtors' blockbusting led to anger on both sides. Some racist Jews panicked and attacked a few African-American residences. Local media reported that apartments were often "jacked up," and those who weren't paying high rents were relegated to living in the filthiest housing conditions by irresponsible realtors and slumlords. "There [was] anger at 'Whitey'('They stand there like they own the streets') and at the landlords('we are at their mercy')."[27] Aside from the obvious racial tensions, there were also attempts to deescalate the tensions from both sides. African-American tenants protested peacefully outside of the infamous slumlord Israel Mindick's house on account of the filthy, hazardous conditions of his estates. Local Jewish leaders responded by trying Mindick at the rabbinic court to pressure him into agreeing to the tenants' demands. The Mindicks backed down and sold the estates to the Boston Redevelopment Authority, which placed them under the control of the South End Tenants Council for management and repair.[28] Violence, however, still pervaded in spite of such pacification efforts.

Frequent, life-threatening crimes occurred in the Jewish neighborhoods of Mattapan, Dorchester, and Roxbury. In most of the events in which Jews were victims, the assailants were Black radicals. Mugging of Jews occurred almost daily. A *Boston Globe* article gave a detailed description of the frequency and severity of the assaults in 1969: there were shootings, and acid had been thrown onto a rabbi around the same time as the integration occurred. Thirty elderly Jews were assaulted on average every week. Residents avoided attending morning or evening services, and everyone was on guard. [29] The Anti-Semitism got the most out of hand in 1970, with the burning of two Dorchester synagogues—Congregation Chevra Shas and Congregation Agadath Israel— in which Holy scriptures that Jews deemed as important as their lives were burned. Rabbi Goldberg said vandalism had occurred in the past, with "window after window being broken" and

[27] "HOUSING PROJECTS," *Boston Globe*.
[28] Levine, *The Death of an American Jewish Community*, 190-2.
[29] "Attacks upon Elderly Spur Mattapan Action*". Boston Globe*, November 26, 1969. https://www.newspapers.com/image/435195278/?terms=Attacks%20upon%20Elderly%20Spur%20Mattapan%20Action&match=1.

a "small fire set in the back yard." The burnings were viewed by the Jewish community as "a 'part of a pattern' and a continuation of a campaign to scare the Jewish residents out of the area."[30] This shocked the community, prompting various organizations such as the Jewish Defense League, Jewish Community Council of Metropolitan Boston, and Anti-Defamation League got involved to ask for preventative programs in the future. The Jewish Defense League called for $50,000 in funds for guards in Jewish neighborhoods. Police canine patrols became a familiar sight. Jewish agencies arranged a host of services for residents in Mattapan, Roxbury, and Dorchester to diffuse the tension and to help those who wished to move out of the neighborhood.[31] Despite these efforts, reports of assaults were numerous. Arsons continued. A woman in her 60s who was unable to move out was a victim of no less than 10 incidents, one of which included her being beaten up in her own apartment.[32] When Soviet dissident Boris Kochubievsky visited Boston and gave a speech in appreciation of the American Jews before thousands of listeners in May 1972, he addressed the violence by stating "even in Soviet Union, Jews are not afraid to walk on the streets in their own neighborhoods after dark."[33]

Finally, in October 1972, *Boston Globe* writer Mark Mursky declared that "the end has come for the Jews in Dorchester."[34] The violence Rothstein mentions in the book *The Color of Law* that whites inflicted on new Black residents in hope of expelling them did happen as well in Mattapan, Roxbury, and Dorchester. Although this paper does not intend to extensively cover this violence, violence from both sides did occur.[35] Nonetheless, when fast integration took place in a

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[30] Alan Sheehan, "Jews Claim Temple Fires Plot to Drive Them Out." *Boston Globe*, May 28, 1970. https://www.newspapers.com/image/435344670/?terms=Jews%20Claim%20Temple%20Fires%20Plot%20to%20Drive%20Them%20Out&match=1. There was a complex nature to the different Jewish groups in how to help their coreligionists in Mattapan, Dorchester, and Mattapan. The inactions of some Jewish groups will be mentioned in later section to be further discussed.

[31] George Collins, "Jewish Groups Hope to Heal Splits in Urban America," *Boston Globe*, December 5, 1970, https://www.newspapers.com/image/435193078/?terms=Jewish%20Groups%20Hope%20to%20Heal%20Splits%20in%20Urban%20America&match=1.

