ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: THE PUBLIC CONSCIENCE OF CHICAGO: THE *CHICAGO REPORTER* AND FOUR DECADES OF INVESTIGATING RACE AND POVERTY

Thomas Brune, Master of Arts, Journalism, 2015

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The *Chicago Reporter* is a small nonprofit news organization founded in 1972 to use investigative and data-driven journalism to uncover and highlight racial and economic disparities in Chicago. It is written for local elites who can implement reforms. Its stories have prompted changes, and it has trained a diverse group of journalists in the process. But it never has built a broad readership or developed a business plan that doesn't rely on charity. The question of this thesis is: How has the *Chicago Reporter* survived for four decades? A review of its history and interviews with its publishers found the Reporter still exists because it has a base at a stable nonprofit, and its reporting on race and poverty draws support from a core group of funders, leaders, and academics. Yet its singular focus has limited expansion, and its recent move to an all-digital operation poses challenges for its future.

THE PUBLIC CONSCIENCE OF CHICAGO: THE *CHICAGO REPORTER* AND FOUR DECADES OF INVESTIGATING RACE AND POVERTY

by

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Introduction: The *Chicago Reporter*

On July 12, 1972, the *Chicago Reporter* published its first issue. Since then it has published 418 printed editions containing more than 1,200 investigations and stories quantifying, documenting, revealing, and analyzing race and poverty in metropolitan Chicago. On September 5, 2015, the Reporter became an all-digital news operation based on its website. Most people living in Chicago have never heard of the Reporter - its readers are a small but select group. But the little non-profit investigative news organization based at a United Church of Christ urban affairs agency has had an outsized impact over the years on local and state government, businesses and industries, and communities and politics. It has spurred changes to racially and ethnically discriminatory policies in basic municipal services including parks, police, fire, ambulance, and libraries. It has prodded businesses, professions and government to recruit and hire blacks, Latinos and women, and give contracts to minority and female run businesses. And it has prompted reforms in medical care, subsidized dwellings, and open housing policies throughout the region.

Consider some examples of its work.

In the 1970s, the Reporter used computer-assisted analyses and deep reporting to reveal the city of Chicago's racially and economically skewed distribution of basic services. In 1978, for example, the Reporter found the city had failed to put telemetry equipment – which allows paramedics to communicate with an emergency room doctor on the way to the hospital - in ten ambulance companies, all of them in black

or Latino areas. Ensuing outrage forced the city to equip all ambulances with the life-saving apparatus.

In 1980, a Reporter survey of local black leaders was the first to identify that then State Sen. Harold Washington, not the better-known Rev. Jesse Jackson, was their top choice as a black candidate for mayor. In 1983, Washington ran and won as two white candidates split the white vote, and he won with coalition of black, Latino and liberal voters after he campaigned in part on Reporter investigations that documented the city's discriminatory delivery of municipal services.

In 1997 the Reporter revealed the presence of dangerous asbestos in apartments at public housing developments by testing fifteen randomly selected samples after the Chicago Housing Authority had begun cleaning it up only in their on-site offices where their staff worked. The spotlight aided a cause that President Barack Obama later in a memoir called his biggest victory as a young community organizer in Chicago housing projects in the 1990s.

And from 2004 through 2007, the Reporter's analyses of Home Mortgage Disclosure Act data identified predatory subprime home-loan lending practices largely aimed at black home buyers – ahead of the 2008 scandal. Those stories led the Justice Department to sue Wells Fargo for discriminatory lending practices, resulting in a $275 million settlement. The stories also prompted a racial discrimination lawsuit by the Illinois attorney general, joined by nine other states, against Countrywide Financial Corp., which agreed to a settlement to set aside $8.4 billion in direct loan relief for 400,000 borrowers nationwide.

The *Chicago Reporter* emerged as the civil rights movement faded at the end of the 1960s, created by a white Catholic activist named John A. McDermott. His tour of civil rights advocacy groups across the country led him to the conclusion that appeals to conscience and emotion were no match for hard facts and data. That led McDermott to hit on the idea of using the power of the press as his lever. He drew on his own experience as a college newspaper editor and brief stint as a small-town reporter. He borrowed from Chicago's tradition of aggressive and investigative journalism. And he built on his experience as executive director of the Catholic Interracial Council in engaging the powerful to persuade and prod them to implement reforms on race. What he came up with was a distinctive, idealistic, and unusual journalistic and business model. There is no publication quite like it in the country, and no other city created its own version. He named it the *Chicago Reporter*.

Here is how he designed it to work.

It would target the elites to implement reforms. The audience that the new monthly would target would be the "movers and shakers," McDermott said - the business executives; local, state, and federal government officials; civic and institutional directors; and other influential figures who had the power to make change happen. It was not intended to be a general interest magazine. But it would reach a broader audience through reports on its stories in Chicago's newspapers and radio and television newscasts.

It would make its case with high journalistic standards. The stories it would produce would be deeply reported - based on tough interviews, documents, and data – and written in a dispassionate manner to uncover and highlight racial disparities or

injustices that needed to be addressed. To underscore its intent to provide cold hard facts, the Reporter would not present itself as a minority publication, or presume to speak for minorities – instead it would focus on the intersection of where black and white meet. And to ensure its credibility among both white and black leaders, it would be led by co-editors who were white and black, and be reported and written by a staff that would be diverse in race and gender.

It would not be in business to make money. The Reporter would neither pursue profit (it would take no advertising) nor government funding to avoid any outside pressure, commercial or political. Instead the publication would be based at a nonprofit religious urban agency and fund its operations with revenue from subscription income and, mostly, with small grants and gifts from corporate charities and private foundations.

McDermott tailored the Reporter for the 1970s – not as just another journalistic venture but as a vehicle to produce change. It was a time when memories of the riots and turmoil of the 1960s were still fresh and interest in race was high. Chicago was in the midst of a political transformation, with liberal groups pushing for change. The city's journalism was robust. Chicago had four dailies; inexpensive offset printing had spawned a crush of newsletters, alternative weeklies, and niche publications; and the television and radio monopoly by major networks had begun to crack with the growth of local PBS and NPR stations. Major local corporations were willing to fund the new newsletter-style publication if it could help them meet government requirements, and black companies were glad to chip in as its stories opened doors for contracts with public agencies and big business.

But the Reporter continued to exist as the 1970s gave way to the 1980s, and after McDermott in 1985 turned over his creation to what would become a series of six successors as the publication's editor and publisher. Along the way, the Reporter trained a diverse group of more than one hundred and twenty journalists and hundreds of interns, most of whom moved on to other newspapers or news operations with uncommon skills and an even rarer grasp of race and poverty.

The Reporter's heydays were under McDermott, though it had a resurgence in the 1990s with the return of Laura S. Washington, a black journalists who had worked under him. For the past fifteen years, though, the Reporter has seen its budget, staff and publication schedule shrink as interest in race has waned and the public's attention has shifted to terrorism and the financial collapse. The Reporter still produces significant stories on race and poverty, but it no longer has the connections to or influence with the city's top decision-makers and news media it once had. With its move to the Internet, the Reporter is re-creating itself for a new medium and age.

Over time, the Reporter already has had to adapt to many changes – in journalism styles, requirements for foundation grants, shifts in politics, the resurgence of capitalism, and the slide of general interest in urban affairs, race and poverty. It has had to recalibrate its approach to stories as racial issues broadened from white and black to white and black, Latino, Asian, and Muslim. It has had to withstand the Internet's disruption of the newspaper business model. And it has had to weather its own internal clashes and staff turnovers; missteps in management; the aging of its core of supporters; and dwindling attention from the local news media. Now it faces its biggest challenges: finding new readers and re-engineering itself for the Internet.

Research Questions and Methodology

Thesis Question

The primary question of this thesis is: How has the Reporter survived for more than four decades as a nonprofit news organization using the tools of investigative reporting to cover race and poverty in Chicago?

But there are other key questions: While the Reporter has survived, why hasn't it been able to thrive over the past two decades? As it transitions from print to web, how does the Reporter rework the business and journalism model that has kept alive for all of these years? And finally, does prompting racial, ethnic, and economic reform remain the primary purpose of the *Chicago Reporter*?

The Reporter merits an examination for not just for its distinctive model, but also for what it has accomplished. It stands as one of the earliest examples of a local nonprofit investigative news organization. It helped pioneer the use of data and computer analysis for reporting. And it has trained a diverse group of journalists who number in the hundreds. A magazine writer profiling the Reporter in 1980 called McDermott "the public conscience" of Chicago. That also is an apt description of his creation, which has outlived him, his co-editor, and many of its initial supporters and subscribers. Through six succeeding editors and publishers, the Reporter still stands, despite the odds against it lasting this long.

Purpose and Rationale

The purpose of this thesis is to tell the story of the *Chicago Reporter*, as its first full-length narrative history, to describe how it handled opportunities and challenges over time. This thesis seeks to add to three streams of knowledge.

Finances: Non-profit investigative journalism. For the past decade, there has been a flurry of essays, reports, and studies on the growth of nonprofit news organizations, particularly those established to fill the gap in investigative reporting in the wake of the crash of the news business model. The example of the Reporter offers a strategy for financial survival.

Techniques: Using data analysis and investigative reporting to cover race. There has been explosive growth in the use of data analysis by newspapers and website, along with a new literature on the use of data. The Reporter was an early user of these tools to cover race, and demonstrates how data-driven stories can influence leaders and the public.

Goals: Reformist journalism. There is an enduring interest in the history of pamphlets and publications that urged freedom and equality for African Americans – from the abolitionists to the anti-lynching movement; from the rising black protest weeklies to the dispassionate data publications arguing for the end of segregation. The Reporter fits into this tradition by its singular focus and its strategy to aim its findings at the influential members of the community who make change happen.

Literature Review

There are no published academic studies of the *Chicago Reporter*, according to searches of Google Scholar, ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global, and the University of Maryland library online catalog. Those searches, however, turned up dozens of references in scholarly papers, essays and articles that cite or note Reporter stories, findings and analyses. The Reporter, for example, was cited as a source in 167 academic papers catalogued by the ProQuest database.

The Reporter has been the subject of major profiles in several newspapers and magazines, including the *Wall Street Journal*, the *New York Times*, the *Associated Press*, the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Chicago Sun-Times*, the *Chicago Journalism Review*, the *Chicago Reader*, and *Chicago* magazine. The stories present similar positive views of a small but dedicated staff scooping the bigger mainstream papers with its statistics-laden stories on racism and poverty. Most of these articles were written during McDermott's era, and often were as much about him as the publication. A Nexis search shows that the Associated Press did the last profile, in 2002.

In 2013, the Reporter published its own retrospective of its previous forty years, highlighting the stories that had had the most impact. The retrospective also included interviews with each of the Reporter's previous editor and publishers, allowing them to define their tenures and describe the conditions in which they took the publication's top job. Those interviews proved to be valuable starting points for the interviews conducted for this paper.

Methodology

The research question posed by this thesis is: How has the *Chicago Reporter* survived for more than four decades as a nonprofit investigative news organization focusing on race and poverty?

To answer that question, this narrative history focused five core aspects:

People – Who were the seven men and women who served as editor and publisher of the Reporter? How did they manage and lead the editors, reporters, bloggers, photographers, interns, and office staff who worked under them? What choices did they make on their approach to journalism and how did they raise funds?

Historical context - What were the times in which the Reporter operated? What were the politics and social issues at the forefront? How was the economy? What were the major events that shaped the public conversation? What technological changes occurred that affected the production and survival of the publication?

Stories - What kind of journalism did the Reporter produce? What impact did the investigations have? Did stories draw attention and readers? How did editors and reporters balance the use of data and deeply reported information with the readability of the final stories?

Readers – Who did the Reporter have in mind when it produced its stories? How did the editors and publishers reach out to broaden the audience? How did readers react to the Reporter?

Resources – How did the Reporter raise the funds to continue publishing? What was the role of its host nonprofit? Did the Reporter tap into expertise and technology from outside sources?

This history has two parts.

The first describes the four main characters who played the most significant roles in creating the Reporter, and gives historical context for the idea of a nonprofit investigative publication focused on race and poverty. Those characters are John A. McDermott, Lillian Calhoun, the Rev. Donald L. Benedict, and the City of Chicago.

The second is a chronological review of the eight regimes that led the Reporter: John A. McDermott and Lillian Calhoun, 1972-1976; McDermott, 1976-1984; Roy Larson, 1985-1994; Laura Washington, 1994-2001; Alysia Tate, 2002-2007; Alden Loury, 2008-2011; Kimbriell Kelly, 2012; and Susan Smith Richardson, 2013-now.

Those chapters focus on each of the publishers – allowing them to explain their visions and hopes for the Reporter, the opportunities and challenges they faced, and what they ended up doing. They were asked about their approach to covering race, how they chose stories to pursue and the impact that they had, their attempts to broaden the audience, their efforts to keep up with changes in technology and the news industry, and their strategies and results in raising money.

In the concluding chapter, Still Here After All These Years, I revisit the five factors outlined above to discuss how each of the publishers worked to keep the Reporter alive and to continue to pursue its purpose of doing the best investigative and data journalism on race and poverty.

For this history, I interviewed six of the seven people who served as editor and publisher. The founder, John A. McDermott, died in 1996, but I use his memos and published interviews with him to make his case. I also interviewed seven of the managing editors, three of the consulting editors, and more than a dozen staffers who had worked as reporters. In addition, I spoke with foundation officers, academics, Community Renewal Society executives, nonprofit experts, and other journalists.

Susan Smith Richardson, the current editor and publisher, supplied me with .pdf files of nearly every printed edition of the Reporter, an invaluable resource. I read the dozen or more profiles other publications printed about the Reporter, and examined scores of stories – mostly in the Chicago press - about the Reporter's findings to assess its impact and importance in the public discussion of Chicago.

Because the Community Renewal Society is a religious agency and does not file nonprofit tax forms, I was unable to compile a consistent set of revenue and expenditure figures for the society or the Reporter. I was able to get early figures from archival materials and for the past decade the society provided budget information. For the 1980s and 1990s when I did not have those figures I relied on the Reporter's own stories about grants.

I also referred to the Reporter's files from 1972 to 1985 that are archived and available at the Chicago Historical Society. Pity that the society would not process the personal papers, despite my requests, that McDermott donated to their keeping.

Author's Disclosure

I worked at the *Chicago Reporter* more than three decades ago, from 1975 to 1983. I served as circulation manager, reporter, assistant editor, managing editor, and acting editor during that time. All my jobs were operational - the editor and publisher established policy and editorial direction. From time to time I have made financial donations to the nonprofit news organization. But I have no financial or other stake in the Reporter. And I have sought to rely on independent evidence – documents, studies, interviews, and data – throughout my research on this paper.

PART I

Chapter 1: Out of the Ashes of the Civil Rights Movement

The Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. staggered, his legs buckled, and he fell to one knee. A rock had hit him just above his right ear, creating a gash on the side of his head. King was just setting out to march with about six hundred black and white demonstrators through a hostile white mob numbering more than four thousand in the all-white Marquette Park neighborhood on Chicago's Southwest Side. Aides and bodyguards surrounded King, to protect him from the continual barrage of stones, bottles and bricks hurled by the angry crowd screaming racist slogans behind a protective wall of more than one thousand Chicago police. On that Aug. 5, 1966 afternoon, about thirty people were injured, including one marcher hit by knife thrown at King, and more than forty members of the mob were arrested. The crowd also flipped a car and set it on fire. King insisted on standing up and continuing the three-hour march to protest Chicago's racially segregated neighborhoods and the complicity of real estate agents in keeping them that way. "I have to do this – to expose myself – to bring this hate into the open," King said. "I have seen many demonstrations in the South but I have never seen anything so hostile and hateful as I've seen here today."[1]

Among the marchers on the front line with King that day was John Andrew McDermott, a 40-year-old white activist, his round face and bald head framed by his black horn-rimmed glasses. McDermott served as executive director of the Catholic Interracial Council in Chicago, a lay group founded in 1945 to work for racial equality. Historian James R. Ralph Jr., who has done extensive study of King and

Chicago, called McDermott one of the "three most prominent whites in the Chicago civil rights movement."[2] McDermott had been recruited for the job in 1960 by the council's board chairman, Sargent Shriver, who also was manager of the Kennedy family's Merchandise Mart in Chicago. Shriver's brother-in-law was then Sen. John F. Kennedy, who was elected president on the Democratic ticket later that year.[3]

Philadelphia born and Catholic-school educated, McDermott earned a bachelor's in philosophy at Villanova in 1948 after two years active duty with the U.S. Navy. He had done work on a masters at Georgetown University before spending a summer in Nigeria, dropping out of school and taking a series of jobs. He worked as weekly newspaper reporter, community organizer, housing inspector, human relations housing officer, and associate director of the National Conference of Christians and Jews in Philadelphia. When Shriver tapped him, McDermott was an intergroup relations specialist at the Federal Housing Administration in Washington.[4]

McDermott was press savvy and attuned to the paths to the powerful, and he quickly made his mark in Chicago. Local newspapers, especially the *Chicago Defender*, ran stories about him, his group, and his views of race and the Catholic Church. In 1962, McDermott held his first high-profile annual dinner by inviting Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson to accept an award. McDermott made Mayor Richard J. Daley honorary chairman and included local executives, politicians, and religious leaders as co-chairmen of the event.[5] Later dinners featured the singer Harry Belafonte, Robert F. Kennedy, and, in 1964, King, who came despite feeling ill.[6]

But McDermott also put his body on the line, as the saying went among civil rights activists. He organized marches and protests in Chicago. He attended the

March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom in 1963. He took a contingent of Chicago Catholics to the historic trek from Selma to Montgomery in the spring of 1965.[7] When King led a protest through downtown Chicago in July that year, police arrested McDermott and three priests for blocking the street. Each was fined $125.[8] Years later he told a young reporter about the experience of marching with King through the slurs and missiles of the angry white mob in Marquette Park: "My God, it was pure, total hate – almost like a war. But there was a great camaraderie on the part of the marchers, black and white. You stood up for something you believed in, took a risk, put your life on the line. There was a wonderful sense of joy in being alive, a pride in being part of that group."[9]

McDermott joined the demonstrations against racial discrimination by the Chicago public schools. It was a cause that became the Chicago Freedom Movement, a coalition of local groups led by former school teacher Al Raby and King's Southern Leadership Conference. The movement brought King to Chicago for his Northern Crusade for open housing in 1966. McDermott, a member of its Agenda Committee, lent his offices to the Chicago Freedom Movement for strategy meetings.[10]

King encountered a different experience in Chicago than he had in the South. Chicago was a diverse city of ethnic neighborhoods and had a massive black community on the South and West sides. The issue of open housing – which he made the centerpiece of his campaign – was far more intractable and elusive than his Southern goals of winning the freedom for blacks to eat at a drug-store lunch counter. King also was confronted by Daley, a politically adept big-city Democratic-machine mayor who did whatever he could to coopt the civil rights movement. Daley avoided

acting like another Bull Connor, the notorious white Birmingham, Ala., commissioner of public safety who turned loose dogs and fire hoses on civil rights demonstrators. Daley provided police protection for the troublesome protests that he detested. He won an injunction to stop the marches and entered into negotiations over King's demands, resulting in a Summit Agreement that looked better on paper than in action.

By the middle of 1967, the Chicago Freedom Movement and the local coalition that drove it sputtered to an end, as its energy shifted to black power and anti-war protests that would disrupt the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago. McDermott decided it was time for him to move on. The days of marching in the streets to demand progress had given way to finding ways to enforce the new civil rights laws and to attack the entrenched but more subtle institutional racism. And McDermott had a line on a job that would let him do just that.

In October, McDermott leaked a story to *Chicago Sun-Times* gossip columnist Irv Kupcinet that he was leaving the Catholic Interracial Council for a newly created job of Midwest civil rights director for the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, one of three new regional posts. In a follow-up *Sun-Times* article, McDermott described his job as a "compelling challenge" and of "great promise." In this new post, he would be responsible "for the enforcement of civil rights legislation as it pertains to the expenditures of hundreds of millions of dollars in federal funds in five Midwestern states."[11] The job was to begin Jan. 1, 1968. Shortly before Christmas, McDermott wrote a letter to President Lyndon B. Johnson at the White House, thanking him for a telegram for the Catholic Interracial Council's recent

annual dinner, reminding Johnson of the 1962 dinner that had honored him, and telling him about his plans to accept the new job in his administration.[12]

In February 1968, however, McDermott announced he had decided not to accept the new federal post. “A number of problems have arisen since the announcement of my appointment last October which have caused me to have some serious second thoughts,” McDermott wrote. Among them were cutbacks in staff, making his office more limited than he had imagined. HEW’s national director of civil rights accepted his decision with “regret,” and asked him to be a special assistant and consultant.[13]

But a confidential letter that McDermott sent to a friend a few weeks later casts doubts on whether it was staff reductions that led him to decline the job. “HEW and I have decided to end this business as gracefully as possible. It was a good fight, but you can’t win them all,” McDermott wrote. “Someday perhaps the whole story will come out. In the meantime, I have decided it unwise to make charges which, though true, can’t be proven absolutely.” Alluding to his work at the Catholic Interracial Council, he said, “If this is the price for that work, then I am glad to pay it and without bitterness. God knows, many others have paid much, much more.”[14]

McDermott always believed that Daley had blocked his HEW appointment, according to McDermott’s son John, but he had no records to back it up.[15] It would fit a pattern. After King’s departure, the Chicago establishment began pushing back on the local civil rights leaders. In March 1967, Cardinal John Cody, the archbishop of Chicago and an ally of Daley, cut the Catholic Interracial Council from his list of church-supported organizations. Daley, watching riots in black neighborhoods tear

apart his city in 1966 and 1968, hardened in his views of the civil rights movement. In one outbreak, he issued orders to shoot to kill looters. A supporter of Johnson, Daley also soured on King for his attacks on the Vietnam War.

Had McDermott gone to work at HEW, he might have stayed for years in a position with authority to shape civil rights policy through the power of the federal purse. Or he might have left after a year or two amid the clashes over civil rights policy in the administration of Republican President Richard Nixon. But it's likely he would not have gone on the same journey that led him to decide to create, out of nothing, a new publication.

In 1969 McDermott landed a job as a senior project officer at the Urban Institute, a new public private think tank that the Johnson administration had established. It was there, he told interviewers later, that he came up with the idea for the *Chicago Reporter*.[16] McDermott said he spent two months traveling around the country, visiting every institution he could that was attempting to combat racism. "I found that most programs were guilt oriented. They had you go on a weekend retreat and confess your sins," McDermott told an interviewer. He said that "the local powers" didn't hate blacks, so those programs missed the mark. The real problem, he said, was "a huge information gap." He recalled, "They would say, 'Don't lecture me on morality, just tell me what works. We need solutions. We need facts.'"[17] To deliver on that request, McDermott came up with the idea to start a publication that used investigative reporting on race. That, he said, could have a dramatic, far-reaching effect.[18]

McDermott talked about his concept with the Rev. Donald L. Benedict, the executive director of the Community Renewal Society, an urban affairs nonprofit group in Chicago. Benedict invited McDermott to give it a try. In 1971, McDermott joined the society as an associate executive director of The Open Society Division while raising funds and assembling staff. His most important hire was Lillian Calhoun, a respected and experienced journalist. Together, as co-editors, one white, one black, they put together the little publication that had big aspirations.

Chapter 2: Black Liberation Press: Advocacy and Facts

Barely taller than five feet, with cat-eye glasses and a slight southern accent from her birth and early years in Savannah, Ga., Lillian Calhoun at first glance looked just like another nice little middle-aged black woman. Her appearance was deceptive. Calhoun was restless, adventurous, confident, and at times prickly, a pioneering black women journalist in an era when neither blacks nor women had many opportunities in a rough and tumble occupation dominated by white men. By 1971, when John A. McDermott began to put together the *Chicago Reporter,* Calhoun had worked as a journalist in the black press in Detroit, New York and Chicago. She was well-connected: her brother-in-law Louis E. Martin at the time was editor of the *Chicago Defender* and during the 1960s had been an adviser to Presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson. She also had been the first black woman to work at the *Chicago Sun-Times*.[1] Calhoun not only brought more than two decades of reporting and editing to the partnership with McDermott, she also brought her own deep roots in black experience - and credibility for the Reporter in the black community.

In the mid-40s, when she was single and known as Lillian Scott, she began working for the black press at that time when it wielded considerable power and influence with its readers. The *Chicago Defender, Philadelphia Tribune, New York Amsterdam News* and similar papers covered black events, issues and personalities ignored by the white press - from local obituaries to stories of segregation by such notables as Langston Hughes and Zora Neale Hurston.[2]

Freedom's Journal, the first black newspaper in the United States, was founded in New York City in 1827 by John Russwurm and Samuel Cornish, amid an emerging black and abolitionist press.[3] By their very nature and names, black newspapers were reformist, if not revolutionary. Along with the news itself, these pamphlets, magazines and newspapers argued for the end of slavery and bigotry in two ways. One was based on religious, emotional, and logical appeals to conscience. That was offered testimony, documentation, and descriptions of the evils of people being treated like chattel. Both freed slave Frederick Douglass, who began publishing *The North Star* in 1847, and white abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison, who edited the anti-slavery newspaper, *The Liberator,* from 1831 to 1865, relied on this formula.[4] Harriet Beecher Stowe, the white abolitionist author, wrote *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in 1852 as a stirring and horrifying tale to move people to end slavery. But after harsh criticism that she had simply made up the story, Stowe followed up two years later with a defense of her work. She titled the book: *The Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin: Presenting the Original Facts and Documents upon Which the Story is Founded, Together with Corroborative Statements Verifying the Truth of the Work*.[5]

Until the 1950s and 1960s, most newspapers and magazines were racially segregated. This was largely because whites still thought blacks were inferior and that was the social standard at the time. That was well understood by Ida B. Wells, the formidable black intellect and writer known best for her crusading journalism against lynchings of black men in the South. She knew whites questioned black accounts of those illegal hangings. To allay suspicions, she relied on white sources, particularly the *Chicago Tribune*, when she compiled three years' worth of data for *A Red Record:*

Tabulated Statistics and Alleged Causes of Lynchings in the United States.[6] In an even odder example, in the 1950s John Howard Griffin, a white novelist, had a dermatologist make his skin look black to describe the world of black people, as if to validate what black people repeatedly complained was unfair and denigrating treatment by whites. Ironically, he first published his unusual exploit in *Sepia*, a magazine intended for a black audience.[7]

The white press did do its own investigations of bigotry. In the 1920s, for example, *The World*, then New York's biggest newspaper, produced a two-week series on the Ku Klux Klan detailed its fraudulent and racist appeals to raise money. And white newspaper and reporters put themselves on the line to cover the often tumultuous, violent, and dangerous civil rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s, as Gene Roberts and Hank Klibanoff documented in *The Race Beat*, the ground-breaking book that documents that era.[8]

Newspaper editors in the South were split on their view of the civil rights movement, a schism that deepened with the Supreme Court's landmark decision in Brown v. Board of Education in 1954. Led by *Arkansas Gazette* editor Harry Ashmore, Southern editors created what the Roberts and Klibanoff call "a unique experiment in the history of American journalism: the Southern Education Reporting Service." It would publish *Southern School News*, a monthly region-wide newspaper aimed at educators, government officials and editors offering "fair, objective, in-depth, statistically supported information about the way school districts were responding to desegregation orders." Its purpose was to cut through emotion and rhetoric with detailed factual information, on both the successes and failures of

desegregation agreements, in a publication run by nineteen of the top editors and reporters in the South. Simply put, the news service did not produce opinions, but created a common ground of facts and data for the Southern editors. Many of them ran the reports, others editorialized on them. But it succeeded in becoming the source of unbiased information throughout the tumultuous years of school desegregation in the 1950s and 1960s.[9] The service later became the Race Relations Information Center and published the *Nashville Race Relations Reporter*. The Ford Foundation ended its funding in 1972, and the center closed.[10]

While the white press wrestled over emotion and fact, narrative and data, the black press embraced the movements that liberated black people from the debilitating Jim Crow laws that shackled them after the end of slavery. Attorney Ferdinand Lee Burnett established the *Chicago Conservator*, the first black newspaper in Chicago, in 1878 and later sold it to Wells, his wife, who ran it until 1914.[11] In 1905, Robert S. Abbott founded *The Chicago Defender*, and it changed the country. It helped spur on the Great Migration from 1890 to 1930 of blacks fleeing the oppressive racism and servitude in the South for factory jobs in the North, particularly in manufacturing cities such as Detroit, Cleveland, Pittsburgh and Chicago. The *Defender* was unabashed in its point of view, and it along with other black newspapers helped shift black allegiance in 1932 from the Republican Party to the Democrats. In 1956 after the Brown decision, the *Defender* became a daily and provided some of the most detailed coverage of the growing civil rights movement.[12]

Calhoun, daughter of a Savannah insurance company owner and businessman Walter S. Scott, moved from Georgia to attend Ohio State University, where she

graduated in 1944. Then she went to Detroit to work at her brother-in-law's newspaper, the *Michigan Chronicle*, and then for his magazine *Headlines and Pictures.* She followed Martin and her sister Gertrude to New York City, where they felt it would succeed. It folded after a year and a half.

