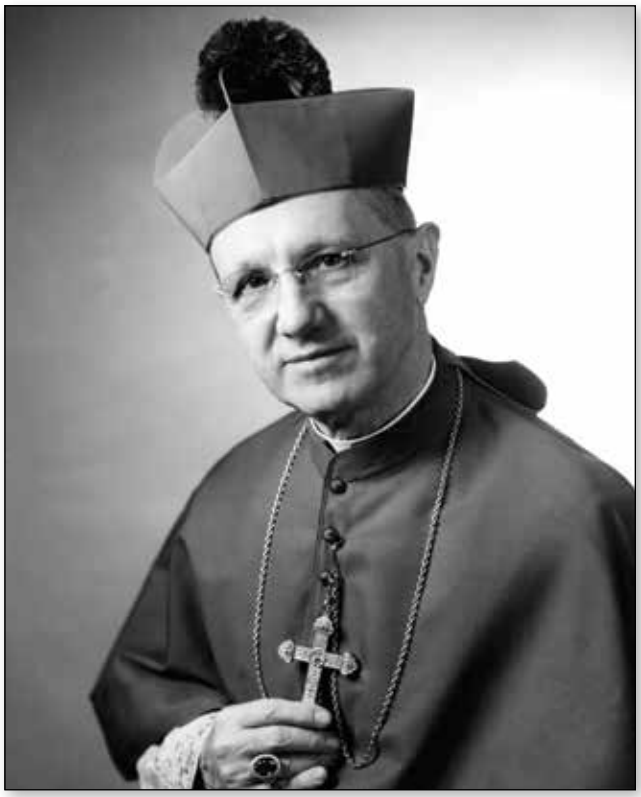
Gateway Liberalism:

Catholic and Jewish Responses to Racially Transitioning Neighborhoods and Schools In St. Louis's West End, 1945–1960

SARAH SIEGEL



Joseph Ritter (1892–1967) had already taken action to desegregate Catholic schools before he arrived in St. Louis as archbishop in 1947. As the new Bishop of Indianapolis in 1938, Ritter ordered that parochial schools no longer be segregated, which met with opposition and protests from groups as varied as the Ku Klux Klan and some clergy. *(Image: Archdiocese of St. Louis Archives)*

Within the span of one year, two civil rights decisions, one religious and one secular, signaled momentous shifts in the racial and religious demographics of St. Louis's schools and neighborhoods. In the summer of 1947, St. Louis's newly arrived Cardinal Joseph Ritter announced that the city and county's Catholic high schools would desegregate.[1] A few months later, in January 1948, the United States Supreme Court ruled racially restrictive housing covenants illegal in the St. Louis–based *Shelley v. Kraemer* case. For decades, racial covenants had forced a growing black population to remain in overcrowded, segregated neighborhoods, and as a result of the case, blacks gradually moved into previously all-white neighborhoods across the city and north county.

These two decisions, imposed upon St. Louisans by authority figures, sparked rapid and intense demographic change in schools and neighborhoods. The area most affected by housing desegregation was the West End neighborhood, a working- and middle-class community located on the northwestern border of the city. In the decade following these two decisions, the West End specifically and St. Louis as a whole rose to be a model of progressive race relations that quickly faltered. Buoyed by an initially lauded school desegregation process, West End activists worked hard to stabilize their neighborhood's interracial composition by publicizing the neighborhood as a model of an integrated, desirable, middle-class community.

As the decisions of 1947–1948 signaled clear change in the city's population patterns, a broad range of St. Louisans exhibited optimism regarding the future of race relations in the city. This confidence was especially apparent in the way the city's press portrayed St. Louis's response to the *Brown v. Board* public school desegregation case. When the *Brown* decision was announced in May 1954, local news articles distanced the city from the turmoil the case caused in the South. On the day of the court's announcement, the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* foresaw that the decision "will cause the most radical upheaval in the South since reconstruction days," yet a day later, the city's NAACP branch also correctly predicted "that no difficulty will be experienced because of integrated education [in St. Louis]. … All people have a profound respect for the laws of the land."[2] Even though the *Brown* case deemed Missouri's school segregation laws illegal alongside those of the South, the city reported the decision as if residents were northern onlookers. In fact, St. Louis's newspapers usually took a nonchalant tone regarding the city's school desegregation to highlight its lack of controversy. The press also declined to give much publicity to anti-integration protest, choosing instead to focus on the logistics of the desegregation plan.[3] The *Post-Dispatch*, the *Globe-Democrat*, and the black-owned *Argus* described the three desegregation phases planned by the school board, announced each stage of implementation, and reported the number black students who transferred to each previously all-white school. They provided quotes from school administrators who praised students for adapting quickly to their new peers.[4] Overall, Missouri's desegregation process received surprisingly little attention from the press, and St. Louisans prided themselves on their peaceful, law-abiding citizenry that seemed, for the most part, accepting of progressive change.

Certainly, some ardent and vocal segregationists expressed their anger at desegregation. Most notably, an organization called the National Citizens Protective Association organized briefly to express opposition to the desegregation plan. Many others surely expressed disapproval of segregation privately, and a minority of parents instructed their children not to associate with black classmates socially, telling their children to "just act like [the black students] are not there."[5] But public school desegregation plans in St. Louis were implemented without violence or widespread opposition and with the support of a variety of community institutions, especially civil rights, interfaith, and neighborhood organizations.[6] In some cases, parents organized to ease their children's schools' integration. They expressed their enthusiasm that desegregation strengthened the city's commitment to equality and democracy, and their views were accepted as mainstream.[7] At the time it was implemented in 1954–1955, civil rights groups and liberal whites largely hailed the integration process as a victory. Indeed, the St. Louis

Board of Education had completed its desegregation plan on schedule by September 1955, just over a year after the *Brown* decision and two years before the federally forced desegregation of Central High in Little Rock, Arkansas. City leaders, school officials, residents, and news outlets touted St. Louis as a law-abiding community willing to actively facilitate, or at least passively accept, integration.

Despite this tranquil picture, the recently desegregated schools and racially transitioning neighborhoods in St. Louis fell prey to re-segregation within only a few years, and this racial and economic segregation has persisted to the present day. There were instances in the late fifties and early sixties of the school board allowing white students to attend white schools outside of their neighborhood districts through loopholes and busing, but overall re-segregation occurred due to racial change within city and county neighborhoods. Less than ten years after this purported triumph of school integration and racial progressivism, school and neighborhood desegregation had all but disappeared, and St. Louis became yet another example of the devastating shortcomings of liberal racial policies.

Why did a city that acted so confidently to end legalized school segregation overwhelmingly fail to sustain integrated urban schools and neighborhoods? The answer lies in the contradictions of liberalism, both in St. Louis and throughout the country. Historian Robert Self defines liberalism with four factors: a general commitment to New Deal welfare institutions, the economic promotion of the middle class, equality of opportunity for all races, and individualism.[8] As Self has explained, a central pitfall of liberalism in the mid-twentieth century was that when white liberals' commitment to racial equality clashed with their commitment to expanded opportunity for the middle class, they almost always favored benefiting the middle class to the detriment of black economic, political, and housing opportunities. White liberals' desire to live and own property in upwardly mobile communities ultimately trumped visions of interracial neighborhoods. Self provides a crucial explanation for where goals of liberalism fall apart, but it is necessary to analyze local cases to understand why this breakdown of liberal ideology occurred and what its consequences were.

Two distinct but related types of liberalism were present in St. Louis, though both failed to create a coherent vision of an urban community that was both integrated and economically prosperous. A small but vocal cohort of active liberals understood that maintaining an integrated urban neighborhood would require individuals to make housing choices based on a desire to foster an integrated community. They understood that pursuing economic advancement and racial integration simultaneously would require a personal commitment. They joined interracial neighborhood organizations with the goal of fostering an integrated, economically stable neighborhood. As large numbers of their neighbors disinvested in the city and moved to the suburbs, however, active liberals realized that their agenda would be incredibly difficult to implement. Organizations that promoted neighborhood advancement experienced interracial disagreements, inhibiting their moral authority. Further, active white liberals never had a critical mass to influence demographic patterns. Despite a more realistic understanding of what it would take to craft an integrated neighborhood, active liberals were unable to sustain an interracial community.

In addition to a small number of active liberals, the majority of whites in the West End were what can be called passive liberals: they believed in both economic opportunity and racial equality, but were unwilling to take any actions that would risk their financial security. To be a passive liberal does not mean that these individuals were unwilling to act; in fact, these individuals were quick to leave the neighborhood when they sensed the possibility of economic decline. These individuals assumed that an influx of black residents would decrease property values, and they chose to leave the West End (sometimes even before blacks started moving into the neighborhood) rather than risk living in a declining community. Passive liberals could feel secure that their race-based decisions were not racist because they espoused the rhetoric of racial equality. The term "passive" therefore refers to the nature of their commitment to liberalism: they believed that individuals should not be responsible for personally participating in residential desegregation. Passive liberalism could only improve race relations when a community would endorse policies that were becoming mainstream, as was the case in St. Louis's public school desegregation.[9] Passive liberalism failed to produce improvements for blacks when whites perceived personal financial or social risks, seen in whites' housing choices in the late 1940s through the 1950s. While this passive liberalism may seem innocuous on its surface, it had pernicious consequences that have maintained economic and racial segregation into the twenty-first century. Most insidious, as passive liberalism became the mainstream in the West End, individuals could espouse liberal rhetoric while justifying race-based decisions about where to live and with whom to socialize.

To better understand racially transitioning neighborhoods, urban scholars have examined the religious influences within cities, which in many cases had profound effects on urban policy and neighborhood demographics. Attention to religious population patterns is especially important in heavily Catholic St Louis and in the West End, which had a large Jewish population. Even though the character of liberalism was different for Catholics and Jews, the effects of liberalism were similar on each group's housing choices. As evidenced by Cardinal Ritter's decision to desegregate parochial schools, Catholic leadership in St. Louis proved much more actively liberal than the general population. Parishioners therefore often felt caught between their religious devotion to the Catholic hierarchy and their social anxiety about living in close proximity to blacks. This tension between mandates from Catholic religious leaders and discomfort with integrated communities translated into a grudging acceptance of passive liberalism. It led to the existence of integrated institutions and a simultaneous exodus into racially homogenous suburbs.[10] Even though Jewish laypeople were more likely than Catholics to espouse liberal rhetoric,

BLUE CROSS Enrollment March 1-18

The "Y" Journ

Vol. 27—No. 26 Y.M.H.A.-Y.W.H.A.—ST. LOUIS, MO.

