

Note: This is an unpublished writing sample. Please keep the details of this story confidential. Do not share or forward without permission from aprilrosenblum@gmail.com.

1971

VICTIM: WILLIAM SEIDLER
AGE: 62
RESIDENCE: 1937 WEST COLUMBIA AVENUE
PLACE OF OCCURRENCE: INSIDE CLOTHING STORE-1937 COLUMBIA AVE.
DATE AND TIME OF OCCURRENCE: MARCH 18, 1971 - 4:45 PM
CAUSE OF DEATH: GUNSHOT WOUND OF CHEST AND RIGHT ARM

MR. SEIDLER, OWNER OF A CHILDREN'S CLOTHING STORE AT 1937 WEST COLUMBIA AVENUE, WAS SHOT DURING A HOLDUP. THE SUSPECT, A NEGRO MALE, ESCAPED ON FOOT AFTER SHOOTING THE VICTIM TWICE, AND EMPTYING THE CASH REGISTER.

ARREST: NONE

Figure 1: Police summary of William Seidler's death.¹

PROLOGUE: MARCH 18TH, 1971

On March 18, 1971, a Black man walked into a clothing store at 1937 West Columbia Avenue in North Philadelphia. He pulled out a pistol and shot 62-year-old William Seidler – the white, Jewish owner of the store. After taking a handful of cash, the shooter fled, leaving Seidler dying on the floor of his shop. Beside him, awaiting an ambulance, was his wife of thirty-nine years, Miriam. Although she survived her husband for decades, Miriam never opened her shop again. The shooter was never apprehended.²

Police labeled the crime a holdup, dismissing Seidler’s death as the unfortunate result of a robbery gone wrong. It was a poor neighborhood; theft and violent crime were common. Once, it had been a thriving Jewish business district, but the end of the Second World War had changed that. Most of the area’s white families had started new lives in the suburbs, beckoned by easy mortgages and new homes. Black families had been shut out. North Philadelphia was a Black community now, with the Seidlers among the last of its white Jewish business owners.^{*3}

Although they had never suffered more than petty theft at their clothing shop, the older couple had recently been taking precautions at work. “Storekeeper William Seidler always kept the door locked,” wrote reporter Rich Sapok in the next morning’s *Daily News*. “He opened it only to customers he knew.” But just before five o’clock that Thursday, he had made an exception and it had cost him his life.

At the scene of the crime, reporters described a hurt, frustrated crowd gathering outside of Seidler’s Shelley Shop. The Jewish couple had not merely done business in the neighborhood – they had lived there, too. Fifty-three-year-old Lela Green reminisced that from the time Seidler

* Although local Black Jewish communities had been active for decades, contemporary accounts treated “Black” and “Jewish” as mutually exclusive terms. For a discussion of these terms, see the Introduction. See chapters 2, 4 and 8 for more on Philadelphia’s Black Jews, Hebrews and Israelites; see chapters 11 and 12 on North African Jews.

arrived a quarter-century earlier, “he treated a customer like you were a member of his own family.” A Black Muslim merchant standing in front of the shop recalled how he had just spoken to the Seidlers about his plans to open a deli beside them. “They came over and congratulated me,” he said, shaking his head in disbelief. “They offered to help me paint the outside.”

Violent crimes were common in North Philadelphia. Still, the murder of William Seidler shocked the neighborhood. Bill, as he was known, had been a fixture on Columbia Avenue for decades. Neighbors described him as gentle, uniquely kind and committed to the community – an emblem of hope for warm interracial relations in the years when the neighborhood had changed so quickly. At his memorial ten days later, friends eulogized a man who saw no difference between people, no matter their color.⁴

Yet for other white business owners on the block, Seidler’s murder pointed to a more cynical, color-conscious reality. An elderly white Jewish butcher asked reporters to keep him anonymous, fearing Seidler’s “death would bring further polarization between the races. ‘Seidler had me 80 percent convinced about being fair, trying to help the black man, but since this has happened it has turned me inside out. No matter what you do or how much you do[,] when you step outside of your store, you’re just a white man.’” Murray Rosenberg, a white Jewish optometrist, echoed the butcher’s concerns. Since the shooting, he had taken to “peering nervously through a small glass plate window” before opening his door to patients. “Seidler leaned over backwards to be a good man. This is what happens to you,” he lamented. “If this keeps up the stores along Columbia Avenue will die.”⁵

The block had already been struggling. “The scene of the murder is in the heart of the Columbia Ave. business district,” wrote the *Evening Bulletin*, “an area that has deteriorated greatly in the past few years.” Seven years earlier, a massive riot had left a mile of Columbia

Avenue in ruins and triggered a final, decisive wave of white flight. Now, “many of the stores are deserted and boarded up... Names of gangs and gang members are scrawled with spray paint on nearly every available wall.” “Everybody’s talking about moving away from here,” said Lela Green. “Pretty soon, there won’t be anything here anymore.”⁶

By the day after the murder, journalists were reporting that more merchants on the block – of all races – were arming themselves at work. The butcher’s son, Carl Potnick, willingly gave his name to reporters – perhaps emboldened by the revolver strapped to his apron. Potnick voiced his frustration that there were plenty of police to write parking tickets, but none to patrol the neighborhood by foot, as they once had. “I’ve even demonstrated at the 22nd Police District for better protection,’ said Potnick, ‘but they tell us they can’t spare the manpower.’”⁷

On its face, the story of William Seidler – an older white man dead at the hands of a younger Black one – blended seamlessly into the headlines of out-of-control crime and chronic racial tensions filling white-owned U.S. newspapers in the 1960s and ‘70s. The image of the nice older man gunned down by a mugger in a crumbling neighborhood confirmed exactly the picture of the city that certain local white politicians preferred to paint. And for about a year, that was how the story was told.⁸

But near the one-year anniversary of the crime, the gears of this standard narrative came to a sudden, grinding halt. Seated in front of a veteran reporter from the *Philadelphia Daily News*, William Seidler’s widow delivered a shocking statement: “They say my husband was murdered,” said Miriam firmly, “but I say he was assassinated.” The term was loaded, but the 63-year-old woman hesitated to say anything more.⁹

Were these the words of a traumatized widow, pushed over the edge from despair into

delusion? Or did Miriam Seidler know something that other people didn't?

Had the crime been a robbery gone wrong, as had seemed completely plausible until then? Or could it have been something more worrisome? A trap walked into by an overly-trusting elderly couple? A racially-motivated incident in a tense neighborhood – or, more anxiety-provoking for some, an attack on Jews? Could it have been the escalation of something small – a simple neighborhood disagreement that culminated in violence? Or was it none of those things?

What, indeed, was the crime?

PART ONE:

JEWISH GEOGRAPHY

Anyone who looked closely at newspapers the morning after William Seidler's death would have noticed the sort of curious details that might catch the attention of police. Hours before the shooting, for instance, a holdup had occurred just two doors down, at J's Five-and-Ten-Cent Store. Why had Seidler, who did not usually unlock his shop door to strangers, loosen his usual rules just after a robbery on the block?¹⁰

But there was a different detail altogether that would have stuck out most to one group reading the news. That Friday, white Jews all around the city's outskirts, in working class developments and middle class suburbs, would have awoken to news of Seidler's death. These were Jews with recent memories of living in Philly's urban neighborhoods; many had lived in North Philadelphia itself. But North Philadelphia's white Jewish community had been making steady efforts to leave the neighborhood for 25 years, first enticed by chances to move to the new

suburbs and finally, after the riots seven years ago, admitting that the last days of Jewish life in North Philadelphia were over. Conditions in the area had only worsened since.¹¹

A *Daily News* reporter captured the sentiments many might have murmured to each other in kitchens and dining rooms, as they picked up their newspapers in the morning to see news of Seidler's death.