Calhoun became New York correspondent for the Chicago *Defender* based in Harlem during the literary and arts renaissance and the emergence of the civil rights movement around the country. "That was an exciting time, a dream job," she later recalled. "I covered everything from movie reviews and entertainers to social issues and the U.N." Clips from the Defender showed the breadth of her work. She interviewed politicians including 1948 Republican presidential candidate Thomas Dewey and Democratic vice presidential candidate James Barkley; baseball stars Roy Campanella and Joe DiMaggio; filed gossip columns (she attended Nate King Cole's wedding); and wrote about the ideas of leading black figures. She also did stories that would become a staple years later for the *Chicago Reporter*: she surveyed New York colleges to see how many employed black teachers (eight of twelve did); profiled the seven blacks, including Ralph Bunche, working in the United Nations secretariat; and highlighted the return of black lyricists and songwriters to Broadway. But she also had to force movie and Broadway theaters to invite black reporters to premieres. She held the job for four years, before leaving to get married to a law school graduate.[13]

In 1959, Calhoun and her husband, Harold Calhoun, moved to Chicago. There she worked at *Ebony* and *Jet* magazines, then returned to the *Chicago Defender* as features editor and writer of the gossip column "Confetti," which highlighted big name, civil rights leaders, gatherings, and protests. Among them was John A

McDermott. They shared connections, such as Sargent Shriver who worked often with her brother-in-law. McDermott and his Catholic Interracial Council often made it into Calhoun's column.

McDermott and Calhoun also deepened that relationship in January of 1965, when Calhoun learned of a council report on the refusal of St. Philip Neri Catholic School in Chicago's South Shore community to enroll black students. McDermott hoped to sway with Archdiocese of Chicago with the report to quietly desegregate the school in a changing neighborhood. In a confidential memo, McDermott told his executive committee about Calhoun, and said she had agreed to hold off on the story but that her editor, John H. Sengstacke, insisted she run it. McDermott called Sengstacke and offered to give preference to the *Chicago Defender* when he went public if he would hold the story. Sengstacke agreed. McDermott had averted a crisis. Quietly, and reluctantly, the school opened its doors to black students. By the end of the 1970s, the school and church were attended mostly by black students and parishioners, as white members moved to the suburbs.[14] But McDermott had learned he could work with Calhoun on sensitive stories.[15]

Chicago daily newspapers and television news teams had long been white and mostly male, but attitudes about blacks began to change, slowly, after the end of World War II. When managers of newspapers realized they needed to hire black reporters, it started a migration of black journalists to their city rooms. In 1952, the *Chicago Daily News* hired a black reporter, Benjamin Holman, a 21-year-old graduate of the University of Kansas. He was assigned to be the only black among the white reporters in the police-station press room. "The night that I walked into that

news bureau, all of them stood and walked out of the room. And this went on for several weeks. They wouldn't talk to me," he recalled. Holman persevered, finally won acceptance and spent a decade at the newspaper before switching to broadcast news at the CBS affiliate in Chicago in 1962 as television's popularity soared. [16] He was 31 at the time, and became the first black anchor at WBBM-TV. "I knew I was the only black at WBBM, but really it was the days before we were conscious about these things. It's almost embarrassing now," Holman recalled a quarter of a century later as a professor at the Philip Merrill College of Journalism at the University of Maryland.[17] Holman later worked as a correspondent and anchor for CBS News in New York and for NBC in Washington. He left reporting and spent eight years as the assistant attorney general in charge of the community relations service, set up to deal with black communities amid disorder. That was the condition that kick started many a career as white editors frantically sought black reporters to cover the black communities. "When all hell broke loose, they were snatching anybody off the streets who could talk and making him a reporter," Holman recalled.[18]

In 1965, as black protests heated up and civil unrest stirred in Chicago, the *Chicago Sun-Times* hired Calhoun as its first black woman reporter. She was thirty nine, and already had been a reporter, columnist and editor for years. She also was well sourced in the black community, where she knew everyone of importance, and they knew her. Showing her fearless, feisty side, Calhoun and her husband also left the black South Side for the all-white, and wealthy, North Shore suburb of Kenilworth, which they personally integrated. But Calhoun's best known article at the *Sun-Times* was not about the civil rights movement or the black community. It was a

feature about Richard Speck who in July 1966 spent hours methodically torturing, raping and murdering eight nursing students from South Chicago Community Hospital in a townhouse that served as their dorm. “Why Didn’t They Scream?” Calhoun’s article asked. It won an Illinois Associated Press Award.[19]

After three years, the restless Calhoun left the newspaper. She became the managing editor for *Integrated Education: Race and Schools*, a national publication, and then she began writing a column for the *Chicago Journalism Review* and freelancing. Calhoun was ready when McDermott asked her to take on a new challenge. McDermott would be the visionary and Calhoun would be the editor. McDermott said Calhoun had a “fierce devotion to principle and a tenacious commitment to excellence.”[20] But the key to the partnership would be that it was bi-racial as they began their new venture. They found a home for it at an old-line urban ministry that a life-long activist had turned into an incubator for bold, novel, and risky experimentation.

Chapter 3: The Freedom and Restraint of a Non-Profit Base

The Rev. Donald L. Benedict was open to just about anything, as long as it aimed to help people and communities who were poor, disadvantaged, or excluded. Benedict grew up as an only child of a stern Protestant family in an all-white Ohio town and became a minister with strong principles and a willingness to challenge authority. As a young seminarian at the start of World War II, Benedict joined fellow students who refused to enlist in the military. Benedict and the others - including David Dellinger, later tried as one of the anti-war Chicago Seven - served time in federal prison in Danbury, Conn., for their pacifist stands. After hearing of the Nazi atrocities against Jews, Benedict changed his mind and joined the Army. After the war, Benedict started inner-city ministries in East Harlem in New York, Detroit and Cleveland. In 1960, he was recruited to run the Chicago City Missionary Society.[1]

The society was founded in 1882 during the massive influx of immigrants from Europe into Chicago – one hundred thousand or more a year moved into a city booming with railroads, manufacturing, the stockyard, and meat-packing plants. Businessmen, professors and other members of the Congregational Church established the society to bring religion to the newcomers and to provide help to their crowded neighborhoods, high crime rates, and poor living conditions.

Taking particular interest in this effort was Victor Lawson, publisher of the *Chicago Daily News*, an afternoon newspapers written for educated, and more liberal, readers. The *Daily News* investigated working conditions and ran articles about injustices to wage earners. When Lawson died in 1925, he left a trust fund of $1.3

million to the society and one-fourth of his estate after other bequests had been paid. It totaled $3 million, or nearly $41 million in today's dollars.[2] That bequest ensured that the urban agency never would close for lack of funding – in recent years it has provided the society $1.5 million to $2 million a year.[3] That made the society a stable berth for experimentation and agitation.

In his first year at the organization in 1961, Benedict found, to his surprise, not only a secure budget but a surplus of unspent income. He did not want that money to sit idle. Benedict recruited four seminarians and told them to do what they wanted to do. "I tended to hire highly motivated people, then to allow them considerable freedom," he wrote.[4] That would be how he would run the agency over the next dozen years. The projects the seminarians created didn't all pan out, but a theater project was spun off to the Community Arts Foundation. For a short time, the society published a slick forty-eight-page magazine of essays and articles called *Renewal*.[5]

That was just the beginning. Benedict guaranteed loans for low- and middle-income housing, and helped set up a foundation to rehab and manage housing, some of which failed. Benedict pushed the edge even further as he began working to develop leaders in the poorest, slum-ridden neighborhoods – and was accused by police of aiding black Communists and helping street gangs.[6] The Chicago Police Department's Red Squad – a special and illegal task force to conduct surveillance on left leaning groups - infiltrated the society and spied on him in the late 1960s. In 1967, Benedict shed his agency's paternalistic name and rechristened the Chicago City Missionary Society as the Community Renewal Society.[7]

Benedict knew McDermott from the civil rights movement and the almost clubby community of activists and non-profit groups. In 1968, McDermott had joined the board of the Community Renewal Society after he had left the Catholic Interracial Council and was working in Washington. McDermott wanted to return to Chicago.[8] McDermott talked with Benedict about his idea for a publication to investigate race and poverty. As usual, Benedict said yes.[9]

A connection between nascent journalism ventures and groups tied to religion or churches is not widespread but it exists. Peter Collier, whose magazine *Colliers Weekly* helped launch the muckraking era in the late 1890s, was a seminarian who got his start in the publishing business producing books marketed to Roman Catholics.[10] The well-respected *Christian Science Monitor*, winner of seven Pulitzer Prizes, is a nonprofit begun in 1908 by Mary Baker Eddy, founder of the Church of Christ, Scientist.[11] The Investigative Reporters and Editors, a national group created in Indianapolis in 1975, credits the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) for helping its startup.[12] And the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints owns the *Deseret News*, a daily newspaper in Salt Lake City, Utah.

Still, what McDermott proposed was unusual, risky and ahead of its time. News organizations run as not-for-profits existed at the time, including *Consumer Reports, Christian Science Monitor, National Public Radio, the Public Broadcasting System, Foreign Affairs,* and the *Associated Press*.[13] But all of those outlets had national distribution, and the purpose of nearly all of them was to cover popular or general interest topics for a broad audience – not investigative reporting. The closest example of what McDermott had in mind was the *Nashville Race Relations Reporter*,

a publication funded by the Ford Foundation to examine the issue of race in the South. But even that publication did not match what McDermott had in mind.

McDermott wanted a dispassionate and deep-digging publication focused on race and poverty in Chicago before investigative reporting had become widely celebrated.[14] He drew up his plans before the lionizing of *Washington Post* reporters Carl Bernstein and Robert Woodward's Watergate stories. The Reporter was publishing before other well-known investigative journalism nonprofits existed. Investigative Reporters and Editors came into being in 1975. *Mother Jones*, the muckraking magazine, was founded in 1976. The Center for Investigative Reporting, based in San Francisco, was started by Lowell Bergman and two friends in 1977. Charles Lewis created the Center for Public Integrity in Washington in 1989.

But McDermott's plan also was risky. He set aimed to make corporate executives not only the subjects of his publication's stories but also its audience. And then he wanted those executives and corporations to fund the reporting with subscriptions and grants.

The risk was two fold. McDermott was aiming the Reporter at a small targeted audience – because he wanted to reach people who could make change happen. And initially he relied on the local news media to reach a larger group of readers. He did not foresee the future issues that would raise. McDermott asked businessmen for small grants, making it easier to raise money and to protect the publication one angry donor cutting off his funding. "Most of our gifts are from $200 to $5,000, so we can afford to offend people," McDermott said.[15]

As the Reporter grew in size and in influence, McDermott found himself fighting a two-front war. He had to try to figure out ways to package the Reporter to corporate and private foundations, which preferred not to provide operating support because they preferred high-profile projects. And he had to push for greater support from the Community Renewal Society, which already gave more money to his project than to any other. That struggle has continued to this day – every one of the publishers of the Reporter interviewed for this history had stories about courting foundations and jousting with the Community Renewal Society to secure enough money to keep the publication going.

The boom in non-profit investigative journalism didn't kick into high gear until the business model of commercial newspapers and broadcast news stations began to crumble in the mid-2000s. In response to rapidly declining ad revenue, most newspapers and stations began cutting staff. Those laid off or bought out included many investigative reporters, whose work is often costly and time-consuming. Many of those reporters decided to create their own journalism organizations that didn't rely on advertisers to pay the bills.

By 2012, all but nine states in this country had at least one of the one hundred and seventy two nonprofit digital news outlets created since 1987 – one fifth of them producing investigative reporting, the Pew Research Center reported in a 2013 study.[16] Nearly two thirds began with a startup grant, but only about a quarter of those new organizations found that the initial funder had agreed to renew that grant – forcing the nonprofits to try to diversify their funding stream. About two-thirds of the nonprofit news outlets were, like the Reporter, sponsored by another organization.

But one thing all the groups shared in common was a constant struggle for funding – even for developing a staff to raise money - and a wavering cycle of interest by foundations, many of which do not give grants for general operating expenses.

"The jury is kind of out about not for profits. Many have found success in that the dance with donors and funders, but most of them find that the run of that success is very rare," said Charles Whitaker, the Helen Gurley Brown in Magazine Journalism at Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism.[17] He also served on the Reporter's advisory board.

Charles Lewis, the founder of the Center for Public Integrity – one of the premiere and pioneering nonprofit investigative organizations in the country - acknowledged that foundations and donors have cycles of interest in topics, and then move on. But he said he has found that groups like his, and the Reporter, can find ways to adapt to raise money. "Sometimes groups of foundations get excited in zeitgeist moments about hot public issues, certainly, and they then support organizations with missions in those 'hot' areas for a while – until years later, usually when a new president and board change direction," Lewis said. "But journalism is also adaptive to a myriad of public issues so that its funding can be multi-faceted."[18]

Each publisher of the Reporter tried a variety of strategies with varying levels of success. A common tactic, begun by McDermott to fund the Reporter's first full-time paid reporter, was to propose to fund a beat or specialty for which the foundation could take credit. That first funded beat was education. Later foundations would underwrite political reporting, Latino coverage, even the pay of a reporter to keep a close eye on what happened with the Plan for Transformation after Chicago began

tearing down the racially segregated and poverty ridden public housing towers. Over time, the Reporter also won grants to purchase and adapt to new technologies - from a compositor to set type to its first website to a transition to digital publication.

The Reporter also has been backed by some attentive Chicago philanthropies, notably the Chicago Community Trust, the McCormick Foundation, and the MacArthur Foundation, as well as many local business foundations. Major national foundations, including the Rockefeller Foundation, the Ford Foundation, and more recently, The Open Society, established by billionaire George Soros, have provided needed funding to aid in transitions of leadership and technology.

But the base of the Reporter always has been the Community Renewal Society. The Reporter began as a project to be spun off as an independent agency. But McDermott convinced Benedict to make the Reporter one of the programs of the society. Benedict was comfortable with the Reporter's editorial independence. But after he left, some of his successors did not understand why the Reporter should not serve the society's agenda. That internal question would lead to tension. But the Community Renewal Society's willingness to host the launch of a new journalistic venture and stick with it matched the spirit of Chicago as an incubator of reform movements and investigative journalism.

Chapter 4: Chicago: Fertile Soil for Muckraking on Race

When Chicago incorporated as a city in 1837, its founders adopted the motto "urbs in horto," which is Latin for "city in a garden."[1] A century and a half later, *Chicago Daily News* columnist Mike Royko proposed an updated version reflecting the graft of the Chicago Democratic machine running the city: "ubi est mea," or "Where's mine?"[2] Both fit. Chicago always has been fertile ground for parkland and concrete, immigrants and idealists, politicians and crooks, and crusaders and journalists. The city expanded rapidly as a boom town driven by manufacturing, steel mills, butchering and railroads. Chicago was open to one and all to come and make their way, though the playing field often was tilted by corruption, connections, or bigotry. Spawned by massive immigration from Europe and the South, Chicago became a city of neighborhoods that served as ethnic enclaves. Chicago has long been known as the most racially segregated large city in America. But it also is one of the most racially and ethnically diverse urban areas in America.[3] Chicago, now the third largest city in the United States, has hard streets, architecturally significant buildings, culture and entertainment, murderous street gangs, and a robust civic life. And for most of the people residing there, Chicago was and is as real a character in their lives as their best friends or their worst enemies. With its history and tradition, Chicago was fertile ground for the *Chicago Reporter*.

When Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was deciding on the city he would choose for the launch of his Northern Campaign during 1966, he looked favorably toward

Chicago. It had a powerful mayor and entrenched racism. But it also had activists and a civil rights organization that was among the strongest of any major city – and they wanted him to bring his brand of protest to their streets. King had always been well received in Chicago. In 1964, he spoke to a rally of seventy five thousand cheering supporters at Soldier Field, Chicago Bears stadium. In 1965, he came to address several groups and was "quite impressed by the response." And he had friends there, gospel singer Mahalia Jackson and lawyer Chauncey Eskeridge. Other cities posed hurdles – a black politician in New York and a black leader in Philadelphia warned that they did not want an outside rival to come into their towns, and other cities had no strong local civil rights movement. Chicago was, in the end, not a difficult choice for King, according to civil rights scholar James R. Ralph Jr.[4]

The Reporter has roots in Chicago as an outgrowth of King's movement and local efforts to continue his work at ending racism. When John A. McDermott decided to create the Reporter, he tapped into a network of colleagues from his days as executive director of the Catholic Interracial Council for support. They included activists in the vibrant nonprofit world, such as the Jewish Council on Urban Affairs, Leadership Council for Metropolitan Open Communities, and the crusading and investigative Better Government Association. And he had ties to the city's major black groups, such as Operation PUSH, the Chicago Urban League, and the NAACP.

McDermott's contacts also included members of the city's business community, who had a personal and financial stake in ending racial strife and in making their city safe and stable. The battle over civil rights, McDermott said, had moved from Congress to the board room of Commonwealth Edison. In its first two

years, the Reporter mainly aimed its stories and subscription appeals to executives. Among the most important of them was Thomas G. Ayers, president of Commonwealth Edison, the area's largest provider of electricity. Ayers chaired the Summit Agreement negotiations between Daley and King in 1966. Later Ayers led the low-profile but powerful Chicago United, a group of executives who met quietly to find ways to address problems in the city. They had no sanctioned mandate but they had the power to shape policy and influence Daley and leading institutions. Ayers also was a board member of the Community Renewal Society. McDermott would later rent a small house behind his home to Ayer's son and daughter-in-law: Bill Ayers and Bernadine Dohrn, key figures in the Weather Underground radical leftist group during the late 1960s. They had fled prosecution, married and had two children, and resurfaced in 1980. Dohrn served less than a year, and both found work at local universities.

What also set Chicago apart from many other cities for a publication like the Reporter is its vast black and Latino community and history of racial segregation. When the Reporter investigates race, ethnicity, and poverty, it is, in fact, reporting on more than a niche issue – it is about what is now the largest group of people living in Chicago. Whites, in fact, are now a minority, too.

Beginning in the 1890s, Italians, Poles, Bohemians, and Germans resettled in their own neighborhoods across the city. But southern blacks moving north in the Great Migration were channeled into a three-mile long and quarter-mile wide strip between railroad tracks on the South Side. As the migration continued, the South Side black belt grew and a smaller one began on the West Side. The white reception to

black newcomers shifted from tolerance to hostility as their number grew. In 1919, a race riot broke out after a black boy drowned at a "white" beach. White thugs conducted drive-by shootings in the black belt and beat up blacks on the streets. Blacks retaliated, attacking whites near their community. After the riot ended, 23 blacks and 15 whites were dead.

The flow of blacks fleeing the South, egged on by the *Chicago Defender*, did not stop, and it transformed the makeup of the city. In 1890, there were 14,271 blacks in Chicago, less than 2 percent of the population. By 1930, there were 233,903 blacks, or 7 percent. After World War II, the pace of black migration picked up. [5] From 1940 to 1960, the number of blacks more than doubled to 812,637, or 23 percent of the city's population.[6]

Today, Chicago is 32 percent white, 33 percent black, 29 percent Latino, and nearly 6 percent Asian, according to Census Bureau estimates. Chicago's black population of 913,000 is second only to New York and much bigger than the third largest in Philadelphia.[7] Chicago's black community is not monolithic. It includes wealthy business owners, a strong middle class, but also many who live in deeply entrenched poverty. The surge of Latinos has nearly matched the growth of blacks – rising from 7 percent of the population in 1970 to 29 percent now. The Latino community is split mainly between those from Mexico and Puerto Rico, with a smaller number of Cubans and others from Central and South America.

The Reporter and its host, the Community Renewal Society, are part of a long tradition of reformers that have made Chicago a workshop and battleground. Jane Addams in 1899 founded Hull House to help settle the immigrants pouring in to the

city from Europe. Labor union organizers and anarchists sparked the Haymarket riot and assassinated the mayor. The University of Chicago pioneered sociological research, and mapped out seventy six identifiable city neighborhoods, a tool still used by researchers and the Reporter. In the In the 1960s, Saul Alinsky, who wrote "Rules for Radicals," began organizing communities to fight for their rights. In the 1970s, Gail Cincotta led the fight to end redlining, the practice by insurance companies of refusing to offer affordable insurance for homes and autos in poor communities. In the 1980s, the young Barack Obama would spend a year on the far South Side organizing.[8]

Chicago has an open, sophisticated, and at times contentious conversation about race. It is home to major, and some controversial, black figures: The Rev. Jesse Jackson Jr.; Elijah Muhammad and his successor Louis Farrakahn, leaders of the Nation of Islam; and Conrad Worrill, a leader in the movement to force the federal government to pay reparations to blacks for centuries of slavery and subjugation as second-class citizens. The city's politicians include the first black Chicago mayor, Harold Washington, and the first black president, Obama, a former Illinois state senator and U.S. senator. Yet Chicago is also home to conservative think tanks, such as the Heartland Institute. And it had a Nazi Party, which in 1977 held a march in Skokie, a suburb that is home to many Jewish families.

Also informing that conversation are street gangs, mobsters, and politicians. A young black man named Jeff Fort began a small gang he called the Blackstone Rangers after the name of his street and grew it into a confederation of gangs – he later became the first American convicted of domestic terrorism for attempting to buy

hand-held rocket launchers from Libya's dictator Moamar Gadhafi. The local mafia resembled its hometown – unlike in New York, mobsters didn't have to be Sicilian to be a "made man." That's why Al Capone, who was not Sicilian, left New York to set up shop in Chicago. The organization he set up included Irish, Jews, and even some blacks. Corruption is rampant in Chicago. Politicians of all races and ethnicities have been convicted, including Gov. Rod Blagojevich for trying to sell the Senate seat that Obama vacated and Rep. Jesse Jackson Jr. for using public funds for private purposes.

Ruling over this divided city was the Chicago Democratic machine, led by Mayor Richard J. Daley from the 1950s to the 1970s, and his son Mayor Richard M. Daley, from the 1980s to the early 2000s. The boss controlled City Council, the Democratic Party, politicians representing the city in the state capital and Washington, and a maze of special districts. Presidential candidates paid homage to the elder Daley, who allegedly stole the election for John F. Kennedy in 1960. Spun around the mayor was a web of graft, political patronage, and lucrative deals with developers and contractors. The almost dictatorial rule by Daley, and the corruption surrounding him, spurred the development of an aggressive press and news media that used investigative reporting to break stories.

Chicago's place in the history of journalism is secured in part by being the location for "The Front Page," the play about newspapers first produced in 1928. It was written by Ben Hecht and Charles MacArthur, who had worked as a reporter at the *Chicago Tribune* and *Chicago Daily News.* MacArthur was the brother of the owner of a Chicago insurance company who would later form the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, known for its "genius" grants. Recently it has

awarded substantial grants to nonprofit investigative reporting organizations including Pro Publica, the Center for Investigative Reporting, the Center for Public Integrity, and the Reporter.[9]

McDermott wanted to tie into the city's long history of investigative reporting. *Chicago Tribune* reporter George Bliss won a Pulitzer Prize in 1962 by uncovering scandals at the Chicago Metropolitan Sanitary District that led to reforms, and in 1976 won another with investigative reporter Chuck Neubauer on fraud by mortgage firms exploiting the Federal Home Loan mortgage insurance program. In 1971, a team of Tribune reporters won a Pulitzer for exposing collusion between police and private ambulances to restrict service in low-income areas of Chicago. Newspaper and television reporter Pam Zekman began her career in 1971 with an undercover probe of nursing homes and later helped set up and run the Mirage Bar, where reporters documented a steady stream of police, fire inspectors, and other regulators coming by for bribes.

In that journalistic environment, the Reporter developed its own style of reporting and presentation. It relies mainly on data journalism – taking records or databases and analyzing them for disparities based on race or poverty. It uses graphs, charts, and maps to plot out its findings. And it relentlessly focuses on Chicago and its metropolitan area with hard-edged stories that document and demonstrate issues. But it fits the definition of investigative reporting in its "use of evidence to challenge authority and oppose entrenched power – political, governmental, corporate, or religious – on behalf of ordinary citizens."[10]

So far, no one has been able to transplant the Reporter model to another city. In 1980, McDermott secured a grant to determine if he could start versions of it in other cities. Of the seven cities he reviewed, he settled on Boston. He pitched the idea to a new interracial civic group called the Boston Committee, which had been created by the city's mayor after racial violence in 1979 left a black student completely paralyzed. It seemed like the ideal host organization.

In his proposal, McDermott set an annual budget of $267,467 (about $750,000 today) to pay for an editor, business manager, secretary and two reporters. He wrote that he had carefully studied the "alternative media" model – usually weeklies that were "commercially successful and publish high quality investigative articles." But he said that model "could not afford to specialize in race relations and survive financially." The Reporter's "unique model," he wrote, appeals to Boston social justice leaders. He listed the reasons: it provides local coverage; uses an investigative approach; plans a sufficient budget to hire high-quality talent; controls its own editorial policy; and its no-advertising policy avoids real or imagined inhibitions to editorial freedom.[11] The Boston Committee, however, declined the opportunity, largely because of the cost.[12]

Roy Larson, who succeeded McDermott as the Reporter's editor and publisher said he had gotten inquiries from journalists and advocates in other cities about replicating the Reporter. But he said they never followed through. When in charge of journalism funding at the McCormick Foundation in the 1990s and early 2000s, Mark Hallett said he tried to interest other cities and foundations in creating a publication like the Reporter. "We did some looking around at other potential funders to see if

there was interest in spreading the Reporter model elsewhere," he said. "But I don't think that we found any takers." The reasons varied. Some cities had interests other than race, he said. In Philadelphia, funders focused on urban planning and schools, for example, he said. And most foundation already had their own agendas.[13]

McDermott planted the seed of the Reporter in Chicago at a time when race and the future of the city were major concerns. He also had strong connections in Chicago, making it easier for him to build support for his idea. Also, there may not be many nonprofits such as the Community Renewal Society, which foots at least a fifth of the bill despite being overshadowed by a publication with editorial independence.

The Reporter now remains ensconced in Chicago as an institution that is seeking to regain its footing as a journalistic force in the city. Editors at the *Chicago Tribune* and *Chicago Sun-Times* don't follow the Reporter, at least not with the same level of interest as they once did. The editorial page editors of both daily newspapers declined to comment on the Reporter for this thesis.