Diane Joyce of TV to Open Nu-Teens' Program

Diane Joyce of KSD-TV, also nown as Janet Dailey on KXLW, teacher at Beaumont High chool, will formally "cut the ipe" on the Nu-Teens Committee rst activity—a "He-She-Bang" ening, at Teen Haven, Sunday ght, March 4, from 7:30 to 10 m. The affair is open to teen-ers from 13-16 and will feature ree original comedy skits by embers of the committee, which chairmanned by Ruth Waldman d Roberta Harris. Admission is ly 20c with proceeds going to J. A.

The Nu-Teens Committee is a oup of younger teenagers who ll sponsor programs at Teen ven on alternating Wednesday d Sunday nights, or twice a onth. The schedule for these will posted in the lobby. Watch for —and be sure to come, stag or g, to the "He-She-Bang" ening.

uniors Preparing or Annual Purim arnival, March 24

"One World" Is Novel Program to Be Offered Here

Today's news is being made in all parts of the world. An explosion occurs in Korea and our entire lives are changed here in America. To meet the need of people to know what is happening elsewhere, and how it affects them, a new program is beginning, entitled, "ONE WORLD." Twice each month, a citizen of a foreign country will speak on life in his native land. There will also be short films about the country on the program.

The first program, on Monday, March 12, at 8:30 p. m., will present Dr. Chatterjee of India. Dr. Chatterjee is a medical student at Washington U., and has spoken on life in this country before numerous community groups. After his talk, there will be a question and discussion period. All programs in the series will be free of charge and open to the public.

Future programs will deal with Brazil and the Philippines. Programs will be held the second and fourth Mondays of each month.

Arthur Cohn, Chairman Western States Chapter Of Jewish Center Workers

In the course of the annual meeting of the West Central States Chapter of the National Association of Jewish Center Workers held recently in Chicago, the following were elected as officers of the Chapter for the coming year:

Arthur Cohn, Assistant Executive Director, Y. M.-Y. W. H. A., chairman; William Kahn, Director, Intermediate Division, Council House, Vice-Chairman, and Chairman, Program Committee; Rose

SPEAKS SUNDAY

MAX LERNER

Large Crowd Lauds Jewish Music Festival

An audience estimated at 300 celebrated Jewish music at a Jewish Music Festival held Tuesday, February 20. This, in spite of a severe rain and windstorm, speaks

Soloists for the program were Alvin Rudnitsky, assistant concert master of the St. Louis Symphony well for interest in Jewish music. Orchestra., who played the Baal Shem Suite by Bloch, and Eleanor Lyons, who sang a series of Hebrew and Jewish folk songs.

The evening was introduced by Mrs. Joseph Kingsley from the Board of Jewish Education, who opened the Festival on behalf of the Jewish Cultural Committee and allied organizations sponsoring the event. In addition to the above mentioned soloists, the following participated Dora Menkin,

Max Lerner Concl Forum Season Wi Democracy And T

Three Doubles Handball Titles Decided Here

The Class A handball tournament came to a dramatic close last Sundy when the team of Al Goldstein and Paul Mayorwitz won from Herb Shieber and Carl Winstein. It was a heart-breaker for the losing duo because they were coming strong toward the end. The champs took the first game 21 to 10, but they faltered in the second, dropping it by the same score.

It was a nip and tuck during the rubber contests until the score reached 19 to 17 in favor of Goldstein-Mayorwitz. Then it happened. Herb Shieber reached for one and pulled a muscle. The pain was too much and continued play might prove harmful. Very reluctantly, upon advice of the chairman of the tournament, the game and title was awarded to Goldstein-Mayorwitz.

Steve Sudzinski and Marshall Dennison were a bit hard-pressed in taking the Class B crown from Sig Goffstein and Bernard Yevelson. The champs took the first game 21-16. In the second contest, they had to show some rare skill in winning 21-20.

In the Class C tournament, Bob Portnoy and Maury Fox had easy sailing. They drubbed the team of Al Bierman and Steve Redler 21-6 and 21-8.

The YMHA/YWHA sponsored a Liberal Forum in the 1940s and 1950s that featured a number of speakers who were prominent nationally. Among those was Max Lerner (1902–1992), a Russian immigrant who became a popular journalist, editor, and scholar. By the time he spoke at the Liberal Forum in St. Louis, he was well known for advocating rights for African-Americans, as well as supporting internment of Japanese Americans during World War II. *(Image: St. Louis Jewish Community Archives)*

most Jews' commitments to racial equality and integration were also passive—they were ultimately unwilling to take any action that posed economic or social risk in order to cultivate a desirable, integrated urban neighborhood.[11] For Jews in the West End, the problem with liberalism was a gap between rhetoric and action. Passive liberals accepted desegregated institutions but proved unwilling to commit to active pursuance of an integrated, desirable neighborhood.

St. Louisans' understanding of the necessity and inevitability of school integration opened unique opportunities for residents to lead integration, and many of these efforts had religious influences. Despite efforts by some religious and secular leaders, though, St. Louis missed its opportunity for a truly integrated city because a majority of passively liberal residents and religious leaders could not reconcile their theoretical commitment to racial equality with personal choices regarding where to live and educate their children. Highlighting Catholic and Jewish experiences with school and neighborhood desegregation demonstrates these complex dynamics. Regardless of who spearheaded campaigns to promote integration—

Temple Israel was among the religious institutions at the "Holy Corners" area in the Central West End at the intersection of Kingshighway and McPherson, and it was the synagogue for the large Jewish population in the West End. *(Image: St. Louis Jewish Community Archives)*

institutionally based Catholic leaders, individual liberal Jewish leaders, or secular interracial neighborhood organizations—the results were similar: between 1945 and 1960, most whites moved out of neighborhoods that began integrating after 1948.

St. Louis's West End neighborhood typifies the city's racial transition and failed efforts to create stable, middle-class, integrated urban spaces. The West End is located north of Forest Park, extending west to the city limits, east to Kingshighway Boulevard, one of the city's central arteries, and north approximately to Natural Bridge Road. The West End bordered African American residential enclaves, making it a logical place for blacks to move after the *Shelley v. Kraemer* decision. The neighborhood's Windemere Place was the first block of the city to desegregate in the wake of the court decision.[12] Individuals who lived in the West End in the first half of the twentieth century remember it fondly. Harvey Brown, a Jewish West End resident from 1937–1950, explained, "it was a wonderful place to grow up, and we had everything we needed. . . . [W]e had so many places to go to play."[13]

The West End was home to two Catholic parishes that flourished during the early twentieth century: St. Rose of Lima and St. Mark. Adjacent to the neighborhood lies the Cathedral Basilica of St. Louis, the spiritual center of the archdiocese of St. Louis. A variety of Jewish congregations also inhabited the neighborhood through the first half of the century. Most of these synagogues had relocated to the West End from locations in or near downtown, following a population shift as the Jewish community grew, prospered economically, and moved west. Even though racial transition was occurring by the early fifties, the West End still boasted at least fourteen separate Jewish congregations in 1954.[14] While many Catholic children attended parochial schools, most Jews sent their children to public school. Soldan High School (for a brief period known as Soldan-Blewett), located on Union Boulevard in the heart of the West End, housed a large Jewish student body from its construction in 1909 until after World War II and was a source of pride for the neighborhood. In fact, Jewish alumnae and their families continue to refer to the school and the prominent place it once had for their community. Analyzing Catholic, Jewish, and secular responses to school and neighborhood integration demonstrates the ineffectiveness of St. Louis's liberalism.

There is a very strong Catholic influence on the St. Louis region. St. Louis today has a higher proportion of Catholics attending parochial schools than any diocese in the country.[15] As Cardinal Joseph Ritter's 1947 school desegregation indicated, the liberal Catholic impulse to embrace integrated schools and neighborhoods was rooted in Catholic leadership and institutions. While some Catholic St. Louisians supported school and neighborhood integration, a large portion resented incoming blacks. Clergy, recognizing that fixed parish boundaries would suffer great population losses if white Catholics abandoned their parishes, worked to convince white Catholics to remain in their parishes and also sometimes to convert

blacks to Catholicism. These efforts, both to keep white Catholics in the city and to convert blacks, were largely unsuccessful. The post–World War II years witnessed a substantial decline of the Catholic population in St. Louis city, and many urban parishes—including those in and near the West End—had to be closed or consolidated in the late twentieth century due to a decreasing Catholic population.

By the early twentieth century, the vast majority of the Catholic population in St. Louis was white. Black Catholics, whose population had French Creole roots, worshiped in the segregated St. Elizabeth Parish, and many sent their children to St. Joseph's Colored High School. However, Cardinal Ritter's 1947 announcement that all Catholic high schools would desegregate was a reaction to the inadequate resources at St. Joseph's. His actively liberal proclamation provoked a variety of responses from both Catholics and non-Catholics, and correspondence poured into the Archdiocese from St. Louis, across the country, and places as remote as Mexico and Bangalore. The vast majority of the letters—402 out of 479—expressed approval of Cardinal Ritter's actions.[16] They applauded his courageous declaration and implored him not to let segregationists change his mind. One approving citizen wrote, "it is difficult to see how the Church's mission to men of all races and nationalities can be fulfilled in the United States without some bold action such as your own."[17]

Those who disapproved also sent emotional letters. They cited many reasons—personal, economic, political, and racial—for disapproving of the Cardinal's actions. They expressed outrage that stemmed from fears of miscegenation, worry that black people had bad odor, frustration that the money white Catholics donated to the Archdiocese was being used to help undeserving blacks, and a belief that Cardinal Ritter's unilateral action was reminiscent of Hitler's totalitarianism. Some stated that they refused to send their children to integrated institutions and intended to transfer their children to other schools, with one individual stating, "all I can say is thank God for our Public Schools."[18] Still others referred to the city's southern connections, explaining to the Cardinal that "St. Louis has always been a pro-Southern city, and I think we have handled the racial problem to our advantage, so why should the Catholic Church be the first to initiate such a drastic flaw?"[19] One woman even claimed she no longer

St. Mark's Church quickly became a large and prominent Catholic congregation by the start of the twentieth century. This building at Page and Academy avenues, designed by the prominent architectural firm of Barnett, Haynes, and Barnett, was completed in 1902. The school was nearby. *(Image: Archdiocese of St. Louis Archives)*

Completed in 1909, Soldan High School originally educated a wealthy and predominantly Jewish student body until the 1950s. It was named for Frank Louis Soldan, superintendent of St. Louis Public Schools who had died the previous year. It is one of several in St. Louis designed by William B. Ittner, who designed schools in new ways starting in the early twentieth century with increased attention to the needs of students and new learning theory. Today, it is the Soldan International Studies High School.

wanted to be Catholic.[20] The reasoning in the disapproving letters ranged from desires to maintain the status quo to overt racial hatred.