[32] Leo Shapiro, "Center Deals with Jews' Problems," *Boston Globe*, July 10, 1970. https://www.newspapers.com/image/435449618/?terms=Center%20Deals%20with%20Jews%27%20Problems&match=1.

[33] Levine, *The Death of an American Jewish Community*, 322.

[34] Mark Mursky, "Synagogues of Dorchester" *Boston Globe*, October 22, 1972. https://www.newspapers.com/image/436322091/?terms=the%20end%20has%20come%20for%20the%20Jews%20in%20Dorchester&match=1.

[35] There were many accounts as well of white violence towards Blacks. For example, the anonymous writer in his "Confession of a Blockbuster "in *the Metropolitan Real Estate Journal* mentioned how the Black family next to him were stoned every night by white teenagers.

traditionally-rooted neighborhood, Jews suffered from a high level of violence despite their white skin color.

It is important to note that violent crimes were not the only contributing factors to the dislogement. Year later, in retrospect to the violent crimes and hostility, Jonathan Kaufman wrote in his book *Broken Alliance*: "the city is polarized beyond hope… the Jew is the weakest link in the white chain and the black militant knows that few-Jew are concerned with Jew's plight…so now most Jewish neighborhoods are integrated, and the militant blacks there practice terror, extortion, and violence."[36] While Jonathan Kaufman's commentary was not wrong in the discussion of the binary between Jews and Black militants, one must bear in mind that Black leaders strictly opposed the behaviors of the Black radicals, and among the Jews there were established wealthy Jewry and infamous slumlords who oppressed their tenants. Considering the issues in Mattapan, Dorchester, and Roxbury, the Jew's plight and eventual dislodgement was also caused by the inactivity of established Jewry.

The Abandonment from Established Jewry

If the established Jewry had paid closer attention and took active measures to protect their coreligionists, the dislodgement may have been prevented from happening. Jews were not without influence in 20th century Boston. In fact, the areas of Mattapan, Dorchester, and Roxbury alone saw the emergence of John F. Fitzgerald, a U.S. representative and mayor of Boston who was also the grandfather of U.S. President John F. Kennedy, Julius Ansel, a member of the Massachusetts House of Representative as well as the Massachusetts State Senate, and John B. Hayes, a Boston mayor—all of whom were Jews. The residents of Mattapan, Dorchester, and Roxbury felt a strong connection to the neighborhoods with a "part of the pride [that was] deeply rooted in a long history of political consciousness."[37]

Jews had powerful connections through various organizations in Boston and across the U.S. One major power center was the Associated Jewish Philanthropies—called "the federation". The federation, first founded in Boston by German Jews, served as a model for later Jewish developments in Chicago, Detroit, New York, and Philadelphia. In the 1910s, about twenty-five

[36] Jonathan Kaufman, *Broken Alliance: The Turbulent Times Between Blacks and Jews in America* (New York: Scribner's, 1988), 157, quoted in Hill Levine, *The Death of an American Jewish Community: A Tragedy of Good Intentions* (Lexington, Massachusetts: Plunkett Lake Press, 2012), 256, Kindle Edition.
[37] "HOUSING PROJECTS," *Boston Globe.*

local federations operated in the United States. In the case of Boston, the federation boasted itself as a center of educational, cultural, overseas, and defense needs of Jews.[38] In the 1970s, *Boston Globe* posted an article titled "200 agencies in 66 communities help million people," most of which were Jewish organizations. Yet, when the traditional neighborhoods that gave birth to Jewish leaderships and played a vital role in Jewish power dynamics in Boston faced difficulties on the federal and local levels with the ramifications of violent crimes, blockbusting, and BBURG, many of those with power and wealth chose to flee rather than facing the issues upfront.

The main reason was the layered social structure within the Jewish community. The residents of Dorchester, Roxbury, and Mattapan at the end of the 1960s consisted of a large population of working-class Russian Jews instead of the mostly wealthy and well-do-to German Jews, who, in the 1960s, mostly dwelled in leafy suburbs such as Brookline. Dorchester Jews had to contribute to the federation and the campaign while being well aware that they would not be welcome on the federation's leadership committees. Dorchester residents had their own standards for status locally with membership at, for instance, King Solomon Lodge of B'nai B'rith where members rejected unfair landlords. There were multiple layers of division within the minority group that made it easier for community members capable of making change to simply look the other way.