When North Philadelphia burned in 1964, William and Miriam Seidler lost their store. So did many other merchants. Most of the other merchants never returned... But Bill Seidler and his wife did... Bill Seidler is dead now, shot down during a robbery attempt in his store less than two weeks ago. A lot of people warned Bill Seidler not to return; they told him it was no place for whites, that something like this would happen sooner or later.¹²

Yet it wasn't just that they had chosen to re-open after the riots. After all, there were some white Jews who still carried on their business in North Philadelphia, locking up each night, pulling down protective metal grates and setting burglar alarms before they made their way home to safer, more comfortable neighborhoods. But this couple, it seemed, were living there by choice. At a time when nearly all of North Philadelphia's white Jews had pulled up roots, the Seidlers were planting seeds. Why?¹³

CHAPTER 1:

A SLAP IN THE FACE TO THE ANGEL OF DEATH

The sky feels very close on the 1900 block of Cecil B. Moore Avenue. The buildings are low, nestled here and there between overgrown lots, so that nothing separates parts of this block from the sky. Many days in Philadelphia's humid air, a muted blanket of cloud hovers overhead, so that the block has the feel of a stage set: dimly lit, with walls close enough to touch if you stand in the middle. Blink, let your eyes adjust. You'll notice that this street is wider than it

seems; large enough for a whole neighborhood's business to pulse through it, as it once did in the days when they called this street Columbia Avenue.

If we were to watch time-lapse photography of this block, the sky might change in different eras. We could rewind and watch the sky heighten; move back in time just far enough to see older, taller buildings reconstruct themselves; glance out toward other blocks to see stories raising themselves back up in all directions. We could lift our lens higher and sweep out, to where the topography changes: eastward to Broad Street, the wide, rushing river that courses through North Philadelphia's center, with its rumbling underground rapids of the subway below, its grand peaks of old hotel and office towers, the sculpted rock ledges of theaters and banks and ballrooms that crowd it on both sides. We could sweep back westward once more, skimming over the lowlands of brick homes and brownstones, until we reach the western edge of North Philadelphia's world, Strawberry Mansion, where the homes suddenly drop off and the green fields, rolling hills and forests of the park begin.

We need this map to understand how two women in this story burst through the pages of history. Miriam Seidler and Barbara Easley-Cox came to know each other in this space, when they crossed Columbia Avenue. Miriam's piece in the puzzle comes earliest. But this story wouldn't be complete – it wouldn't even exist – without other women, many of whom went without commemoration in books or newspapers. So let us pause first at the door of Beatrice Brooks: daughter of Clara Bullard, granddaughter of Mattie Davis, great-granddaughter of Melvina Wright and of other women and men like Melvina, who were born into slavery, who built America and created its wealth.¹⁴

In August of 1945, Beatrice Brooks was 21 years old, with a husband, Joseph, and two small daughters. She was a shy Black woman with a sense of humor that came out when she was

most at ease, playing cards at night with friends. Her parents, raised in the Carolinas, had made their way North as a young couple in the 1920s, in one of the early waves of the Great Migration. She and her sisters and brothers had grown up in Philadelphia's old immigrant neighborhood on the south end of town, where Black families lived side-by-side with newcomers from Europe. With Joseph, however, she was making her home in North Philadelphia. They had rented this apartment in a slim building on Wallace Street, where they were raising their girls: eight-month-old baby Brenda and their firstborn, nearly two years old: Barbara.¹⁵

On August 14th, 1945, a sudden stillness and then a roar of sound shook the world around Beatrice and her family. It came first from the airwaves at 7 p.m., when President Harry Truman declared an end to the Second World War. "For about three minutes after the announcement hit the ether, there was a sort of stunned silence which hovered over the city as though everyone had been shocked, momentarily, by the news which all had expected but which few had really hoped would come so soon," wrote the city's Black newspaper of record, the *Tribune*. "Then it came, in swelling crescendo, gathering volume, like the rear of a bursted dam."¹⁶

First the city's air raid siren, a signal from the mayor, pierced the air. Then church bells rang, crowds filled the streets tossing confetti, drivers leaned on car horns. On North Philadelphia's southern edge, at the beautiful ivory tower of the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, the newspaper's staff fired off a cannon. North Philadelphians on the east and west sides of Broad Street watched traffic on their neighborhood's main artery come to a standstill, as cars flooded in from the outskirts of the city to join the central celebrations. Elsewhere, neighborhood revelers added their own sounds to an illicit orchestra: gunshots skyward, illegal firecrackers, crackling bonfires in the street.¹⁷

Readying themselves for a turbulent night in the city, Philadelphia's officials immediately ordered bars to close and stationed police officers all over the city, on foot, motorcycle and horse. But riots broke out anyway, from working-class Italian streets in South Philly to the wealthy, lily-white campus of the University of Pennsylvania, where students fought with police, ripped down street signs and sabotaged trolleys. Still, the unrest paled in comparison to the tumult elsewhere. In San Francisco, thousands had filled the streets for three nights. Celebrants had assaulted women, used cars as battering rams against buildings and looted the city's shops. By the end of the week, eleven people were dead and national newspapers were running photos of white crowds carousing in the streets, calling them the exuberant Navy boys behind San Francisco's "peace riots."¹⁸

Not everyone reveled with the same abandon. When the *Tribune* came out, two headlines vied for space on the Black newspaper's front page: "War's End Brings Joy" and "V-J Day Presents Special Problems." Photo tributes captured the joy, commending Black soldiers while reporting that "hundreds of colored citizens who shunned the company of their pale faced brethren" had gathered at the USO hall instead of in the streets. The second article hinted further at why, beyond the joy of basking in each other's company, Black people might wish to celebrate away from the crowds.¹⁹

"Like other Americans, Negroes must now go about the task of reconstruction," wrote Associated Negro Press journalist Ernest E. Johnson, speaking in carefully measured tones about the demobilization that lay ahead. There was reason for hope – signs that some new leaders in the Veterans administration might defend Black veterans' access to the GI Bill of Rights. But "[g]rowing like a spectre now is the prospect of unemployment" for veterans and for those on the home front. The wartime production boom had forced employers to open up jobs to Black

workers. Beatrice's husband Joseph, who worked at the Navy Yard, was one of them. The looming cutbacks would throw "millions of Negroes out [of] high-paying jobs" and into competition for work with returning servicemen, many of them white. For *Tribune* readers who were old enough to remember the end of the First World War and the years of white terror that had followed, the parallels were unmistakable. Johnson left his readers with a note of caution.²⁰

[A]ttention is beginning to focus upon threats of outbreaks. Sociologists and other observers in recent years have been viewing with unguarded alarm the possibility that racial incidents will develop with increasing frequency when the war emergency is behind us. The Federal Bureau of Investigations has been and is on the alert for signs of domestic unrest, and steps are being taken to check any such incidents.²¹

The night the war ended, the sounds of celebrations and street fights lasted long into the night. It would have been hard for any children to sleep, even if the city's mothers weren't already too giddy to enforce bedtime routines. Three miles west of Beatrice Brooks, 37-year-old Miriam Seidler would have listened to the night's clamor with her young son, David. For the last two years – most of David's life – her husband had been away at war, serving the troops through the Red Cross. Now Bill would come home for good.²²

Change was in the air. The August night literally vibrated with it. But Miriam was no stranger to change. Her childhood had been full of it. At four years old, in 1912, she had immigrated to the U.S. from Russia. Her family had only been in their new country for two years when the world spiraled into the Great War. By the time she was nine, the Tsar had fallen, and Jews all around her were following news of the Russian Revolution with rapt attention. Philadelphia itself was not so peaceful, either. The summer she turned ten, a Black woman named Adella Bond had purchased a home on a white street near the center of town. Thousands of white people had formed mobs that terrorized Black people in the area for four days.²³

That fall, the flu pandemic that had been whispering its way around the world arrived in Philadelphia with a vengeance. As the pandemic continued its spread throughout the U.S. in 1919, so did the white terror attacks. The summer of 1919 had been dubbed Red Summer, for all the bloody riots white mobs had mounted against Black communities. In the newspapers her family read, Yiddish writers had printed ringing denunciations of the riots against Black communities, calling them by the only word European Jews had for such orgies of violence: *pogroms*. Meanwhile, Philadelphia's Jews had their own anxieties: A series of bombings in the city by radical immigrants had attracted the harsh national spotlight of the Red Scare. Two years after that, as Miriam started her first year at a prestigious local high school for girls, Mussolini's fascists captured Rome. The era of European fascism had opened with a bang.²⁴