It is impossible to tell whether the majority of St. Louis's Catholic population approved or disapproved of Catholic school integration solely by analyzing letters sent to Cardinal Ritter. Comparing the number of supportive and opposing letters sent does little good because many people who personally disapproved of the Cardinal's actions were probably unwilling to voice their dissenting opinions directly to the Cardinal. What is clear, though, is that many Catholics in St. Louis were deeply disconcerted by the contradictions between their personal racial views and their Cardinal's liberalism. Other pieces of evidence from the months and years after Cardinal Ritter's announcement provide clues to how the community adjusted to integrated Catholic schools, as well as to increasing numbers of blacks in previously all-white neighborhoods. For the most part Catholic St. Louisans, like the majority of the city, acted as passive liberals who accepted the reality of desegregated institutions due to Cardinal Ritter's liberal activism, but were also unwilling to risk the respectability of their city to fight for segregated schools and neighborhoods.

Even if a significant number of Catholics disliked Cardinal Ritter's racial policies, most limited their complaints to friends and family. Dan Kelley, a West End resident who was ten years old at the time of the integration, explained that his parents were very upset with the Cardinal's decision, though they, like most Catholics, did not engage in any protest against the decision. Kelley recalled, "people talked about it at church" and worried that "everything was going to go to hell in a hand basket." In the end, though, he explained that while many disagreed with the decision, "they accommodated it."[21] This passive acceptance of Catholic school desegregation and the Cardinal's liberal race policies opened an opportunity for Catholic leaders to be optimistic about the possibility of fostering interracial parishes. However, the ambivalent nature of the Catholic community's commitment to integration ultimately did very little to sustain integration in the West End.

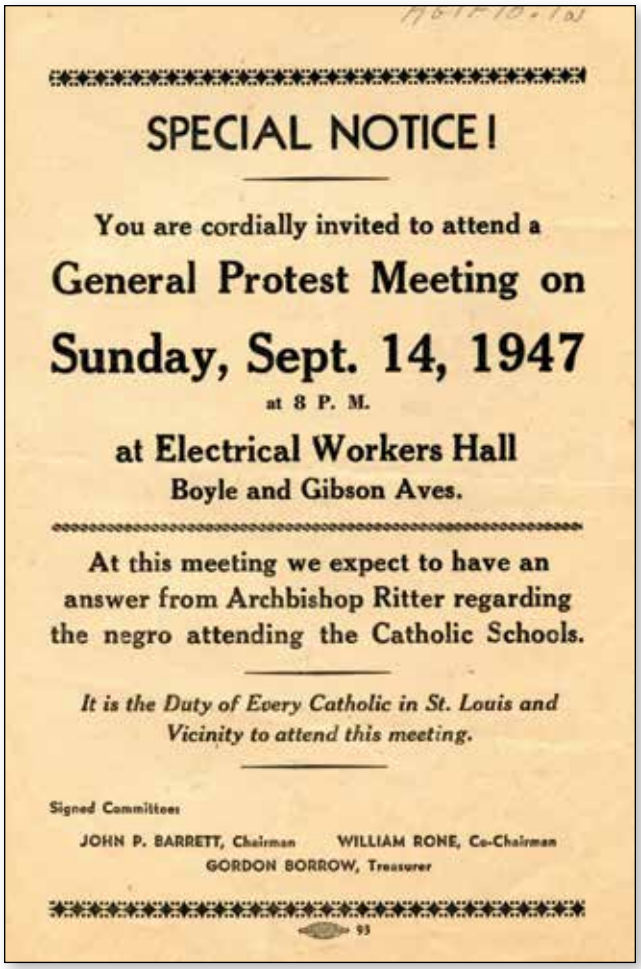
The most salient example of short-lived but direct opposition to Cardinal Ritter's school integration was a

St. Elizabeth's was an African-American Catholic Church in the 1940s; most of its parishioners sent their children to the segregated St. Joseph's Colored High School. In the undated first communion photo from St. Elizabeth's, note the white nun on the left. *(Images: Archdiocese of St. Louis Archives)*

group of over eight hundred Catholics who formed an organization to block Catholic school desegregation. The Catholic Parents Association of St. Louis and St. Louis County threatened to sue the Cardinal for forcing integration. Just weeks after its creation, the group reluctantly disbanded after Cardinal Ritter announced that anyone opposing the integration would be excommunicated. During the emotionally charged final meeting of the Catholic Parents Association, group leader John Barrett pleaded with the crowd to rescind its legal threats against the Cardinal and disband the group. On the verge of tears and "in a state of near collapse," he announced, "the only alternative we can now have to disbanding this group is to turn on our Archbishop and our faith. I am not going to do that. We cannot scandalize our Catholic religion and oppose our Archbishop without getting into sin. The only way we could carry on after this, is to throw up our Catholic religion."[22] Barrett "wept openly" as he put forth a motion to disband the group. The motion was met with loud booing from the crowd, and one man even grabbed the microphone and shouted that Catholic parents should transfer their children to public schools in protest. Even though the meeting was emotional and chaotic, only fifty people voted against disbanding the group. After announcing that the motion to disband had passed, "Barrett was so overcome that he blindly left the platform and, hardly able to walk, [had to be] escorted to his car."[23]

Though several individuals voiced their continued dissatisfaction with Catholic school integration, the Catholic Parents Association was defunct. This event indicates two important points. First, when forced to choose, St. Louis Catholics who opposed school integration chose their religious views over their racial views. Second, and equally important, while these Catholics ceased fighting school integration, they did not have to accept an integrated community. As became apparent through housing choices, Catholics often moved out of parishes that were integrating. The short-lived existence of the Catholic Parents Association, while ultimately unsuccessful in their goal of blocking Catholic school integration, certainly demonstrated that many St. Louis Catholics were unwilling to support Cardinal Ritter's liberal race policies.

While the Catholic Parents Association was the most vocal instance of opposition to integrated Catholic schools, some parents did indeed remove students from Catholic schools that enrolled black students. For example, the all-girls Rosati-Kain High School, which drew a significant number of students from West End parishes, enrolled five black students for the 1947–1948 school year.[24] As a result, "about thirty girls who had previously registered, on learning of the acceptance of five colored girls, sought entrance to other Catholic High Schools, and a few to Public High Schools."[25] In subsequent years, black enrollment increased to over one hundred pupils, about 20 percent of the school population by 1954.[26] While some parents chose to actively resist integration through school choice, the majority kept their children in Catholic schools.



SPECIAL NOTICE!

You are cordially invited to attend a

General Protest Meeting on

Sunday, Sept. 14, 1947

at 8 P. M.

at Electrical Workers Hall

Boyle and Gibson Aves.

At this meeting we expect to have an answer from Archbishop Ritter regarding the negro attending the Catholic Schools.

It is the Duty of Every Catholic in St. Louis and Vicinity to attend this meeting.

Signed Committee

JOHN P. BARRETT, Chairman WILLIAM RONE, Co-Chairman

GORDON BORROW, Treasurer

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Not all Catholics supported Ritter's efforts to end segregation in parochial schools, as this handbill from 1947 suggests. *(Image: Archdiocese of St. Louis Archives)*

Even though most St. Louis Catholics were willing to tolerate desegregated religious education, the same could not be said for integrated neighborhoods. Archdiocese concerns and parish population patterns in the racially transitioning West End show clearly that the vast majority of white Catholics were unwilling to live in integrated city neighborhoods; by the late 1960s, St. Rose Parish in the West End only served about two hundred Catholics.[27] In a letter to parish priests, Cardinal Ritter specifically asked if priests would volunteer to be assigned to a racially transitioning parish, saying, "I realize this is an unusual request, but these are unusual times."[28] Clearly, leaders of Catholic institutions understood the necessity of making special efforts to foster stable, integrated neighborhoods that would be acceptable to both blacks and whites.