But race is never been far below the surface in Chicago, making the Reporter's work still necessary, said Donald Hayner, who retired three years ago as editor of the *Chicago Sun-Times*. "Chicago, perhaps more than any other large U.S. city, has always struggled with the issue of race and neighborhood segregation," he said. "Race relations has improved a bit, but there are still deep suspicions, divisions, and fears on all sides. Honest discussion and clear analysis is still provably the best light forward."[14]

PART II

Chapter 5: Where Black and White Intersect
The McDermott-Calhoun Years, 1972-1976

The first issue of *The Chicago Reporter* gave only a few hints of what was to come. Appearing mid-summer in 1972, the six-page 8-1/2 by 11 inch newsletter was printed in brown ink in three vertical columns on thin white paper. It folded into thirds to fit neatly into a cream brown business envelope for delivery. It was anything but flashy. The top of the page featured the Reporter logo, a large C followed by an equal sign, its name and a bland description: "A monthly information service on racial issues in metropolitan Chicago." The front page carried two items: "Yarrington's Challenge – Corporate Social Responsibility: Ritual or Reality?" – an excerpted speech by Amoco Oil Company president B.J. Yarrington on the importance of business attending to social issues as an economic necessity – and in the right hand column: "Editorial: Why the Chicago Reporter?"

The editorial laid out a set of principles to guide the fledgling publication: "Of all the challenges facing Chicago, race is the make or break issue of the 1970s… The goal of The Chicago Reporter is to bring some new light to this important issue… The Reporter will be an investigative publication… The Reporter is not in competition with the black media… it will not speak for the black community… its focus will be on the terrain where black and white intersect… The Reporter will try to be dispassionate, accurate and constructive… The Reporter will be available for all but is written especially for Chicago leaders… They have the power to act… The Reporter is admittedly reformist…" The editorial was signed by co-editors John A. McDermott and Lillian Calhoun.[1]

In the first four years of the Reporter, McDermott and Calhoun faced the challenge of establishing a new publication in a tough town during a hard economic time. They had to create an identity for the new publication and sell the idea to their main audience – business executives; leaders of government, civic associations, and community groups. They had to persuade a cynical press that what they did was fair and accurate - and of great importance to the city of Chicago. And they had to raise the money to keep it going.

The first edition of the Reporter had all the traits of a business newsletter – names in bold face with small accompanying mug shots, pages of unrelieved type and small one-column headlines. The tone of the first stories was neutral but almost upbeat: highlighting five major corporations building new headquarters and voluntarily creating affirmative action plans for construction workers; identifying companies with blacks on their corporate boards; and comparing the number of black officials in city halls in Chicago, New York and Los Angeles. But the most striking thing was McDermott's choice of using brown ink on white paper.

"He wanted it to look classy," said Rene Ward, one of the first four reporters at the Reporter.[2] Kenneth Guentert, another staff member, said, "He wanted it to be very professional, appealing to the business community. He picked a very expensive, very thin, tissue-like paper. That was something that was very important to him, and he paid dearly for it because it was a specialty paper."[3]

In Chicago, and in the rest of the country, the 1970s were a time of retrenchment and reflection. Chicago had scars from the riots erupting after Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s assassination in 1968 and the overnight racial change in

neighborhoods as whites fled, spurred by school desegregation and unscrupulous real estate brokers. The economy began to sour, and crime and murders began to soar. Politically, the country began moving right: Democrats held Congress, Republican Richard Nixon was in the White House. Eight years after the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 - which outlawed discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, or gender –everyone was still figuring out how to enforce it. The tool of choice became the amorphous, vague and little-loved program called affirmative action. The programs the Nixon administration began to institutionalize included "goals and timetables" for hiring blacks and contracting with black businesses. A month before the Reporter made its debut, the *Washington Post* began running stories about GOP operatives breaking into the Democratic National Committee's office in the Watergate building. Amid these shifts, the main constants in Chicago were big business and Mayor Richard J. Daley.

It was in that era that McDermott and Calhoun sought to find footing for their new publication. To help them, they recruited four young part-time reporters from local colleges and paid them $3,000-a-year stipends. John Roberts, their first hire, was earning a master's degree at Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism and had interned at the Nashville Race Relations Center, the successor to the Southern Education Research Service.[4] Ward was an undergraduate at Northwestern's School of Speech. Guentert, who had written for the *New World*, the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago newspaper, a Notre Dame graduate who was pursuing a masters in urban studies at Loyola University. And Henry Jordan was a former Chicago gang member who went "straight" and earned a bachelor's degree

from Dartmouth before going to Northwestern's law school. By design, the staff was interracial: McDermott, Roberts, and Guentert were white, Calhoun, Ward, and Jordan were black.

McDermott fostered a family atmosphere. He had married a former nun named Theresa, had three sons, and lived in a large Queen Anne house that he rehabbed on weekends in the racially diverse Kenwood neighborhood not far from the University of Chicago. He wore bow-ties, smoked a pipe, and went to barber shop once a week for a trim of his reddish beard and receding hair. The tone of the office was set by Helena Appleton, a black South Sider who had been his long-time personal secretary from his days at the Catholic Interracial Council. "She was the mother of the outfit. Very funny. She wouldn't let us get away with anything," Guentert recalled. Appleton made lunch for the Friday weekly staff meetings, where ideas and stories would be discussed, and often McDermott would bring a guest – a city official or community leader, a newspaper editor, or scholar.

"John was the visionary, like the idea guy," said Ward. McDermott would circulate newspaper and magazine articles, reports and essays on race, poverty and politics to the staff, and suggest story ideas. Calhoun was the tough editor. "When you turned in any copy, that red pen was wicked," Ward said. Roberts recalled that McDermott would put his views into articles, and Calhoun would take them out.

The key to credibility – and building an audience and raising funds – would be the journalism the Reporter produced. It had to be thorough, accurate, and fair. In an early memo, Calhoun laid out the baseline for reporting for any reporter starting on a new story. "I want reporters to get in the habit of the library check on stories in

progress. When a reporter receives an assignment, he or she should go to the Chicago Public Library Main Building next door and run the topic through the Readers Guide to Periodical Literature, the *New York Times* files and the card catalogue," Calhoun wrote. "In this way, you can quickly obtain a view of the state of the art regarding your particular topic around the country."[5]

The Reporter's version of investigative reporting, however, also came down to this: Get the data. In its second year, the Reporter began conducting what later became known as "head count" stories: Articles that detailed for different businesses how many blacks, Latinos, and women they had hired, put on their boards, and given contracts. It was reminiscent of Calhoun's stories in the *Chicago Defender* about New York institutions. Ward produced the first full "head count" story – an examination of minority enrollment and employment at Chicago's six major universities.[6] In the next issue, Roberts dug up minority hiring and contracting data for the candy industry.[7] These stories were central to McDermott's purpose for starting the Reporter: through public accountability, they prodded corporate and business executives to follow through on hiring previously excluded minorities and women.

Sandra Bergo, a young white reporter who joined the staff from Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism, sparked headlines that challenged the core readers of the Reporter – she reported that the city's top private business and social clubs were closed to minorities and women, depriving them of the setting for making helpful connections and deals.[8] The *Chicago Tribune* reported on the private clubs story, closing with the Reporter quote from a former club leader defending policies barring women who said "rationales for excluding women as members range from the

danger of women using the club as husband-hunting grounds to the displeasing sound of older women's voices."[9]

No institution in Chicago was spared – the Reporter took on major Chicago-based corporations such as Kraft and Zenith; the top law firms; the five major banks; the utility companies; labor unions; newspapers and broadcast stations; and even local foundations, a funding source for the Reporter. In 1974, Roberts began an annual tradition that would become a trademark feature of the Reporter: A survey of the biggest corporations and their minority hiring and contracting numbers. Those surveys generated headlines. McDermott had each of those newspaper stories about Reporter articles framed and put on office walls, proof to any visitor – particularly those with checkbooks - that the Reporter had impact.

Reinforcing the Reporter's success after two years in operation was its first journalism award. The Columbia School of Journalism presented the Michelle Clark Award for Excellence in Race Relations Reporting at a ceremony on campus on Aug. 16, 1974. McDermott took the whole staff to New York to accept the award.

In New York, Bergo went to its city hall to pick up a document – the racial breakdown of New York City employees by race and gender, required by federal law. Cities and states had to file those reports with the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission but could ask for the numbers to remain secret. That is what Chicago did. Inspired by the Watergate reporting, McDermott urged Bergo to find the city secretary who had access to the city's EEO report and knock on her door. "I can't do that," Berg recalled telling him.

Instead, Bergo asked EEOC officials if they would release aggregate figures for Chicago, New York, and Los Angeles. They said they could. She obtained the Los Angeles EEO report. But because of issues of comparability, Bergo ended up using a different combination – Atlanta, Illinois and Chicago. She then subtracted the figures from Atlanta and Illinois. That left the EEO profile for Chicago.[10]

The *Chicago Tribune* reported on Bergo's findings on its front page.[11] Chicago's employment profile was bleak: only 25 percent of city employees were black and Latino, though Chicago's population was 40 percent minority.[12] The findings showed why the U.S. Justice Department filed a racial discrimination lawsuit in 1973 against the Chicago Fire Department: only 4.9 percent of its employees were black or Latino, the lowest in presence in any city department. Chicago Fire Commissioner Robert Quinn, an old white veteran of the Democratic machine, shrugged off the disparity and the lawsuit in a response to the Justice Department. He said, "I'm more concerned with other stuff than that."[13]

With a young staff and a complex subject to cover, what the Reporter couldn't do through traditional source-based investigative reporting it accomplished through clever work-arounds and willingness to do the hard work of data journalism at a time when most calculations were made with calculators and handwritten spreadsheets.

Ward, for example, recalled meeting with City Treasurer Joseph Bertrand to ask why local black banks received no deposits from the city. He said they did not offer a high enough interest rate. Ward countered with a request: Give me the interest rates offered by all the banks bidding for deposits. He left the room while she copied them down in her notebook. Back at the office, she used a calculator with a tape to

compare the rates, and determined the city was losing money by not depositing its funds in black banks – because they actually offered higher interest rates. That prompted the city to increase the amount of money it place in those institutions.[14]

In another instance, Ward said she investigated the insurance companies' rationale for charging higher auto insurance rates in central city and black neighborhoods than in outlying white communities. She placed a map of the zones that insurance companies used to set rates over the Chicago Police district boundary map. Then she compared the number of accidents in high-rate zones – in the central city and black neighborhoods – with those in low-rate zones. And she found that the top eight districts with the most accidents were in the zones in white outlying communities with the lower insurance rates.

McDermott required all his reporters to read *Precision Journalism: A Reporter's Introduction to Social Science Methods*, by Philip Meyer, the Pulitzer Prize winning reporter who used a mainframe computer to analyze a survey of Detroit residents to better understand the 1967 Detroit race riots. Meyer's approach was rare in U.S. newsrooms. It was used by reporters at a handful of newspapers, including the *Philadelphia Inquirer* and the *Miami Herald*. It wasn't until the mid-1980s that the use of what was then called computer-assisted journalism became more widespread.[15] By 1975, Reporter staff began using a mainframe computer to analyze large amounts of data, at Northwestern University's Vogelback Computing Center in Evanston, Ill. The center's computer ran on punch cards coded with data and instructions for calculations for the analytical statistics program called Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

The Reporter's first major computer-assisted reporting story was a deep dive into the character of Chicago homicides at a time when murders in the city and across the country began to soar.[16] Irene McCullough, a black Northwestern journalism student working at the Reporter, analyzed the 895 murders in Chicago in 1973, a jump from the 711 murders the year before. In a detailed story accompanied by thirteen charts and three maps she found that found 597 of the victims were black, and 171 were white – giving blacks a homicide rate of 59 per 100,000, more than three times the rate for whites. She also delved into the patterns of murder that now have become well know but then were still new: the majority of murders were among friends, they took place indoors, and nearly two-thirds were committed with handguns. She plotted the murders on a map, and found half the murders took place in ten mostly black community areas. The analysis was picked up and reported by Chicago's newspapers and television stations.

But the real firestorm stirred up by a Reporter computer analysis came four months later, when black Northwestern journalism student Vernon C. Thompson wrote that Chicago had the highest fire-death rate of the nation's top ten cities. Thompson found the Chicago Fire Department failed to report 200 fire deaths from 1969 to 1974, a figure he determined by comparing the department's fire-death number with fire fatality statistics compiled by the coroner.[17] Thompson wrote that blacks were disproportionately the victims and the highest fire death rate was in a Latino community. Thompson also revealed that the fire department had cut its force by 291 during those six years; that it assigned four firefighters to each truck and engine when other cities assigned five; and that its special unit to teach fire safety

operated in high-rises but not in overcrowded poor communities more prone to deadly fires. The findings were so compelling the *New York Times* for the first time ran a story about a Reporter investigation.[18]

Quinn disputed the findings. “I don’t know of any ghetto in Chicago,” he said. “All the people live pretty nicely in Chicago. I wouldn’t say there are any slums either.”[19] Black and Latino community leaders were outraged. The *Chicago Tribune* editorial writers wrote that Quinn appeared to work harder at denying failures than saving lives.[20] But Daley stood by his fire commissioner.

In 1975, the Reporter won its second award. The Chicago Community Trust, the city’s leading private foundations, honored the Reporter with the James Brown IV Award for Outstanding Community Service. The awards helped McDermott raise money, mostly from corporate charities and a few private foundations.

In 1972, the year it began publishing, the Reporter raised $49,200, which included $15,000 from the Rockefeller Foundation, $10,000 from the Amoco Foundation and $5,000 from a United Church of Christ fund. In addition, the Community Renewal Society kicked in $19,000 and provided office space, desks, telephones and supplies. The Reporter spent $46,100 to publish six issues - $26,100 for staff costs and $11,500 for printing.[21] For perspective, those expenditures in today’s dollars would total about $260,000.

In 1973, its second year, the Reporter again relied on the Rockefeller Foundation, which gave $24,000, but it also picked up corporate foundation contributions from First National Bank, George E. Johnson Foundation, and Quaker Oats, for a total of $39,000. In 1974, the Reporter doubled its revenue to $78,500 with

contributions from a dozen corporations – the group McDermott appealed to directly. And in 1975, it lost its Rockefeller grant but made up the difference with donations from nearly two dozen corporate charitable funds and one foundation, the Chicago Community Trust. By then, the Reporter's expenses had jumped to $162,900 and CRS subsidy had risen to $47,000.[22]

McDermott said he asked for relatively small grants so no one funder could pull the plug on the Reporter if it was unhappy with any story. He said Quaker Oats, a Chicago based conglomerate, donated $1,000 but refused to contribute again when a Reporter story pointed out that its management was 100 percent white.

Fundraising was constant work for McDermott. Internal memos show society managers pointedly raised concerns about the Reporter's growing share of CRS funds. "CRS has and is contributing a third or more to the Reporter's Project. It is critical for me to point out that we have not subsidized any projects to that extent to date," a 1975 memo to McDermott said.[23]

McDermott sought to boost revenue through subscription income. With a Chicago Community Trust grant, he hired a circulation and promotion manager with a lofty goal: dramatically pump up subscription income to pay for half of the publication's budget. By the end of his first year, subscription income had risen to from $10,400 to $18,000. But that was only a tenth of the budget. About 600 of the 3,000 copies distributed went to subscribers, many of them business executives, government officials, or non-profit and community leaders.[24]

In July 1976, Calhoun and her husband Harold decided to move to Washington, D.C., ahead of the presidential election. Her brother-in-law, *Chicago*

Defender editor Louis E. Martin, was an adviser to former Georgia Gov. Jimmy Carter, a Democrat who won the presidency in the general election that year. Calhoun took a job in the new Carter administration as editor of the Labor Department publication *Forum*.[25]

Together, McDermott and Calhoun had accomplished what they had set out to do by establishing a new publication with its interlocking journalistic and business model. The Reporter produced stories that had impact and produce change; its target audience, though small, grew slowly; local news media broadened its reach through stories and follow-up pieces; and the success of the stories and outside fundraising overcame doubts at the Community Renewal Society about its growing investment in the publication. But McDermott also knew that the Reporter would have to expand it coverage beyond affirmative action, housing, and business if it were to keep growing.

After Calhoun left, McDermott sought and won a Wieboldt Foundation grant for a special project building on the successful stories about the police and fire departments. It would be "a series of special articles presenting comparative analyses of the extent and quality of municipal services provided to different Chicago neighborhoods," according to a draft of the proposal. "It will determine whether or not certain neighborhoods are favored" in police, fire, parks, streets and sanitation, and library services. "The project will represent a further refinement and use of investigative techniques developed by the Reporter in its analysis of Chicago homicides, crime victimization, and public school per pupil expenditures, readings scores and segregation," McDermott wrote. It would be conducted with the Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights Under Law and the help of local community groups.[26]

McDermott's proposal left out the story the Reporter had begun but hadn't completed on the Chicago Park District. On August 19, 1975, Reporter staffer Stephan Garnett, a 22-year-old black student, drove his Le Mans to the still all-white Marquette Park, bordered by the street that divided white neighborhoods from black. It is where Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. nine years earlier had learned how much northern whites can hate. Garnett went there to take pictures to compare Marquette Park's field houses, gyms and other facilities with those in parks in black and Latino neighborhoods. Then, a gang of young white men approached him.

"One said, 'What are you doing here nigger?'" Garnett recalled at a news conference two days later. He told them and showed them his identification as a reporter. "The others started to push and shove me around. Someone wrapped their arms around my neck and someone else hit me over the head with a bottle. The others just started hitting me in the face with their fists and kicking me in my sides," he said.

After they threw him onto his car's trunk to continue the beating, Garnett tried to flee. "I got away and got in my car, buy one of the men snatched the keys from the ignition, threw them into the park, and pulled me out of the car," he said. No one among the 20 or so white people watching came to help him. "I noticed that a few of them even got up and walked away," Garnett said. After the gang had left, said Garnett, a stranger picked him up – his face swollen and his clothes torn - and took him to a hospital. When Garnett later went to retrieve his car, the windows had been smashed and it had been torched.[27]

Chapter 6: Making News, Thriving Among Change
The McDermott Years, 1976-1984

The long, narrow cardboard box held 1,154 IBM punch cards, two for each of the Chicago Park District's 577 parks. One listed the facilities, programs and staff for each park. The other detailed the demographics of the ward in which the park was located. Each card had to be created individually, on a typewriter-like machine with a hammer that would knock out the chad in the right spot with a thud. The punch-outs were based on a code sheet, handwritten with pencil, in which all values were zero to nine. Preceding the stack of data cards in the box were an additional thirty to fifty punch cards, also created one by one, containing the SPSS code to direct the big mainframe's computation. This seemingly bloodless mathematical process was the *Chicago Reporter*'s answer more than two year later to the brutal beating of Stephan Garnett. Yet for the Chicago Park District's racially biased status quo, it carried a punch that was just as devastating.

The cards were fed into the mainframe at Northwestern University's Vogelback Computer Center. When the processing was done about an hour later, a young bearded computer scientist behind a counter would either announce "you are a dead man" - meaning there was a mistake in the coding - or he would hand over a stack of wide computer paper. The connected sheets had sprocket holes on both sides and white and green bars, which made it easier to track the numbers that would describe in statistical terms the evidence Garnett had sought to capture with a camera.

The statistical evidence against the Chicago Park District was overwhelming. Parks in white wards had more field houses, assembly halls, recreation buildings,

kitchens, indoor swimming pools, and club rooms than park in black or Latino wards. They had more athletic fields, junior baseball and softball diamonds, football and soccer fields, tennis and volleyball courts. And they had more arts and crafts classes, day camps, drama lessons, and senior citizen centers. The numbers were strong – but only a yardstick.

The Chicago Park District hid per park spending figures, listing only broad line items and aggregate amounts for all parks across the city in an annual budget it often revealed the day before Thanksgiving and approved it the day after. The district kept secret the number of park supervisors, program directors, and workers. The one bit of detailed information the district distributed was the Table of Parks and Park Facilities. It identified the ward each park fell into so the local alderman could take credit for any improvement of service. That was the key to the Reporter's analysis: it could use wards – highly segregated as black or white - to measure services.[1]

The sparse, drily written Reporter article laying out the evidence was picked up by all the news media and inspired the *Chicago Sun-Times* to assign a team of investigative reporters to dig into the political kingdom of the parks chief, Ed Kelly, a Democratic ward committeeman and major dispenser of patronage jobs. The team's stories detailed decay and neglect at crumbling of parks in minority areas while parks in white areas flourished with upkeep and improvements.

The Reporter story and *Sun-Times* series prompted lawsuits: The Chicago Lawyer's Committee on Civil Rights Under Law, a nonprofit group working with major law firms providing pro bono services, sued the Park District in 1979 to force it to halt its racially discriminatory practices.[2] And the U.S. Justice Department in 1983

also sued, alleging the same patterns of discrimination, after trying to negotiate a settlement since the Lawyers Committee lawsuit was filed in 1979. Assistant U.S. Attorney Margaret Gordon said it was the first time the Justice Department had sued a large city's park district for racial discrimination.[3]

On May 11, 1983 – five years after the Reporter article appeared and nearly eight years after Garnett's beating – the Justice Department announced it had reached a consent decree with the Chicago Park District. The district agreed to spend 65 percent of its $60 million in capital funds – or about $39 million – in black and Latino neighborhoods over the next six years. In addition, the district said it would increase by a third the staffing and programs in parks in minority areas. And it promised to carry out maintenance and repair to all parks in the city within six months of notice.[4]

As McDermott took the reins of the Reporter alone, he had to keep his publication growing as an organization and as an increasingly influential source of news that helped drive the conversation about race and poverty in the city. He sought to balance the widening scope of Reporter stories with maintaining the base of funders and readers among business executives. The growing need for funds accelerated when he began to professionalize and expand the staff, a costly step. IN addition to reporters, he brought on Richard Stromberg as a contract photographer. And he faced increasing pressure from the Community Renewal Society, which bore a large share of those new expenses. But the society clearly recognized that the growing attention to the Reporter reflected well on its own reputation. The local, and even, national media continued to look to the Reporter for its findings.

The park district story was just one a series of investigations of how the city and its allied agencies delivered services. Stories probing who got what from the much-touted "City That Works" mounted a serious challenge to the reputation of the Chicago Democratic machine as it began to fall apart after the 1976 death of Mayor Richard J. Daley, the city's boss since 1955. As a caretaker until Richard M. Daley was finished being groomed for his late father's chair on the fifth floor of City Hall, the machine picked the alderman from Daley's 11th Ward, Michael Bilandic.

Under Bilandic, the city began to look incompetent.

Sharon McGowan, the Reporter's first full time writer who wrote under the byline Sharon B. Gelder, documented that per pupil spending was higher in white than in black classrooms in Chicago's public schools. In another story, she reported that the Chicago school system spent $173 million in funds that were intended for poor students throughout the city. The story prompted a citywide debate and a state law two years later directing the Chicago schools to spend $200 million directly for poor children.

Douglas Longhini produced another deep penetration for the Reporter into Chicago Police Department policies in February 1977, showing through data analysis how officers were shifted to white districts with less crime, while patrol cars and police were moved out of black districts with much higher threats of crime. The staffing imbalance put higher workloads on officers in black districts, and slowed their response times to calls about crimes and for help.

In 1978, McGowan revealed that Chicago still had the highest fire death rate as the firefighting force continued to decline amid tragedies in the overcrowded and

poorest neighborhoods, and that of the thirty six city ambulance units all but ten of had life-saving telemetry equipment, all in black and Latino communities. After an uproar, all ambulances were equipped and Fire Commissioner Robert J. Quinn retired.

Reporter Al Lanier reported the Chicago Public Library had longer hours and more branches in white areas than minority areas; Nancy Schulte documented how the city's high neonatal death rate was caused by inexperienced medical staff at hospitals; Lawrence J. Tell detailed how the city's low-interest home loan program to lure families back into the city bypassed minority communities; and the Reporter broke that news that the city intended to scrap its Human Relations Commission.

In a restructuring of the staff, McDermott appointed reporter Irene McCullough and assistant editor John Roberts as the publication's black and white co-managing editors. The Reporter editing style now included lengthy memos from McDermott on each story. The rule was that the reporter didn't have to make changes but had to respond to each question or challenge. The reporter also had to double check every number in the story. But McDermott also worked to keep up the warm atmosphere of the office. On Friday afternoons, he would bring out his bottle of Jameson's Irish whiskey and he and his staff would play darts and socialize.

McDermott also did some soul searching. In July 1976, he produced a twelve-page memo on the future of the Reporter, circulated it to the staff to read, and held a meeting to discuss it. He wrote, "The Reporter is now four years old. It's beginning to be a mature publication with a history and tradition of its own. The Reporter is a

success, but it would be folly for us to become complacent about this success. The rule in publishing, as in everything else, is grow, improve or die."[5]

According to McDermott, the Report's success resulted from three main factors: "Impact – Institutional Change," which resulted from ground-breaking stories; "Respect of the Mass Media," because the media's use of Reporter findings has greatly enhanced its effectiveness and is "an achievement beyond our best hope;" and "Financial Support," which had grown from $10,000 in 1972 to over $70,000 in 1975, "a solid vote of confidence … from the people we most want to influence."

He also cited other factors, which he called "The Reporter 'Formula.'" The Reporter had a special purpose – race and poverty – which allowed it to develop an expertise; it had a local focus that allowed it to be specific on issues and name names; it had editorial independence from its base at the Community Renewal Society; it was aimed at a select audience of the decision makers; it was dispassionate, presented itself as a community service and not as an advocate, offered constructive as well as critical stories, and had an interracial editorial team with a top black editor that won confidence in the publication's integrity from the black community.

Then he listed the problems.

They included structural issues: Not enough earned income with subscriptions bringing in just about 10 percent of the revenue; no natural constituency to make up the Reporter's audience, though half were business executives, a worthy audience to pursue; an advisory board that did not help enough to raise money; the failure to publish on a regular schedule, with issues appearing early, middle, and late in the month; the need to move to a full-time reporters from a part-time student staff; the

lack of a business staff to run the business end; and a lack of a library or morgue to mark the Reporter as the depository of information about race.

McDermott wrote about other problems with the selection, approach and content of stories: articles were too long and too predictable – "it's not good enough to be accurate and dull; we must be accurate and interesting;" there was too little critical coverage of increasingly powerful minority organizations and inadequate reporting on Latino issues; and he lamented a failure follow up on previous stories to highlight impact of Reporter investigations.

McDermott suggested ideas to address these problems. He wanted a tighter focus on business issues, suggesting an annual survey of Chicago's top 100 business leaders; a survey of the top twenty five black business leaders; a regular monthly column of items about personnel changes and corporate social policy changes; a column summarizing major developments in race relations; interviews with local leaders and personalities in local race relations; and a Reporter award to one or more institutions for their contributions to racial equality. At the far end of ideas, McDermott made a plea: "How can we get some humor in the Reporter? Race has its funny side, but we have never figured out a way to include it."

Over the next few years, McDermott incorporated several of the ideas he presented as he continued to push the Reporter forward, building on its success and achieving greater visibility and bigger impact. His editors began to publish the Reporter on a regular schedule at the beginning of the month. With a nudge from an in-house union formed by the reporters, he began a transition from part-time college

students to full-time paid staff. He solicited and won grants to pay for an education reporter, a suburban issues reporter, and a political reporter.