If some girls in her demure high school were square pegs trying to fit themselves into round holes, Miriam was the firecracker in the pegboard. She was the youngest girl in a family of lively female role models. Her three sisters had all grown up in Russia; here they had become labor organizers. The Greenberg daughters specialized in battling wills with older male garment bosses; their mother, Rose, rallied their spirits when the union went on strike. They had been born into a Yiddish culture where songs serenaded young women by comparing their dark eyes to black cherries; where curvy, powerful bodies like Miriam's were called *zafrik* – “juicy.”²⁵

Now Miriam was coming of age in 1920s America, in a nation that worshipped blue-eyed blondes and a decade when hard, flat waif-like frames were so coveted that newspapers raised alarms about young women suffering grave medical harm as they raced to “reduce.” At her prestigious public High School for Girls, Miriam's teachers were tasked with turning a multiracial student body of immigrants' and workers' daughters into elite young ladies of the white Anglo-Saxon Protestant mold. They trained working-class girls to hold teas in elegant

downtown hotels and let Jewish girls aspire to roles in the school's genteel Christmas plays.²⁶

Miriam did not fully translate into this setting; even her class yearbook editors seemed to struggle to understand her Yiddish nickname and categorize her political fire. She was vocal and irrepressible: the kind of girl who delighted in sneaking away with boyfriends in private to pass time in the shadows of the elegant statues by the river and making her political views known in public. She was the most American member of her family; the only one to have an American childhood. Yet in an age of fierce patriotism, Miriam wasn't afraid to criticize American norms.²⁷

By the time she was a senior in the class of 1926, Miriam's boldness and her budding anti-racist politics fueled her to lead a small-scale revolt against that most American of institutions: the senior prom. Although the school's student body was racially integrated, Girls' High administrators had agreed to the Bellevue Hotel's stipulation requiring Black students to enter the dance through a side door. Miriam was incensed. For the rest of her life, she took pride in retelling how she helped to organize protests until, finally, Girls' High staff decided to cancel the prom entirely.²⁸

She graduated the summer America marked its 150th birthday. In the fall, the *Inquirer* printed a picture of smiling Girls' High girls standing bare-headed in the rain to accept the gift of a new American flag from the Patriotic Order Sons of America. The caption cheered: "Rain didn't dampen the youthful patriotism of 1500 girls." Decorating the same page were other human-interest photos of the day, notable to the editors for nothing apart from their elegance: the dapper Fascist ruler of Italy, Mussolini, complimenting his army pilots on their splendid work; the Imperial Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan at the Klan's "magnificent capital headquarters" in Washington, D.C.²⁹

Not pictured was the girl with the rebel heart. Miriam was off, moving forward, building a life with friends who shared her vision for the world. They celebrated May Day, the international workers' holiday, and gathered to see the day's socially conscious artists at the John Reed Club.³⁰

Thus, when Miriam met her future husband, she had her own political credentials. Bill was a gentle man, just her age, a classically trained musician with a college education. But he had grown up in cramped working-class quarters in South Philadelphia as the son of a cigar factory worker and was even more active and politically conscious than Miriam. In Bill, Miriam had found not only a match but an inspiration.³¹

It was a spring weekend in 1932 when the two twenty-three-year-olds married in New York City. In the midst of the Depression, they were starting out with luck: Bill had landed a respectable position as music supervisor for the public schools of Bristol, Pennsylvania.³²

But if they were buffered from the economic crisis, they could not shield themselves from news of world events. That winter, in the homeland of one of the world's most vibrant socialist movements, the Nazis came to power. The new government wasted no time – first cracking down on critics such as Communists and then turning to Jews. On the morning of Bill and Miriam's first anniversary, they awoke to morbid newspaper reports of a different kind of festivity: a national boycott of Jewish businesses in Germany. In Berlin, a "vast cheering throng" of non-Jews rallied to hear speakers threaten to crush the Jews and promenaded to brass bands "as on a holiday."³³

Around the U.S. that summer, Jews gathered to protest worsening Nazi attacks. For Jews in general, the news from Europe brought anxiety. But for young Jewish activists on the 1930s

Left, work to stop the spread of fascism was charged with adrenaline. Every action mattered. Every person who stood up might help to tilt the balance. The consequences of failure were clear even to the Jewish Left's young children, who woke from nightmares of lynchings and pogroms and were only too familiar with the fascist movements in their own backyard: the German American Bund, the KKK, the Black Legion, the Silver Shirts, the energetic followers of the popular radio priest Father Coughlin. Growing up in the 1930s, one boy later recalled, "I expected that fascism would come to the United States and that I would die young."³⁴

As the Depression wore on, Bill and Miriam travelled west, living in places like tiny Aberdeen, Washington, where Miriam enrolled in college courses. Bill found work selling music lessons door-to-door. Across the land, unemployment was high, labor unrest was sharp and Jews were feeling a palpable rise in antisemitism. As the threat of war escalated in Europe, so too did the scapegoating of Jews, whom antisemitic leaders decried as an enemy that could push the U.S. into war. Finally, in 1938, they settled in in Houston, Texas, where Bill joined the Symphony.³⁵

Years later, Miriam would shiver when telling her younger friends what antisemitism in Texas was like. Still, at least in Houston – unlike some of the smaller towns they had lived in – there were a considerable number of Jews. Among them were Irving Wadler, Bill's fellow musician in the Symphony, and his wife Ida Kaplan Wadler.³⁶

In the spring of 1940, Ida and Irving accompanied Miriam to a local courthouse. Although America was the only country Miriam had ever really known, she had spent her life categorized legally as an alien. Now she was asking to become a citizen of the United States.

The court clerk recorded a few essential details: legal name (Marion), occupation (housewife), birthplace (Kipin, Russia). Next to "race," the clerk typed "Hebrew." Miriam was

asked to confirm that she did not fall into categories threatening to the government: she was not an anarchist, like those who had been deported during the Red Scare of her childhood years, nor a polygamist, nor loyal to any foreign prince. Then Miriam was allowed to make one request: “I, your petitioner, pray that I may be admitted as a citizen of the United States of America, and that my name be changed to: *Miriam Seidler*.” Of all her siblings, she had been the one to start life in America with the gift of an English name. Now she returned the gift and took a Hebrew name.³⁷

Nearly two years passed. Bill played for the Symphony; the war raged on in Europe. He registered with the local draft board (Age: 32. Height: 5’4”. Race: White. Complexion: Dark.). Then, in December 1941, Pearl Harbor was attacked. But as the reality of entering a war sank in for people around the country, Bill and Miriam contemplated different news: They were expecting a baby.³⁸

The following summer, Miriam gave birth to David William. Their new son’s name was a study in contrasts. “David” was likely a tribute to Miriam’s father, who had died early in their marriage. William was more complicated. To the average Texan, it would have simply seemed like an honor to Bill. But any Eastern European Jew would have recognized a slap in the face to tradition. Custom strictly prohibited naming a Jewish child after someone living. Superstition held that it was dangerous; it could divert harm meant for an elder to a child instead, by confusing the Angel of Death.³⁹

Or perhaps, to Bill and Miriam, it was the reverse. Perhaps – as news reports from overseas that spring told of a dictatorship engaged in an “open hunt” of the Hebrew race, as they prepared for the possibility of Bill going to war – it was not David’s name but his birth that was an act of defiance: a slap in the face to the Angel of Death itself.⁴⁰

In August 1943, Bill was called up to Scott Field, Illinois. He would train with the Red

Cross, then ship out to use his new skills to serve the war effort. It was time to leave Texas. With whatever she was able to pack from ten years of travelling America, Miriam started for home.⁴¹

**From *Chapter Six: August 1964: The Sparks Came Out the Ground*
an excerpt on the North Philadelphia riots of 1964**

Q: What have you heard about Philadelphia?