The history of the West End's St. Rose of Lima Parish, established in 1884 and closed in 1992, shows how racial demographics affected Catholics in this north city neighborhood. The parish flourished in the first half of the twentieth century. It shifted from a small rural community outside the city limits to serving an increasingly urban population, boasting a handsome building dedicated in

On May 4, 1949, students at Washington University in St. Louis held a rally to gain admission for African-Americans at the university. *(Image: Washington University Special Collections)*

1910, a variety of church clubs, and several Catholic institutions, including a maternity hospital and a girls' technical school. The parish also ran St. Rose of Lima School, with an enrollment of over four hundred students.[29]

In recounting the history of St. Rose of Lima from 1934–1984, the parish history explains: "To tell the story of St. Rose Parish… is to tell the story of a neighborhood because Catholic parishes are based in neighborhoods. … [I]n many parishes the people who celebrate the centennial are grandchildren of the men and women who celebrated the golden jubilee. At St. Rose's, however, that is not the case. There are . . . few such people tied to those earlier ones."[30] The history chronicles the racial transition of the West End parish. As a small number of black Catholics moved into the West End, they experienced a moderate degree of discrimination, but the St. Rose of Lima Parish history asserts that many white parishioners were welcoming. St. Rose School activities were open to students regardless of race. One parishioner, Mrs. Anson, "took it as her personal ministry to welcome Black women and make them part of any activity."[31] The first years of integration, both according to the parish history as well as St. Rose student Dan Kelley, passed relatively uneventfully. Kelley remembers that African American students started attending St. Rose Parish elementary school without incident in the late forties, saying "they just started to show up, and it just wasn't a big issue."[32] The parish history says that racial transition increased sharply as federal urban renewal projects demolished hundreds of residences in traditionally black neighborhoods. Many of these new West End residents rented apartments from large, subdivided houses in the neighborhood. St. Rose's Father Clohessy made some efforts to convert blacks, but his proselytizing produced few converts. By 1962, only 14 of St. Rose School's 450 children were white, and many of the new black students were not Catholic.[33]

Even though the official history of St. Rose highlights the positive aspects of the parish's racial history, the account also reveals white Catholics' struggles to reconcile the church's call to integrate and personal discomfort with racial mixing. Even Father Clohssey demonstrated ambivalence in the face of the changing character of the parish. The history explains that he was "uncomfortable with all the changes" occurring in the parish in the late 1950s and early 1960s.[34] The history repeatedly mentions parishioners' worries about the neighborhood's racial change, heavily implying that an influx of blacks was a main reason whites were moving out of the neighborhood. Despite the commitment of Catholic institutions and some parishioners to integrated neighborhoods and schools, in the space of about ten years, the West End's Catholic and non-Catholic population shifted from all-white to temporarily integrated to almost exclusively black.

By 1963, St. Rose's new pastor understood he was the leader of a black parish, so in 1964, St. Rose hosted a meeting of priests to "study the problems of a Black parish."[35] St. Rose Parish, though, could not maintain a sustainable number of black parishioners; by 1967, the parish only had about two hundred members.[36] In 1992, St. Rose and five other north city parishes combined due to low population. Despite Cardinal Ritter's commitment to integrated education, by the 1960s parishes in the West End were focused on maintaining black, not interracial, parishes. The history of St. Rose Parish reveals that attempts in the fifties to foster an interracial parish as well as an integrated neighborhood were ultimately unsuccessful. As was typical for St. Louis race relations, parishioners limited overt opposition to Cardinal Ritter's desegregation, but their residential patterns simultaneously shifted to sustain segregated living patterns. Liberal church leaders were unable to use their moral authority to overcome parishioners' deep-seated fears—racial, economic, and social—of living among blacks. Because most St. Louis Catholics were committed to their faith, not to actively pursuing racial equality, church leadership could not compel Catholic residents to continue living in the area and welcome blacks into their neighborhood.

Jews also migrated out of the city in the decades following World War II—and they often did so earlier than Catholics—but their reasoning diverged in important ways. Unlike Catholic parishes that are geographically bounded, synagogues are free to uproot and move in response to population shifts. As a result, most Jewish institutions in St. Louis actively sought to move locations in anticipation of population shifts, and almost every West End Jewish congregation moved outside the city limits by the 1960s. Some Jews, often affiliated with Jewish organizations, tried to maintain their neighborhoods and convince other whites to remain. They allied with civil rights organizations and created community groups to address the challenges of stabilizing neighborhoods undergoing racial transition. Despite their efforts, though, these actively liberal Jews could not stem the flow of their peers into the county, and by about 1960 the neighborhood that had once been the center of the St. Louis Jewish community was almost exclusively black.

While St. Louis's Jewish community has always been small in comparison with the total population (about 6

In the 1940s, Soldan High School included a sizable Jewish population integrated into the student body, such as this group at the 1949 graduation party. *(Image: St. Louis Jewish Community Archives)*

percent of the city's population in the early 1900s), Jews still profoundly influenced the city and the West End neighborhood in particular. Historian Walter Ehrlich chronicles St. Louis's Jewish population in his two-volume work, *Zion in the Valley*. The first documentation of Jews in the city dates to the early 1800s, and a handful of Jewish institutions arose throughout the mid-1800s. Increased Jewish immigration from Europe to St. Louis mirrored national immigration patterns of the turn of the twentieth century. By 1900, the majority of St. Louis Jews had settled in the "Ghetto," located north of downtown and west to Ninth Street. As the population grew, the city's Jewish area expanded west toward Jefferson Avenue.[37] While most Jews were concentrated in this space, the area was also home to a variety of working-class newcomers, including blacks migrating from the South as well as Irish, Italian, and Polish immigrants, many of whom were Catholic.[38] By the 1920s, the upwardly mobile Jewish population had shifted further west from the Mississippi River, settling in the West End, and most synagogues transferred to new West End locations to better serve their congregants. For the next thirty years, the Jewish community flourished in the West End.

A variety of West End institutions served the Jewish population. As most Jewish children attended public schools, Soldan High School became a source of pride for the Jewish community and hosted liberal interfaith and interracial events. For example, in 1941 the school held a Youth and Democracy Rally, which Catholics, Protestants, Jews, blacks, and whites attended.[39] While Jews were never the majority religion in either the West End or at Soldan, the school still offered a full program of Jewish classes, as well as an active Hebrew Club.[40] Jewish Soldan graduates of the 1940s discuss their alma mater very fondly. Anabelle Chapel remembered, "Soldan I really loved. Those were some of the finest days of my youth. It was a very good school."[41] Similarly, Harvey Brown, who graduated from Soldan in 1944, recalled that "Soldan was a great city school."[42] Several alumni who graduated in the 1940s particularly remember the school's outstanding English department. From both a social and academic perspective, Soldan graduates from the 1940s

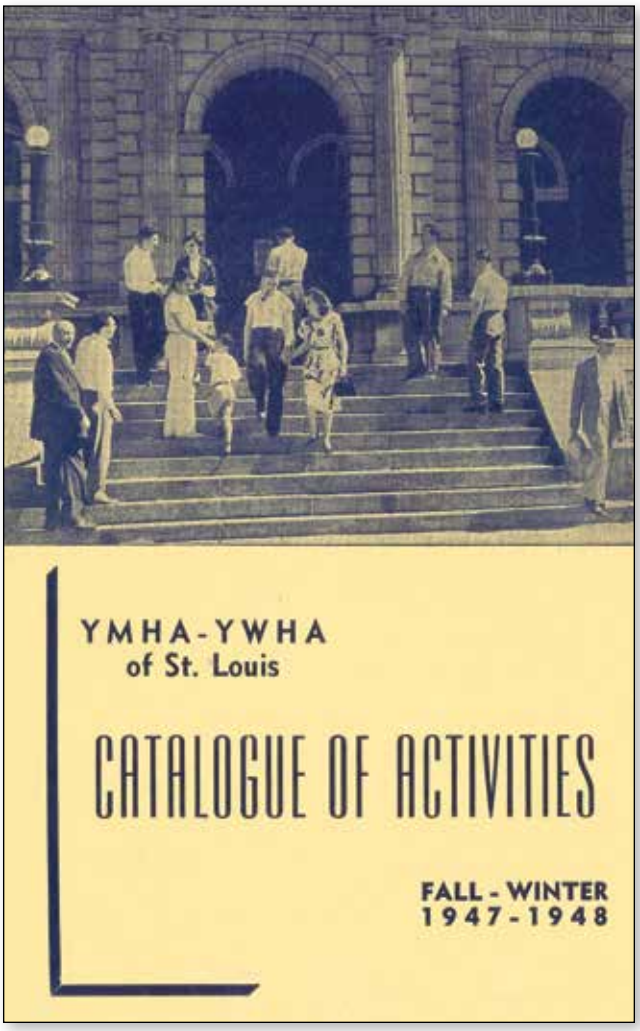
On May 4, 1949, students at Washington University in St. Louis held a rally to gain admission for African-Americans at the university. *(Image: Washington University Special Collections)*

were extremely complimentary of their school.

In addition to over a dozen houses of worship, the Young Men's/Women's Hebrew Association (YMHA) was another important institution for the West End Jewish community. Established in the late 1800s as a men's literary club, the organization expanded in the first half of the twentieth century to become one of the most important Jewish community institutions in the city. The YMHA bounced from location to location in the first two decades of the twentieth century. Under the leadership of executive director Gilbert Harris, the YMHA purchased land to construct a Jewish community center that opened in 1927 on the corner of Union and Enright, about two blocks from Soldan and in the heart of the West End. For three decades, this location provided a wide range of services to both Jewish and non-Jewish community members. The YMHA's newsletter boasted about expanded facilities and opportunities available to members, including a library, game room, auditorium, swimming pool, handball courts, gym, billiard hall, and roof garden.[43] Among various athletic teams, social clubs, and educational programs, the YMHA's Liberal Forums stood out as a highlight of

A native St. Louisan, Gilbert Harris (seated second from left) returned to the city in 1922 to become executive director of the YMHA/YWMA in St. Louis after working for the National Jewish Welfare Board in New York. The YMHA/YWHA building at Union and Enright, built in 1927, was among his fundraising accomplishments. *(Image: Gilbert Harris Collection, St. Louis Jewish Community Archives)*

The Young Men's Hebrew Association (YMHA) was a key part of the Jewish cultural life by the 1940s. The first YMHA was founded in Baltimore in 1854 to assist Jewish immigrants; a branch opened in St. Louis in 1880. An affiliated arm of it, the Young Women's Hebrew Association (YWHA), was founded in 1888 in New York; the first independent YWHA chapter appeared in 1902. Later in the twentieth century, they evolved into today's Jewish Community Center (JCC), offering an array of activities and classes, as this catalogue from 1947–1948 suggests. The YMHA/YWHA was at Union and Enright in the West End when the cover photo was taken. *(Image: St. Louis Jewish Community Archives)*