The story of Levine Weinstein can provide further insights as to the ultimate avoidance of problems from Jewish elites, as he projected the Blacks' takeover of Jewish neighborhoods in 1951. In 1951, Weinstein successfully convinced leaders of the federation to relocate Hebrew College from traditional Roxbury to the western suburb of Brookline. Speaking of the reasons, he has suggested that "by virtue of the fact that blacks and Jews lived in contiguous areas throughout much of the northeast and because Jews related so easily to the problems of other embattled ethnic groups, it was naturally assumed that black would take over Jewish neighborhoods." Weinstein predicted the displacement of Jews in 1951 and presented his projections for the population make-up in 1957: "based on my experience in the national area," Weinstein said, citing his experience in heading a study team on the changing neighborhoods in the United States, "I can tell you that [Roxbury] will be almost 100 percent black in five years."[39] His projection was not wholly accurate

[38] Daniel Elazar, *Community and Polity: The Organizational Dynamics of American Jewry* (Philadelphia PA: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1976), 33.
[39] Interview with Lewis Weinstein, December 18, 1987, in *The Death of an American Jewish Community: A Tragedy of Good Intentions*, ed. Hill Levine (Plunket Late Press, 2012), 53.

in retrospect, though it did eventually come to pass. Nevertheless, Weinstein's story exemplifies the general notion that Jewish elites were readily complacent with conventional thinking that the integration of African-Americans would cause destruction in Jewish neighborhoods. They expected Jewish residents to move away without considering the actual financial and moving capabilities of their less-to-do coreligionists under such a self-fulfilling prophecy. Given the attitudes of Jewish leaders reflected in Weinstein's story, the various approaches that the leaders took in light of violent crimes, blockbusting, and B-Burg could be summarized into one sentence by Norman Leventhal, the founder of the Beacon company and a former Jewish federation president: "by its own admission, the Jewish leadership generally had one single-track policy: 'urging the Jews to get the hell out of [Mattapan, Dorchester, and Roxbury] as quickly as they could.'"[40] Since the leaders already saw projections of integration and had made preparations to leave years before, their policy was a reflection of their "succession theory" that did not consider those who were unable to move.

Under the guise of suburbanization and "succession theory," the relocation of some of the well-to-do was underway long before the intense change in 1968.[41] An article from the *Boston Globe* reported that with "2500 out of 70,000 Jewish families left," "the death of Jewish mother neighborhood in Roxbury-Dorchester is attributed to the coming of age of the second and third generation…and to the expansion of suburban housing and school systems."[42] It showed the readily moving community under the idea of the "succession theory," but the successful were not the only ones in the community in the mother neighborhood.

For those who were unable to move, the difficulties they experienced were reflected in local reports. While there was an "exodus not only of the young people but by the disappearances of institutions, stores, centers, and synagogues," "only a small percentage…can be moved without difficulty [to new neighborhoods]." Jewish support services were always needed: moving was

[40] Interview with Norman Leventhal, March 29, 1988, in *The Death of an American Jewish Community: A Tragedy of Good Intentions*, ed. Hill Levine (Plunket Late Press, 2012), 318.

[41] Succession theory is explained in Weinstein, *the Death of an American Jewish Community*. It is a theory that accounts for changing neighborhoods: it was natural for Jews, now they have broken into new social bastions, to find inconsistencies with their success and the fact that they were still residing an inner-city ethnic neighborhood. As a result, those who could escape did, selling estates to Blacks, and those who stayed had particular interests in mind, mostly slumlords and shopkeepers.

[42] Laura Halbrow,"Religion in a Changing City – I: Jewish Community Exodus Leaves Temples Deserted," *Boston Globe*, February 7,1967. https://www.newspapers.com/image/433970894/?terms=Jewish%20Community%20Exodus%20Leaves%20Temples%20Deserted&match=1.

lethal for elders, and new apartments might not be safe. Although many did not want to leave their neighborhoods for reasons of nostalgia and health, the Associated Jewish Community Council and Jewish Philanthropies—following the one-track policy cited by Norman Leventhal—were focused on helping Jews to move away. [43]

Yet, worse than the passive approach Jewish organizations took to address the problems was the seeming invisibility of the suffering in Mattapan, Roxbury, and Dorchester to the elites and young intellectuals. When the Council of Jewish Federations and Welfare Funds were scheduled to meet with the arrivals of Jewish leaders across the country in 1969, the request from members to address the concerns of the Renewal Plan was rejected. Hillel Levine, a Jewish Harvard faculty member, fought arduously for increasing funding for Jewish education but at the same time was completely unaware of the problems in Dorchester and Mattapan. When one of his students told Levine about Dorchester and Mattapan, Levine was confused: "Dorchester and Mattapan? Wasn't that part of Boston, somewhere?"[44] This showed the general lack of awareness of many Jewish elites in Boston to the gravity of the neighborhood changes in Mattapan, Dorchester, and Roxbury. The center of their world was in their new, affluent neighborhoods in Brookline.