A: Riots.

- Interview with John Lennon

Philadelphia Daily News, 9/3/64⁴²

In the last week of August 1964, a buzz of excitement surrounded Philadelphia. Delegates from around the nation were descending on nearby Atlantic City for the highly anticipated Democratic National Convention. Meanwhile, young people throughout the region were holding their breath for the arrival of a popular new British band called the Beatles, who had been touring the world and would swing through Atlantic City and Philadelphia in a matter of days.⁴³

Miriam had just marked her 56th birthday. She and Bill had lived for eight years in the house on Cobden Road, but she had never quite managed to adapt to the role of suburban wife, happy in her garden. Instead, she and Bill stayed active in their usual causes in the city – donating clothes from Seidler’s Shelley Shop to striking miners in Kentucky, taking part in the new and growing anti-nuclear movement, attending lectures downtown at the Communist Party’s Social Science Forum.⁴⁴

In their two storefronts on Columbia Avenue, they had work to do and friendships to keep up – especially with Janie Banks, whom they had first met as one of their customers from the Black community neighboring the stores. Janie had come into the shop as a girl more than a decade ago and was now like a member of the family, at least as far as Miriam and Bill were concerned. Both Janie and David were growing up. Bill and Miriam had moved here, to the ranch house on Cobden Road, when they could no longer deny that David needed to start high school in a place where he wasn't the only white boy. Now David was a college graduate.⁴⁵

The Seidlers moved through two different worlds – unlike some of their white neighbors in this small suburb, who could relax on summer nights with a newspaper, surrounded by the music of crickets and the flicker of fireflies, and ponder North Philadelphia as a distant, troubled land in the headlines. Miriam and Bill saw the realities of Columbia Avenue each day: the gangs, the poverty, the housing conditions that, in any other part of the city, would be cause for scandal.⁴⁶

Around them in North Philadelphia, patience was wearing thin. Just over a year ago, weeks of fierce protests had broken out against a nearby construction site for withholding jobs from Black workers. Then, in October, a short-lived riot had broken out a few blocks north of the shop when police shot a young, disabled Black man, Willie Phylaw, to death.⁴⁷

This summer had been a waiting game. Beginning in July, scattered riots had been breaking out in Black communities around the country, often touched off by an arrest or an act of aggression by police. As news hit the airwaves of unrest in Harlem, Rochester and Jersey City, human relations advocates waited anxiously to see whether Philadelphia would come next.⁴⁸

Now, with summer waning, they were voicing relief that Philadelphia appeared to have emerged unscathed. The new leader of the local NAACP, Cecil B. Moore, had a strategy in the

works to defuse tensions. Moore was not one to beg and plead. He intended to station NAACP lawyers in police precincts, to restrain the behavior of police and calm the nerves of Black arrestees. Cecil Moore was disliked by many whites for his brashness, but he had earned the loyalty of Black Philadelphians for his uncompromising response to any hint of discrimination. A West Virginia man by birth, he had no problem raising hell when he saw Northern racial problems that were just as disgraceful as the South's. His last few days of summer at the Democratic Convention would offer a close-up view of both.⁴⁹

On the shores of the Atlantic, two gatherings were in progress. Inside Convention Hall mingled Democratic delegates. Outside, in the salty air of the beach town, young activists stood on the boardwalk with haunting signs, the faces emblazoned on them of three young voting rights workers who had been found murdered in Mississippi a few weeks earlier. The vigil was sometimes silent, sometimes punctuated by speeches. One day a thunderstorm clapped down on them and everyone broke out in freedom songs, singing their way through the downpour.⁵⁰

Stating their case inside the convention was 46-year-old Fannie Lou Hamer. Hamer was a sharecropper from Mississippi who had not known until she was 44 that Black people had a legal right to vote. Hamer was making up for lost time, working tenaciously to see her people get real voting rights. But to be a Black voter meant taking one's life into one's hands. The white-ruled Southern wing of the Democratic Party was committed to ensuring that Black communities would not cast votes. Throughout the South, local white leaders enforced this through violence and intimidation. While the Party's Northern liberals had made sympathetic utterances about conditions in the South, they stopped short of intervening in the Southern wing's illegal practices, lest any rift undermine the Party's national chances.⁵¹

For nearly a year, Civil Rights workers – volunteers and poorly paid staff, most of them young and Black – had painstakingly organized 80,000 Black Mississippians. By spring they had formed the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party. They had come to Atlantic City to show the world that the South operated not as a democracy but as an authoritarian regime backed by violence.⁵²

On the eve of the Convention, Fannie Lou Hamer addressed the floor. Speaking to the Democratic credentialing committee, she urging the DNC to seat the new, law-abiding Freedom Democratic Party delegation in place of the old, corrupt delegation of white rule. Her voice pealed out as she spoke of the price that Black Mississippians paid for registering “to become first-class citizens”: how, for attempting to vote, she’d been thrown off the land she’d sharecropped for eighteen years and local police had beaten her near to death.

“If the Freedom Democratic Party is not seated,” said Hamer, “I question America. Is this America, the land of the free...[where] our lives be threatened daily because we want to live as decent human beings, in America?”⁵³

The DNC was slow to answer. Layers of negotiation were taking place within the Convention, some directly with Freedom Democrats and some maneuvering around them. Then, on Wednesday, August 26th, with heated dialogue still in progress, Democratic Party leaders appeared on television to announce a “compromise” – one which MFDP members had never agreed to. Mississippi’s law-breaking white Democrats would retain control, and two symbolic seats would be offered to the MFDP. The Freedom Democrats declined.⁵⁴

John Lewis, then the twenty-four-year-old chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, would always recall August 1964 as a turning point. At the summer’s beginning, it had seemed possible that those in power could be moved to do right on moral

grounds. “We had played by the rules, done everything we were supposed to do, had played the game exactly as required...and found the door slammed in our face. ...Those who chose to stay [in the Movement] were ready now to play by a different set of rules, their own rules.” Young Black activists would now struggle, internally and among one other, to decide those new rules.⁵⁵

The question had been asked and answered. For Black people, it seemed, wherever they stood, that land was not America.

Barbara Brooks lived in California now. She was twenty-one, newly married to a GI and known to all as Barbara Easley. By chance, she had been back home to visit family in Philadelphia the week of the Convention – although neither the Democrats nor the Beatles had registered in her consciousness more than faintly. If she marveled at the Beatles-induced euphoria that was overtaking the white girls in her old South Philly neighborhood, she did not join in. She had never had much use for Elvis Presley and other popular white musicians. Growing up, her home had been filled with the sounds of the jazz her mother loved: Sarah Vaughan, Dinah Washington. With the wealth of Black music around her, she rarely got swept up into white people’s music crazes. “I had Chuck Berry. So what did I need Elvis Presley for? What did I care about The Beatles? We had our people, so no big deal, you know? As far as we were concerned, they were copying all of us.”⁵⁶

She had never been the kind of teenager who hungrily sought out politics and she paid little mind to the Convention now. To her, Atlantic City conjured up memories of traveling with her mother: sumptuous memories of her mother showing her how to eat oysters straight from the shell, or painful ones, of Atlantic City as a borderline during bus rides. To ride farther south than the New Jersey border meant peeing in the grass by the side of the road rather than risk danger or

humiliation by seeking out a bathroom open to a Black woman or young girl.⁵⁷

Her week at home had been uneventful. It was on Saturday, when she arrived back in California, that the phone rang with a jolt of news from Philadelphia. She had just missed it, her family told her: North Philadelphia was being set aflame. Hundreds of rioters had flooded the streets and outnumbered police. It had all started with a traffic stop on Columbia Avenue; word was that a pregnant woman had been killed by police. As Barbara reached out to her family members, checking to see that all was well, she found herself scanning memories of world political events she had heard discussed, sensing new connections, feeling her mind recalibrate. “All of a sudden, it was like, whatever was happening in the rest of the world was also happening to *Black people in America*. ...All of it started a little thing churning within me.”⁵⁸