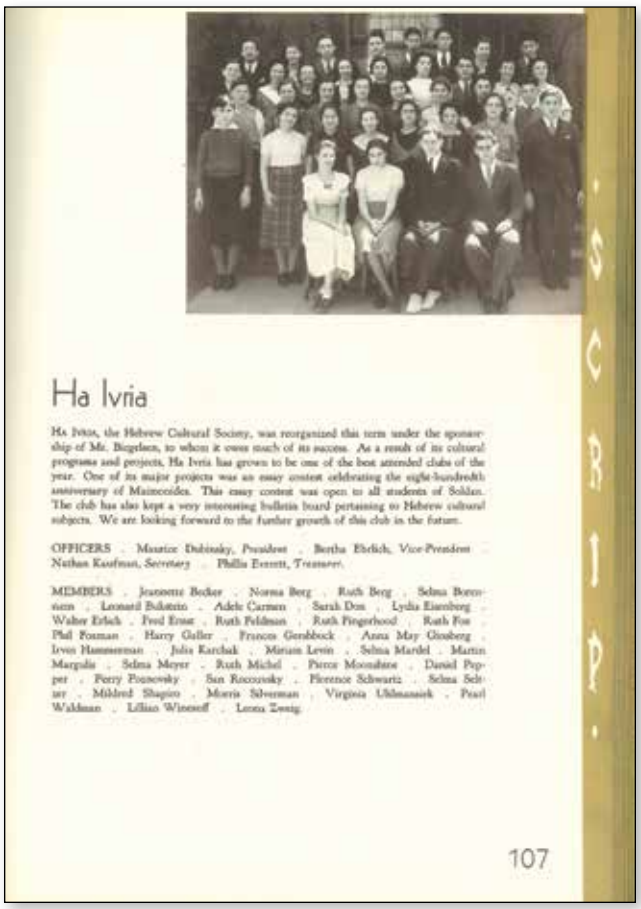
YMHA activities. Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, the Liberal Forum sponsored talks by prominent figures, including Eleanor Roosevelt, Clarence Darrow, and Walter White.[44] YMHA regulars remember Harris's prominent presence at the YMHA. Hans Mayer, who moved to St. Louis as a child, explained that Harris was a "highly visible" director who always made sure to be present when children left for and returned from summer camp.[45]

Soldan High School's experience with school desegregation demonstrated the limited extent of what the West End's Jewish and secular passive liberalism could achieve. Even though Catholic schools integrated in 1947, it was not until the 1954 *Brown v. Board* decision that public schools in St. Louis adopted a desegregation plan. Because by this time the city's Catholic schools had desegregated, the passive liberal majority understood the inevitability of desegregation and therefore supported its implementation. Again, unlike in communities across the South, St. Louis's integration plan was carried out on time and with little controversy. Some St. Louis schools, especially those in mostly white south city, would not experience a significant influx of black students in the early years of desegregated education. The heavily Jewish Soldan High School, on the other hand, absorbed more blacks than any other high school in the city.[46] All accounts of integration at Soldan in 1955 indicate overwhelming success in both planning and implementation. In anticipation of the integration, Soldan held a meeting at which parents could ask questions and make suggestions about easing the transition, and there is no record of dissent at this meeting.[47] Soldan's new principal, Stanley Hill, connected the process of integration to the reputation of the West End, stating that "the good name of the neighborhood as well as the city was at stake in avoiding incidents such as those in Baltimore and Washington."[48] To prepare for the new students, transferees met with faculty advisors and registered for classes the week before integration took place. The first integrated meeting of the Soldan-Blewett Parents' Association had about two hundred attendees, many of whom were black.[49]

On February 1, 1955, the day St. Louis high schools integrated, Soldan absorbed 375 black students, increasing the school's enrollment to 1,350. Speaking three days after integration occurred in city high schools, Superintendent Hickey announced, "I cannot speak highly enough of the manner in which our high school boys and girls of both races have accepted this step. . . . [T]he striking thing to me is the positive, rather passive, acceptance of the change by the student groups."[50] The black press's evaluation of Soldan's integration was very similar to that of other city newspapers, explaining, "observation of passing in the corridors and classroom sessions gave no indication that anything out of the ordinary had occurred."[51] Soldan's students took pride in the orderly and civilized manner of their school's integration. In both 1955 and 1956, students dedicated their yearbook to their school administrators and commended the manner in which integration occurred. The yearbook editors claimed, "[T]his new administration has handled the job of integration with skill and intelligence and has made Soldan-Blewett the best integrated school in St. Louis."[52] An analysis of yearbook photographs reveals that black students participated actively in Soldan's clubs and sports.[53]

Jake Leventhal and Linda Kraus, two Jewish students who attended Soldan when it desegregated, have similar memories of the first year of integration. Neither has recollections of race-based incidents, and Leventhal called the integration process "seamless." Kraus continued her participation in integrated extra-curricular activities, including the yearbook, newspaper, and cheerleading, and she believed that the integration went as well as it could. Neither remembers the school explicitly preparing students for the integration, other than assigning students to new advisors to make sure that each class had a mix of black and white students. As an athlete, Leventhal remembers Vice Principal Otto Rost visiting his integrated football team during a summer practice and specifically instructing the players to "be mixed up" racially the next time he came to check on them. Leventhal discussed his time at the integrated Soldan fondly, explaining that the school's athletic teams served as a role model for interracial cooperation for the entire school.[54]

Ha Ivria was the Hebrew Cultural Center at Soldan High School. When this picture for the Soldan yearbook appeared, Ha Ivria had some 40 members. *(Image: St. Louis Jewish Community Archives)*



By all accounts the integration had been implemented successfully, as evidenced by an almost complete lack of controversy, as well as outward community enthusiasm. The initial success of Soldan's integration was due to passive liberalism: West End residents understood that segregated education was no longer socially acceptable, so the community rallied behind a smooth school integration in the wake of *Brown.* The amount of public support given to the desegregation process made St. Louisans optimistic that their racial liberalism would foster a progressive and democratic city. Citizens believed that St. Louis was in a prime position to handle interracial urban education without violence or controversy, and the confident tone of the black press was similar to that of other newspapers. In an article published a few days after the high schools' integration, an *Argus* article asserted, "[T]he cooperation of all concerned up to this point is assurance enough that St. Louis is foremost among American cities willing to advance democracy in deeds."[55] A large and widely publicized segment of the city welcomed integrated schooling due to liberalism's commitment to racial equality.

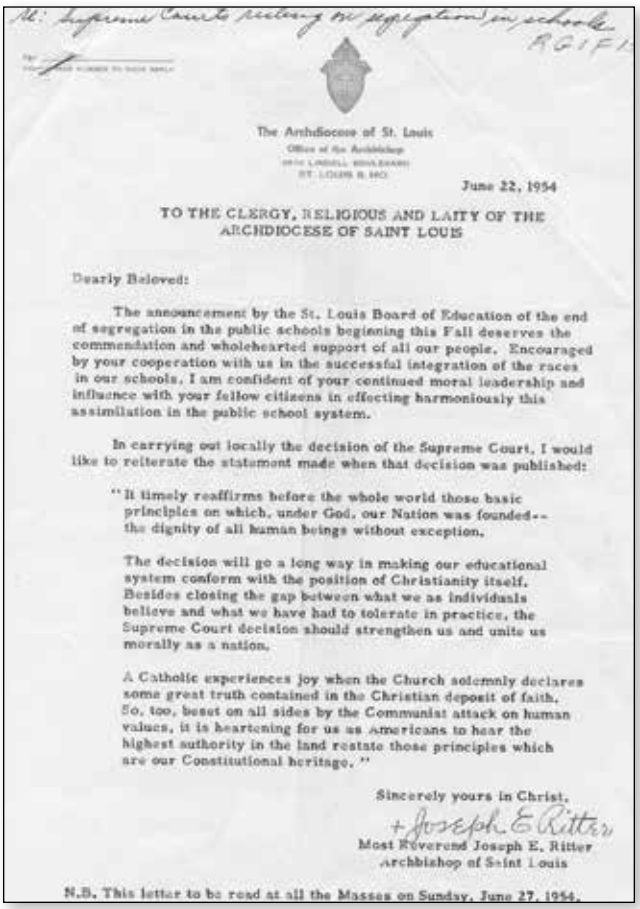
It took only a few years, however, for attentive citizens to realize how fleeting this success was, and when faced with the reality that integration might require difficult personal decisions about where to live and educate their children, passive liberals turned their backs on integration. In a 1959 statement to the Urban League Board of Directors, St. Louis branch executive director Leo Bohanon proclaimed, "[A]bout two years ago the first complaints alleging a breakdown in school desegregation came to the attention of the Urban League. Charges were made that the school administration was permitting Clark grade and Soldan High schools to become all Negro schools in pupils and teachers." He goes on to state, "[T]here is a growing feeling that both the public school administration and the Board of Education have adopted a laissez faire attitude toward public school integration, ~~which borders on indifference~~" [strikethrough original].[56] He also provided a list of accusations, which included busing white students to white schools and overcrowding at predominantly black schools. Clearly, the Urban League and other civil rights organizations believed passivity and indifference were unacceptable.

Further, African American City Alderman William Lacy Clay (who would later represent St. Louis in the United States House of Representatives) charged that "the St. Louis Board of Education and the Department of Instruction have been guilty of either a premeditated and intentional program to cause and allow the increase of segregation in the schools or at the very least have adopted policies that have been conducive to the re-segregation of the school system."[57] He noted that Soldan was 99 percent black, while the neighborhood was 50 percent white; this meant that 1,700 white students who should have been attending Soldan were being educated in white public schools.[58] Jake Leventhal explained that one year after he graduated from Soldan, his parents moved out of the city despite the financial hardship this imposed because his sister had been the only white student in her elementary school class.[59]

To understand why and how St. Louis school integration failed, it is necessary to analyze conversations surrounding residential choices. West End residents, both those merely looking for an attractive place to live as well as individuals who touted themselves as racially liberal, were ultimately unwilling to collectively invest in the continued integration and middle-class status of the West End. By analyzing housing choices and changes in Jewish institutions' locations, the limits of St. Louis's passive and active liberalism become apparent. Despite the fact that city residents were mostly in agreement regarding the need to end formal segregation, citizens were largely unwilling to sustain this commitment to desegregation through housing choices.