McDermott's ability to raise funds from corporations and foundations also continued to grow, but he still relied heavily on the Community Renewal Society. The cost of professionalizing the staff doubled over the next decade, and the overall budgeted expenses rose from $202,520 in 1976[6] to about $460,000 in 1985.[7] But McDermott was only able to increase outside donations by about half, and the Community Renewal Society picked up about half the Reporter's costs.[8] Circulation remained a sore spot, though McDermott tried to increase sales by winning grants for series of stories that could be republished as collections. Thanks to one grant, the Reporter took advantage of new technology to save money by bringing the layout and paste-up in house with the purchase of a compositer – essentially an IBM selectric typewriter that used special ink and glossy paper that could be waxed and placed on a board for offset printing.

By its tenth anniversary in 1982, *The Chicago Reporter* had established itself, even though the country had shifted right with the election two years earlier of President Ronald Reagan in 1980. Glowing newspaper and magazine profiles of McDermott and the Reporter appeared locally and nationally. *Chicago Magazine* dubbed McDermott "editor for the public conscience." The *Chicago Journalism Review*'s profile headline was "*The Chicago Reporter* joins the varsity." The *Wall Street Journal* wrote about the nonprofit monthly with a circulation of 3,000 that came up with its own share of scoops in a highly competitive news town. "And its record of accuracy and enterprise has earned the admiration of journalists throughout

the city," it said. The Reporter had won twenty local and national awards for its stories, and had shown it could produce stories with impact.

As the 1983 election neared, the conditions that political consultant Don Rose had predicted had come about. Young Daley was ready to be mayor, but Mayor Jane Bryne refused to give up her seat. If both ran, they would split the white vote and a black candidate could be elected by black, Latino, young and liberal voters. On the campaign trail, Washington assailed the polices of Byrne and the elder Daley, often citing the Reporter stories, according to Gary Rivlin's book about Washington, *Fire on the Prairie*. On primary election day, to the shock of almost everyone including his own supporters, Washington won the Democratic nomination. In the general election, he defeated a white Republican named Bernie Epton despite his none-too-subtle campaign slogan: "Before It's Too Late."

Change also was underway at the Community Renewal Society. The Rev. Don Benedict had stepped down, replaced by the Rev. Paul Sherry, a rising star in the United Church of Christ. "We always considered the Reporter an independent magazine supported by the Community Renewal Society that had its own editorial integrity that we never tried to change," Sherry said. "I was new to the society and followed Don's lead. I tried not to get in the way of that."[9] Benedict had pushed back against McDermott's expanding publication, but not as much as Sherry did as the recession of the early 1980s hit. "They were not easy times. The economy was not in the best of shape," Sherry said. In January 1984, McDermott wrote a memo to the staff. "This year, 1984, marks an important turning point in the life of *The Chicago Reporter*," he wrote. "The Community Renewal Society has made it clear that we can

no longer count on any increase in support for the publication. In fact, we may face a further reduction."

The struggle over funding continued. And McDermott also had been frustrated in his attempt to plant the seed of the Reporter model in other cities. He had come close in Boston, but in the end, there wasn't the will or the funding to make it happen. McDermott also took note of the changing political and social climate being ushered in by the Reagan revolution of 1980. In that atmosphere, he told his staff, the once largely agreed-upon moral force of the civil rights movement was giving way to a sense by many executives, political leaders, and that minorities were engaging in a special pleading and becoming just another interest group.

In many ways 1984 was a very good year for the Reporter. Chicago had elected its first black mayor the year before, and the Reporter had more influence at City Hall than it had ever wielded. Many of the city's new officials read the monthly, and Mayor Washington extended the consent decree to transform the Chicago Park District to a full decade. Lured by a job as Illinois Bell's urban affairs director, McDermott quit, writing a farewell headlined, "So Long, It's Been Grand."

Chapter 7: Making Race and Poverty More Accessible
The Larson Years, 1985-1994

Martha Allen grew up in in a first floor apartment at a Chicago public housing project named for the crusading black journalist Ida B. Wells, which was located in the black Bronzeville community north of Hyde Park. Allen decided to become a reporter herself, and in late 1985 the *Chicago Reporter* hired her as she finished her master's degree at Northwestern Medill School of Journalism. One day in 1986, a friend, social services activist Linda Randle, called Allen and told her that workers were removing asbestos from the Chicago Housing Authority offices at Ida B. Wells. And just from the offices, not from apartments. Allen had always been curious about the white powdery substance that crumbled off of radiator pipes in the apartments where she had played with childhood friends. And so she and Randle took samples from 15 apartments and sent them to be tested for asbestos.[1]

Around that time, a 24-year-old community organizer named Barack Obama was working in the far South Side housing projects called Altgeld Gardens, and he came across a newspaper ad placed by the CHA for a contractor to remove asbestos from that project's offices. Obama and Randle met often in the offices of the Community Renewal Society. And it was at a meeting at the CRS offices that Randle told organizers about how she and Allen were investigating the presence of asbestos at Ida B. Wells. Obama and Randle decided to join forces. On May 28, 1986, Randle brought residents from Wells and Obama his group from Altgeld Gardens, and they descended upon the CHA downtown offices to demand that its director, Zirl Smith, tell them what was going on. Smith put them off – until somebody tipped off the

press and reporters and cameras poured into the halls. Smith then met with the protesters, and promised to conduct asbestos testing and remove it if it was there.

The story played big on the television newscasts. Walter Jacobson, a well-known critic and commentator at WBBM-TV, jumped on it. He remembered Allen had told him weeks earlier about the asbestos story, and he called to ask her where it was. She told him it was at the printer. But, she said, he could have a summary. Jacobson's commentary set off a storm in the media. As related in *Barack Obama*, the biography by David Maraniss, Jacobsen said: "There is a tough little newspaper in Chicago called the *Chicago Reporter* which is at the printer tonight with a story... 'Asbestos in CHA Apartments Poses Possible Health Hazards'... the result of making visits to 15 apartments selected at random in the Ida B. Wells Project… in every one of them, says the Reporter, there are pipes insulated with asbestos. And the newspaper has pictures of children living among those pipes. The asbestos inside the apartments is exposed and it's found along the bottom of radiators, in the living rooms, bedrooms, kitchens, storage rooms, and hallways."

Because of the outcry and publicity, CHA did remove the asbestos from apartments as well as its own offices in the housing projects. And the story got a second life a decade later, when Obama ran for president. In his 1994 memoir *Dreams of My Father*, Obama wrote about the CHA protest as a searing moment for him – a moment "that hints at what might be possible and therefore spurs you on." But in his telling, Obama left out the important role of Altgeld Gardens activist Hazel Johnson, who worked with him on the asbestos issue, and, of course, Martha Allen and the Reporter. His press aides downplayed the omission. "The book isn't a history

of social efforts to help the area. It was about what he was involved in," Obama spokesman Robert Gibbs said in 2007.[2] The *Los Angeles Times* and other newspapers corrected the record.

Roy Larson remembers the original story well. He had been the editor and publisher of the Reporter for less than a year, and Allen's story helped establish that John A. McDermott's absence wouldn't diminish the publication he had founded and built into a credible force in Chicago journalism. John Schrag, Larson's first hire as a staff reporter who later became the Reporter's acting editor, said Allen's asbestos article "was the story that got the most attention" during Larson's tenure. "I think that was really good for the publication," Schrag said.[3] Larson said he fought for credit. "I remember on the night when we published the story," he said. "Jacobson called and said he was going to be doing a story. So I called him about five minutes to 10 and said he was missing three little words: The *Chicago Reporter*. And he slipped it in."[4]

When McDermott resigned from the Reporter in December 1984, he left behind co-managing editors Laura S. Washington and Ronnie Scheier – a black and white team - and four reporters, Kevin B. Blackistone, Jorge Casuso, Ann Grimes, and Ben Joravsky – a black, Latino, and two white reporters. But he hadn't chosen a successor yet, so the Rev. Paul Sherry, the executive director of the Community Renewal Society, served as acting publisher. McDermott left no notes of his search, but by May 1985 he and Sherry had settled on the longtime religion editor and columnist at the *Chicago Sun-Times*, Roy Larson.

Larson, 56, wasn't an obvious choice – he was a white Protestant, quiet, and almost stern, while McDermott was Catholic, charismatic and warm. Larson was born

in Moline, Ill., graduated from Augustana College in Rockville, Ill., and earned a master's in divinity from Garrett Theological Seminary in Evanston, Ill. He became an ordained Methodist minister in 1956, and served at five different area churches until 1969. That year, he joined the Sun-Times to write about religion. "One thing that made that change easy was that Ralph Otwell was in my congregation," Larson said. Otwell was the editor of the *Sun-Times*. For the next 16 years, Larson covered religion in the Chicago area, across the country and abroad. At the *Sun-Times* he had been involved in just one investigative story – but it was a big one.

In 1980, Larson and two of the *Sun-Times'* top investigative reporters – Gene Mustain and Bill Clements – began an eighteen-month investigation into Archbishop Cardinal Cody, the most powerful archbishop in the United State, for his handling of the funds of the Archdiocese of Chicago and his relationship with Helen Dolan Wilson, a women he called a cousin, and her son. On Thursday Sept. 10, the *Sun-Times* began the five-part series with a first-day headline: "Federal Grand Jury Probes Cardinal Cody Use of Church Funds – Investigation Centers on Gifts to a Friend." The series indirectly raised questions about whether Cody and Wilson had more than an innocent relationship – he provided her an apartment in the pricey Lake Shore Towers and in a room in his mansion. It laid out a case she had prospered because of Cody. The grand jury, the *Sun-Times* reported, was investigating whether the cardinal had diverted up to $1 million in tax-exempt church funds to Wilson; had given her money to buy a Florida home; had provided her one of the church's highest salaries for undisclosed work, and had bought insurance policies that netted her son $150,000 in commissions. The charges were sensational, and swept through Chicago, home to

millions of Catholics, and across the country. Prosecutors dropped the probe when Cody died in 1982.

As the *Sun-Times* religion writer and a former protestant minister, Larson came under intense attack for the series. One letter called Larson "a fallen away Methodist with an axe to grind" and added, "I work in the building so watch it Roy."[5] Even before the series, the *Chicago Catholic* regularly ran criticisms of Larson in its own pages and in the pages of the Sun-Times rival, the *Chicago Tribune*. One of Larson's top defenders was John A. McDermott, described in stories as a prominent Chicago lay Catholic and editor and publisher of the *Chicago Reporter*.[6] Larson said years later, "I used John as a source – not the primary source though."[7]

As the new face of the Reporter, Larson faced the difficult task of maintaining a successful publication and fundraising operation. With a black mayor and a white bloc of alderman in a war for power, he had to navigate the politics of race while still digging into continuing institutional discrimination. Larson set a goal of broadening the readership for the Reporter.

Any time the founder of an organization moves on, the successor faces a tough transition amid concerns about the new chief and the future and direction he or she will set. Larson said that is exactly what he faced when he came to the Reporter, as a "trustee" of "a creative tradition we have inherited." The co-managing editors both left before he arrived, leaving him a staff without an editor. He appointed Grimes acting managing editor. "It was fairly rough at the beginning. We had a young staff. And several who had been there with McDermott then left," Larson said in a telephone interview. "When I first started there the young staff didn't know what to

do with this guy – 'We're not sure this is the right guy.'" He said it reminded him of the reception the new basketball coach received in the movie "Hoosiers."

Blackistone, who had worked at the Reporter before taking a job at the *Boston Globe*, had returned in 1983, taking a pay cut, because he missed reporting on significant stories about race and poverty. Blackistone was deeply disappointed when McDermott announced he would be leaving. "It's an understatement to say he was the *Chicago Reporter*," he said. And when Larson came on, the atmosphere in the office changed. "I just remember when Roy got there it was not a fit. Maybe we didn't give him a chance," he said. Schrag said Larson was right about the impression he made. "He was quirky. He was so old. He was sort of awkward with the kids," Schrag said. "But once he found his footing he did a pretty good job of rebuilding a publication that was surrounded by memories of the person who had founded it."

Larson set about putting his own imprint on the Reporter, and he aimed at making it a more professional and regularly published magazine. He took down the scores of framed newspaper and magazine stories about the Reporter that McDermott had covered the walls with. Larson told the *Chicago Sun-Times* his goal: "Within six months to make the Reporter an indispensable source of information of metropolitan Chicago; to reach suburbanites smart enough to know that a city divided against itself can't stand up to the competition of other cities with a more enlightened sense of their own self-interest. We will continue to do investigative reporting, but we'll package the information in a way that will make it more accessible."

In a Reporter retrospective,[8] Larson said, "Very early on, we changed the design and made it a lot more readable…. It was a significant upgrade." In January

1987, the new design scrapped the Reporter's logo and newsletter format and replaced it with a magazine style that used thicker white paper with black ink, bigger photos and larger illustrations and graphics. Larson also introduced shorter stories, softened the focus and introduced regular features. Two of them – Keeping Current and For the Record – provided short monthly updates on race relations, an idea right out of McDermott's 1976 memo. So were the steady stream of follow-ups to earlier Reporter stories amid continuing stories about corporate affirmative action.

Larson also made what he called needed institutional changes. He remade the editorial advisory board, which he said was very active in many ways. "They provided support. They suggested story ideas," Larson said. "I think that made the institution significantly stronger." He also worked on fundraising. "The fundraising had gotten very weak," Larson said. "I discovered I could do a good job of raising funds." He also guided the Community Renewal Society to hire professional fundraisers, a controversial step at the time, according to Schrag. By 1987 the budget remained about $442,000, with the Community Renewal Society underwriting more than half of the cost.[9] Circulation remained flat. "We reached our target audience: corporate people, people in the media, community organizers," Larson said. "The circulation never really grew significantly." The Reporter once again took advantage of technology to make production cheaper. "We went to desktop publishing," Schrag said. "Somebody created this little computer called Apple, and I remember it saved a tremendous amount of money."

Another complication facing Larson rose when the *Sun-Times* and *Tribune* stepped up its reporting on black and Latino issues. The dailies' series followed what

happens after a shooting, described challenges facing young black men, revealed the destruction of black and Latino neighborhoods by slum brokers. The newspapers also began using computer-assisted reporting for stories. In 1983, the Field family sold the *Sun-Times* to Rupert Murdoch, who stripped the paper of its television station and shifted it to a down-market tab. Then he sold the paper.

The Reporter stumbled with an October 1987 story that claimed Chicago had the highest infant mortality rate, and lowest public health nursing staffing, of the 10 largest cities in the county. But the freelancer who did the story conflated 1995 and 1996 data, making the comparisons invalid. Chicago did have the highest infant death rate in 1995, but not in 1996. Nor did it have the lowest number of public health nurses per capita in 1996, as the original story claimed. The editors ran a full page correction ran in the next issue – and re-established the practices and culture of checks and double-checks of numbers and facts as part of the Reporter method.

In 1985, President Ronald Reagan was beginning his second term as his administration continued to dismantle many of the liberal programs of the past, with a particular aim at civil rights rules and regulations. But in Chicago, Mayor Harold Washington was leading the city in a different direction – when he could amid the Council Wars. “Harold Washington had just become mayor and that raised many questions and small debates about how the Reporter should report this,” Larson remembered. “We thought that we might have to be easier on a black mayor than a white mayor. But I think we all knew that for the sake of journalistic integrity, we would not have to be so focused on him but on how we had always reported. So we went about things the same way, which was to just give the facts.”

Joravsky did just that in his review of the Washington administration's first two years in the April 1985 issue, which pointed out his mistakes, challenges, and hurdles thrown up by an opposition led by Ald. Edward Vrdolyak, a white alderman from the far South Side. Schrag and Joravsky's preview of Washington's upcoming second term won them awards. That term was short lived. Washington died sitting at his desk in City Hall from a heart attack in 1987.

By now, the Reporter had become so well-respected locally that mayors would sit for interviews. Following Washington's death, acting Mayor Eugene Sawyer talked to John Schrag and Rod McCullom in his office to explain his view of the unfolding political scene.[10] In 1989, Mayor Richard M. Daley gave a 30-minute interview in his office to the Reporter's assistant editor, Jennifer Juarez Robles.[11]

Meanwhile, the Reporter began taking a harder look at minority organizations. In 1985, Blackistone investigated The Woodlawn Organization, a black community development group formed in the 1960s with the help of legendary community organizers Saul Alinsky and Nicholas von Hoffman, and found it stumbling with bankrupt real estate projects and disorganization. After thirteen years, the Reporter also stopped conducting its annual survey of the top one hundred and twenty five area corporations about their minority and female hiring and contracting practices. Too many corporations had simply stopped cooperating, Schrag said.

In 1989, Larson hired Laurie Abraham from the *American Medical News*, the American Medical Association's newspaper. "Together we created a role for her that was kind of upsetting to the rest of the staff," Larson said. "She wanted to devote herself entirely to the health beat by concentrating on one family. It was very

successful." Abraham wrote she was hired "to bring 'people' into the investigative publication's health care reporting. We envisioned a series of stories on health care for the poor, though neither of us was sure what form it should take. But, Roy said, if the articles were successful, perhaps I might expand the series into a book." She did. And through a series of grants, Abraham wrote *Mama Might Be Better Off Dead: The Failure of Health Care in Urban America,* [12] published in 1993, just in time for the national debate spurred by First Lady Hillary Clinton's massive secret panel working to create a new health-care system.

In 1989, the Rev. Paul Sherry became president of the United Church of Christ, and Larson stepped as up acting executive director of the Community Renewal Society while its board searched for a new executive director. Schrag became acting editor, and to help him out, Larson hired a consulting editor, Donna Leff, an associate professor at Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism. When the society selected Yvonne Delk as its new executive director, Larson returned to the Reporter full time. But he no longer wanted to be editor and publisher. Larson stayed on another five years as publisher. He said he conducted a wide-ranging search to handle the editorial end of the Reporter as the new editor. He hired Laura Washington.

Chapter 8: Restoring the Edge, Broadening the Reach
The Washington Years, 1994-2001

When Laura S. Washington finished her undergraduate studies at Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism in 1979, she applied to seventy-five newspapers and other publications for a job. Only one responded – the *Chicago Reporter*. At that time she was young, tall, slender and reserved. The economy was in "stagflation" and the journalism job market was crowded with freshly minted would-be Bob Woodwards and Carl Bernsteins. Washington later recalled that awkward job search as a young black woman starting out in her career. "I was painfully shy growing up and even when I came to the Reporter, I was not comfortable talking to people and asking them tough questions," she said.[1] But that changed as she and the Reporter grew in confidence and influence together over the next five years. After two other jobs, she returned to the Reporter in 1990 as editor. In 1994, after Roy Larson retired, she became the Reporter's first black editor and publisher. At the age of 40, Washington was on her way to becoming the face of the Reporter as she transformed it into a resurgent investigative news magazine.

When Washington took over in the mid-1990s, politics and technology were in flux. Mayor Richard M. Daley was becoming entrenched in Chicago and President Bill Clinton was the first Democrat in the White House since Jimmy Carter. The country was entering into an era of prosperity, but one that left the poorest far behind. Meanwhile, newspapers' golden age of profits were beginning to sputter as the novelty of the Internet began to show its future promise. To boost the reach of the Reporter, Washington became the first editor to put its stories and research on a

regular basis onto multiple platforms – news stories, op-eds, commentary on news and radio shows, a documentary, and collaborations on public television series.

Washington grew up on Chicago's South Side, the daughter of a mailman and a library aide. She thought she wanted to be a doctor or biologist while at Academy of Our Lady in southwestern Chicago. She had been accepted at Cornell in the pre-med program. But Washington said she also enjoyed writing, and in her senior year a teacher read her work and talked to her about pursing that skill when she went to college. That nudge prompted Washington to apply to Medill. "It was a fortunate decision," Washington said.[2]

Washington worked her way up the ranks at the Reporter, from an intern in January 1980 to staff reporter six months later. In 1983 she became assistant editor, in January 1984 co-managing editor, and in May 1985 managing editor. But the next month, after a five years, Washington left. At the age of thirty, she became the deputy press secretary for the first black mayor of Chicago, Harold Washington. Despite their names, they were not related. And for the next two years, she played a key role in running the mayor's press office, often being pressed to defend the mayor during the racial and political wars in the City Council. But before the mayor died in 1987, Washington went back to journalism at WBBM-TV, the local CBS affiliate, where she worked with one of the premiere investigative reporting teams, led by on-air producer Pam Zekman and her producer Sandra Bergo.[3]

When Larson first approached her about being the Reporter's editor, Washington couldn't imagine going back to the place where she had started her career. "It was the last thing in the world I thought I wanted to do when he asked me.

… I had done every position except editor. I was interested in television, which is why I went to work for Pam. I thought it was a backward step," Washington said.

But Larson laid out the advantages of the job, with the possibility of succeeding him as publisher. "Roy convinced me it would be a chance to run my own publication, to take the publication in the direction I wanted to, and to have a lot of influence and power, and to do some of the things in journalism I would not be able to do if I stayed with Pam," she said. Washington said yes.

When Larson announced his selection of Washington, she told media critic Michael Miner of the *Chicago Reader*, "I'm going to come back to the Reporter and kick some ass." Upon reflection, she said, that was not politic thing to say. "It made things more challenging for me, and I came back in a way that threatened staff," she said. Washington said she had concerns the publication was not diverse enough – it had a white and a Latina editor, and three white reporters. Within a year, she rebuilt her staff as most of the old staff moved on to other jobs.

In the first issue as editor, the Reporter announced what it said was the only minority fellowship program of its kind. The Robert R. McCormick Charitable Trust gave the Reporter a grant of $124,200 to pay for the salary and educational expenses for a minority journalist a year for three years. Over the next decade, many of the best reporters – and future editors - would come into the publication through this grant.

Washington also hired James Ylisela, an award-winning former contributor to the Reporter, to be consulting editor. Ylisela, a white journalist, was teaching classes at Medill and Columbia College, as well as freelance writing. She also hired two black reporters, Rachel L. Jones and Curtis Lawrence, and two white reporters, Tom

Corfman and Lisa Capitanini. And, as a former intern, Washington welcomed interns, and broadened the source of journalism students from Medill to DePaul University and Columbia College. “The intern community got very large,” she said, noting that the Reporter had a dual mission of producing stories and training journalists.

And Washington kept her promise to push attention-grabbing stories that had impact. Laurie Abraham took a break from her health care series to produce a story about “billboard blight” in minority neighborhoods, finding that 600 illegal billboards without required city permits had popped in the city’s diverse neighborhoods.[4] Jones reported on the eve of the first Gulf War in 1991 that 80 percent of the recruits for military service in metropolitan Chicago were minorities.[5] Lawrence revealed that the city of Chicago had failed to take advantage of up to a half million dollars in federal housing funds to provide homes for low to moderate income households because it waited too long to apply, allowing other cities to snatch up all the money.[6]

Washington and Ylisela came back to the Reporter in a very different era than when they had started in the early 1980s. A different conversation on race emerged nationally during the 1990s, one that showed the split in perceptions of whites and blacks on racial relations. In 1991, Rodney King, a black cab driver, was surrounded by four police officers who had brought him to a halt after a police chase. Some of them beat and kicked him repeatedly – actions caught by a witness on camera from a nearby apartment balcony. In the trial of the officers, the jury deadlocked and they were set free. Three years later, the nation was transfixed by another police chase, this a slow-moving one involving former pro-football start O.J. Simpson, a black role model. He turned himself in, was charged with killing his white wife and her white

friend. But after a high-profile trial, he was acquitted in 1995. Meanwhile, the nation debated whether to continue affirmative action, which Clinton saved through his mantra – mend it, don't end it. Yet Clinton also angered the liberal community by working with Republicans to cut back and add work as a requirement for some people to receive welfare benefits.

The city's political leadership also had changed. Mayor Harold Washington had been mayor when they left the Reporter. But their second stint at the Reporter coincided with the return of a Daley – the former mayor's son Richie Daley - to the fifth floor of City Hall, Ylisela said. "The Democratic Machine was back," he said. Also, the edges of the issues the Reporter covered were spreading beyond affirmative action and no longer were primarily defined by black and white. "We expanded the definition of what was race and poverty. We couldn't look at race the same way as the Reporter used to," Ylisela said. The Reporter had to keep up with the shifts. It continued its focus on Latinos, immigration, AIDS, asthma, utilities, and minority organizations.[7]

In 1992, Washington oversaw the production of a special issue to mark its twentieth anniversary - in the Reporter way. The July issue contained 14 pages loaded with 37 charts and graphs showing how race had changed in metropolitan Chicago over the past two decades. It provided a snapshot of progress and backsliding. More minorities were in government jobs – though barely so among firefighters - but they lagged still in city council seats and state cabinet appointments. Black voter registration was up, but black voting was down. Black infant mortality was down but still higher than white deaths, while AIDS cases among blacks had surpassed the

cases among whites. The most striking figure was poverty: Ten black communities had gotten blacker and significantly poorer. The poorest community, Oakland, went from 42 percent below poverty level to 72 percent.[8] Out of that package came an annual review of race and poverty that ran each December, compiled by interns.

In 1993, Washington gave a glimpse of how she intended to expand the Reporter's name and influence. Washington and Ylisela wrote and appeared in a documentary in cooperation with the local public television station, WTTW-TV. Called the "Cost of Racism," the documentary pulled together the findings of stories that Corfman and researcher Paul Caine had written for the Reporter. It covered the "black tax" of higher prices, fewer stores, and higher insurance costs, and steeper mortgage rates and foreclosures in black areas.[9]

The Reporter billed the documentary as part of its year-long twentieth anniversary commemoration. But it also was part of a regular program produced in a collaboration of WTTW-TV and the public radio station, WBEZ-FM, underwritten by the Chicago Community Trust. Washington not only helped write and appeared in the documentary, she also delivered reports on racism on "Chicago Tonight," a weekly news show on the public television station, where she was a part-time correspondent.

Washington expanded her presence as a commentator on race and politics and grew her star power. At first she tried to place op-eds in either paper on spec. She said if the dailies and broadcast news didn't pick up Reporter stories, she would get them out there in other ways. "I just pursued opportunities," Washington said. "I thought it was another way to reach our audience. I would pitch ideas or angles that would come out of the stories." In 1995, she began a weekly public affairs show on WNUA-FM

called “City Voices,” which focused on politics, race, and urban affairs, often taken from the stories done by the Reporter. The next year, she began to write monthly opinion pieces as a columnist at the *Chicago Tribune*.

In 1997, the Reporter was invited to become a partner in the annual public radio and television Chicago Matters program. “That was something that we pursued,” she said. “It brought significant income, we got mentioned and promoted as part of that series.” The Reporter also partnered with WGN-TV, which would do a version of a story each month. Newsweek magazine in 1997 named Washington to its “Century Club,” the 100 leaders nationwide to watch in the year 2000 and beyond. In 2000, she moved to commercial TV, as one of a few journalists invited as an in-studio guest on WBBM-TV anchor Carol Marin’s 10 p.m. broadcast. At times, her staff complained that Washington seemed spread too thin.

Her high profile was a departure from Larson. On most counts, he was more cautious in his approach to the job, from his public persona to his fundraising. “Roy was pretty conservative about grants,” she said, only seeking money from local institutions. She went to national funders such as the Rockefeller Foundation and the Ford Foundation. The Reporter’s funding landscape had changed over the years. Corporate gifts had plummeted – “I would say $20,000 to $40, 000,” Washington said – but foundations more than made up for that decline. Washington estimated that she had a budget of about $600,000, raised $400,000 and the Community Renewal Society picked up the rest. “Foundations are fickle and they go through cycles for what they look for, and you have to do that dance,” Washington said. “We began to strategize around topics and issues. That was a period of time when foundations really

pulled back on operational funding." So they packaged issues for funders: one foundation would cover politics, another housing, and the Chicago Community Trust gave it money for Chicago Matters. The problem, she said, was that those grants "were inhibiting our editorial control." They would not tell us what to write but the Reporter would have to produce a specified number of stories on those funded issues.