Shortly before dawn on Saturday, August 29th, Cecil B. Moore returned from Atlantic City to find North Philadelphia in a whirlwind. Normally, it was his voice that spurred his people to action. This time, the crowd was out of his control. He urged the people filling the streets to go home; this was not the way to get the change they needed. But out of the crowd came a mocking woman’s voice: “We don’t need the NAACP, we don’t need civil rights and we don’t need Cecil Moore.”⁵⁹

The riots continued for three nights. Thousands of people milled about the streets – some looking to participate, others simply awestruck or curious. Under orders, the police dutifully held back their gunfire. They brought out their nightsticks instead.⁶⁰

Fifteen-year-old Kenneth Smith was one of those who wandered the streets, observing North Philadelphia in chaos. Police violence was nothing new to Smith; he had had his first run-in with them when he was just a child. He and his young friends had discovered a local

construction site that was inactive after work hours. One evening they were pretending to be knights, jousting together with iron rods from the construction debris, when police spotted them. The officers chased them, slamming Smith's small, skinny body against a wall. For decades, he would remember the thoughts that burned in his mind as they kicked and beat him with a force that shocked him: how he longed for the moment when it would be over; the fear he felt when he saw that they really seemed to have enough anger to kill him.⁶¹

Tonight, however, the police were unleashing a level of violence against the rioters that Kenneth Smith had never seen. For the first time, as he watched police beating a man on the ground, it dawned on him that police nightsticks held a metal bar inside them. Every time the officers missed the man's body, as their nightsticks pounded the ground instead, "the sparks would come out the side-walk. That's how hard they was trying to kill you!" Later on, when he grew older and took part in Civil Rights demonstrations that were beaten back by police, this kind of knowledge would become second nature to him. "But that was the first time I saw [that]: the sparks came out the ground."⁶²

Wandering around in the August night, Smith felt pulled to join in with the looters. Although both of his parents worked, in a family with eight children, there was never money to spare. He yearned to dress nicely – like the impressive, clean-cut Black men he saw in the neighborhood, in their sweaters, tweed slacks, hats and wingtip shoes. With five brothers in line for the same hand-me-down clothes, he knew that this kind of finery would always be off-limits to him. But even more than clothes, what he wanted on the night of the riot was to be able to give something to his mother: "My beautiful mother, she never had a real good toaster."⁶³

These were years of plenty in America; kids in North Philadelphia knew this. They could see it in the advertisements that beckoned housewives to enjoy gleaming new technologies "on

the threshold of the fabulous Sixties!” But the makers of these lustrous appliances did not seem to envision Kenneth Smith’s beautiful mother as their customer. A typical ad would show a smartly dressed white couple and their blond child, ooh-ing and ahh-ing over a refrigerator. The lucky purchasers would receive a free gift of White Shoulders cologne. The fabulous Sixties had been made for some other mother in some other place, with a body protected from hard labor and porcelain skin.⁶⁴

Nearly fifty years after the riot, Kenneth Smith – now Kenneth Salaam, a storied Civil Rights activist – was interviewed about living through those August nights. When asked how he viewed the looters in retrospect, he worked to find the right words. “I didn’t feel, I didn’t feel—I didn’t feel that [the looters] were—were wrong. ...I didn’t say, ‘Well, they shouldn’t be going in these peoples’ stores, stealing their stuff.’ I didn’t feel that.” In his teenage mind, there was a kind of imperfect justice in the looting. He and his neighbors had long felt certain that many of the neighborhood’s white storekeepers cheated them. Families in his neighborhood pinched pennies for the necessities and walked by the finer things in the windows with the knowledge that those things would never be theirs. For one fleeting moment, the looting was their chance to take something back. When the sun rose on the last day of August, nine blocks were filled with shattered glass.⁶⁵

In the days that followed, the memory of looting stood between Blacks and white Jews in North Philadelphia as though it were a photograph and its negative: one event, two alternate realities. For Black youth such as Kenneth Smith, the looting was a moment of jubilation: an ecstatic, temporary reprieve from an economy that had worn their families down for generations and seemed destined to continue. For the white, mostly Jewish storekeepers whose businesses

were destroyed by the riot, the impression was precisely reversed. The looting was a sudden crack: a fault line of fear and ruin that fractured the peace and stability which had begun to feel normal to them in America.

Most Jews who worked in North Philadelphia had European roots. Some of the neighborhood's oldest Jews had lived through European pogroms, while those born in the U.S. had grown up hearing stories of the anti-Jewish riots their elders had fled: periodic waves of terror which had left Jewish homes, livelihoods and families in pieces.

Sometimes the pogroms had followed seasonal rhythms, bubbling over from non-Jews' local celebrations. Other times, violence rained down without warning. In Europe, Jews had learned to prepare for danger when Christians were in a festive mood – and to prepare for local authorities, whether out of indifference or enthusiasm, to stand by and allow the violence.

The riots on Columbia Avenue – especially the scenes of police so vastly outnumbered that they simply stood back and let looters take control – awakened these memories. In the testimony of Jewish business owners, two emotional themes came through. One was the indignation of white shop owners who had expected that police would protect them. But there was a second, contradictory emotion, a feeling with older and longer roots in their families' experiences as Jews: an expectation that help would not arrive.

For drugstore owner Morris Gerson, writing a shaken letter to the city's Jewish leaders, the riots were a horrible nightmare that left him preoccupied by images of the "Old Russian Pogroms." For Elsie Finkelstein, the riots provoked a sense of powerlessness. She had been at home with her young children when word reached her that her wallpaper store was being ravaged. She had called police multiple times, but they said there was nothing they could do to help her. "As an American," she said, "I have lost my feeling of security."⁶⁶

On Columbia Avenue, Miriam and Bill inspected their two stores for damage. The looting had started one block west of them. Within a few hours, both of their shops were in ruins. One was “just a rubble of glass from back to front.” That Wednesday at City Hall, Miriam attended a public meeting for business owners to air their grievances. Exasperated shopkeepers lashed out at city officials and at each other. A few others tried to promote calm. Samuel Evans, a local Black concert manager and Civil Rights activist, pleaded with the group. “I’ve lived in this area for 45 years,” Evans told the gathering. “What happened was a disgrace and a tragedy... You need patience.”⁶⁷

Miriam, too, urged patience. With her dark hair coiffed, wearing a flowered dress, dark lipstick and large cat’s-eye glasses, she spoke of how moved she was by the compassion the Seidlers’ Black neighbors were showing them. “Yesterday, a little colored woman came up to me and offered me \$100,” she said, “and I went home crying.” Others offered to help in any way they could, even volunteering to lend a hand with ironing. There was no question in her mind, Miriam said: She was staying.⁶⁸

Not everyone was so certain. City official Frederic Mann tried to assure business owners that police would protect them going forward. Even during the riot, he said, “We were pretty tough with them.” The businesspeople jeered at Mann’s assertion. Mann shot back, defending city government by insisting that police *had* been violent. “I saw a lotta busted-open heads and they didn’t come from nowhere.”⁶⁹

That night, the Beatles went onstage in a graceful arena near the University of Pennsylvania to a “wiggling, jiggling mob” of 13,000 girls. The concert was proclaimed a rousing success. Afterward, the band’s drummer met with the city’s police commissioner to

convey his affection and thanks for the fine job Philadelphia's police had done protecting the Beatles and their fans. "You chaps gave us the safest and most orderly protection we've had in any city," he told Commissioner Howard Leary. As if to drive home how comfortable he felt, Ringo Starr reached out to ruffle the police commissioner's hair. The commissioner blushed, wrote the *Daily News*. "After North Philadelphia, this was a lovely way to spend an evening."⁷⁰

KEY TO ARCHIVAL CITATIONS

For brevity, archival collections cited in this work are represented by the following codes:

JCRC = Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Philadelphia Records, SCRC 230, Special Collections Research Center. Temple University Libraries, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

WILPF = Women's International League for Peace & Freedom Records, Swarthmore College Peace Collection, Swarthmore, Pennsylvania.