While Gilbert Harris was proud of the ways the YMHA building on Union Boulevard served the West End community, Harris's goal, like those of the West End's synagogues, was for Jewish institutions to follow

Ritter issued this statement to support the announced desegregation of St. Louis Public Schools in the aftermath of the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in 1954. Ritter instructed that "This letter to be read at all Masses on Sunday, June 27, 1954." *(Image: Archdiocese of St. Louis Archives)*



re: Supreme Court ruling re segregation in schools

RGIFI

The Archdiocese of St. Louis

Office of the Archbishop

4431 LINDELL BOULEVARD

ST. LOUIS 8, MO.

June 22, 1954

TO THE CLERGY, RELIGIOUS AND LAITY OF THE ARCHDIOCESE OF SAINT LOUIS

Dearly Beloved:

The announcement by the St. Louis Board of Education of the end of segregation in the public schools beginning this Fall deserves the commendation and wholehearted support of all our people. Encouraged by your cooperation with us in the successful integration of the races in our schools, I am confident of your continued moral leadership and influence with your fellow citizens in effecting harmoniously this assimilation in the public school system.

In carrying out locally the decision of the Supreme Court, I would like to reiterate the statement made when that decision was published:

"It timely reaffirms before the whole world those basic principles on which, under God, our Nation was founded--the dignity of all human beings without exception.

The decision will go a long way in making our educational system conform with the position of Christianity itself. Besides closing the gap between what we as individuals believe and what we have had to tolerate in practice, the Supreme Court decision should strengthen us and unite us morally as a nation.

A Catholic experiences joy when the Church solemnly declares some great truth contained in the Christian deposit of faith. So, too, beset on all sides by the Communist attack on human values, it is heartening for us as Americans to hear the highest authority in the land restate those principles which are our Constitutional heritage."

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+Joseph E. Ritter

Most Reverend Joseph E. Ritter

Archbishop of Saint Louis

N.B. This letter to be read at all the Masses on Sunday, June 27, 1954.

Jewish population trends, not to shape them. The YMHA's commitment to following Jewish population patterns led to complex and contradictory statements and policies regarding Jews' residential choices and their role in fostering integrated neighborhoods. As it became apparent by the late forties that Jews were increasingly choosing to live west of the city limits, by 1950 Harris advocated heavily for the YMHA to move out of the city, despite the fact that a significant number of Jews remained in the West End into the mid-1950s. Therefore, Jewish institutions' movement out of the city cannot simply be attributed to attractions of suburban living; predictions of future population trends were based on racialized assumptions that upwardly mobile Jews would not live among blacks.

A 1947 YMHA program needs survey provides insight into both the state of the West End neighborhood and the Jewish community's future in it, and its recommendations reveal deep problems with passive liberalism. In 1947, the survey stated, about one-half of St. Louis's Jewish population resided outside city limits, with a high concentration in University City, a municipality directly bordering the West End. With this information, the authors believed that the city's Jewish population would soon be concentrated west of the city limits. Taking this impending population shift into account, the report predicted that the Union Boulevard YMHA building would only continue to be an adequate location for another ten to fifteen years, as long as satellite programs were created to reach Jews outside the city.

While this report provided a large amount of demographic information about the region's Jewish population, its references to neighboring black populations provide a fascinating window into Jews' feelings about the possibility of integrated neighborhoods. Published before the *Shelley v. Kraemer* decision, this report indicates that Jewish institutional leaders assumed blacks would eventually move into the West End. Even before the demise of racially restrictive housing covenants, the report correctly predicted that blacks would soon reside in areas of the West End that were primarily comprised of rental properties. Though the report does not explicitly label this impending trend as negative, the writers were uneasy about the effects blacks would have in the West End. The fact that blacks were the only non-Jewish group referenced in the report indicates that the authors drew a direct connection between migration of blacks into the West End and the neighborhood's decline in Jewish population. This connection was a thinly veiled admission that, regardless of widespread support for the ideal of integration, the authors assumed most Jews did not want to live in a racially integrated neighborhood. The report stated that when blacks began to move into the West End, "Union Avenue from Delmar to Page will probably remain a [Jewish] civic center area for a period of about 15 years."[60] The report had racial overtones without making any explicit race-based recommendations. When blacks, as predicted, did begin migrating into the West End, the YMHA's, as well as the Jewish community's, responses were simultaneously welcoming and wary. Some Jews actively welcomed the transitioning neighborhood's interracial character, and the YMHA provided a number of interracial programs, indicating the institution's acceptance of blacks in the neighborhood. However, even as Jews accepted the concept of integration, most did not believe it was their personal responsibility to foster integration through housing choices.

YMHA Executive Director Gilbert Harris's statements regarding neighborhood racial transition were dizzyingly contradictory, and these inconsistencies demonstrated the genuine ambivalence he and many other passively liberal residents likely felt regarding how to interpret changes in the West End and Jewish institutions' role in shaping those changes. "Our Neighborhood," a speech Harris delivered seven years after the program needs survey recommended moving the YMHA to the suburbs, clearly illustrated his confusion. In one section of the speech, he stated:

> The [West End] which once was an area of home owners . . . is now characterized as a neighborhood of transients and lower economic groups. I make this statement objectively and without any lament for the good old days. Every American city and every American neighborhood seems to go through its years of youth, maturity and decline. . . . Today there are some communities that are concerned with the conservation process of neighborhoods and are doing something about it, and hopefully in the future more neighborhoods will continue to be zealous to maintain their character. In giving these facts I do not speak disparagingly of any people. All peoples need housing and we know that as their economic status improves, their social acceptability advances too.[61]

Several key paradoxes were present in Harris's thinking, and these complexities reveal the limitations of passive liberals' thought and action on race issues. First, Harris simultaneously identified with the West End but also showed willingness to abandon the neighborhood for the sake of economic opportunity in the suburbs. Second, he provided only lukewarm evaluations of efforts to conserve the character of transitioning neighborhoods, despite the fact that the YMHA sometimes served as a meeting place for the religious and secular organizations that championed integration. Third, he portrayed neighborhood change as inevitable, again, despite the fact that the YMHA hosted organizations firmly committed to halting neighborhood deterioration through maintenance of integration. Harris seemed in favor of neighborhood conservation efforts in theory, but as a Jewish community leader, he was unwilling to participate in them actively or to make the YMHA building a symbol of Jewish commitment to West End neighborhood integration.

Later in this same speech, he made the following comments:

> Those of us who live in our neighborhood like it and want to improve it in whatever way we can. Unfortunately, there are not enough people who are

> energetic enough to do the job. . . . They were full of venom about having to leave the neighborhood and to suffer financial losses in selling their homes, and were very cynical about the newcomers. … As one who has lived most of his life in the general neighborhood, and who looks forward to many more years there, I am anxious to see the neighborhood maintain itself. It has many advantages—cultural, spiritual, and geographic. I know there are those who share the same point of view and with their help we hope that our neighborhood will continue to be a fine and interesting place in which to live.[62]

Here again, Harris' contradictions were glaring. He concurrently assumed that whites would abandon the neighborhood, expressed whites' anger at the declining status of the neighborhood, and also stated that he intended to continue living in the West End. The very belief that property values would fall simply due to blacks' presence in a neighborhood shows whites' racial fears. Because the fear of declined economic status was tied to integrated neighborhoods, financial interest easily trumped passive liberal ideology. While it is unclear whether Harris was conscious of all these contradictions, their presence in a public speech indicated that Harris himself wrestled with his understanding of changes in the West End. There were certainly racist qualities to his statements, yet his ideas do not seem hateful. Rather, he was demonstrating a genuine attempt to process the rapid societal changes occurring around him, attempts that West End residents were likely also grappling with.

In a speech a few months later, Harris made a fascinating comment about the importance of neighborhood institutions, saying, "institutions uphold property values. Would Union Boulevard have remained the street it is today, with the various institutions located in that area, or would it have held up better with residences?"[63] He attributed the West End's success to the existence of institutions (religious as well as secular), yet he advocated for pulling the YMHA out of the West End for the sake of Jewish progress in the suburbs.[64] The decision to move the YMHA into West County mirrored the decisions of synagogues. Congregation B'Nai Amoona, for example, began searching for a new location almost immediately after purchasing a property in the West End.[65] For Harris, like most liberal Jews, opportunity for economic upward mobility in the suburbs or fears of declining financially trumped opportunities to maintain the status of a cherished neighborhood. If Gilbert Harris was an accurate representation of liberal Jews' conflicted feelings on integration and neighborhood change, it is no surprise that efforts to maintain neighborhood integration failed miserably. Liberal individuals were unable to see the racist assumptions underlying the belief that integration would necessarily lead to decreased property values, so St. Louisans' liberal ideology could not be a vehicle for realizing integration in the West End.

Even though some St. Louis Jewish leaders were in the vanguard of advocating for integrated schools and neighborhoods, their active liberalism could not convince passively liberal counterparts to remain in an integrating community. These actively liberal Jews, like counterparts in other cities, believed their decisions on where to live and educate their children could play a role in creating stable, desirable, and integrated urban neighborhoods. To achieve a desirable integrated neighborhood, community activists would have to work against ambivalence regarding individuals' personal roles in maintaining the integrated, middle-class character of the West End. It would only be possible to sustain integration through explicit claims that the West End could maintain its desirable character, convincing white residents they should not sell their properties.

During the brief time that St. Louis's public school desegregation generally and Soldan's integration specifically seemed to be working as planned, religious and secular organizations committed themselves to making the West End a model of a successful, integrated, and stable middle-class neighborhood. The Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC) was in the vanguard of these efforts. Through the leadership of St. Louis branch Executive Director Myron Schwartz, the JCRC provided active leadership in a variety of neighborhood improvement efforts and collaborated frequently with the Urban League as well as various neighborhood-based organizations. Schwartz corresponded frequently with other cities' JCRC leaders to understand how other city neighborhoods were dealing with neighborhood racial transition. JCRC leaders across the urban North understood neighborhood change as a democratic issue. A draft of a JCRC guide for changing neighborhoods explained, "[T]he contradictions between our democratic principles and our actual practices cannot help but arouse suspicion, cynicism and distrust, both among our own citizens and our watchful allies."[66] Clearly, a cohort of Jewish leaders understood that vocalizing integrationist rhetoric amidst a mass exodus into the suburbs would not promote racial equality. Maintaining integrated neighborhoods would require active decisions by Jews to remain rooted in urban neighborhoods in the face of speculation and panic.