The Reporter continued to be frustrated by its inability to raise significant revenue from subscriptions or increase the number of readers. The Reporter tried all kinds of gimmicks, she said, including giving subscribers coffee cups with the publication's logo and trying to sell the Reporter in bookstores. "We got grants over the years to try to build the audience," she said. "Never happened." In 1998, the Reporter created its first website, which it used to post a digital version of the publication, to reach more readers.

In 2000, the McCormick Foundation gave what it at first called a one-time $100,000 grant to the Reporter to develop a plan to boost the number of paid subscribers, and to nudge the Reporter toward self-sustainability. But Washington said she also increased the complimentary subscription list because she believed the Reporter's primary mission came from McDermott's idea of influencing the "movers and shakers," at that point mostly government leaders, activists and advocates, and the news media.

That view of audience shaped Washington's approach to how stories should be written. When she came back to the Reporter, she set out to reignite the fire under tough investigative stories and hard-nosed news. "I was criticized for the fact that our stuff wasn't as readable," she said. "It was numbers heavy. It was policy heavy. There

was not as much anecdotal narrative as there could have been." She conceded she was a heavy-handed editor, who sometimes stifled the voice of the reporter. "I think too often we saw our audience as the 'mover-shaker' types who were going to be motivated to read it because it was their job," she said.

Ylisela described the Reporter formula this way: "You have a premise. You report it out. You write the hell out of it. Then you do everything you can to knock it down." Stories still often started and ended with stats. The staff now used computers to write and crunch numbers. "Tom [Corfman] elevated the Reporter's computer-assisted reporting," he said. But Ylisela tried to humanize stories to make them more readable. "It was hard to do because you didn't have much room because you had all these stats," he said. "I remember thinking, 'We've got to get some people here, let's get some people.'"

In 2000, Ylisela got a chance to run a publication. Washington won a Chicago Community Trust fellowship, a paid sabbatical for nine months. He wasted little time in moving the publication to a magazine style – running a cover that was a photograph, without a story starting there, to get more attention. The cover of the April 2000 issue was a photograph of black male students in their school uniforms at Hales Franciscan High School, with the headline "The Plight of Young Black Men." Inside, reporter Alden Loury wrote a first person story about what it is like to be a black man. "Black men are in trouble. Serious trouble. I am surrounded by constant, painful reminders that black men live violent, dangerous lives," wrote Loury, who included statistics and charts. Loury also wrote a sidebar about how he fathered a child out of wedlock. This was not the typical Reporter story.

And in September, intern Mick Dumke, who had two degrees in religious studies, wrote a story about Daley's courting of black clergy, especially through $9.8 million in city funding over the previous decade to fourteen black churches and their affiliated nonprofits. The cover headline – "Prophets or Puppets? Mayor Daley and the Black Church" – did little to soften the implication that the mayor had bought the pastors' loyalty. The story "hit a nerve," Dumke said. "It was the first story that I got a lot of attention for." Ylisela said it created ripples throughout the Community Renewal Society. The Rev. Jeremiah Wright, later known as President Barack Obama's "radical" pastor, came to the CRS offices to complain, but didn't stop in at the Reporter office. Some of the funders weren't happy and they let CRS know it. "Internally we took a lot of heat," Ylisela said.

When Washington returned from her sabbatical, she made it clear she was ready to move on, to take advantage of opportunities that had opened for her during her long tenure at the Reporter. At the time, Ylisela was looking for a way to run his own magazine. The Rev. Calvin Morris, CRS executive director, made it clear he wanted a black editor and publisher. Ylisela had begun a working relationship with George Ball, owner of the Burpee Seed Company, who offered to bankroll a magazine. Instead of starting from scratch, Ylisela said he thought it would be easier to take over the Reporter. "We wanted to buy the Reporter," he said. Ylisela said he and Ball met with Morris, asking him to sell them the Reporter. "I didn't know if he ever took it seriously," Ylisela said. "For a brief moment, though, I thought he would go for it."

When the deal fell through, Ylisela took two or three reporters with him to start *Clout* magazine. He rented space and was ready to start. But then, in 2001, the tech bubble burst, and Ball – who had purchased garden.com – saw everything crash. So Ball pulled the plug on the magazine.

Washington selected reporter Alysia Tate to take her place, in the Reporter's tradition of promoting from within. "When we hired her, we thought Alysia had all the tools," Ylisela said. "The most important story Alysia did was comparing Oak Park and Evanston," the two suburbs on the western and northern borders of Chicago known for their efforts to integrate racially. When Washington finally walked out the door, Tate was taking over with a staff of her peers.

Chapter 9: Going Glossy Amid Turmoil, Money Woes
The Tate Years, 2002-2007

On December 12, 2007, Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan announced she had subpoenaed documents from Countrywide Financial Corp. for an investigation into the high-cost mortgage loans they made to lower income people as the number of foreclosures soared in Chicago and across the country. Madigan's action made news across the country, prompting stories in the *New York Times*,[1] *Washington Post*[2] and throughout the country via the Associated Press. "We're looking at why people who appear to us to not be able to afford the loans they are in are in those loans, and how Countrywide contributed to that," said Deborah Hagan, Madigan's chief of the consumer protection division. "We're looking at how the loans were originated, funded and sold all the way up the line. We know we have a nationwide problem – we have record foreclosures in Chicago and in the surrounding area – and we're trying to figure out how this happened and who needs to be held accountable."[3]

The data behind that investigation emerged from the *Chicago Reporter*. Senior editor Alden Loury and reporter Kimbriell Kelly, two young black journalists, had conducted a data analysis that found that metropolitan Chicago had more high-cost loans than any other metropolitan area in the country. Foreclosures had been on the decline in the Chicago area until 2005, but then jumped 37 percent, according, to their November 2007 Reporter story, "The High Price of Home Ownership." The foreclosures coincided with the mortgage industry issuing an astonishingly 88,315

high-cost loans (more than three points over the Treasury rate), making it hard for many Chicago area borrowers to manage the hundreds of dollars in extra payments they paid compared with homeowners who received prime-loans (within three points of the Treasury rate). Blacks and Latinos accounted for half the sub-prime loans, Loury and Kelly found.

"*The Chicago Reporter's* detailed analysis of this data raises huge questions about the fairness of lending practices in the Chicago region. Over the coming months, my office will continue to take a hard look at this data and investigate whether the number of high-cost loans, which generally equate to subprime loans, is attributable to questionable lending practices and whether these practices violate any Illinois fair lending or civil rights laws," Madigan told the Reporter for its story.

Two weeks before Madigan announced her investigation, she appeared at a conference sponsored by the Reporter, the Community Renewal Society, and the Chicago Urban League to assess home foreclosures. There, Loury used a power-point presentation to describe the racial bias in the lending patterns uncovered by the Reporter's investigation: black and Latino homebuyers with more than $100,000 in income were more likely to be offered high-cost loans than white loan applicants making $35,000 a year. The presentation also named the lenders most responsible for those loans, starting with Countrywide, which made high-cost loans to more than half of its black borrowers. "High-cost, high-risk loans are clearly fueling the current, growing foreclosure crisis," Madigan said at the conference. "This crisis impacts individuals and families most of all, but also has a devastating impact on neighborhoods and our economy."[4]

The story and its significant impact was a gratifying swan song for Alysia Tate, who was stepping down as editor and publisher of the Reporter after five years of a productive, if tumultuous, tenure. Tate had decided to join the Reporter's publisher, the Community Renewal Society, as chief operating officer. Her new job starting January 1, 2008. "CRS had created that position because it was doing some strategic planning and trying to really figure out the organization's future," Tate said. "The person who was chief operating officer had left, but I had worked very closely with her and she really thought I would do a great job in that position. So I transitioned right over to that."[5]

When promoted to be the publication's second black editor and publisher in January 2002, Tate at age 30 faced one of the toughest transitions during the Reporter's history. Funding had dropped after the September 11, 2001 terror attacks. Terrorism and two wars overshadowed the issue of race. She also was the first to be promoted to the top job from within, without a break to work in another job with the widening perspective that provides. And she had no independent standing or citywide reputation like the previous publishers had when they took over – McDermott as a civil rights leader, Larson as a well-known reporter and columnist, and Washington as a mayoral spokeswoman and producer for a top investigative TV reporter. Unlike her predecessors, she wasn't significantly older than her staff.

Washington had spent her last year at the Reporter in 2001 grooming Tate for the top job, naming her managing editor and then senior editor. Tate had been at the Reporter since 1998, when Washington hired her away from the *Daily Herald*, a suburban Chicago newspaper, after meeting her at an IRE conference. Tate was a

1994 Northwestern Medill graduate who had switched her major from speech to journalism and had been a feminist activist on campus. Her mother, who was white, had been the first woman in the newsroom at WOOD-TV in Kalamazoo, Mich., and later worked as a writer an editor of a weekly newspaper. Her father, who was black, was a minister who moved into pastoral counseling and eventually became a psychology professor. She interned at the *Boston Globe* and the *Sedona Red Rock News* in Arizona, before going to work at the *Herald*, where she had the diversity beat. At the Reporter, Tate had covered politics and government.

"Laura announced she was going to be leaving, then began the process of making me her successor. There was like a year I worked as a senior editor under her, and really tried to learn the editing side and learn a lot of the fundraising and all that kind of publisher stuff," Tate said. "It was like a frying pan."

Chicago, like the rest of the country, had moved into the era of terrorist threats. Rumors spread that al Qaeda had a plot to bomb Sears Tower, the tallest building in Chicago. Immigrants, particularly Muslims and those from Southeast Asia and the Middle East, came under heavy scrutiny. Mayor Richard M. Daley was gearing up for a campaign for a fourth term. The Chicago Housing Authority was beginning to tear down the high-rise housing projects that Daley's father had helped build, with a Plan for Transformation to disperse the impoverished population and sell off land around the old projects.

Like Roy Larson in 1995, Tate faced the problem of following someone who had become the face of the Reporter. "I mean there are just not that many Laura Washingtons in the world. She is just the full package and not all of us have that

ability. It was challenging," Tate said. But she set out to put her own imprint on the Reporter. "Our 30-year mission remains investigating, analyzing and documenting the ways issues of race and poverty affect us all. So we'll keep evolving. Through our print and electronic editions, we will provide more timely, shorter stories about the people and organizations tackling these issues," she wrote in the first issue as editor and publisher. "But we won't lose our edge. We will remain, at root, an investigative publication, dedicated to accuracy, breadth and clarity."[6]

Tate also began with a young staff who had been together for a few years and was like family. Her reporters included Rui Kaneya, Pamela Lewis, Alden Loury, Brian Rogal, Leah Samuel, Stephanie Williams and contributing writer Sarah Karp. When Washington made Tate senior editor in July 2001, she also, at Tate's suggestion, named Mick Dumke, 29, managing editor. Dumke had worked as a researcher and writer at the Reporter. His experience blended two degrees in religion, work as an inner-city school teacher time as a newspaper reporter and columnist.[7] Dumke said being managing editor was a daunting task. "Most of the time I was trying to maintain what the Reporter was… a publication dedicated to investigative reporting about arguably the most significant issue of this country – race," he said.

The first new feature Tate added to the Reporter was "New Voices," a one-page Q&A interview of someone whose life has been touched by race and poverty issues, to get a shorter, people-oriented feature into the publication. Among those featured were a foster parent; a former drug dealer trying to turn around others; a Filipina collecting life histories; one of the "Lost Boys" who fled the Sudanese war; and a Korean activist worried about a nuclear stand-off with North Korea.

Meanwhile, the Reporter continued to produce a wide range of investigations, including a three-part series over three issues on housing in the Chicago area as part of the "Chicago Matters" program with the public television and radio stations, and a three-part series on the national War on Drugs.

In October 2003, the *Chicago Reporter* came out with a slick new magazine look and a new mission. A redesign had smoothed the rough edges of the Reporter, giving it a sophisticated appearance, with stylish layouts and large photographs – including Parting Shot, a quirky or symbolic photo on the back cover. Even the inevitable data, graphics and maps of the Chicago area had a cleaner look. Kaneya said a journalism class at Medill had done a study on how to upgrade the look of the printed publication of the Reporter. Kaneya said he thought he could do a better job, so he went to work on both the web and paper versions.

The new magazine style represented the next step in this new generation of editors and reporters bid to make the Reporter the best-looking and best-written publication in town. The staff even went to a weekend seminar on narrative writing at Harvard University's Nieman Foundation for Journalism, and the writing showed it.

The featured story in the new packaging was "Coming Home," with the subhead: "Growing Numbers of women end their prison terms each year. Then their struggle to find work begins." It was the first of a year's worth of stories about ex-offenders.

> "In 1982, Leslie Brown went to prison for conspiring to kill her husband," the story by Leah Samuel began. "'It was my second husband, and I was in a domestic violence situation for many years, and I just couldn't take any more of his abuse,' said Brown, who served seven years in prison until she was granted clemency in late 1988 by Gov. James Thompson. At the time, the governor said he freed Brown and another woman because they were driven to

> their crimes by abusive husbands. Once Brown got out, she found herself without many resources to start over – no food, no money – and a family to support."

In the new Reporter style, nearly every article began with the story of a person, an anecdotal lead. The long-tension between data and story had tilted in favor of story. "All of us there were big fans of long-form narrative writing. We were all interested in good writing. We experimented. We wrote profiles. We tried to do some new things," said Dumke, who would win an award for his portrait of longtime Chicago activist Conrad Worrill, a leader in the movement to win reparations for the descendants of former slaves. "We wanted to be the *New Yorker* of Chicago."[8]

Former McCormick Foundation official Mark Hallett said that he worked with the Reporter to explore other models in an attempt to increase its presence and grow its readership.[9] The two nonprofits he said that they examined were *City Limits* in New York City and *Colorlines* in Oakland, Calif. The comparison is more apt now than back then because both of these nonprofit news operations are all digital.

City Limits, founded in 1976 during New York's fiscal crisis, produces a mix of reporting – including investigative journalism - aimed at the community activists and professionals who work to improve New York City. Funded by foundations, reader donations, and ads, *City Limits* reported raising $105,022 and spending $85,547 in its last fiscal year.

Colorlines is published by Race Forward, a nonprofit founded in 1981, to advance racial justice through research, media and practice. *Colorlines* produces breaking news and some investigative reporting for a national audience but mainly offers commentators to write op-eds and appear on news broadcasts to provide

context and analysis for “fast-moving stories.” Race Forward raised $5.8 million two years ago. Last year it raised $1.2 million and spent $2.8 million.

Emulating either one of these operations would require the Reporter the make a major change in its business and journalism model. *City Limits*, like the Reporter, focuses on one city. But the Reporter would have to abandon its focus on race to be like it. Mick Dumke said when was the Reporter’s managing editor that the staff discussed broadening the focus beyond race, ethnicity, and poverty to include issues such as the environment and sexual identity. The Reporter actually did stories on those two issues, but reported them through the lens of race. *Colorlines* focuses on race and has a national focus. But it is best known as being an advocacy group that offers commentary to provide context and a point of view on racial issues of the day for broadcast news shows and the opinion pages of newspapers and other publications. As editor and publisher, Laura Washington and her successor Alysia took a move in this direction by writing commentary for the Chicago papers’ editorial pages. And Washington became a pundit for television news shows, But no editor and publisher has changed either the Reporter’s focus on race and poverty, or abandoned the deeply reported, data-driven approach to its journalism.

The Reporter also was willing to take risks, said Loury, who in 2002 became senior editor. In 2003, Karp wrote about a foster child who at the age of 17 was charged with stabbing another foster child to death, based on court documents and confidential records – an extreme case that illuminated the problems facing children who grew up in foster homes. In 2004, Shenoy tracked down information about 103 police shootings, including 37 that resulted in fatalities, despite the Chicago Police

Department's refusal to share police shooting data. And Karp illustrated that failure of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services to protect children under special review by telling the story of a 12-year-old girl left in charge of her siblings who couldn't find help for her sick baby sister. Her addicted mother the next day found the pre-teen rocking the dead baby in a rocking chair.

Rogal collaborated with tenant Beauty Turner of the *Residents Journal*, a public housing paper, for a series of stories that showed the city's destruction of high-rise projects had put former residents' lives at risk because it scrambled the turf of the gangs in the area. Children faced perilous walks to school because they crossed through different gang territory than they had before. Rogal and Turner wrote of one teenager who was lured to his death by a gang that suspected him of being in a rival gang. "The Chicago Police Department actually increased patrols along the State Street corridor as a result of our piece," Loury said.

It was in 2004 that Kelly and Loury worked on their first analysis of Home Mortgage Disclosure Act data, finding that blacks were having a harder time getting home loans in 2003 than ten years before – 72 percent of black homeowner applications resulted in loans in 1993, but only 48 percent in 2003. And, a sign of trouble ahead, blacks had the lowest percent of prime-rate loans, and the highest of sub-prime loans.

Behind the scenes at the Reporter, however, there was tension. Everyone felt that their work was strong but ignored. The staff had a sense that the dailies and broadcast news outlets now treated the Reporter as competition, and as a result were not picking up on the stories as they had before. "We really wanted to be much more

widely known," Tate said. "We just felt like we had one of the best things going and that almost no one had heard of it."

When she was being groomed in 2001, Tate had taken a big step to solve the nagging problem of circulation, with subscriptions stuck at a low level. The McCormick Foundation, which had been funding a fellow, was open to the idea of a three-year grant of $100,000 a year that could be used to build circulation, according to Loury. But the trade-off was that the Reporter would have to give up the fellowship. Tate decided to do that. Initially the staff was excited about the prospect, Loury said. "There is going to be somebody here pitching our stories, going to be getting us into some outlets, and then help keep our name up," he said. But after $400,000 in grants, the circulation and promotion director she hired didn't pan out. He failed to substantially increase the Reporter's subscriptions or its public profile. The staff blamed Tate.

"I do think the publication lies below the radar of most of the public," said Charles Whitaker, the Helen Gurley Brown professor at Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism and former Reporter board member. "The Reporter is struggling with that. Their audience right now are people who are very committed and who want to stay on top of social justice issues in Chicago, which is very small."[10]

Hallett recently said he still thinks the Reporter needs a broader audience to be effective. "To survive and thrive the Reporter will have to go beyond the say 1,500-3,000 people or so who pay closest attention to it," he said. Creating the engagement to bring more people to the Reporter, he acknowledged, "is complicated, and requires a lot of work and also a lot of customization to carry out.[11]

Adding to the woes was the difficulty the Reporter was having in raising money, especially after the terror attacks. “It had a huge impact on the funding,” Tate said. “Over that next year or two, we had to make some really hard decisions.” Veteran Chicago journalist Suzy Schultz, hired in 2001 as a consulting editor to help the young staff, departed. “I left because there wasn’t money to fund my position,” she said. “And most of the foundations said, ‘We have to fund 9/11.’” Loury said the Reporter was in conversations with a foundation to fund a series of trainings for other journalists in the *Chicago Reporter* way, a course on data, analysis and fact checking – and a new way to raise revenue. But 9/11 ended that.

In Washington’s last year, the Reporter raised $730,000 – with the help of the McCormick grant. In 2003/2004, contributions dropped to $531,920. CRS’s endowment was getting hammered by the stock market, and its executive director Calvin Morris ordered cutbacks throughout the organization. In response, Tate laid off two of the six reporters, both the least senior, and ended contracts with a couple of freelancers at the end of 2003, Loury said, leaving the staff unhappy. In 2004/2005, the Reporter raised $648,769, and the year after that $622,524. That helped meet the budget targets of CRS, which reduced support and charged the Reporter more for management costs.

In 2005, the tension between Tate and the staff, particularly Dumke, reached a breaking point. Tate felt the staff didn’t respect her. Many on the staff did not like her distant management style and questioned some of her operational moves. The family

feeling had turned into a family feud. In April, Tate fired Dumke and Rogal. Shenoy quit. Karp went on maternity leave.

Tate then announced the Reporter would go bi-monthly, cutting back its publication schedule to six issues a year. That was bad. Worse was media critic Michael Miner writing about it in the *Chicago Reader*, with details of the dispute between Tate and Dumke. In the following year, funding plummeted to $461,898 as the McCormick foundation ended its grant.

"I felt like we did some great stories and I really I felt like I took the writing to a whole other level. I think for a number of us the really high-quality, well-written pieces in more of a magazine style, that was exciting," Tate said. "But then we realized, 'How many are going to sit down and read a 3,000 word story?'"

So she shifted gears, creating an advisory board to help redesign and rethink the Reporter. The changes she instituted in the print version went hand-in-hand with the digital version, she said. "The idea was to do story packages – break the elements of the stores into smaller elements. So where you would have had one 3,000-word story, maybe you have a 1,000-word piece, and maybe you have a couple of shorter pieces," she said. "That's when we went color, because printing got so cheap."

That wasn't the only challenge Tate faced. The CRS executive director, Calvin Morris, had a different view of the Reporter, and its sister publication Catalyst, than previous directors. "I think the tension always there has been: How does that organization that does the advocacy work it wants to do and explain the fact that it has these independent news magazines associated with it? And I think that faith-based, faith-oriented board of CRS has always struggled to see the value of the

magazines and felt like the organization should be just doing more straight-up advocacy work," Tate said.

The Reporter and Catalyst were so well respected that to the outside world it looked like that was not an issue, Tate said. But she added, "There is also a new leader, who is not like a Chicago guy, who's not from that group of board members. He's got a fresh perspective on the whole thing." In 2005 and 2006, the senior staff of the Community Renewal Society went through a strategic planning process. "What came out of that was CRS sand its different parts working together more collaboratively," Loury said. And that, for the first time, included the Reporter.

The new direction created a bit of a tight-wire act for the Reporter's editors, Loury said. The editors would talk with the director of the CRS organizing staff and try to determine what stories would work. "There were these kinds of zones that couldn't be touched for both of us," Loury said. The reporters didn't want interference, and the CRS staff didn't want stories that could use to organize.

But the Reporter moved forward under the new directive and won grants to produce stories that the CRS and church organizers could work on: suspensions of kids from schools, lack of affordable housing, children of incarcerated parents. CRS and the Reporter were able to sell foundations on funding stories about incarcerated parents, Loury said. "But from a journalist's standpoint, it was like what are we going to write about children of incarcerated parents, as an institution that does data journalism?" he said. But the Reporter completed a three-part series on them, he said.

Tate said this was simply part of the evolution of the Reporter. She did not think of the Reporter's aim was the intersection of black and white, as McDermott

had written in the founding editorial. “I thought of it as the expansion of the conversation around race, and largely doing that through really rigorous reporting and research and analysis of structural and institutional racism,” Tate said.

Nor did she think of the Reporter’s voice as being dispassionate. “We were the post-civil rights crew. And the civil rights movement was supposed to solve all of those problems, and then you see the problems and the issues just appear in another form,” she said. “It was about helping people have a perspective on that, understand that… We didn’t tell them what to do, but we felt like we wanted to broaden their perspective on those issues enough that they would be pushed into taking action.”[12]

Looking back on her tenure and record as editor and publisher, Tate said, “I just felt like, frankly, one of the biggest accomplishments was that I brought in the money to keep it viable, because it was very difficult after 9/11. I had no experience fundraising. I was brand new. I worked really hard to keep that going.” And she turned over the Reporter to her top editor, Alden Loury, while she moved into a position where she would keep close watch.

Chapter 10: Driven by Data, Not Fundraising
The Loury Years, 2008 - 2011

On October 6, 2008, amid the United States' worst financial crisis since the Great Depression, Countrywide Financial Corp. agreed to set aside $8.4 billion in direct loan relief for an estimated 400,000 borrowers nationwide for alleged predatory lending practice. The mortgage company entered the agreement to settle lawsuits led by Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan and lawyers from ten other states, who were seeing whole blocks of houses being boarded up in a foreclosure epidemic. Along with the direct relief, Countrywide agreed to waive all late fees of $79 million and prepayment penalties of $56 million, while suspending foreclosures on delinquent borrowers with the riskiest loans. It was the largest, and most comprehensive, mandatory loan workout program since the crash began, the *New York Times* reported.[1]

Madigan had been the first state attorney general to open an investigation into Countrywide's lending practices in September 2007, prompted by the data analysis conducted by Kimbriell Kelly and Alden Loury of the *Chicago Reporter*. "Madigan's probe follows a *Chicago Reporter* study finding that the Chicago area led the country in high-cost home loans for the second year in a row. The study also found marked disparities in loan pricing between white and non-white borrowers," a March 6, 2008 press release from the attorney general's office said. "Countrywide Financial Corp. and Wells Fargo & Company showed the highest disparities in the *Chicago Reporter* study."[2]

But Loury wasn't satisfied. In 2009, he wrote four posts on the *Chicago Reporter's* new blog that compared Wells Fargo's lending practices with those in the city of Baltimore – a city that had sued Wells Fargo in 2008 for allegedly targeting black borrowers with its subprime mortgage loans. Loury analyzed the data for Baltimore and Chicago and found that in 2007 black borrowers in Baltimore got high-cost loans from Wells Fargo 34 percent of the time, but in Chicago they got them 49 percent of the time. Loury included a link to the spreadsheet containing the data analysis. He continued his analysis in a blog he posted the next day, this time with a color map available that showed the concentration of those loans in black communities on the South and West sides of Chicago. And on July 10, he was back at it again, finding that of the nation's top ten lenders, Wells Fargo had given black borrowers in Chicago the highest-priced loans, on average, during 2007.

On July 31, 2009, Madigan sued Wells Fargo, once again acknowledging the Reporter's analysis. And three years later, the U.S. Justice Department, based on those allegations and others, entered into a settlement with Wells Fargo requiring it to pay $175 million to compensate more than 34,000 borrowers nationally. In Illinois, the settlement included $8 million in cash payments averaging $15,000 to each of 3,300 customers who were wrongly steered into subprime loans between 2004 and 2007, and average of about $2,000 each to minority borrowers wrongly charged a higher fee on their mortgages. In addition, Wells Fargo agreed to spend another $7 million in the state to help homebuyers with down payments.[3]

And that is all Alden Loury really wanted to do: conduct data-driven investigations, the kind that the *Chicago Reporter* had made its name with, even

when he agreed to become the first black male editor and publisher at age 37 in January 2008. As Loury moved up, he faced many of the same challenges as Tate – he was not well known across the city, did not have deep ties to foundations or wealthy donors, and had not established himself independently. In addition, he was not a charismatic figure like McDermott or Washington, though he brought a warmth to the Reporter offices that restored a friendlier atmosphere.

The money woes Tate faced worsened during his tenure: he had to raise funds during the nation's worst financial recession since the Great Depression. The local news scene also had deteriorated: both daily newspapers soon would be in bankruptcy court. At the same time, fast computers, abundant databases, and a new fascination with numbers put the Reporter's data-driven journalism into a crowded field. In 2009, Nate Silver's 538 column started in the *New York Times*, followed by Ezra Klein's Wonk Blog in the *Washington Post.*

Loury treasured his time as senior editor of the Reporter before Alysia Tate left. "Those five and a half years or so were the best times I had at the Reporter. I was working very closely with reporters. I was doing the data analysis, which was the part of journalism I enjoyed the most. For many of the stories I was editing. I was helping conceive of the ideas," Loury said. He also worked with Tate on fundraising and management. "It was a really good kind of middle ground."[4]

But when Tate said she was leaving, and that she would recommend him for the job, he said he felt he had to take it. Loury said he had ideas he wanted to try out, particularly for the Reporter's website – breaking smaller stories, analyzing existing data for quick stories to capitalize on the news. But Tate said no. "I heard 'no' enough

times that when the prospect of somebody new coming in to tell me 'no,' I thought, 'I don't know if I want to do that. I want to do some things that I haven't had a chance to do under Alysia's leadership," Loury said. "So I took the job, even with her giving me the warning that 'you know this means you can't do the things you were doing.' Yeah, I know. My hope was to be editor and publisher and to still have my foot in both worlds."