¹ Commissioner Joseph F. O'Neill, "Confidential: Slain Jewish Merchants 1968-1973" (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Philadelphia Police Department, April 10, 1973), n.p. Box 175, Folder 19-21 (individual folder not numbered): Slain Jewish Merchants 1968-1973 (City of Phila. Police Department), JCRC.

² Unless noted, details in this chapter of the crime and neighborhood reaction are from Rich Sapok, "Merchant Slain in N. Phila.," *Philadelphia Daily News*, March 19, 1971. Miriam discusses never returning to the store in an interview for the WILPF newsletter, identified as circa 1989 by then-WILPF staffer Deborah Zubow (Author unknown, untitled biographical sketch of Miriam Seidler for WILPF newsletter, undated, DG 043: Accessions from 2000 - 2013 (June), Part VII: U.S., Section Series A: Historical Records; Biographical information: Miriam G. Seidler, WILPF. Confirmation that the shooter was never apprehended is in O'Neill (1973) and William R. Macklin, "A Volunteer Who Doesn't Fit the Mold," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, April 30, 1998, sec. D.

³ Sandy Padwe, "My Philadelphia: Believed in People - But He Met Death," *Philadelphia Daily News*, March 31, 1971, Main Edition, sec. Metropolitan Page. On racial preferences in postwar housing benefits, see Richard Rothstein, *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America* (New York: Liveright, 2017).

⁴ Padwe; Associated Press, "Slain Storekeeper Eulogized by Black Panther Party Members," *Standard-Speaker*, March 30, 1971, final edition.

⁵ Dennis Kirkland and Edward Eisen, "Neighbors Take Up Arms After Merchant's Death," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 20, 1971, final City edition, sec. A.

⁶ Kitsi Burkhart and Alfonso Brown, Jr., "Slain Storekeeper Helped Neighborhood," *Evening Bulletin*, March 20, 1971, "William Seidler," George D. McDowell Philadelphia Evening Bulletin Clippings Collection, Biographical, SCRC 169A, Special Collections Research Center, Temple University Libraries, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

⁷ Kirkland and Eisen, "Neighbors Take Up Arms After Merchant's Death." Black merchants seem to have armed themselves earlier; see Burkhart and Brown, Jr., "Slain Storekeeper Helped Neighborhood."

⁸ For more on the national dimension of racialized crime reporting, see Melissa Hickman Barlow, "Race and the Problem of Crime in 'Time' and 'Newsweek' Cover Stories, 1946 to 1995," *Social Justice* 25, no. 2 (1998): 149-83. Philadelphia's prime example of a white politician capitalizing off of 'law and order' discourse was police commissioner, then mayor, Frank Rizzo, discussed further in chapter nine and in Timothy J. Lombardo, *Blue-Collar*

Conservatism: Frank Rizzo's Philadelphia and Populist Politics (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2018).

⁹ Larry Fields, "It Takes More Than Guns to Kill Widow's Ideals," *Philadelphia Daily News*, March 1, 1972.

¹⁰ Charles Montgomery, "Store Owner Is Slain in North Phila. Holdup," *Evening Bulletin*, March 19, 1971.

¹¹ Jewish communal institutions saw conditions in North Philadelphia as so dire that by 1970, they were conducting what could almost be termed humanitarian missions, sending social workers to find the last few white Jews in the previously most concentrated Jewish residential area, Strawberry Mansion, to aid them, and subtly encourage them, to move out. Bessie K. Stensky, "The Strawberry Mansion Project on the Aged: A Report on A Reaching Out Effort by the Jewish Family Service of Philadelphia," November 1970, Box 179, Folder 2, Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Philadelphia Records, SCRC 230, Special Collections Research Center. Temple University Libraries, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. For more on the conditions affecting both white and Black Jews in North Philadelphia after the mid-1950s, see chapter 4.

¹² Padwe, "My Philadelphia: Believed in People - But He Met Death."

¹³ Kirkland and Eisen, "Neighbors Take Up Arms After Merchant's Death."

¹⁴ "1930 United States Census, Philadelphia, Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania, Digital Image s.v. 'Beatrice Bullard,'" Ancestry.com. 1930 United States Federal Census [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc., 2002; "Marriage License, Grant Bullard to Clara Davis, 22 December 1919, Robeson County, North Carolina. Office of Register of Deeds, Lumberton, North Carolina. Robeson County, North Carolina, North Carolina County Registers of Deeds, North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh, NC, Volume Unknown; p. 12, Microfilm. Record Group 048. Ancestry.Com. North Carolina, U.S., Marriage Records, 1741-2011 [Database on-Line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.Com Operations, Inc., 2015. "1910 United States Census, Wahee, Marion, South Carolina, Digital Image s.v. 'Mattie Davis,'" n.d., Roll: T624_1451; Page: 2A; Enumeration District: 0075; FHL microfilm: 1375464, Ancestry.com. 1910 United States Federal Census [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc., 2006. "1880 United States Census, Wahee, Marion, South Carolina, Digital Image s.v. 'Melvina Wright,'" n.d., Roll: 1235; Page: 336C; Enumeration District: 102, Ancestry.com and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. 1880 United States Federal Census [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc, 2010.

¹⁵ Isabel Wilkerson, *The Warmth of Other Suns: The Epic Story of America's Great Migration*, Vintage 2011 ed. (New York: Random House, 2010), 217–18; Barbara Easley-Cox, interviewed by April Rosenblum via telephone, transcript, July 26, 2019.

¹⁶ "Staid Old Philly Blows It's Top," *Philadelphia Tribune*, August 18, 1945.

¹⁷ William C. Farson, "Philadelphia Roars Salute to Victory," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, August 15, 1945.

¹⁸ Farson; "Riots End Liberty for 100,000 in Navy: San Francisco Quiet Again After Battles in Streets Cause Deaths of 10," *New York Times*, August 17, 1945.

¹⁹ "Staid Old Philly Blows It's Top"; Ernest Johnson, "V-J Day Presents Special Problems," *Philadelphia Tribune*, August 18, 1945.

²⁰ As Robin DG Kelley points out, it was not until 1944 that wartime employment opened up significantly to African American workers. *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, And The Black Working Class* (Simon and Schuster, 1996), 164.

²¹ Johnson, "V-J Day Presents Special Problems."

²² "Red Cross Workers To Relate Experiences," *Philadelphia Tribune*, January 13, 1945, ProQuest Historical Newspapers.

²³ "Marian Greenberg (Subsequently 'Marion'), SS Volturno Passenger Manifest," November 14, 1912, Passenger and Crew Lists of Vessels Arriving at New York (including Castle Garden and Ellis Island), 1820-1957 (Microfilm Serial T715, roll 1975, line 1, page 205); Records of the U.S. Customs Service, Record Group 36. Ancestry.com [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010. Tony Michels offers some illustration of how local Jewish communities were captivated by the Russian Revolution in two works focused on New York, *A Fire in Their Hearts: Yiddish Socialists in New York* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2005) and "The Russian Revolution in New York, 1917–19," *Journal of Contemporary History* 52, no. 4 (October 2017): 959–79, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022009417724213>. On the 1918 Philadelphia riots, see Khalil Gibran Muhammad, *The Condemnation of Blackness: Race, Crime, and the Making of Modern Urban America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, 2010) and Vincent P. Franklin, "The Philadelphia Race Riot of 1918," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 99, no. 3 (1975): 336–50.

²⁴ James Weldon Johnson, NAACP activist and renowned writer, coined the term “Red Summer.” Imani Perry, *May We Forever Stand: A History of the Black National Anthem*, Ebook-Adobe Digital Edition (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019), 50. The phenomenon of Yiddish-language newspapers identifying white riots against Black communities as *pogroms* is discussed in Hasia R. Hasia R. Diner, *In the Almost Promised Land: American Jews and Blacks, 1915–1935* (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1977).