However, as historian Lila Berman has indicated and the St. Louis experience demonstrated, most urban Jews were unwilling to base housing decisions on the possibility of maintaining integration. Even the national JCRC report's recommendations did not include calls to sustain residences in transitioning neighborhoods; instead, it suggested what Berman termed "remote urbanism": population studies, education, and political activism to increase access to non-discriminatory housing, allowing Jews to devote charitable funds to urban areas while simultaneously moving out of them.[67] Remote urbanism, though, was an acceptance of passive liberalism, because it allowed people to believe they could support urban issues while concurrently disinvesting in cities by moving to the suburbs. The JCRC report therefore fell into the trap it cautioned leaders to avoid: the report wanted to support urban neighborhoods through rhetoric and charity, but it

did not call for Jews to make their housing choices based on an ideal of integrated communities. Most passive liberal Jews believed they could further racial equality verbally and politically while making personal choices to move into racially homogenous suburbs. Myron Schwartz, the St. Louis JCRC branch, and other neighborhood organizations attempted a more active role in maintaining integrated living space through alliances with local organizations, but these efforts proved unsustainable because most white West End residents were unwilling to let a desire for neighborhood integration dictate personal choices of where to live. Therefore, many attempts to be actively liberal quickly became passive, as Jewish organizations were largely unwilling to ask Jews to make housing choices based on a commitment to racial equality.

Starting in 1953, two interracial and actively liberal West End organizations, first the Union Boulevard Association (UBA) and later the West End Community Conference (WECC), attempted to craft a stable, middle-class, desirable, and integrated neighborhood. Their efforts and shortcomings demonstrate difficulties active liberals confronted in the face of a passively liberal majority. That year, the UBA conducted a small survey of thirty-seven West End residents to understand how people perceived changes within the neighborhood. Many white respondents believed that they lived in an ideal location, but they also cited racially coded reasons for wanting to move out, including "crowding, dirt, [and] noise," as well as some explicit discomfort with proximity to blacks.[68]

The most creative UBA campaign involved decreasing blight in the blocks surrounding Soldan High School. To stabilize areas of the neighborhood that were deteriorating and maintain property values, a group of residents requested urban renewal funding from the city government to study zoning violations and build parks and playgrounds. The press lauded these efforts, claiming, "Residents of the Soldan-Blewett High School neighborhood set a fine example with their proposal to organize a conservation and improvement program before it is too late. . . . Here is planning at its best—city planning with a strong base of neighborhood interest and initiative."[69] In order to receive federal funding, West End residents had to request that areas of their neighborhood be labeled "blighted," so that they would be eligible for urban renewal money. Though federal urban renewal programs—both nationally and in St. Louis—were largely vilified by the mid-1960s because they were often used to fund entrepreneurs' interests over those of residents, this instance of West End community members requesting funding shows that in urban renewal's early stages, St. Louis residents were sometimes able to have an impact on where and how federal funding was spent. Despite these innovative, citizen-led efforts, the UBA had little lasting impact on the West End. In fact, labeling sections of the West End as blighted may have backfired because many residents likely felt uneasy about living in spaces marked as deteriorating. The UBA's experimentation showed that some West End residents were willing to work creatively to maintain the status of their neighborhood.

While the UBA clearly wanted to improve the neighborhood, it was the West End Community Conference that more directly attempted to stave off white flight. Formed in 1955, the WECC's explicit goal was to keep the West End a high quality, integrated neighborhood. A flier advertising an April 1955 meeting explained, "[M]any of us feel that this is a good neighborhood to live in and want to see it preserved and improved. That's why over a hundred of us met recently to found . . . The West End Community Conference."[70] By 1957, the WECC, which served a 150-block area that was home to 25,000 residents, boasted 800 members. A 1957 *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* article detailing WECC work explained that the its strategy for maintaining integration revolved around stabilizing real estate prices by maintaining physical neighborhood space and convincing residents to remain in the neighborhood. The article attributed WECC successes to the presence of liberal residents, claiming that "a vital factor . . . was the presence in the area of an extraordinary number of people of broadly liberal bent, accustomed to leadership, unafraid of responsibility and fully aware of how much might depend on the example they set."[71] West End resident Mrs. Carl Meyers typified this liberal commitment to remaining in the neighborhood. She explained, "[W]e deliberately chose to live here . . . we like it simply because it isn't homogeneous. In our block there is a professor at Washington University, another man rich enough to have a chauffeur, and a laborer. We're interested in people, and in finding the answer to the question: Can people really change things, or does nature take its course?"[72] Clearly, a vocal, though probably small, group of actively liberal residents was willing to base their housing choices on maintaining an integrated neighborhood.

The WECC enjoyed a positive reputation for its first five years of existence. In reference to the WECC, a black newspaper article stated, "[H]ere is a particular section of a great city that has been justly held up as an example of what can be done under our American democracy."[73] However, this idealistic view of the neighborhood was incredibly tenuous, and a scandal within WECC leadership illustrated the fragility of white racial liberalism in St. Louis. In 1960, the WECC suddenly lost its positive reputation as a liberal interracial organization due to an incident involving a board member. Landlord and WECC Vice-Chairman William Baggerman evicted a husband and wife from his building upon learning that they were an interracial couple. Baggerman claimed he evicted the couple because they had "acted in bad faith by concealing the fact of [the] wife's race, [while] Negro members of the WECC said Baggerman's actions were motivated by racial prejudice."[74] This incident exposed serious latent tensions within the organization and undermined the interracial harmony on which the WECC was predicated. In response to this controversy, the WECC board voted on whether to "pass judgment on William Baggerman's behavior," and it was the first time in WECC history that a vote was split down racial lines.[75] Only one black woman voted with the conference's white members, stating she wanted

to keep lines of communication open, while a single white member, a Washington University dean, voted with the conference's African American leaders to condemn Baggerman's actions.

WECC members' reactions to this controversy reveal how quickly active liberal viewpoints cracked under pressure. One frustrated white member exclaimed, "[W]hy do you always want to rush things. You are trying to go too fast. If you would just slow down maybe we would work something out"; a black member responded, "[W]e are not that kind of organization. This should never have come up."[76] This interchange demonstrates a glaring miscommunication between white and black WECC members. White members embraced liberal race relations when they provided a noncontroversial way to deal with inevitable school and neighborhood integration that did not require personal or economic sacrifice. When tested by a controversy, though, white liberals retreated to passivity, preferring not to "rush things." This dialogue shows that above all, white liberals in the West End, whether passive or active, wanted to avoid upheaval. Here lies the ultimate problem with liberalism in St. Louis: even if a number of actively liberal individuals were willing to make their housing choices based on a desire to foster an integrated neighborhood, they could not accept that the process of maintaining integration would sometimes be contentious and uncomfortable. If the most actively liberal white community members were asking blacks to "just slow down," it is no wonder that integration efforts quickly faltered.

Media response to this incident was strong, indicating how much stock community members had placed in the WECC, and they quickly highlighted the limits of white West Enders' liberalism. One article explained that the incident may be "the real test of whether the West End Community Conference is a genuine democratic outgrowth in our American way, or is only a façade for pretentious half-believers."[77] The *Argus*, St. Louis's black newspaper, echoed these questions of whites' sincerity, stating that "the majority of the whites, we are sure, felt snug and secure in the feeling that 'we are among the enlightened liberals of this day.'"[78] To both black and white residents, this incident revealed the tenuous nature of interracial alliances in the West End, as well as the inability of liberalism to maintain commitments to integration amidst a contentious atmosphere.

Although the controversy did not cause the WECC to disband, it was a crippling blow—a number of frustrated members (mostly black) resigned, and records of WECC activities after the scandal are infrequent. It is crucial to note how quick newspapers were to highlight whites' wavering commitment to full integration and liberalism, in contrast to the notable lack of controversy in accounts of the 1955 public school desegregation. By 1960, then, both blacks and whites were skeptical of white liberal commitments to racial equality. If the WECC could be debilitated by one controversy, it is unsurprising that efforts to maintain the interracial demographics of the neighborhood failed. Because racial liberalism could so quickly unravel, it was only natural that West End residents who were not politically active would be unwilling to maintain integration through housing choices that came with economic and social status risks. The WECC controversy exemplified the fragility of St. Louis's liberal commitment to an interracial society.

The West End's current segregation and decreased economic status was largely due to the weaknesses of American liberalism. In St. Louis, as well as throughout the country, liberals were unable to sustain combining the ideals of racial equality and middle-class economic opportunity, and fleeting attempts to do so floundered at the first signs of interracial contention. The methods of the West End Community Conference demonstrated that active liberals knew how to simultaneously promote integration and middle class neighborhood status. However, the organization's history showed West Enders' inability to fully commit to these methods, because passive liberalism allowed people to espouse racially progressive rhetoric while making housing decisions based on racial fears. Fleeting successes like the smooth school integration could not convince white liberals that it was worth working through racial tension to create an integrated and economically upwardly mobile urban neighborhood. Instead, liberals used the excuse of pursuing economic opportunity to abandon commitments to racial equality and integration. Ultimately, white liberals in St. Louis believed that a future of integrated neighborhoods, while a commendable ideal, was not the best avenue to pursue the economic and social status they desired.

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The Award is presented biannually, and published in *The Confluence*. This year, Sarah Siegel is the Tatom Award recipient; the article appears in this issue of *The Confluence*.

ENDNOTES

[1] In 1877, the city of St. Louis separated from St. Louis County, making it one of the only cities in the United States that is not also part of a county. The distinction between city and county looms large in St. Louis's history. In the twentieth century, St. Louis County (especially West County) became increasingly white and affluent, whereas St. Louis City (in particularly, North City, including the West End) became increasingly black and poor.

[2] "Court Bars School Segregation: Pupils Here to go to Schools Nearest their Homes," *St. Louis Post Dispatch,* May 17, 1954, and "Officials Here Go Forward with Plans to Halt Separation," *St. Louis Post Dispatch,* May 18, 1954.