Becoming an editor and publisher had never been his dream. The son of a single mom who worked at a printing plant, Loury grew up on Chicago's South Side, a segregated black swath across the city. He and his mother spent a few years in the LeClaire Courts housing development, then moved to the Auburn Gresham neighborhood on the black side of the Western Avenue, the South Side's racial dividing line at the time. In 1975 when Loury was six, he was living about two miles east of Marquette Park at the time when the Reporter's Stephan Garnett was beaten there on his parks assignment. "There was always a line," Loury said.

After attending one of Chicago's best public high schools he was admitted to University of Illinois in Champaign-Urban. "I went to college with the idea of being an architect," Loury said. But instead, he said, "In a five-year period I dropped out of college three times. I had a rough going." His grades had sunk low, and the dean in his school finally would not let him re-enroll. So he took a job at a bank, and to add to his income he began filing high school sports scores and then working for the Urbana newspaper, the *News Gazette*. "That's when I really started to think about going into journalism," he said. That interest turned him around. He enrolled at a nearby community college to take journalism classes, began working on cable access shows,

and landed jobs as a radio reporter for local stations. He applied again to Illinois, for journalism, and the dean let him in. He graduated in 1997. He moved back to Chicago for family reasons and saw an ad for the Reporter. “Laura [Washington] interviewed me… She offered me the job. And I jumped at it.”

That was in September 1999. Working under Washington and James Ylisela, he learned the Reporter way, he said. Three years later, Tate named him senior editor. Loury survived the upheaval in the staff, and along the way kept Kelly from quitting. “We had very lengthy negotiations to allow me to stay,” said Kelly, the last McCormick fellow. “I wanted to make sure I would be doing the same kind of work. He agreed to extend my fellowship for another six months.”[5] Kelly didn’t leave.

When Loury took over from Tate, he had his own vision for the future of the publication. “We do these massive analyses of data… and digging up numbers that nobody is going to have. Nobody else is going to spend the time or have the skills to do these things. So we’re coming out with these major stories that were backed by research and findings that you’re not going to find anywhere else,” he said. “That was our niche and we needed to take it up a notch.”

But looking at the Reporter’s shift to website, Loury wanted to do more, something Tate had held him back from doing because she didn’t think he had time to do it. “With online, I wanted to take advantage of that medium to break smaller stories, even though I knew our reach wasn’t terribly great. I felt like we should be producing more content, not necessarily big mammoth things,” he said, like follow-ups. “But I also thought there were things happening in the news cycle that we could really capitalize given our capacity with numbers,” he added. “We had a decent cadre

of legacy data that we could analyze and turn a quick story on and inject ourselves in the news cycles without having to wait for a three-month investigation."

As he faced his expanded duties of editor and publisher in January 2008, Loury named Kelly senior editor. "By May she was firmly in charge of the editorial process," he said. In July 2009, he split his position – he became publisher and Kelly became editor: "It was a big shift." He was still the face of the Reporter, but he was spending more of his time fundraising and working on the Community Renewal Society's senior staff, buffering his reporters and editors from the new collaborative approach CRS wanted on projects.

But fundraising didn't come easy to him. "I hated asking people for money. I was okay asking foundations… But when it came to individuals, I was abysmal," he said. "And so, as a consequence, development staff had to drag me to make calls, to set up meetings with people."

Records show that foundation funding was drying up in the aftermath of the economic crash. From the 2007/2008 fiscal year to 2008/2009, total revenue for the Reporter slipped from $517,847 to $487,128. The next year, it plummeted to $367,850. Subscription income increased from $5,747 to $9,250 during those same three years, though the number of subscribers never exceeded 450.[6] Personnel and office expenses stayed relatively even, at just a little more than $500,000 a year – but CRS charged more than $75,000 a year for management services.[7] Loury said he increased funding before he left, winning a $75,000 challenge grant and the role as one of NBC's nonprofit partners. "I wrote and made the case for it. They selected the Reporter right after I left," he said.

The Reporter also found itself in a new competition for funding with new nonprofits news outlets in town. As the commercial newspaper business model eroded from the steady flow of free content on the Internet, newspapers cut their staffs and rolled back the most expensive operations, including neighborhood and investigative reporting.

In 2005, the *Chi Town Daily News* launched and was hailed as new business model. The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation gave the online neighborhood news site $340,000 in 2007. But it folded it in 2009, after failing to diversify its funding. In October 2009, the *Chicago News Cooperative* started, run by a cadre of former *Chicago Tribune* editors and reporters. It won a MacArthur Foundation grant and received payments from the *New York Times* for a twice-a-week insert. By 2012, MacArthur ended its grant – and there was not much to replace it after the *Times* stopped using its content. The cooperative shut down.

As the nonprofit boom continued despite failures, the Reporter came under scrutiny by foundation-funded studies and assessments. It also received offers of pro bono assessments of the publication and its website from DePaul University, University of Chicago business school, and Northwestern's Medill School of Journalism. Loury and Kelly welcomed them.[8]

The UC CampusCatalyst analysis relied on a subscriber and website user survey. Delivered on June 8, 2010, it recommended that the Reporter's fix its stagnant circulation and declining revenue by putting a greater emphasis on government and politics for its stories, create a Data Depot of raw and analyzed data, and to improve

the website. It proposed that the Data Depot restrict access to the data to subscribers, as a way to raise revenue and to drive traffic to the website.[9]

In December 2011, the Community Media Innovation Project class at Medill delivered its quarter-long assessment of the Reporter's website and digital strategy. The findings were sobering. The Reporter had a small and transient audience. Its content did not serve users well. Placing the Reporter's "Chicago Muckrakers" blog on the Tribune's website didn't drive traffic to the Reporter's site. And the website badly needed a redesign. The report recommended technical and design changes. It said the blog should be shifted to the Reporter's website. It urged greater use of storytelling tools such as photo slideshows, interactive graphics and timelines. It recommended an expanded use of Twitter and Facebook. To make the changes, it said the Reporter should hire a full-time Web producer as well as a part-time photographer and a part-time graphic designer adept in data visualization.[10]

The Reporter had come a long way in the decade since it created its first website but still had work to do, the assessments made clear. Kelly said the studies said that "we needed to be digital, to be more relevant, and had to have more pictures." After Kelly became editor in July 2009, the Reporter launched the Chicago Muckraker's blog on its own website. The Reporter also introduced pdf subscriptions and the "Teen Reporter" blog for high school students in July 2010. And it initiated a fellowship for photographers, to provide the illustrations needed for the website. After the staff found that writing blogs interfered with their work on stories for the publication, Kelly that September hired blogger Megan Cottrell, a veteran of the *Chi Town Daily News* where she covered the Chicago Housing Authority.

Cottrell said she encountered a clash of cultures in her new job. The editors and many reporters were "married" to the Reporter style and stylebook, she said, which she found stuffy for a blog.[11] They wanted to create original content, but Cottrell said she always had relied on "other people's content" and "news factoids." Kelly or Kaneya would insist they edit the blogs before posting, which could take days, frustrating her. There were discussions over whether the Reporter should put original material posted on the blog into the magazine. "I think everyone is learning what to do with the web. I think the Reporter was particularly slow in figuring this out," she said. "I feel like the majority of it was the strong tie to the kind of journalism they were known for … the heritage, they had been around 40 years… and this is *The Chicago Reporter* way, and very much a pride that that way."

The Reporter experimented with the web and social media. It created a video for a Reporter issue launch party.[12] In 2011, it produced a video brochure to introduce itself on Facebook.[13] And it posted another video that presented its findings on the cost of police settlements to the music of a techno beat.[14]

As publisher, Loury said he found himself spending more time trying to protect the Reporter from the Community Renewal Society's directives to collaborate with its organizers on issues. Loury said some of the collaborations actually were successful. He said CRS organizers flagged nursing home care in minority communities as a top issue following the death of an 81-year-old veteran with dementia who was supposed to be kept on the first floor but fell to his death out of a fifth floor window. Reporter Jeff Kelly Lowenstein conducted deep research on nursing homes and discovered though data analysis racial disparities. The quality-of-

care ratings of black nursing homes fell far short of those in white nursing homes, even in the same chains. After analyzing the elements that resulted in acceptable quality-of-care ratings, Lowenstein calculated the minimum staffing for nursing and for overall care required for a nursing home.

But Kelly, who edited Lowenstein's stories, said the collaboration with CRS was difficult thing to navigate. "We felt it very important to maintain the wall between advocacy and organizing, and journalism," she said. "From my vantage point, the story was the story, and if you would like to, organize around that." Kelly said she would not let organizers attend the Reporter's staff meetings, and that she did not want to participate in advocacy work. Still, Lowenstein and Kelly testified before the Illinois State legislature as it took up and passed a bill to require minimum staffing levels for overall care at nursing homes, a level similar to those determined by Kelly. But the legislature proposed dropped standards for staffing by nurses.

Loury could handle this kind collaboration. But he said he couldn't bear the pressure to cut budgets, meet publication deadlines, and raise funds from senior CRS staff - particularly because it was coming from it chief operating officer and his former editor and publisher, Alysia Tate. In December 2011, Loury left the Reporter to work at the Better Government Association. Stepping up to take his place was Kimbriell Kelly.

Chapter 11: A New Star – Interrupted
The Kelly Year, 2012

At the MacArthur Foundation's annual meeting of funders in Chicago in 2012, the *Chicago Reporter*'s new editor and publisher Kimbriell Kelly appeared on a panel with other nonprofit leaders. One funder asked Kelly why she was working at the Reporter. Kelly said she when she left the *Daily Herald* for Reporter she took "a really, really big pay cut" and that she making $20,000 less than her previous $50,000 salary. But she said he had never before worked at a place where she woke up in the morning and was excited to go to work. "It changed my perspective about the magazine, because you know it's your place when it's not about the money," Kelly said she told the funders. "I could be at a publication that was bigger and with a bigger name, but I choose to be here." [1]

The next day, Lori McGlinchey of the Open Society Foundation in New York City called Kelly. "'Hey, I just wanted you to know I was at the conference and I didn't get to meet you. But I just want you to know I was really inspired by what you said, and I want to give you some money for the magazine,'" Kelly recalled her saying. "Wow, that's awesome," Kelly said she replied, thinking it would be a small gift. McGlinchey said, "I want to give $150,000." Kelly was floored. They worked out a two-year grant for a digital plan for the Reporter totaling $300,000, one of its biggest grants.[2] "That started a great relationship, and I flew out [to New York] to meet with her and talk to her. I put this digital plan together with the help from Northwestern [University], and I shopped it around the funders and they gave us more money," said Kelly.

Kelly had been senior editor and then the editor for three years before Alden Loury left as publisher at the end of 2011. Now as a mid-career black journalist at age of 36, Kelly was running the whole show. “I don’t think anybody wanted to be the publisher. Nobody wants to have to go out and ask for money, and fly across the country, and find inventive ways to kind of sell your publication hoping you can get funding for another year, another two years,” she said. But she felt pressure to keep the Reporter alive. “I don’t want to go down as the legacy of not being able to keep this amazing magazine afloat.”

Kelly juggled that fear of seeing the Reporter go under with a vision to push it into the new media landscape. Kelly said she looked to the career of Laura Washington for inspiration. Washington had pulled the Reporter out of its steady but safe course and punched it up with collaborations and exposure to television, radio, and commentary. Along the way, Washington became a well-respected and often-honored journalist and role model. Kelly had the personality and drive to do it, but not the independent standing or widespread connections. And she also had to balance how the Reporter would handle deeply reported data-driven stories with the stories for the Internet required a lighter, faster touch.

Kelly began the transition from editor to editor and publisher in December 2011. “When I took over as publisher, one of the first things I wanted to do was to introduce myself to the funders. Instead of just meeting them for lunch or coffee, doing what they usually did, I decided to email them the impact of what we were doing,” Kelly said. She emailed Calvin Sims at the Ford Foundation, which was about to end its funding, with this message: “I just wanted to let you know five days ago

that a story I did three years ago just led to a lawsuit against Wells Fargo by the U.S. Department of Justice." She said Sims replied: "Thanks for the news of the story, and because of that note you sent me we renewed you." It was for $200,000 over two years. "That was huge," Kelly said. "That happening at the beginning of my tenure as publisher reminded me – your stories have to have impact." And she told her reporters to "think about what your stories can do … that and analytics are what funders need to see."

Kelly took over the Reporter after it had gone through a rough financial patch and a time when nonprofit investigative journalism was all the rage as the commercial news media continued to deteriorate. Chicago was getting used to a new mayor not named Daley: Rahm Emanuel, the recently resigned chief of staff for President Barack Obama, a former President Bill Clinton advisor, and a three-term congressman from Chicago before that. Known for his competitiveness and tendency to swear, Emanuel put a focus on finances and budgets. Liberals cast a wary eye on him. Nationally, Obama was running for a second term. Racial issues remained largely in Obama's shadow, but his Republican opponent Mitt Romney underlined the nation's troubling income inequality by ruing the 47 percent of "takers" who would vote for the president.

At that time, three trends were rippling through journalism. Big city newspapers were struggling. The *Sun-Times* slashed staffing and outsourced its printing to the *Tribune*, which literally shrank its pages by an inch and laid off 20 editors and reporters. Nonprofit journalism was going through booms and busts,

especially in Chicago. And more mainstream news outlets had begun doing what used to be called computer-assisted reporting and is now known as data journalism.

Kelly is charismatic and outgoing but also serious and pragmatic about her career and work. The daughter of a mother who worked in social services and a father in the insurance business, she grew up in South Holland, a middle class suburb south of Chicago. Kelly said she joined her newspaper at Thornwood High School and did everything from general assignment to editing. She found journalism interesting but said she was thinking about becoming a lawyer. She remembers her parents talking about being part of the Great Migration, her mother from Louisiana and her father Tennessee. She said they met at the Rev. Jesse Jackson's Operation Breadbasket in the 1960s and joined Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. for his marches in Chicago.

Kelly attended Xavier University in Chicago, where she graduated as English major, and Boston University, where she earned a master's in journalism. She went to work at the *Daily Herald* in Arlington Heights, Illinois. But she was ambitious – she interviewed with the *Washington Post* and was told she needed to do more enterprise stories. That, she said, led her to the Reporter. Alysia Tate, the Reporter's editor and publisher, was an alum of the *Daily Herald,* and she hired Kelly on a one-year fellowship as a McCormick fellow in 2004.

Kelly said when she arrived at the Reporter she thought it must be the way all nonprofits operate. It had a family atmosphere, she said, and "people were playing kickball or soccer in the office. There were wine stains on the floor." And then the family feud between Tate and her staff broke out. She kept her head down and dived into a story that Loury, then senior editor, was keen on her doing. It was an

investigation built on analysis of Home Mortgage Disclosure Act data - home-loan lenders are required by law to report applications and loans to borrowers by race, gender, income level, location, and other information. Unlike most of her colleagues, Kelly knew about buying homes. She had bought her first one at age 22, and was on her third property at the age of 27. Her story didn't make much of a ripple in in the local news media but it caught the eye of Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan.

That introduction to the Reporter formula set Kelly's approach to journalism as editor and publisher. "Alden's a data guy, and I came up under Alden," she said. "I followed his tradition with my own flair." Kelly mandated a weekly training session on data analysis for her staff. She also ended the trips to the Nieman Foundation for narrative writing and began taking her reporters to Investigative Reporters and Editors conferences.

Angela Caputo said when she joined the Reporter staff in 2010 she encountered the "expectation that we were going to use data" in stories. She learned on the job, mastering mapping and data analysis for stories she was working on. And if Loury or Kelly didn't know how to do it, she would go to IRE. At the Reporter's Friday afternoon training sessions, Caputo said she and other reporter learned new skills or worked through problems with stories. "We even had a teacher come in and teach us statistics," Caputo said.[3]

Caputo came to know one of her subject's grandparents while reporting on a story about prosecutions of 17-year-olds as adults, the vast majority of them black teens charged with nonviolent offenses. The elderly couple was moving out of a subsidized unit because their grandson had been arrested, and under the Chicago

Housing Authority's one-strike rule, the arrest of anyone in a household resulted in eviction. "It took me about nine months to get the data from the housing authority," Caputo said. She mapped the addresses and analyzed the 1,390 one-strike cases from 2005 to 2010. She found that the vast majority of leaseholders were not the ones who committed the alleged crime; that more than half the evictions were based on crimes never proven in criminal court; and the largest number of the evictions occurred in gentrifying communities where public housing was being prepared for demolition.[4] The largest concentration of cases were in the hot market on the near North Side where Cabrini Green was being torn down. The *New York Times* ran a story about her piece in its Chicago edition, she said.

Kelly said she was all business as editor and publisher. When Loury was publisher and she was editor, she said, "I think people [on the staff] viewed us like parents – Alden was like the fun dad, but I was the mother who loved them all but wanted them to do better." And, she said, "I was not the person you wanted to have drinks with. I was very serious. I professionalized the office."

Kelly also created two tracks for the Reporter to pursue – the printed publication and the web – and each targeted different segments of the audience she sought to reach. The bimonthly magazine was for big investigations. "If you have 12 stories a year, they all have to be big," Kelly said. "If you do bimonthly, you have six times a year to wake people up." But she also was aware that everything was moving toward the web, toward digital publishing. "My thinking was that we're going to sink our resources in to our biggest publication stories, and then to feed the beast we're going to hire some people to blog. Those six-figure investigations we're going to

have the biggest impact with. The writers for the web will give us traffic, so we will be relevant." The audience for the magazine: "Your policy makers, anyone who can change policy." For the web: "More of a general audience, somewhat progressive, left-leaning, some of those are change agents. A lot of professors."

Kelly staff's consisted of Rui Kaneya as managing editor, presentation editor Christine Wachter, full-time reporters Caputo and Maria Ines Zamudio, and bloggers Megan Cottrell, Yana Kunkichoff and Loury. Kelly also began a fellowship for photographers to create images for the web and Facebook. Kelly hired a web editor - Mike McHugh then Melanie Coffee - because she and Kaneya was busy editing the magazine and couldn't get to Cottrell's blogs quickly enough. Cottrell said, "That was really helpful. We finally could fully focus on the web as its own medium." By 2012, the Reporter's website had improved, rated as one of the best among "specialty media" in Chicago by the Chicago Media Workshop.[5]

Kelly said print stories had to have impact. "I would sit the staff down and ask, 'What do you want to work on?'" she said. She would then ask their idea's scope, reach, and whether it had the potential for drawing attention or making change. "They had to be passionate about it. I didn't want them to just work on anything," she said. "It had to be interesting and relevant to them. I wanted happy reporters."

As an example of this approach, Caputo decided that after self-appointed neighborhood watch guard George Zimmerman shot and killed Trayvon Martin she would took a look at rogue police in Chicago. She examined 441 police misconduct lawsuits that cost the city $45.5 million in settlements between January 2009 and November 2011. Her analysis showed that one hundred forty officers – 1 percent of

the police force - were named at least twice in the lawsuits and accounted for a quarter of the damage payments. And she found that the police union contract and a state law routinely shielded officers from outside and internal investigations.

To spark some interest in the Reporter, Kelly began holding issue-launch parties, developed a radio show, and built a bigger presence on Facebook and Twitter. The Reporter's radio program was aired live during the lunch hour on Fridays. It was called "The Barber Shop Show" because the program aired at Carter's Barbershop in Chicago's North Lawndale neighborhood. With social media, Cottrell said. "We began to interact with people via Twitter. I think we created a pretty good digital audience, but I don't know if there was a lot of cross over from print to digital."

Not long after taking over, Kelly began to look ahead to the fortieth anniversary of the Reporter, planning for a celebration and fundraiser with the Chicago-based NPR show "Wait Wait Don't Tell Me." On the night of the celebration, Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan attended and praised the Reporter's analysis of the home mortgage data that fueled her lawsuits and settlements. Long-time broadcaster Bill Kurtis and other notables also appeared. But neither the *Chicago Tribune* nor the *Chicago Sun-Times* published an editorial or a column to commemorate the Reporter's milestone.

Meanwhile, Kelly was still facing tough times raising funds and fending off CRS calls for budget and staff cutbacks. Kelly had been stunned when she learned that funds raised by the Reporter had been shifted to cover CRS debts. Kelly said she began crafting language for grants that specified exactly what the money could be used for at the Reporter.

In June, Kelly and her staff attended the IRE conference in Boston, where she spoke on a panel about investigating race and poverty. Afterward, she ran into Jeff Leen, the *Washington Post*'s investigative editor who asked her if she would like to join his staff. "I laughed about it," Kelly said, but she said Leen pressed her to have at least a conversation about it. "I loved the Reporter, I really did love the Reporter," she said. "I had just started the digital plan. I had hired a website developer."

Leen called again, and told her he still wanted her to come work for him. "He gave me an offer I couldn't refuse," she said. In November 2012, she accepted the job as part of a team working under a Ford Foundation grant for investigative reporting. Now Kelly is on the regular staff as an investigative reporter at the Post. "I met with Laura Washington, and I asked her to shepherd the search for a new editor and publisher, and to make sure that in the interim the Reporter was still going to go on."

Washington returned to the Reporter as its interim publisher and conducted a search for a replacement. To prospective candidates for the job, Washington said, "After 40 years, the Reporter is no longer a small, non-profit monthly. Today, it is a 21st century news organization that publishes daily across multiple platforms—digital, radio, print and television. The next editor and publisher will be someone who can take the publication into new, higher-impact territory." She added, "We are trying to keep up with technology and sort of abandon the old media model."[6]

That transition was going on with the encouragement of the Reporter's key funders. Mark Hallett, who in 2013 was a senior program officer in the McCormick Foundation's journalism program, said, "The Reporter has begun to be a more entertaining read, with more graphics and better photography. It's starting to do story-

telling that gets beyond the long-form piece about public housing. And so it looks much different even than it did six or seven years ago." But Hallett said the Reporter had much to figure out. "Today's its sort of up for grabs. Are you a magazine with a website? If you're also producing video, or producing audio, or doing significant amounts of photography, do you become a broadcast outlet in the end that also prints long stories?" [7]

Chapter 12: Going Online and Seeking Relevance
The Richardson Years, 2013 -

The police dashboard video was disturbing. In it, a white Chicago police officer could be seen firing more than a dozen shots into a moving car filled with unarmed black teenagers. Recorded on the city's South Side in December 2013, it showed the officer, later identified in court records as Marco Proano, shooting at the vehicle as it drove away after a stop for speeding. Proano wounded two of the teens, one in the shoulder, the other in the left hip and heel. The video, released on June 17, 2015, went viral amid the nation's intense scrutiny of police shootings of unarmed civilians – especially young black men. National and local news stations and the *New York Times*, *New York Daily News*, the *Guardian*, the *Daily Mail*, both Chicago newspapers, and the Associated Press all ran stories about this new video. And they all had to credit the same source: *The Chicago Reporter*.[1]

The response to the video and the story written by reporter Jonah Newman demonstrated the potential power and reach of the publication's website. And it foreshadowed a momentous decision by the Reporter's editor and publisher, veteran journalist Susan Smith Richardson, to go all digital in September, ending the printed magazine after 43 years of publication. Fittingly, Richardson shared the news of the transformation with the Reporter's few hundred loyal subscribers with an email, on September 3, 2015: "We have decided to end the quarterly publication of The Chicago Reporter and focus on our work online, where we can reach wider audiences and have a greater impact while staying true to our mission. And, yes, we will continue to produce the long-form investigations you've come to expect from us…

The platform may have shifted from print to the Web, but the mission has stayed the same."[2]

With that announcement, Richardson took the first step into the Reporter's new existence as an investigative news organization, instead of a publication. Richardson was following the path of her predecessor Kimbriell Kelly. But Richardson was creating her own way forward with ideas for a new online operation, with the help from a 2015 Sulzberger Fellowship at the Columbia Journalism School. Her most immediate question was how to make the Reporter brand "kick ass." She asked herself, "How am I going to get back to what made [the Reporter] what it was, but breathe new life into it, and how are we going to look at an online presence?"[3]

At publications and in newsrooms across the country, editors and publishers are asking similar questions as the digital disruption of the news media business and publishing model continues to transform how news is delivered and consumed. It is a particularly big question for magazines – longtime national weeklies such as *Newsweek*, *Time*, and *U.S. News & World Report* all have shrunk as web publications. The digital revolution also changed the reality for local magazines. In the new digital world, access to local news content is no longer limited to a defined geographic area by the logistics of print or the strength of a broadcast signal. The Internet reaches all part of the world, and that makes any online news organization potentially global. Going digital cuts costs of production – no more ink, paper and delivery trucks - but the ease of access to material on the Internet also undermines attempts to raise revenue by charging for content.

As the Reporter video that went viral showed, the issues of race in America had come back in 2014. It was fueled in part by videos taken with smart phones. On July 17, New York Police Department officers used a choke hold on Eric Garner, an unarmed black man, in an attempt to arrest him for selling single cigarette. A video shows him repeatedly saying “I can’t breathe” before dying. On Aug. 9, a white Ferguson, Mo., police shot and killed an unarmed young black man named Michael Brown after stopping him for walking in the street. Other videos and police shootings of black men took on an importance that had been missing for a decade. A new movement, Black Lives Matter, emerged. The new national conversation offered a chance for the Reporter to reclaim its place as the source of analysis and data about race in metropolitan Chicago.

Richardson acknowledged she was trying to take advantage of it. But while the Reporter made a mark with the video, it has struggled to come up with another major journalistic coup. The new attention to race has come at a time when Richardson is restructuring the operation and redefining its journalistic approach. She replaced almost everyone on the staff she inherited, changed how stories are edited, and stressed the need for better writing. She now has two reporters, a blogger, a managing editor, presentation editor, and social media editor. “Sometimes you need to blow something up,” she said.

When Laura Washington came back at the end of 2012 as the interim publisher, she set up a search committee to find a new editor and publisher. “When we started the search, I thought it was going to be impossible to find the right

combination of skills," Washington said.[4] Some candidates were excellent journalists, but didn't understand the nonprofit world, she said.

Richardson almost didn't apply. She was in Austin, Tex., working as managing editor of the *Texas Observer* when three different friends sent her Washington's email about the Reporter opening. "By the time the third email came, I said, 'Wow, I guess I have to apply.'" She said she sent in her application four or five minutes before the deadline. Washington said the committee was impressed with Richardson's breadth of experience: "It was a total package."

Jennifer Choi, a McCormick Foundation journalism program officer, said, "Susan Smith Richardson was kind of an interesting pick for the Reporter. She's a bridger. She is dedicated to the core values, and keeping that legacy alive, but she is also open to new business models."[5] Richardson also brought the most experience in journalism, and foundations, in the history of the publication.

Richardson was a military brat who grew up in Austin, Tex., where her father retired. In 1977, she went to Texas Southern University, a historically black college in Houston, but dropped out after two years to work in union and community organizing. She decided journalism could be a tool for social change, so she went back and earned a degree in journalism at the University of Texas at Austin. Then she held a string of Texas newspaper jobs – at the *Odessa American*, *Corpus Christi Caller*, and the *Austin American Statesman*, where she became city editor. The *Sacramento Bee* lured her to be associate editor. After a couple of years she returned to the *Austin American Statesman*, where she joined the editorial board and became a metro columnist. She won a Nieman Fellowship at Harvard and stayed at the

Kennedy School of Government to earn a master's degree in public administration. Then she became an editor at the *Chicago Tribune*. But after billionaire financier Sam Zell bought the Tribune Corp., the paper began to deteriorate and she jumped to the MacArthur Foundation, where she worked for four years as a senior writer. After a family matter drew her back to Austin, She became managing editor at the *Texas Observer*. But she had kept her place in Chicago and was eager to return. The one skill she lacked was data analysis.[6]

By the time Richardson arrived in November 2013, the Reporter had been on cruise control for nearly a year. Washington had kept the publication going, editing stories and overseeing Rui Kaneya, the interim editor, and the two reporters, Angela Caputo and Maria Ines Zamudio. Kelly had brought in two-year foundation grants in 2012 that were still underwriting the Reporter's operations. But Washington had not done any fundraising nor had the Community Renewal Society. The fortieth anniversary celebration had brought in money from individual donors, but those, too, were drying up.