²⁵ On Miriam’s sisters see Sara Solovitch, “Women of Peace Who Fight Onward,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, December 25, 1983, sec. A, 20; on her mother see Teresa Jaynes, “Folk Arts of Social Change: Excerpts from an Exhibition,” *Works in Progress: Magazine of the Philadelphia Folklore Project*, Winter 2000, 13. For examples of Yiddish lyrics comparing dark eyes to black cherries, see “Baym Oybsheyd (At Parting),” *Yiddish Songs sung by Ruth Rubin* (New York: Folkways Records, 1978), “Oy dortn, dortn, ibern vaser,” in Ruth Rubin, *Jewish Life: The Old Country* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2007) and “Dreyt zikh arum mayne fenster,” in Elvira Grözinger et al., “*Unser Rebbe, unser Stalin*”: *jiddische Lieder aus den St. Petersburger Sammlungen* (Leipzig: Otto Harrassowitz Verlag, 2008). For the original connotation of “zaftik,” as opposed to the English euphemism, see Michael Wex, *Just Say Nu: Yiddish for Every Occasion (When English Just Won’t Do)* (New York: St. Martin’s Publishing Group, 2007), 70–71.

²⁶ “Just How Much Is It Safe to Reduce?,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, April 25, 1926. “High School Girls Present Christmas Play (in ‘News of the World Told in Pictures’),” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, December 23, 1926; “500 Alumnae Dine,” February 14, 1926, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/173486803>.

²⁷ Miriam’s yearbook entry writers seemed confused by her nickname – they recorded it as “Money,” probably a misreading of her family pet name, the Yiddish “Monye” or Manye. “In politics,” they wrote, “it would be hard to find a more fiery suffragette,” and groped for a compliment by suggesting that perhaps she was destined to be a lawyer or politician, or “since her nickname is Money, she may yet turn out to be a real estate agent.” *The Record of the Class of June, 1926* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Philadelphia High School for Girls, 1926), n.p. Mention of Miriam’s romantic excursions are in Deborah Zubow, interviewed by April Rosenblum, Philadelphia, PA, Transcript, May 25, 2019, 7. “Marian Greenberg (Subsequently ‘Marion’), SS Volturno Passenger Manifest,” November 14, 1912, Passenger and Crew Lists of Vessels Arriving at New York (including Castle Garden and Ellis Island), 1820–1957 (Microfilm Serial T715, roll 1975, line 1, page 205); Records of the U.S. Customs Service, Record Group 36. Ancestry.com [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2010.

²⁸ Solovitch, “Women of Peace Who Fight Onward,” 20; Author unknown, untitled biographical sketch of Miriam Seidler for WILPF newsletter.

²⁹ Untitled spread of photographs, *Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 10, 1926.

³⁰ Author unknown, untitled biographical sketch of Miriam Seidler for WILPF newsletter; Laurie Ann Alexandre, “The John Reed Clubs: A Historical Reclamation of the Role of Revolutionary Writers in the Depression” (California State University, Northridge, 1977), 57–58.

³¹ “1910 United States Census, Philadelphia Ward 39, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Digital Image s.v. ‘William Seidler,’” 1910, Roll: T624_1409; Page: 12B; Enumeration District: 0973; FHL microfilm: 1375422, Ancestry.com. 1910 United States Federal Census [database on-line]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations Inc.; Fields, “It Takes More Than Guns to Kill Widow’s Ideals.”

³² “New York, New York Index to Marriages, New York City Clerk’s Office, v. 3: Marriage of William Seidler and Miriam D. Greenberg, #6281, 1932; New York City Municipal Archives, Manhattan. Ancestry.Com [Database Online], Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.Com Operations, Inc., 2017,” accessed 5/13/19; “Public Is Invited to Girls’ Music Contest,” *Bristol Daily Courier*, May 28, 1932, 1, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/48719218>, accessed 2/4/20.

³³ “Nazi End Boycott on Jews,” *Sunday News*, Lancaster, PA, April 2, 1933, Volume 10, Number 30, 1, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/559878869>, accessed 2/4/20.

³⁴ Michael Feldberg, “Anti-Nazi Boycott of 1933,” *My Jewish Learning*, <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/the-anti-nazi-boycott-of-1933/>, accessed 5/4/20; Dick Levins, “Touch Red,” in Judy Kaplan and Linn Shapiro, *Red Diapers: Growing Up in the Communist Left* (Chicago: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1998), 261.

³⁵ The Seidlers were likely in Aberdeen by fall 1935, as Miriam attended the local junior college for at least some of the 1935–1936 school year. Associated Students of the Grays Harbor Junior College at Aberdeen, *The Nautilus (Yearbook)* (Aberdeen, WA: Grays Harbor Junior College, 1936), 1421, <https://issuu.com/graysharbor/docs/1936>, 14, 21. Bill’s work is referenced in United States World War II Draft Registration Cards, Card for William Seidler, Serial No. 948, Local Draft Board 9, Houston, Harris County, Texas; The National Archives in St. Louis, Missouri; St.

Louis, Missouri; Record Group: Records of the Selective Service System, 147; Box: 1356, Ancestry.Com. U.S. WWII Draft Cards Young Men, 1940-1947 [Database Online]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.Com Operations, Inc., 2011.,” October 16, 1940, Draft Registration Cards for Texas, 10/16/1940 - 03/31/1947, The National Archives in St. Louis, Missouri; St. Louis, Missouri; Record Group: Records of the Selective Service System, 147; Box: 1356, <https://www.fold3.com/image/625362380?xid=1022> and in “News From The Boys Serving In The Armed Forces of Uncle Sam,” *Lubbock Avalanche-Journal*, August 8, 1943.

³⁶ Kathleen O’Donnell, interviewed by April Rosenblum, Philadelphia, PA, Transcript, July 12, 2019, 23; Bobbie Newman, “Growing up with the Houston Symphony,” *Houston Symphony* (blog), January 24, 2011, <https://houstonsymphony.org/growing-up-with-the-houston-symphony/>.

³⁷ Here, as in many official documents, her name was misspelled. Miriam’s own hand always recorded her given legal name as “Marion,” a spelling typical in the U.S. for boys. Marian Seidler Petition for Naturalization (1940), Naturalization File 5275, Texas District Court, Houston; Page 42. Ancestry.com. Texas Naturalization Records, 1852-1991 [Database online]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.Com Operations, Inc., 2012. https://search.ancestry.ca/cgi-bin/sse.dll?dbid=2509&h=900159400&indiv=try&o_vc=Record:OtherRecord&rhSource=2238, accessed 5/13/19.

³⁸ “United States World War II Draft Registration Cards, Card for William Seidler, Serial No. 948, Local Draft Board 9, Houston, Harris County, Texas; The National Archives in St. Louis, Missouri; St. Louis, Missouri; Record Group: Records of the Selective Service System, 147; Box: 1356, Ancestry.Com. U.S. WWII Draft Cards Young Men, 1940-1947 [Database Online]. Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.Com Operations, Inc., 2011.,” October 16, 1940, Draft Registration Cards for Texas, 10/16/1940 - 03/31/1947, The National Archives in St. Louis, Missouri; Records of the Selective Service System, 147; Box: 1356, <https://www.fold3.com/image/625362380?xid=1022>.

³⁹ Jacob Zallel Lauterbach, *The Naming of Children in Jewish Folklore, Ritual and Practice* (Cincinnati: CCAR, 1932), 21-22, in Omi Morgenstern Leissner, “Jewish Women’s Naming Rites and the Rights of Jewish Women,” *Nashim: A Journal of Jewish Women’s Studies & Gender Issues*, no. 4 (2001), 172, note 101.

⁴⁰ Deborah E. Lipstadt, *Beyond Belief: The American Press And The Coming Of The Holocaust, 1933- 1945* (New York: Free Press, 1993), 159–60.

⁴¹ Miriam recalled that Texas’ antisemitic atmosphere made her unwilling to remain in Texas without Bill. Kathleen O’Donnell, July 12, 2019, 23. “News From The Boys Serving In The Armed Forces of Uncle Sam.”

⁴² Jack Helsel, “Beatles Came, Conquered, Sang - But Not Heard,” *Daily News*, September 3, 1964.