[3] Bonita H. Valien, *The St. Louis Story: A Study of Desegregation* (New York: Anti-defamation League of B'nai B'rith, 1956), 41.

[4] "First Classes on Integrated Basis Meet in High Schools," *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, February 3, 1955.

[5] Valien, *The St. Louis Story*, 31.

[6] The Young Men's/Women's Hebrew Association, for example, hosted meetings to discuss integration and allowed integrated sports teams to practice at the organization's facilities.

[7] "Parents Can Help School Integration, Hickey Declares," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat,* April 26, 1955, Jewish Community Relations Council Papers, Box F, Folder "Neighborhood Councils St. Louis 1952-1976," Jewish Archives of St. Louis.

[8] Robert Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 13–14.

[9] Cardinal Ritter's Catholic school desegregation and the *Brown v. Board* decision made it clear to the majority of St. Louisans that legalized school desegregation was a thing of the past.

[10] In *Parish Boundaries,* historian John McGreevy argues that the fixed nature of Catholic Parish boundaries meant that Catholics were slower to move out of integrating neighborhoods. However, in the St. Louis case, even though Catholic parishioners passively accepted desegregation, they simultaneously chose to abandon their urban parishes for racially homogenous suburban spaces.

[11] Historians Lila Berman and Cheryl Greenberg both write on urban Jews' beliefs and actions regarding race relations. Greenberg argues that Jews were only willing to support civil rights policies if they did not negatively influence the Jewish community. She employs the "not in my back yard" framework to explain that while Jews, as a largely liberal group, supported the concept of racial equality, they were unwilling to take action for racial equality by allowing or encouraging racial integration of heavily Jewish neighborhoods. Berman has also produced insightful work to trace how urban Jews reacted to and shaped neighborhood racial transition. In an article about Jews in Detroit, Berman posits that Jews, in comparison to non-Jewish liberals, remained relatively committed to urban issues, both during and after the time most Jews lived within Detroit's city limits. She distinguishes between two types of Jewish urbanism: local urbanism when Jews lived in city neighborhoods, and remote urbanism after they moved to the suburbs. In St. Louis, though, Jews' commitment to any kind of urbanism is less apparent; rather, Jewish housing decisions were based on negotiating competing liberal ideologies of promoting racial equality and opportunities for economic and social upward mobility.

[12] "St. Rose Parish, St. Louis, MO 1934–1985, Then and Now," St. Rose of Lima Parish Histories, RG04B84, Archives of the Archdiocese of St. Louis, MO 63119.

[13] Harvey Brown, Interview with Author, May 12, 2014.

[14] "Letter to Myron Schwartz October 18, 1954," Jewish Community Relations Council Papers, Box F, Folder "Neighborhood Councils, St. Louis, 1952-1975," Jewish Archives of St. Louis.

[15] "History of Catholic Education in the Archdiocese," http://archstl.org/education/page/history-catholic-education-archdiocese

[16] Letters of Approval and Dissent, 10 February, 1948, Cardinal Joseph Elmer Ritter Papers (RG 01 F 15.16), Box A 58, Archives of the Archdiocese of St. Louis, MO 63119.

[17] Letter To Cardinal Ritter, 22 September, 1947, Cardinal Joseph Elmer Ritter Papers (RG 01 F 15.16), Box A 58, Archives of the Archdiocese of St. Louis, MO 63119.

[18] Letter to Cardinal Ritter, 23 September, 1947, Cardinal Joseph Elmer Ritter Papers (RG 01 F 15.16), Box A 58, Archives of the Archdiocese of St. Louis, MO 63119.

[19] Letter to Cardinal Ritter, 11 August, 1947, Cardinal Joseph Elmer Ritter Papers (RG 01 F 15.16), Box A 58, Archives of the Archdiocese of St. Louis, MO 63119.

[20] Letter to Cardinal Ritter, 22 September, 1947, Cardinal Joseph Elmer Ritter Papers (RG 01 F 15.16), Box A 58, Archives of the Archdiocese of St. Louis, MO 63119.

[21] Dan Kelley, Interview with Author, July 22, 2014.

[22] "Catholic Group Drops Fight on School Issue–Votes to Disband at Meeting Marked By Boos and 'No,'" *St. Louis Star Times*, October 6, 1947.

[23] Ibid.

[24] M. Alvera Fallinger, "The History and Development of Rosati-Kain High School Saint Louis, Missouri" (MA Thesis, St. Louis University, 1949).

[25] *Rosati-Kain Chronicles*, September 2, 1947, Archives of the School Sisters of Notre Dame, Central Pacific Province.

[26] Ibid.

[27] "St. Rose Parish, St. Louis, MO 1934–1985, Then and Now."

[28] "Letter To Priests, February 24, 1966," Cardinal Ritter Papers, RG1F6, Archives of the Archdiocese of St. Louis, MO 63119.

[29] "History of St. Rose's Church, 1910" and "Fifty Golden Years, 1934," St. Rose of Lima Parish Histories, RG04B84, Archives of the Archdiocese of St. Louis, MO 63119.
[30] "St. Rose Parish, St. Louis, MO 1934–1985, Then and Now."
[31] Ibid.
[32] Dan Kelley, Interview with Author, July 22, 2014.
[33] "St. Rose Parish, St. Louis, MO 1934–1985, Then and Now."
[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid.
[36] Ibid.
[37] Walter Ehrlich, *Zion in the Valley, The Jewish Community of St. Louis* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2002), 29.
[38] Ibid.
[39] "Address delivered at Youth and Democracy Rally, Soldan High School," February 19, 1941, Alfred Fleishman Collection, Box 9 Folder 37, Jewish Archives of St. Louis.
[40] Rosalind Mael Bronsen, *B'Nai Amoona For All Generations* (St. Louis: Congregation B'Nai Amoona, 1985), 142. Also see Soldan High School Yearbooks, St. Louis.
[41] Anabelle Chapel, Interview with Author, May 13, 2014.
[42] Harvey Brown, Interview with Author, May 12, 2014.
[43] "'Y' Journal Dedication Issue, c. 1927," Jewish Community Centers Association Papers, Box 3 Folder 1, Jewish Archives of St. Louis.
[44] *Y Journal*, 1949–54.
[45] Hans Mayer, Interview with Author, July 8, 2014.
[46] "First Classes on Integrated Basis Meet in High Schools," *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, February 3, 1955.
[47] Gilbert Harris, "Our Neighborhood," January 21, 1955, Gilbert Harris Papers, Box 3 Folder 5, Jewish Archives of St. Louis.
[48] "Message to Union Boulevard Members," December 14, 1954, Jewish Community Relations Council Papers, Series 2, Box 8A, Folder 5, Jewish Archives of St. Louis.
[49] "Parents Can Help School Integration, Hickey Declares," *St. Louis Globe-Democrat,* April 26, 1955, Jewish Community Relations Council Papers, Box F, Folder "Neighborhood Councils St. Louis 1952–1976," Jewish Archives of St. Louis.
[50] "First Classes on Integrated Basis Meet in High Schools," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, February 3, 1955.
[51] "Integration of Schools in Second Phase," *St. Louis Argus*, February 4, 1955.
[52] Soldan High School Yearbook, 1955.
[53] Soldan High School Yearbooks, 1955–1958.
[54] Linda Kraus, Interview with Author, July 14, 2014, and Jake Leventhal, Interview with Author, July 10, 2014.
[55] "A Natural Day," *St. Louis Argus*, February 4, 1955.
[56] "Complaints against the St. Louis Public School system, 1959," Urban League Papers, Series 2, Box 8, Folder 25, Washington University Archives.
[57] "Letter from William L. Clay, 1958–1960," Urban League Papers, Series 2, Box 8A, Folder 5, Washington University Archives.
[58] Ibid.
[59] Jake Leventhal, Interview with Author, July 10, 2014.
[60] "Types of Programs Survey, 1947," Box 2, Folder 19, Jewish Community Center Association Papers, Jewish Archives of St. Louis.
[61] Harris, "Our Neighborhood."
[62] Ibid.
[63] Gilbert Harris, "Speech to Annual JCCA Meeting," May 16, 1955, Gilbert Harris Papers, Box 3, Folder 5, Jewish Archives of St. Louis.
[64] Ibid.
[65] Bronsen, *B'Nai Amoona For All Generations*, 1985.
[66] "Draft of Guide re: Changing Neighborhoods," Jewish Community Relations Committee Papers, Box F, Folder, JCRC Committee on Changing Neighborhoods St. Louis/National, 1952–1966, Jewish Archives of St. Louis.
[67] Ibid.
[68] "Summary of Union Avenue Neighborhood Survey Report," Jewish Community Relations Committee Papers, Box F, Folder Neighborhood Councils St. Louis 1952–1976, Jewish Archives of St. Louis.
[69] "From the Neighborhood Up," *St. Louis Post Dispatch,* February 15, 1954, Jewish Community Relations Committee Papers, Box F, Folder Neighborhood Councils St. Louis 1952–1976, Jewish Archives of St. Louis.
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[71] "The 'Holding Action' on Windermere Place," July 21, 1957, Jewish Community Relations Council Papers, Box F, Folder Neighborhood Councils St. Louis 1952–1976, Jewish Archives of St. Louis.
[72] Ibid.
[73] "West End Conference Has a Rift that Will Be a Test of its Merit," *St. Louis American,* January 14, 1960, Jewish Community Relations Council Papers, Box F, Folder Neighborhood Councils St. Louis 1952–1976, Jewish Archives of St. Louis.
[74] Herbert Simmons, "West End Community Group Faces Critical Policy Issue," *St. Louis Argus*, Jewish Community Relations Council Papers, Box F, Folder Neighborhood Councils St. Louis 1952–1976, Jewish Archives of St. Louis.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Ibid.
[77] "West End Conference Has a Rift that Will Be a Test of its Merit."
[78] "One Night Last Week" *St. Louis Argus,* January 15, 1960, Jewish Community Relations Council Papers, Box F, Folder Neighborhood Councils St. Louis 1952–1976, Jewish Archives of St. Louis.