Richardson brought an outsider's eye to her new job, and she took a critical look at both the editorial and business operations of the Reporter. "My first thought was that it was dry and that the writing was unpleasant and challenging. The investigations were great but I thought the writing was stiff and not very engaging," she said. "I felt like the formula that people had settled into was not that polished, not sophisticated." The business end was also a problem, she found. "The whole organization had contracted, contracted, and this was about saving money. The bottom line was to cut off your nose to spite your face," she said. The foundation

grants were about to run out, Richardson said. “I was hearing from a lot of small donors that they had checked out or were about to check out.”

Richardson had to tackle both of those major issues, and wanted to do it with her own team. She tightened up what she saw as “looseness” in the Reporter’s family atmosphere – no more missed deadlines, for example. As she began thinking about where she wanted to take the Reporter, she began to wonder if the staff she had could change. “Did I have the staff that was capable of going to a new place, and could I lead them? Did we have the skills we needed to get to that place?” she said. She was looking for a range of skills she needed for an online operation.

“One of the first new positions I got was a social media editor. I specifically asked for a grant for that… to get the issues out there,” Richardson said. The Reporter could do the best investigations in the world and nobody would see them, so it was also important to drive traffic to the website through the blog, Facebook and Twitter. With Google analytics, Richardson and Asraa Mustafa, the new social media editor, helped strategize how to get the biggest draw. They set a schedule to ensure two days would not pass without a new story being posted. “We do have a standard – four pieces Monday through Thursday,” Richardson said. Stories and blogs are posted before 8 a.m. to get the biggest push.

To help drive traffic to the website, Richardson said she brought in a well-known, long-time blogger named Curtis Black. She said he was a good writer, had been around since the 1980s, was well connected, and understood the context of the city. “We needed to get someone who kind of puts us in the conversation,” she said. “Consistently, he is always in the top five most trafficked pieces on the website. He’s

got a following." And he has a voice, and opinions – a departure for the Reporter, which since its creation has made a point of a writing style that is dispassionate. "I don't use that word anymore," Richardson said. "We need voices to brand us, I felt we needed to have voices who were staking a claim in the city. That actually gives us a whole other level of energy. It helps engage us in the issue of the day."

Richardson said new approaches are needed. "What the Reporter does now is not as novel as it was five years ago…. The *New York Times* has an inequality beat," Richardson said. "It shows that the landscape has changed. We are now competing against the Tribune in a sense. They have way more resources than us. They certainly can knock out the numbers part with less trouble."

During Richardson's first year at the Reporter, Angela Caputo continued to produce data-driven stories, but they had a twist – an almost hopeful note. In the first printed publication under Richardson in 2014, Caputo wrote about an abandoned building on the in a black South Side neighborhood as a microcosm for the many unoccupied buildings after the foreclosure crisis. But in the case she highlighted, neighbors pulled together and rehabbed the house, put it up for sale, and sold it, bringing back stability to their block.

With such a small staff and growing demand for producing content for the website, Richardson cut back the publication schedule, making the Reporter a quarterly. It still published strong stories. One documented the lack of private investment in the black South Side community of Woodlawn. Another reported that after the Chicago Park District allowed private investment in park improvements a new gap began to grow in facilities and programs in rich and poor neighborhoods.

The Reporter continues to use students to help in investigations. Jack C. Doppelt, the Al Thani Professor of Journalism at Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism, began a Social Justice Project that works with the Reporter. The project pays for a position for a professional reporter. "The role of the Reporter is to continue to be the beacon for revealing the patterns of inequitable treatment that impacts disparately on minorities. They do it with data that then gets recirculated elsewhere in the media and among policy makers," Doppelt said. "It's hard to directly track the influence of their stories but it's undeniable and often doesn't show until months or years down the line."[7]

One of those fellows, Deborah Shelton, became managing editor of the Reporter. Doppelt's students helped with her story that showed through data and anecdotes how the mentally ill were being arrested and jailed for lack of treatment. Another fellow was Alden Loury, the Reporter's former editor and publisher.[8]

The online Reporter shows a mix of news, features and quick data hits. Reporter Jonah Newman obtained the video of the police shooting at unarmed teens, which had been under seal in a federal lawsuit the young men filed against officers and the department and settled for $360,000. A retired judge said he gave it to Newman because it was "an outrageous overuse of deadly force."

Newman also wrote about a lawsuit by residents at a federally subsidized housing unit against a private security firm for harassment and overzealous policing. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development canceled the security contract after the story appeared. Christine Wachter produced an online slide show of the rise and fall of the Cabrini Green public housing development. The lead piece on

the website at the end of October was a complex story about the role of black police in the Chicago Police Department.

Richardson said she is working hard to stabilize the budget and funding for the Reporter. In the last fiscal year of 2014/2015, she raised about $470,000, enough to pay for staffing and program costs. The Community Renewal Society provided about $120,000 for office expenses and $91,000 for shared development, human resources and management costs.[9] “I do think as much as possible the publications need to be financially independent,” said the Rev. Curtiss DeYoung, executive director of the Community Renewal Society. “Then there is less question about their editorial independence.”[10]

Richardson has made progress in raising funds. In November 2015, the MacArthur Foundation announced it would donate $500,000 over two years to the Reporter, the single largest grant in the news organization’s history. The Reporter will use the funds to expand staff and training, as well as explore partnerships with other news outlets.

Richardson has big plans for the future. In her second month on the job, she wrote a vision statement: “The Chicago Reporter will become a destination website for timely, smart, thoughtful and lively news and commentary about race, poverty and income inequality in Chicago.” Since then she has amended it, adding, “Our goal should be to grow a national audience as we expand our local audience.”[11] Her plan for success includes doubling the money raised to $1 million, launching an interactive database that will draw 10,000 users, producing a book of the Reporter’s best stories, and setting up a digitized archive available to the public for a fee.

Richardson said she is seeking funding to hire another reporter, a development professional to help raise money, a multi-media editor who can do data visualizations, and a database editor who can also report. She does not have skills in data analysis, but she said, “We’ve got to get back to our core mission of data driven journalism.”

She also is trying to establish partnerships with other national nonprofit investigative organizations, including the Marshall Project, which focuses on criminal justice; Pro Publica, the Pulitzer Prize winning national investigative nonprofit; and *Mother Jones*, the West Coast investigative publication. “We need a national partner because we need to get more national attention and money,” Richardson said. “Chicago is also a national story… We’ve got to get a bigger mindset with our work.”

Richardson said her decision to pull the plug on the print edition simply made economic sense. The Reporter had fewer than 300 subscribers, most of them long-time supporters of the publication, she said. Printing magazines for subscribers and complimentary issues for the new media and leaders cost $12,100 a year, but subscriptions brought in only $2,400. Richardson said, “It wasn’t about the money. It was about the resources.” Instead of spending time on producing a paper product, the Reporter now can focus on its reporting and online work. She said reaction was almost all favorable. Only one person called - an 80-year-old woman who for years had sent $50 each year to support the Reporter and who said she would not be able to read the Reporter anymore because she doesn’t go online. “She was not angry,” Richardson said. “She just sounded sad.” Richardson said she will mail or deliver paper version of the Reporter to her house.

Richardson said she is not worried that the Reporter will close, given the support it gets from the Community Renewal Society and key foundations, as well as supporters among Reporter alumni, civic and government leaders, academics, and activists. “It will be here, whether I am here or not,” she said. “What does worry me is just this: Will it be relevant? Will it be dynamic? Will it have all the tools to make impact and change?”

Conclusion: Still Here After All These Years

Why has The *Chicago Reporter* survived for more than four decades?

The examination of the Reporter's history and structure for this thesis finds that the Reporter is still around because of three key elements in founder John A McDermott's business model. And it is possible that the Reporter will continue to exist for the foreseeable future if it maintains those elements. First, the Reporter has a reliable financial and institutional base at the Community Renewal Society – it very likely would not have survived without that support. Second, the Reporter produces journalism on race and poverty that is original, significant, and useful – it has had impact often enough to prompt reforms and changes even if it has few readers. Finally, some foundations, corporate charities, and individual donors believe that the Reporter's work continues to be important and effective enough that supporting it financially is worthwhile. In sum, founder John A. McDermott set out to build a vehicle for to prompt racial reforms, and it has largely worked.

After four decades, the Reporter has become a Chicago institution. But its public profile has slipped. It was at its most effective, and had its highest name recognition, in the 1970s and early 1980s, and again in the 1990s. Since the beginning of the 2000s – a grim decade of terror, war, and financial collapse - the Reporter has had less clout than it did with the city's leadership class and with the local news media. In that era, its reporters continued to produce much good work and at times also has prompted reforms, such as a new Illinois state law setting standards for care provided by nursing homes, or more recently, the removal of a security company that

menaced residents at a subsidized housing complex. But still, its recent editor and publishers acknowledge that few outside of a small select group of people follow the Reporter on a regular basis, and the local mainstream news media only rarely pick up its stories. That is one of the many challenges facing the Reporter as it transforms itself into an all-digital nonprofit news website.

That leads to a second question. The Reporter have survived but why hasn't it thrived in the past several years?

That is an issue that was raised by Elspeth Revere, who recently retired as vice-president for media, culture, and special initiatives at the MacArthur Foundation. That Chicago-based foundation is one of the Reporter's most important funders. It also has played a significant role in underwriting the growth of non-profit investigation news organizations in Chicago and across the country in recent years.

"My instinct is that The Reporter has lasted so long because of the sponsorship of the Community Renewal Society, which in turn has lasted so long because of the long-time civil rights activists in Chicago (John McDermott and his colleagues) and more recent leaders, especially religious," Revere said.

"At the same time, while the support has kept it alive, it has not been enough to make it really thrive. How can we compare it to ProPublica with its huge investment from the Sandlers? Or to Center for Investigative Reporting, which takes on any and all important issues, which has finally come into its own as a national/regional/local investigative group that is always at the cutting edge in the many ways it speaks to its audiences and the partnerships it establishes to do so," she

said, referring to the center's extensive use of video, broadcasts, and more recently a podcast called Reveal.

"I think it has to some degree lacked the ambition to grow; its long-term commitment to reporting on race in Chicago has been important locally but may have been limiting as well," Revere said. "MacArthur, given its long-term commitment to Chicago, has funded the Reporter for a long time. It is part of the institutional fabric of the city and, as such, deserves support. We have been comfortable with the quality of its work. We think that its work is noticed locally."[1]

The answers to both questions actually are multilayered. Partly, the answer rests with the arc of history. There have been generational changes in attitudes and opinions. Civil rights and race relations, and how they're perceived, are not the same now as in the immediate post-civil rights era. Journalism and the news business have gone through some major shifts – many of them not for the better. And technology and the Internet have created a new way of communicating, unsettling old patterns of consuming news and information.

Another important factor is the Reporter model. Its focus on race and poverty has played a large part in its survival – enough people think that is an important issue to keep the Reporter alive. But that model has some built-in limitations. The Reporter's data-driven coverage of race and poverty draws a limited, special-interest audience - efforts to broaden readership have repeatedly failed. The Reporter's status as an indigenous Chicago institution has made it hard to replicate elsewhere - other cities haven't had a nonprofit willing to bear the cost of an independent news service and their local reformist groups have different priorities than race and poverty. And

the original Reporter model rejects going national – it asserts the most effective way to prompt reform is through aggressive reporting in one city. Finally, the Reporter was created without a sustainable business plan. It was designed to rely on its base at the Community Renewal Society and donations from corporate charities, foundations and individuals, as well as subscription income. At the time of its founding, that was an acceptable proposition. In the past decade, however, foundations have insisted that nonprofits develop self-sustaining business models to lessen the need for grants. With a few notable exceptions, McDermott's successors at the helm of the Reporter have adhered to his business model and journalism formula for the publication.

To determine how the Reporter arrived at where it is today, consider the five factors covered in this narrative history: the people involved; the context of the times in which it operated; the stories it produced; its audience, and the financial resources it had to do its work. Lessons can be drawn from the Reporter experience.

People

Literature on nonprofits makes a distinction between leaders and managers. Leaders look to build the organization for the future, while managers focus on the present to operate and maintain the nonprofit.[2] For any nonprofit organization, said Jennifer Choi of the McCormick Foundation, "It always comes down to a leader."[3]

Seven men and women have led the Reporter as the editor and publisher. Working under them have been three dozen editors, 90 reporters, and hundreds of interns and students. Most of those staffers have gone on to careers in journalism, some of them successfully as investigative reporters.

The Reporter was at its most visible and influential under John A. McDermott and Laura S. Washington – both charismatic public figures with a network of influential contacts. Washington also benefitted from a strong economy. They were part of an era of stability at the top: McDermott was at the Reporter for twelve years, Roy Larson for nine, and Washington for twelve. Alysia Tate lasted five years; Alden Loury three years; Kimbriell Kelly less than a year. Susan Smith Richardson has been in charge for nearly two years.

Tate and Loury acknowledged that they were not fully prepared to run the Reporter. Tate, Loury, and Kelly each introduced innovations but also said their main ambition was to keep the Reporter alive. To their credit, they did that during the Reporter's toughest days – much of it circumstantial, some of it of their own making.

Lesson: A small nonprofit news organization needs a dynamic leader to help it raise awareness and money, connect with the news media, and to create partnerships.

Historical context

The Reporter has been greatly affected by changes that have occurred over the past four decades. Chicago moved from majority white to majority black and Latino. Chicago remains the most racially segregated city in the country,[4] amid a sharp increase in immigration and income inequality.[5] Those trends led the Reporter to broaden its coverage but also reinforced the need for its focus on race and poverty.

A greater challenge to the Reporter is the change in attitudes. Many blacks and Latinos have made progress entering the mainstream of business and politics. And there have been high-profile successes: Chicago television star Oprah Winfrey,

Mayor Harold Washington, and President Barack Obama. But an increasing number of blacks and Latinos are in segregated and impoverished neighborhoods. But there's apathy about those issues among the major news media, politicians, and many whites in the next generation.[6] That complacency works against the Reporter.

Change of attitude isn't limited to whites. The current generation of blacks do not fully grasp how much their parents and grandparents overcame to get to this point. One Reporter editor said the civil rights movement was supposed to solve everything and it didn't – though at the end of the 1960s most activist believed legal reforms were just the beginning. That generation gap is captured by clashes between the Rev. Jesse Jackson, a protégé of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., and the Black Lives Matter movement.[7] The Reporter must adapt to that shift in attitude.

Meanwhile, other issues have overshadowed race – particularly in the 2000s. The Sept. 11, 2001 attacks were followed by the U.S. wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Then came the financial crash. That has made it harder for the Reporter to get its message out to a larger audience through other media. It is only in the past two years that race has re-emerged as a national issue.

The news business has been on a roller coaster of prosperity and collapse over the past four decades. The Reporter experienced the same financial boom and bust cycle. Meanwhile, over time the dailies have picked up fewer Reporter stories as they did their own reporting on race, ethnicity, and poverty – and began using data and computer analysis. When the Reporter partnered with television and radio stations, other local media outlets began to treat it like a competitor. By the 2000s, the Reporter had fallen below the radar as a regular source of news.

The Internet has eroded the commercial news business model, hollowing out the *Chicago Tribune* and *Chicago Sun-Times*. Both have been through bankruptcies, slashed newsroom staff cut back the size and amount of news they publish. There is less room for Reporter story pick up. And discarded staff started their own news nonprofits, competing with the Reporter for grants. The Reporter, though, has outlasted its biggest recent rivals.

Lesson: A nonprofit news outlet must be able to change to respond to its era, to remain current topically and to adapt to developments in technology.

Stories

As times and issues have changed, the Reporter has adapted by covering a greater variety of issues through its primary focus of race and poverty. In the 1970s, it wrote about how local institutions carried out affirmative action and examined delivery of municipal services. In the 1980s, it widened its view to increasingly cover education, politics, and cultural issues. By the 1990s, it published stories on AIDS and current subjects. By the 2000s, it had added LBGT and environmental issues to its list of stories. But all of the Reporter's editor and publishers said they understood that the key litmus test for their investigations was impact.

But since the days of McDermott, editors have struggled with the writing of stories. Should they be fact-and-data articles or human-driven narratives? Philip Meyer, the author of *Precision Journalism,* addressed that strain between the two styles in a 2012 speech. He said narrative journalists are subjective to a degree that horrifies precision journalists. But he said he has softened that view, and that news

teams include both talents to create a blend he called "evidence-based narrative."[8] That describes the current approach of the Reporter.

The other issue has been tone. McDermott, Larson, and Washington sought to retain a dispassionate distance, probing the intersection of race and poverty. But Tate, Loury, Kelly, and Richardson say they stopped using the word "dispassionate" to describe the Reporter's work. They see the Reporter's role as increasingly explanatory. That might have changed the perception of the city's leaders and news media about the Reporter, as they saw it as less a new service than an advocate.

Lesson: A nonprofit that bills itself as an investigative news service must produce stories that are relevant and have impact.

Readers

The Reporter has never had a large audience. It is not known to the most people in Chicago. The Reporter has never been able to break away from its founding as a publication for a group of elites. McDermott targeted what he called "the movers and shakers." And after a decade of trying to boost readership and subscription sales, McDermott declared the Reporter never would be a magazine for a popular audience.

His declaration has stopped his successors from trying. Larson sought to make the Reporter more accessible but concedes that didn't lure more subscribers. Washington accepted McDermott's assessment, and expanded the number of complimentary copies. Tate cut costs by limiting those free copies. Loury accepted that he was writing for a small and select audience.

The readership has shifted, from primarily business executives to community leaders, academics, and activists. But the core subscribers are now older and fewer. It is possible that the original model's goal of targeting an elite audience could continue to work, but there is little evidence that the Reporter's later editor and publishers aggressively sought out a new generation of business, civic, and government leaders as readers - or they tried but encountered a lack of interest. But though small, the readers have been loyal. But it's clear the Reporter needs to rebuild its audience.

Lesson: Any organization engaged in journalism must have a target audience for their stories - even if the readership is a small but influential group.

Resources

Fundraising has been a longstanding struggle for the Reporter. It has no sustainable business model – foundations did not require one when it started publishing in 1972. The Reporter simply has not had not the capacity to raise the amount of money that the MacArthur Foundation's Elspeth Revere would consider sufficient to go beyond the news organization's current mission of covering race and poverty in Chicago. The publishers of the Reporter all preferred to put more energy into the journalism than the business side.

Few foundations, however, fund the same nonprofit consistently over time, and most prefer not to give money for operating expenses. Reporter editors succeeded in packaging those costs as beats or projects. Seven or eight years ago, the foundation community took an interest in nonprofit investigative reporting as daily newspapers shed staff. But foundation officials were dismayed that the impact they hoped to spur

by funding nonprofit investigative journalists did not occur immediately. The foundations began requiring different metrics from nonprofit news operations – analytics on page views and time spent on a page, for example. And after a while, many foundations moved on from investigative reporting to documentary film making, or other priorities.[9]

The Reporter has managed to raise enough money to continue publishing – thanks to its base at the Community Renewal Society and the support from a core groups of foundations and corporate charities. Over the past decade, the Community Renewal Society has provided the Reporter $1.3 million in office space and services, and about $1.1 million in management and other services, and the Reporter has raised $5 million from contributions and subscriptions. In the past decade, the McCormick Foundation gave $890,000 (since 1990, it has made 15 grants worth $2.4 million to the Reporter[10]). The Rockefeller, Ford, and The Open Society foundations also have contributed funds. During that time the MacArthur Foundation donated $600,000[11] (and a $225,000 grant before then). And it recently announced the award of $500,000 over the next two years – the largest grant in the Reporter's history.

Lesson: A news nonprofit needs a base - a wealthy benefactor's guarantee of funding or a host at a financially secure organization.

As the Reporter enters into its transition from print to web, how does it rework the business and journalism model that has kept alive for all of these years?

Reporter founder John A. McDermott did not think of his model as being sacrosanct - he encountered its limitations himself when he tried to replicate the

Reporter in Boston and failed. He also understood a publication must grow or die, as he wrote in his looking-to-the-future memo in 1976. The Reporter will have to re-imagine itself as it operates as an online publication. There are examples of magazines that tried to transfer their print operations to the web, only to close after a year or two. That is, in part, what happened with *AJR*, aka the *American Journalism Review*, which closed in July, 2015. The *National Journal*, a four-decade-old weekly magazine that reported stories about politics, policy, and politicians on Capitol Hill, has announced it will shut down at the end of 2015. Editor and publisher Susan Smith Richardson faces several questions as she rebuilds the Reporter in its most important transformation since it began. A key question she must face as she raises the funds she needs to rebuild the staff: Will she retain the original purpose of the Reporter as it core reason for existence – that is, to be a vehicle for reform on racial, ethnic, and economic issues? Or will she emphasize the journalism – good writing that has a distinctive voice to set the Reporter apart on the crowded Internet? In her interview for this paper, Richardson said she is trying to put the "best of tradition in new packages."

Further Research

In working on this thesis, I came across several areas I would have liked to have examined and dug into more deeply. My principle focus was on the eight regimes that led the *Chicago Reporter* over the past four plus decades to create a narrative history on five factors that determine the survival of any publication. The topics and issues that follow could lead further research by others.

When I sought to learn the role of philanthropy in nonprofit investigative journalism, I was surprised that I could not find a database that lists all of the donations to existing or start-up news nonprofits. And I did not find a comprehensive review of foundation and individual support for this form of journalism. A study of both the history and current state of philanthropic funding of journalism could be very helpful to funders and journalists.

Ample evidence exists that Reporter investigations led to reforms, lawsuits, and legislation. The Reporter has published lists of some major actions resulting from its stories, but it has not created a comprehensive catalogue of the change its stories prompted or inspired. A compilation of the impact of the Reporter stories could yield a better sense of how the publication affected Chicago, and also illuminate how journalism acts as an agent for change. A study of that compilation would provide insight into the importance and durability of changes made in reaction to journalism.

Similarly, the Reporter has done several investigations on different issues at the same institution – like the Chicago Park District, for example. But there is no compilation of those stories by issue or institution with an analysis of the short and long term effects. These subjects would be worth longitudinal examination: Reporter stories on the Chicago Police Department, especially in regard to its policies and practices in black and Latino communities; a revisiting of Reporter stories on corporate and institutional affirmative action hiring and contracting practices; and a review of the distribution of basic public services – education, libraries, and parks, for example - by neighborhoods.

Appendices

Appendix I

The *Chicago Reporter's* founding editorial, July, 1972.

Editorial
Why the Chicago Reporter?

Of all the challenges facing Chicago, race is the make or break issue for the 1970's. And by "Chicago" we mean the whole community, the city and the suburbs. Race touches everybody and everything. Racial peace and progress are more than moral ideals today. They are maters of profound self-interest to every person and institution in the community.

The goal of The Chicago Reporter is to bring some new light to this important issue. The Reporter is a monthly investigative newsletter which will specialize in covering racial issues in metropolitan Chicago.

The Reporter will focus on Chicago because there is a need for more sophisticated information about the Chicago race relations scene. In recent years, the center of action in race has shifted from the national to the local level. It is on the local urban level that racial problems and pressures are the greatest. It is on the local level that the most serious reform efforts are underway.

The Reporter will be an investigative publication. It will tell it like it is, but we are not interested in mere muckraking. There is already so much that is wrong in this field that a steady diet of failure may simply encourage despair and the temptation to cop out.

The Reporter is not in competition with black media. It will not speak for the black community as such. Rather, its focus will be on the terrain where black and white intersect.

The Reporter will try to be dispassionate, accurate and constructive in its approach. It will seek to enlighten its readers not browbeat them. It will not assume that every Chicago institution is racist. It will report success stories as well as failures. It will also look for the humor, richness and beauty which racial diversity contributes to our common life.

The Reporter will dig beneath the surface of local racial news because the issues of the 70's are more hidden and complex. The special problem of the 70's is racial inequality, the deep disparities in the condition and quality of life which separate the races and which are the legacy of generations of injustice. Racial peace will be impossible if these disparities are allowed to harden into permanent subordination, a racial underclass.

The Reporter will be available to all but is written especially for Chicago leaders, for those who have important institutional responsibilities and influence. They have the power to act. The Reporter will seek to help them understand the issues and opportunities which confront them.

The Reporter is admittedly reformist. We believe that racial justice and peace can be achieved without revolution, that our system and institutions can change and be changed non-violently to produce an open, non-racist society. This will not happen without serious commitment and work, but it can happen if we choose and it must happen if we are to build a civilized and safe future for this community.

John A. McDermott
Lillian Calhoun
Editors

Appendix II

List of Editors & Publishers, Publishers, and Editors of the *Chicago Reporter*

John A. McDermott, Lillian Calhoun, Co-Editors, July 1972 - July 1976

John A. McDermott, Editor & Publisher, August 1976 - December 1984

Roy Larson, Editor & Publisher, July 1985 - July 1989

Roy Larson, Publisher, September 1989 – August 1994

John Schrag, Acting Editor, September 1989 – April 1990

Laura S. Washington, Editor, May 1990 – August 1994

Laura S. Washington, Editor & Publisher, September 1994 – December 2001

Alysa Tate, Editor & Publisher, January 2001 – December 2007

Alden K. Loury, Editor & Publisher January 2008 – June 2009

Alden K. Loury, Publisher, July 2009 – December 2011

Kimbriell Kelly, Editor, July 2009 – December 2011

Kimbriell Kelly, Editor & Publisher, January 2012 – November 2012

Laura S. Washington, Interim Editor & Publisher, December 2012 – August 2013

Susan Smith Richardson, Editor & Publisher, September 2013 -

Appendix III

Diversity of the *Chicago Reporter* editorial staff

Seven Editor and Publishers:
Two white men: John A. McDermott, Roy Larson
One black man: Alden Loury
Four black women: Laura S. Washington, Alysia Tate, Kimbriell Kelly, Susan Smith Richardson

Seventeen Managing Editors:
Five white men: John A. Roberts, Tom Brune, John Schrag, Thomas A. Corfman, Mick Dumke
Five white women: Sharon McGowan (nee Gelder), Ronni Scheier, Anne Grimes, Danielle Gordon, Sherry Skalko
Five black women: Irene McCullough Pace, Laura S. Washington, Eugenia C. Daniels, Alysia Tate, Deborah L. Shelton
One Latina: Jennifer Juarez Robles
One Asian man: Rui Kaneya

Thirty-one other editors (senior, consulting, contributing, copy, assistant, associate, and art directors):
Nine white men
Ten white women
One black man
Eight black women
One Latino man
Two Latina woman

Ninety staff reporters:
Seventeen white men
Sixteen white women
Twelve black men
Twenty four black women
Twelve Latino men
Five Latina women
Two Asian men
Two Asian women

Note: These numbers are based on positions, not individuals. They represent the race of the person who held the position. Some individuals served as reporters and editors.

Appendix III

Awards Won by the *Chicago Reporter*

1974

The *Chicago Reporter* - Michelle Clark Award for race relations reporting, Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism.

1975

The *Chicago Reporter* - The James Brown IV Award of Excellence for Outstanding Community Service, Chicago Community Trust.

1978

The *Chicago Reporter* - James P. McGuire Award, Illinois Division of the American Civil Liberties Union.

1979

Stories on the high fire death rate and Chicago Fire Department problems, by Sharon B. Gelder – Peter Lisagor Award; Stick-O-Type for public service.