In hindsight, many criticized the lack of "sophistication" and "aggressiveness" of Jewish leaders' responses. Norman Leventhal attacked the inability of Jewish leaders to solve the issues in the mother neighborhood. Levine wrote a book partially to point out the responsibility and complex nature of Jewish leadership. The lack of effort of Jewish leaders to resolving the predicament of their coreligionists was to many a contributing factor to the rapid, lethal dislodgement of Jewish neighborhoods.

Conclusion

Rabbi Samuel Kroff angrily challenged historians in memory of the death of his congregant Shumrack in some of the last existing areas of Jewish living space in Mattapan in 1973, asking "How was it possible for a Jewish community of 40,000 soul [in Mattapan] to be emptied in the

[43] Shapiro, "Center Deals with Jews' Problems."
[44] Levine, *Death of an American Jewish Community*, 251.

course of two years and how much crime was concentrated in the short space of 40 blocks?" [45] The short time span it took for Jewish neighborhoods to change was the same across the areas of Mattapan, Roxbury, and Dorchester. Neighborhoods that had been the center of living for half a century had almost completely disappeared by the early 1970s, whereas drastic change had only started in 1968.

Rabbi Samuel Kroff's question was a hard one to answer. In conclusion, HOLC maps marked Mattapan, Roxbury, and Dorchester as "definitely declining," which set them up as prime targets to be replaced by federal urban renewal program through local consortiums such as B-BURG. B-BURG's line ran through central Jewish neighborhoods; the banks' willingness to give loans to low-income groups gave realtors the ability to sell estates with virtually no down payments. Free from stringent regulations, the realtors used blockbusting schemes in Jewish neighborhoods in Mattapan, Roxbury, and Dorchester. While blockbusting resulted in fast African-American integration into the neighborhoods, escalation grew between Jewish residents and their new neighbors: the long-time Anti-Semitic sentiment in the area combined with Black radical attacks against racist Jews and oppressive slumlords. Frequent violent crimes took place. The lack of proactivity from Jewish leaders left poor, elder, and nostalgic Jews with no option but to be forced out of their neighborhoods. In this situation, the source of the problems that dislodged Jewish neighborhoods was the HOLC maps that saw Jews as a lower grade of white. These maps then led to B-BURG, which incited blockbusting. Blockbusting escalated conflicts between Jews and African-Americans. The apathy from Established Jewry to the violent crimes in Mattapan, Roxbury, and Dorchester completed the dislodgement.

Such a story offers a new approach to 'white flight'. Despite their skin color, HOLC maps associated Jews with terms such as 'infiltration' and 'foreign.' In fact, research in the past has reflected a hierarchy of nationalities and races in real estate texts. From the most desirable to least desirable, the list places the likes of English, Germans, Scots, Irish, and North Italians at the top and ranks Russian Jews, South Italians, African-Americans, and Mexicans at the bottom. [46] When 'white flight' occurred, the reality was not as simple as the apparent explanation that the racist,

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[45] Leo Shapiro, "Murder Victim Eulogized: Synagogue Was His Home," *Boston Globe*, March 21, 1973. https://www.newspapers.com/image/435902644/?terms=Victim%20Eulogized%3A%20Synagogue%20Was%20His%20Home&match=1.

[46] Charles Abraham*, Forbidden Neighbors: A Study of Prejudice in Housing*, (New York: Harper and Bros., 1955), 161.

profit-driven white residents panickily sold their houses under the belief that African-American integration equated to property devaluation and loss of safety. It was sometimes hard for the ‘white’ residents to move because they were also a minority placed at the bottom of the ‘white’ category. In the case of Mattapan, Roxbury, and Dorchester, white flight demonstrates a phenomenon of layered social injustice in the United States.

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