Stories on infant mortality, by Nancy Fischer Schulte - Unity in Media Award, Lincoln University; Stick-O-Type Award for investigative reporting.

1980

"City's Low-interest Home Loans Bypass Minority Communities; Blacks, Latinos Buy In White Area, Secure One-third of Loans," by Tom Brune and Lawrence J. Tell - Jacob Scher Award for investigative reporting.

"Attack On Cook County Hospital Threat To Chicago's Poor," by Alfredo S. Lanier, Peter Lisagor Award.

"The *Chicago Reporter*'s 1979 Annual Corporate Survey," by Lawrence J. Tell - Stick-O-Type Award for business reporting.

Editorial on Chicago race relations by John A. McDermott - Stick-O-Type Award.

The *Chicago Reporter* - National Mass Media Medallion Award, National Conference of Christians & Jews.

1981

Ronni Scheier, health care reporter - Helen Cody Baker Award for Public Service, Social Service Communicators, Inc.; Ray Bruner Science Writing Fellowship Award, American Public Health Association.

1982

"Godfather in the Ghetto: State Lottery Win Bet On Minority Gamblers," by Kevin Blackistone and Ronni Scheier - Special Recognition Award, National Association of Black Journalists.

"Crisis Management: City Paramedics Must Gamble With Out-of-District Runs; Areas Left Unprotected While New Ambulances Sit Idle," by James Ylisela, Jr. - Stick-O-Type Award for investigative reporting.

Stories on abortion issues for minorities and the poor, by Ronni Scheier - Excellence in Journalism Award, Illinois Pro-Choice Alliance.

The *Chicago Reporter* - Thomas & Eleanor Wright Award, City of Chicago Commission on Human Relations; Outstanding Public Service Award, Chicago Association of Black Journalists.

1983

"Top Firms' Minority Employment Drops Again, But Purchasing Up," by Joanna Brown - Stick-O-Type Award for business reporting.

1984

"Education at South Shore High: A $4.5 Million Flop," by Ann Grimes and Laura S. Washington - National Award for Education Reporting, Education Writers Association; Peter Lisagor Award; Stick-O-Type Award.

"Gallant Voice for Justice Loses Battle Against Despair," Laura S. Washington and Cassiette A. West - Peter Lisagor Award.

"Public Teachers Pick Private Schools For Own Kids," by Ann Grimes - Stick-O-Type Award.

"Race & Poverty in Chicago," by Tom Brune, Eduardo Camacho, Ronnie Scheier and Willie Cole - Peter Lisagor Award; Stick-O-Type Award for best series.

"Full Service - Less Service," by Laura S. Washington and James Ylisela, Jr. - Jacob Scher Award for investigative reporting.

"Dumpers Swamp City's Southeast Side With Noxious, Toxic Waste," by Ben Joravsky - Stick-O-Type Award for investigative reporting.

The *Chicago Reporter* - Public Service Award, Chicago Association of Black Journalists.

1985

Stories on The Woodlawn Organization and racial violence and harassment by Kevin Blackistone - Stick-O-Type Award for investigative reporting

"Hispanics in Chicago," by Jorge Casuso and Eduardo Camacho – Community Service Award for Excellence in Reporting, Chicago Community Trust.

1986

"Asbestos in CHA Apartments Poses Possible Health Hazards," by Martha Allen - Jacob Scher Award for investigative reporting.

1987

"Race in Chicago, What's Ahead?" by John Schrag and Ben Joravsky - Stick-O-Type Award for series.

1988

"Enrollment Down, Taxes Up at Chicago City Colleges," by Jean Franczyk and Valerie Phillips - Peter Lisagor Award for public service reporting.

1989

The *Chicago Reporter* - Annual Award In Recognition Of Excellence Of Achievement In Publishing Arts, Chicago Women In Publishing.

1991

"City Balks as Billboards Overrun Poor Areas," by Laurie Abraham - Peter Lisagor Award for public service reporting; Clarion Award, Women in Communications; Print Media Award, Chicago Association of Black Journalists.

"Sick and Poor In Chicago," by Laurie Abraham - Clarion Award, Women in Communications.

"West Side Loses in Clout City," by Laura S. Washington and Curtis Lawrence – Clarion Award, Women in Communications.

"Eighty Percent of Chicago Area Recruits are Minorities," by Rachel Jones – Clarion Award, Women in Communications.

"State Budget Crisis Leaves Terminal Care for the Poor hanging in the Balance," by Rachel L. Jones - Award of Excellence, National Hospice Organization.

The *Chicago Reporter* - 18th Annual Award In Recognition of Excellence of Achievement In Publishing Arts, Chicago Women In Publishing; Harold Washington Award, Independent Voters of Illinois.

Laura S. Washington - Kizzy Image and Achievement Award, Black Women Hall of Fame Foundation; "America's Up & Coming Business and Professional Women," Dollars and Sense magazine.

1992

"Troubled Courts, Troubled Kids," by Laurie Abraham - Gavel Award and Kogan Media Award, Chicago Bar Association.

Series of stories on Commonwealth Edison's treatment of poor and minority neighborhoods, by James Ylisela, Jr., Lisa Capitanini and Ted Pearson - Peter Lisagor Award.

"Sexually Transmitted Diseases, Epidemic in Minority Communities," by Lisa Capitanini - Chicago Women in Publishing Award.

"Housing in Chicago," by Curtis Lawrence and Lisa Capitanini – Communication Award, Archdiocese of Chicago.

"State Budget Crisis Leaves Terminal Care for the Poor Hanging in the Balance," by Rachel Jones - Communication Award, Archdiocese of Chicago.

1993

"New Police Plan Faces Obstacles," by Thomas Corfman - Local Public Affairs News Award, Inland Press Association.

"'Just Say No' Program Says 'Yes' to Public Funds," by Muriel Whetstone - Peter Lisagor Award.

Thomas Corfman - Public Affairs Award, Asian American Bar Association.

Laura S. Washington - American Pluralism Award, Illinois Ethnic Coalition.

1994

"Beyond Chicago," a series about Chicago's suburbs by Paul Cuadros, Paul Caine, Ray Quintanilla, Helena Sundman, and Sharon McGowan – Local Public Affairs Award, Inland Press Association; Sigma Delta Chi Award, Society of Professional Journalists.

"The Cost of Racism," by a joint effort by The Reporter and WTTW/Channel 11 - Ohio State Award, Ohio State University; Peter Lisagor Award; award from National Association of Black Journalists; Peter Lisagor for Best Newsletter.

"The Dream that Died," an investigation of a federal housing subsidy program by Paul Caine – Peter Lisagor Award; award from National Association of Black Journalists.

"Failure to Communicate," a report on the lack of translators at hospital by Ruth Richman – Communications Award, Archdiocese of Chicago.

The Chicago Reporter - Unity Award for Investigative Reporting, Lincoln University, for "the coverage of minority issues."

1995

"The Wrong Side of the Track," a story on the poor living conditions at Arlington International Racecourse by Danielle Gordon - Sigma Delta Chi Award, Society of Professional Journalists; Peter Lisagor Award; Local Public Affairs First Prize Award, Inland Press Association; Clarion Award, Women in Communications.

"The Pulse of Reform," a series on health care reform by Paul Cuadros - Primary Care Journalism Award, Pew Charitable Trust.

"Trading Type for Bites," by Mary Abowd - Award for Excellence in Journalism, Chicago Association of Black Journalists.

"State Neglects Cook County's Poor Kids," by Natalie Pardo - Communication Award, Archdiocese of Chicago.

Laura S. Washington - Matrix Award for Outstanding Achievement in Communications, Women in Communications.

1996

"Voter Registration: Too Good to be True," by Burney Simpson - Journalism Award, National Press Club; Unity Award, Lincoln University.

"Republican Judges: The New Minority," by Rekha Balu - Special Recognition Award, Chicago Council of Lawyers; Herman Kogan Media Award, Chicago Bar Association.

Series on lead poisoning at the Chicago Housing Authority, by Natalie Pardo, Medal for Meritorious Journalism, Casey Foundation.

1997

"Death Comes by Accident in Poor, Black Neighborhoods," by Brian Rogal - Ray Bruner Science Writing Award, American Public Health Association; Unity Award, Lincoln University; Salute to Excellence Award, National Association of Black Journalists.

"Republican Judges: The New Minority," by Rehka Balu - Herman Kogan Media Award, Chicago Bar Association.

Series on lead poisoning at the Chicago Housing Authority, by Natalie Pardo - Peter Lisagor Award.

Laura S. Washington - Racial Justice Award, YWCA of Metropolitan Chicago; Media Advocacy Award, Illinois Association of Non-Profit Organizations.

1998

Series on sexual abuse of minority women and children by Natalie Pardo – Local Public Affairs News Award, Inland Press Association; Communications Award, Archdiocese of Chicago;

"Zoned Out," an investigation into Chicago Empowerment Zones, by Burney Simpson - National Headliner Award, The Press Club of Atlantic City

"Chicago Matters: What's Working?" a series that included "Invisible Jobless" and an investigation of the Immigration and Naturalization Service by Danielle Gordon, and "Zoned Out," by Burney Simpson – Award for Excellence in Writing, Chicago Women in Publishing.

Laura S. Washington - Bernadine C. Washington Human Relations Award, Chicago Commission on Human Relations

1999

"Chicago Matters: Our Region, Our Community," Clarion Award for Magazine Series, Association for Women in Communications; two Peter Lisagor Awards.

"Sex Abuse Cases Decline, but Blacks Still Main Victims," by Natalie Pardo - Peter Lisagor Award; Unity Award in Media, Lincoln University.

"Evanston, Oak Park Struggle to Keep Racial Balance," by Alysia Tate – Feature Writing, Peter Lisagor Award.

"Wanted: Minority Voters for Governor's Race" and "Latinos Do an About-face, Support Poshard," by Alysia Tate and Sofia Javed – Unity Media Award, Lincoln University.

The *Chicago Reporter* web site - Excellence Award for Online Publications, Chicago Women in Publishing

Laura S. Washington - Community Service Fellowship, Chicago Community Trust; Studs Terkel Award, Community Media Workshop.

2000

"Special Report on Englewood," by the Chicago Reporter staff – First Place Award, Inland Press Association; Best Online News Project Category for New Media, National Association of Black Journalists; Excellence Award, Chicago Women in Publishing; Peter Lisagor Awards for online public service and reporting.

"Policing Their Own," about police misconduct in Chicago, by Rebecca Anderson – Newsletter Journalism Award, National Press Club; First Place Award, Inland Press Association.

"A Community's Trauma," by Alysia Tate - Award in Excellence in Magazines, Chicago Association of Black Journalists; Award of Excellence, Chicago Women in Publishing.

"Chicago Matters: Examining Health," by the *Chicago Reporter* staff - Public Service, Newsletter Category, Peter Lisagor Award.

Jim McGowan – Peter Lisagor Award for layout and design.

Alysia Tate - Excellence Award, Southwest Women Working Together.

Laura S. Washington - Excellence in Media Award, Chicago Chapter of the National Organization of Women; Harry Chapin Media Award for Lifetime Achievement, World Hunger Year; Excellence Award, Southwest Women Working Together.

2001

"Chicago Matters: Education Matters," a three-part series focused on inner-city schooling, children and families, by Mick Dumke, Brian Rogal and Sarah Karp and CATALYST writers Dan Weissman, Maureen Kelleher, Bret Schaeffer and Elizabeth Duffrin - Casey Medal for Meritorious Journalism

Story on Illinois juvenile transfer law by Sarah Karp – Award for enterprise reporting, Chicago Association of Black Journalists.

"Fighting the Odds: The Plight of Young Black Men," by Alden Loury - Herman Kogan Media Award, Chicago Bar Association.

"State Drug Law Hits City Teens, Minorities," by Sarah Karp – Herman Kogan Media Award, Chicago Bar Association.

"1,000 Feet," the radio version of "State Drug Law Hits City Teens, Minorities," by Sarah Karp and produced with WBEZ 91.5 FM Chicago Public Radio – investigative reporting award, Illinois Associated Press Broadcasters Association.

"Transit Woes: The CTA's Aging Bus Fleet," by Rui Kaneya and Pamela A. Lewis – Peter Lisagor Award for online public service.

Jim McGowan – Peter Lisagor Award layout and design.

Laura S. Washington – Induction in Chicago Journalism Hall of Fame by the International Press Club of Chicago; Trailblazer Award, Chicago Association of Black Journalists; 5th Annual Women in History Month Award, Alpha Gamma Pi Organization, Metropolitan Cluster, National Hook-Up of Black Women Inc., and the Chicago Urban League.

2002

"Chicago Matters: Education Matters," by Mick Dumke, Sarah Karp and Brian Rogal and CATALYST writers Liz Duffrin, Maureen Kelleher and Dan Weissmann - Sigma Delta Chi Award for Public Service, Society of Professional Journalists; Peter Lisagor Award for public service; Alden Loury and Rui Kaneya – Peter Lisagor Award for public service in online coverage; Jim McGowan – Peter Lisagor Award for layout and design.

"Giving Voice to the Anonymous," by Stephanie Williams – First Place for personality profiles category, National Federation of Press Women; Mate E Palmer Communications award, Illinois Women's Press Association.

Stories on drug abuse treatment in Cook County by Rui Kaneya - Mate E Palmer Communications award, Illinois Women's Press Association.

Investigation of crack babies by Sarah Karp - Mate E Palmer Communications award, Illinois Women's Press Association.

Alysia Tate – 2002 "40 Under 40" of up-and-coming leaders, *Crain's Chicago Business*.

2003

Three-part series on the war on drugs by Alden Loury - Unity Award in Media for investigative reporting, Lincoln University of Missouri.

2004

Series on ex-offenders by Sarah Karp and Leah Samuel - Peter Lisagor Award for in-depth reporting.

"Power to His People," a profile of black-reparation rights activist Conrad Worrill by Mick Dumke – Peter Lisagor Award for feature writing; Award for Excellence, National Association of Black Journalists Chicago Chapter.

"Foster Case Ends in Disaster," by Sarah Karp - Award for Excellence, National Association of Black Journalists Chicago Chapter.

Alysia Tate – "You Make a Difference" award, U.S. Department of Health & Human Services Office for Civil Rights, Region V; Fellow, Leadership Greater Chicago; Fellow, Poynter Institute Ethics Fellows Class.

2005

"Deadly Moves," an examination of the danger created in gang-controlled areas after the emptying of high-rise public housing, by the *Chicago Reporter* and the *Residents' Journal* - New America Award, The Society of Professional Journalists; Peter Lisagor Award for media collaboration.

"Our Next Generation," by Sarah Karp - Sidney Hillman Foundation Award.

2006

Series of stories on ex-offenders by Sarah Karp, Rupa Shenoy and Robert VerBruggen – Peter Lisagor Award for in-depth reporting.

"Rising values," by Kimbriell Kelly – Peter Lisagor Award for business reporting.

The *Chicago Reporter* - Paul Tobenkin Memorial Award for reporting on racial issues, Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism; Independent Press Award for Local Coverage, Utne Reader.

2007

"51 Cents an Hour," by Kimbriell Kelly - Clarion Award for magazine series, Association for Women in Communications.

Story on human trafficking by Kimbriell Kelly and Angelica Herrera - Peter Lisagor Award for business reporting

Alden Loury - Fellow, inaugural Peter Jennings Project for Journalists and the Constitution.

2008

"High Price of Homeownership," an examination of wide racial disparities in high-cost mortgage lending by Kimbriell Kelly and Alden Loury - Peter Lisagor Award for business reporting.

"Chicago Matters: Beyond Borders," a yearlong examination of immigration in the Chicago region, by the *Chicago Reporter*, the Chicago Community Trust, the Chicago Public Library, Chicago Public Radio and WTTW-Channel 11 - Midwest Light of Human Rights Award for the media collaboration, Heartland Alliance.

Three part-series on immigration by Kimbriell Kelly, Jeff Kelly Lowenstein and Angelica Herrera - Peter Lisagor Award for in-depth reporting

"Missed Signals," an investigation of Chicago Police officers sued for wrongful death in fatal shootings of civilians by Jeff Kelly Lowenstein and Rui

Kaneya - Herman Kogan Media Award, Chicago Bar Association; and with and *Colorlines* Tram Nguyen - Watchdog Award for Excellence in Public Interest Reporting, Chicago Headline Club.

Jeff Kelly Lowenstein - Ochberg Fellow, Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma.

Fernando Diaz - Emerging Journalist of the Year, National Association of Hispanic Journalists; Justice and Journalism Fellowship for Ethnic Media, USC Annenberg's Institute for Justice and Journalism.

2009

"A Renter's Nightmare," an examination of what happens to renters when lenders and mortgage firms take over foreclosed apartment buildings, by Kelly Virella - Peter Lisagor Award for business reporting.

"Children of the Incarcerated," a series by Fernando Diaz, Jeff Kelly Lowenstein, Alden Loury, Rui Kaneya and Christiana Schmitz - Herman Kogan Media Award, Chicago Bar Association.

"Lower Standards," an investigation of racial disparities in nursing homes by Jeff Kelly Lowenstein – Public Service Award, National Citizen's Coalition for Nursing Home Reform.

Alden Loury - Studs Terkel Award, Community Media Workshop.

2010

"Above the Law," an examination of why authorities do not expunge criminal records, by Kelly Virella, Rui Kaneya and Kimbriell Kelly - Herman Kogan Media Award, the Chicago Bar Association.

"Lower Standards," an investigation of racial disparities in nursing homes by Jeff Kelly Lowenstein, Kimbriell Kelly, Jessica Young and Jennifer Fernicola - Salute to Excellence Award, National Association of Black Journalists.

2011

"Stolen Futures," an investigation into how teens are prosecuted as adults, by Angela Caputo and Kimbriell Kelly - Salute to Excellence Award, National Association of Black Journalists.

"17," about teens prosecuted as adults for nonviolent offenses, by Angela Caputo, Kimbriell Kelly and Alissa Groeninger – Peter Lisagor Award for in-depth reporting; Jon Lowenstein and Mark Abramson – Peter Lisagor Award for photography; Christine Wachter - Peter Lisagor Award for graphics.

"Taser Timeout," an examination of excessive Taser use at a Kankakee jail, by Kelly Virella and Kimbriell Kelly and WBEZ's Natalie Moore – Peter Lisagor Award for multimedia collaboration.

2012

"Out at First," an investigation of the Chicago Housing Authority's policy of evicting a household for one crime, by Angela Caputo and Kimbriell Kelly - Sigma Delta Chi Award. Society of Professional Journalists; Peter Lisagor Award for in-depth reporting.

"Without a Smoking Gun," an investigation into prosecution of teens for guns, by Angela Caputo, Kimbriell Kelly, Phil Jacobson and Samantha Winslow - Peter Lisagor Award in-depth reporting.

"Loopholes," a story probing how spending $1 billion failed to revive the Loop, by Angela Caputo, Kimbriell Kelly, Jeff Kelly Lowenstein and Louis McGill - Peter Lisagor Award for business reporting; Christine Wachter – Peter Lisagor Award for best design.

"Empty Jackpot," an investigation to set aside contract with disabilities, by Megan Cottrell, Rui Kaneya, Samuel Charles, Dylan Cinti, Caitlin Huston and Alexis Pope – Peter Lisagor Award for business reporting.

"Living with ADHD," a joint program of the *Chicago Reporter* and WPWR-TV by Tasha Ransom, Kimbriell Kelly, Nancy Langfels, Jay Sondheimer, Suzanne Dumetz-Cole and Russ Sherman – Peter Lisagor Award for public affairs programming in television.

"Secure Communities," Joe Gallo and Jason Reblando – Peter Lisagor Award for best photography.

"Double Whammy," Christine Wachter – Peter Lisagor Award for best graphics.

2013

"Abusing the Badge," by Angela Caputo, Rui Kaneya and Yisrael Shapiro, May 2012 – Investigative reporting award, National Association of Black Journalists.

"Slammed: Photos of Juvenile Justice," Jonathan Gibby – Peter Lisagor Award for photography.

"Dying for Attention," by Maria Ines Zamudio, Rui Kaneya, Kate Everson, Kyla Gardner and Kaitlyn Mattson – Peter Lisagor Award for non-deadline reporting.

"Subsidized Housing," "Wage Theft," and "Juvenile Justice," Christine Wachter – Peter Lisagor Award for graphics.

"Minor Misconduct," by Angela Caputo, Rui Kaneya, Jonathan Gibby and Safiya Merchant – Peter Lisagor Award for in-depth reporting.

"Waiting in Vain," by Maria Ines Zamudio, Rui Kaneya, Crystal Vance Guerra and Samuel Charles – Peter Lisagor Award for in-depth reporting.

"There is More to Being Gluten-Free," a WPWR-TV story by Tasha Ransom, Kimbriell Kelly, Jay Sondheimer, Steve Long, Ken Goss and Bill Barth – Peter Lisagor Award for science, heath, technology, environmental reporting.

"Experts Talk About Sexual Assault and How to Defend Yourself," a WPWR-TV story by Tasha Ransom, Kimbriell Kelly, Jay Sondheimer, Steve Long, Russ Sherman and Bill Barth – Peter Lisagor Award for public affairs programming.

Megan Cottrell - Studs Terkel Community Media Award, Chicago Media Workshop.

Note:

The Peter Lisagor Award is presented annually by the Chicago Chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists, Sigma Delta Chi.

The Stick-O-Type Award was presented annually by the Chicago Newspaper Guild.

The Jacob Scher Award for Excellence in Investigative Reporting was presented annually by Women in Communications, Inc.

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Catholic Interracial Council. Papers 1960-1968. Chicago Historical Society, Chicago, Illinois.

Downie, Leonard and Schudson, Michael. *The Reconstruction of American Journalism*. Columbia Journalism Review, November-December 2009.

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Lewis, Charles. "The Nonprofit Road," *Columbia Journalism Review*, 13 September 2007.

McKersie, Robert B. *A Decisive Decade: An Insider's View of The Chicago Civil Rights Movement*. Southern Illinois University Press, 2013.

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Non-profit News. 2011.
What's Next for Nonprofit Journalism. 2013.
Political Polarization & Media Habits. 2014.

Ralph, James R. Jr., *Northern Protest: Martin Luther King Jr., Chicago, and the Civil Rights Movement.* Harvard University Press, 1993.

Rivlin, Gary. *Fire on the Prairie: Chicago's Harold Washington and the Politics of Race.* Henry Holt and Company, 1992.

Roberts, Gene and Hank Klibanoff. *The Race Beat*. Vintage Books, 2006.

Serrin, Judith and William. *Muckraking! The Journalism That Changed America*. The New Press, 2002.

Star, Jack. Papers. Correspondence with John A. McDermott. Chicago Historical Society, Chicago, Illinois.

Star, Jack. "Editor for the public conscience," *Chicago Magazine*, August 1980.

The Chicago Reporter.
Fifth Anniversary Issue, June-July, 1977.
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Comprehensive Index, 1972-1980, published 1981
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More than 400 issues of the Reporter published since July 1972

The Chicago Reporter. Papers, 1975-1987. Chicago Historical Society, Chicago, Illinois.

Travis, Dempsey. *An Autobiography of Black Chicago.* Agate Bolden, 2013.

Interviews

Bergo, Sandra, former reporter at the *Chicago Reporter*, interview with author, Washington, D.C., October 9, 2015.

Blackistone, Kevin, former reporter for the Chicago Reporter, interview with author, Takoma Park, Maryland,

Caputo, Angela, former reporter for the *Chicago Reporter*, telephone interview with the author, October 27, 2015

Choi, Jennifer Choi, McCormick Foundation, telephone interview with the author, July 23, 2015.

Cottrell, Megan, former blogger for the *Chicago Reporter*, telephone interview with the author, October 15, 2015.

DeYoung, Curtiss, the Rev., executive director, Community Renewal Society, telephone interview with the author, October 7, 2015.

Doppelt, Jack C., Al Thani Professor of Journalism at Northwestern University Medill School of Journalism email to the author, November 1, 2015.

Dumke, Mick, former researcher, reporter, managing editor, contributing editor of the *Chicago Reporter*, interview with author, Chicago, Illinois, July 22, 2015

Guentert, Kenneth, former reporter at the *Chicago Reporter,* telephone interview with the author, September 30, 2015.

Hallett, Mark, former senior program officer for journalism for the Robert R. McCormick Foundation, email to the author, November 29, 2015. Telephone interview with author, May 2013

Hayner, Donald, retired editor of the *Chicago Sun-Times*, email to the author, October 30, 2015.

Im, Kathy, MacArthur Foundation, email to the author, October 16, 2015.

Kelly, Kimbriell, former reporter, editor, and editor and publisher of the *Chicago Reporter*, interview with the author, Washington, D.C., September 21, 2015.

Larson, Roy, former editor and publisher of the *Chicago Reporter*, telephone interview with author, October 13, 2015.

Lewis, Chuck, executive editor of the Investigative Reporting Workshop and professor at the American University School of Communication, email message to author, October 15, 2015.

Loury, Alden, former reporter, managing editor, editor and publisher, and publisher of the *Chicago Reporter*, interview with the author. July 23, 2015.

McDermott, John, son of John A McDermott, personal interview, Chicago, Ill., April 21, 2013.

McGowan, James, former design and production editor, the *Chicago Reporter*, interview with author, Chicago, Ill, July 24, 2015

McGowan, Sharon, former reporter, managing editor, consulting editor, advisory board member, the *Chicago Reporter*, interview with author, Chicago, Ill, July 24, 2015

Revere, Elspeth, retired vice-president for media, culture, and special initiatives at the MacArthur Foundation, email to author, October 13, 2015.

Richardson, Susan Smith Richardson, editor and publisher of the *Chicago Reporter*, telephone interview with the author, October 23, 2015.

Roberts, John A., former reporter and editor at the *Chicago Reporter*, email to author, April 11, 2013.

Schrag, John, former reporter, managing editor, and acting editor of the *Chicago Reporter*, telephone interview with the author, October 14, 2015.

Sherry, the Rev. Paul, former executive director of the Community Renewal Society, telephone interview with author. October 1, 2015.

Tate, Alysia, former reporter, managing editor, senior editor, and editor and publisher of the *Chicago Reporter*, interview with author, July 22, 2015

Whitaker, Charles, Helen Gurley Brown Professor in Magazine Journalism, Northwestern University, Medill School of Journalism, telephone interview with author, September 21, 2015.

Ward, Renee, former reporter at the *Chicago Reporter*, telephone interview with the author, October 2, 2015.

Washington, Laura S., former reporter, managing editor, and editor and publisher of the *Chicago Reporter*, telephone interview with the author, October 26, 2015. Telephone interview with the author, May 2013

Ylisela, James Jr., former contributor, consulting editor, and acting editor and publisher of the *Chicago Reporter*, interview with the author, July 23, 2015.

Endnotes

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[6] "Hilliard to Head Catholic Testimonial for Dr. Martin Luther King," Catholic Interracial Council press release, September 23, 1962, The King Center, Atlanta, Ga. http://www.thekingcenter.org/archive/document/cic-press-release-hilliard-head-catholic-testimonial-mlk
[7] "'Selma Here We Come:' CIC," photo and caption of John McDermott and others in bus on way to Selma, Ala., *Chicago Daily Defender*, March 17, 1965.
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[17] Starr, *Public Conscience*
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Chapter 2

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[2] Larry Muhammad, "The Black Press: Past and Present," *Nieman Reports*, September 15, 2003. http://niemanreports.org/articles/the-black-press-past-and-present/. See also, Langston Hughes, "An Adventure in Dining," *Chicago Defender*, June 2, 1945, in "Reporting Civil Rights: Part One, American Journalism 1941-1963," (New York: The Library of America, 2003), 68-70.
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Chapter 3

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