⁴³ Joe O’Dowd, “City Officials Ready for ‘Operation Beatle,’” *Philadelphia Daily News*, August 19, 1964; “Seems Everybody Loves the Beatles,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, August 19, 1964; “Beatles Four to Play the Hall - It’ll Be Packed from Wall to Wall,” *Philadelphia Daily News*, September 2, 1964.

⁴⁴ Based on real estate records, telephone directories and the timing of David’s freshman year of high school, the Seidlers probably moved to Laverock in the summer of 1956. “8020 Cobden Rd, Laverock, PA,” Trulia Real Estate Search, accessed February 5, 2020, <https://www.trulia.com/p/pa/laverock/8020-cobden-rd-laverock-pa-19038--2016930518>; *Philadelphia, Pennsylvania White Pages - Philadelphia - LIGGET through z*, 1956, 1089, <https://www.loc.gov/item/usteledirec08121/>; *Philadelphia, Pennsylvania White Pages - LITVACK through z*, May 1957, 1094, <https://www.loc.gov/item/usteledirec08125/>; *Yearbook* (Wyncote, PA: Cheltenham High School, 1960), 80, <https://www.classmates.com/yearbooks/Cheltenham-High-School/1000247050>. Miriam mentioned her disinterest in gardening when remembering life in Laverock (Deborah Zubow, in discussion with the author, July 29th, 2019). Clothing donation was to Larry Robin (Larry Robin, interviewed by April Rosenblum, Philadelphia, PA, Transcript, May 23, 2019, 41–42). Miriam mentions anti-nuclear work, specifically Women Strike for Peace, in her biographical sketch for the WILPF Newsletter. Melvin Metelits met the Seidlers through the Social Science Forum (Excerpts of Melvin Metelits, interviewed by April Rosenblum, Philadelphia, PA, Transcript, July 12, 2019, 4–7).

⁴⁵ Janie’s entrance into the store is mentioned in her biographical sketch for the WILPF Newsletter. David as the reason for moving to Laverock is mentioned by Deborah Zubow (Deborah Zubow and Kathleen O’Donnell, interviewed by April Rosenblum, Philadelphia, PA, 29). David’s graduation in 1964 is confirmed by *The Quaker (Yearbook)* (Greensboro, North Carolina: Guilford College, 1964), 62. <https://lib.digitalinc.org/record/28188?ln=en#?c=0&m=0&s=0&cv=61&r=0&xywh=-339%2C-64%2C4012%2C2438>.

⁴⁶ Lenora E. Berson, *Case Study of a Riot: The Philadelphia Story* (Institute of Human Relations Press, American Jewish Committee, 1966), 27–39.

⁴⁷ On hiring protests see 136-141 and on Phylaw's death see 154-155 of Matthew J. Countryman, *Up South: Civil Rights and Black Power in Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 2007).

⁴⁸ Advance anxieties among human relations advocates about a summer 1964 riot are mentioned in Berson, *Case Study of a Riot*, 21. Philadelphia's Black press watched the conflagrations occurring in other cities with a keen awareness of the earlier 20th century race riots, driven by white mobs. The *Tribune* printed a three-part series, with articles such as "Race Riot! The Time Bomb Haunting Large U. S. Cities: 1919 Chicago, Ill. Strife Began at 'Colored' Beach: Negro Boy Swims into Forbidden Area to Death," August 15, 1964, p. 3.

⁴⁹ Matthew Countryman discusses Moore's plans for police precincts in *Up South*, 160. Moore derived grassroots credibility from this willingness to offend and he was comfortable targeting Jews for this purpose. This caused great pain and tension for white Jewish human relations advocates and resulted in censure from NAACP's national leadership, as in 1963, when he denounced Jews as exploiters of Blacks and called white Jews engaged in Civil Rights phonies. See Murray Friedman, ed., *Philadelphia Jewish Life, 1940-1985* (Philadelphia: Seth Press Inc., 1986), 155-56; Countryman, *Up South*, 151-52. On Moore's impact on the city, see Arthur C. Willis, *Cecil's City: A History of Blacks in Philadelphia, 1638-1979* (New York: Carlton Press, 1990).

⁵⁰ "Vigil Supports Freedom Delegation," *CORE-LATOR* (bimonthly newsletter), October 1964.

⁵¹ On Fannie Lou Hamer, see Keisha Blain's forthcoming work, *Until I Am Free: Fannie Lou Hamer's Enduring Message to America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2021). Hamer's recollection of how she learned from Civil Rights workers in 1962 of her right to vote is reprinted in Van Gosse, "Fannie Lou Hamer," in *The Movements of the New Left, 1950-1975: A Brief History with Documents*, ed. Van Gosse, The Bedford Series in History and Culture (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2005), 61-62, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-137-04781-6_15.

⁵² "The Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (Considerations Underlying the Development of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party)," undated, Ella Baker papers, 1959-1965; Archives Main Stacks, SC628, Wisconsin Historical Society, <https://content.wisconsinhistory.org/digital/collection/p15932coll2/id/18091>.

⁵³ "Testimony Before the Credentials Committee by Fannie Lou Hamer" (1964), <http://americanradioworks.publicradio.org/features/sayitplain/flhamer.html>, accessed 2/2/20, or see Hamer's collected speeches in Maegan Parker Brooks and Davis W. Houck, *The Speeches of Fannie Lou Hamer: To Tell It Like It Is* (Jackson: Univ. Press of Mississippi, 2011).

⁵⁴ Barbara Ransby, *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement: A Radical Democratic Vision* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2005), 338-41.

⁵⁵ John Lewis and Michael D'Orso, *Walking with the Wind: A Memoir of the Movement* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2015), 291-292. For more of Lewis' reflections on one such struggle between himself and Stokely Carmichael, see "Documenting the American South: Oral Histories of the American South," *Choice Reviews Online* 49, no. 08 (April 1, 2012): 49-4652-49-4652, <https://doi.org/10.5860/CHOICE.49-4652>.

⁵⁶ Barbara Easley-Cox, interviewed by April Rosenblum via telephone, Transcript, July 2, 2019, 9-11; Helsel, "Beatles Came, Conquered, Sang - But Not Heard."

⁵⁷ Barbara Easley-Cox, interviewed by April Rosenblum, transcript, via telephone (July 26, 2019, p. 16) and in (Philadelphia (May 19, 2019, 15-16).

⁵⁸ Muhammad Ahmad, Interview with Barbara Easley-Cox, VHS (video cassette), 1991, Barbara Easley-Cox Papers, Blockson Collection.

⁵⁹ Countryman, *Up South*, 157; Paul Levy, "Woman Clerk Is Held on Bail in Riot Charge," *Evening Bulletin*, September 17, 1964, "Riots--Philadelphia--Miscellaneous--1964 August--Trials and Convictions--1964-66" folder. George D. McDowell Philadelphia Evening Bulletin newspaper clipping collection, Temple University Special Collections Research Center, Philadelphia, PA.

⁶⁰ On public debates about limitations on police during the riots, see Nicole Maurantonio, "Standing By: Police Paralysis, Race, and the 1964 Philadelphia Riot," *Journalism History*, January 1, 2012, 110-21.

⁶¹ Elizabeth Hinton points out that incidents like these – police abuse of Black Philadelphia youth – helped to form national crime policy under Nixon and Ford. Policymakers were influenced (or had their biases confirmed) by University of Pennsylvania criminologist Marvin Wolfgang, who studied 10,000 Philadelphia boys born in in 1945 and released his findings in 1972 as *Delinquency in a Birth Cohort*. Wolfgang's conclusions, that Black and Latino youth were disproportionately criminals and recidivists, were based on a fundamental flaw: "In reality, Wolfgang's [research] captured more the extent of police contact with black youth than a 'pattern of criminality'; Wolfgang

had labeled as 'delinquent' any youth who had come into contact with police for something other than a traffic violation, and the fact that African Americans were more likely to be stopped by police on 'suspicion,' to be assaulted verbally or physically, and to be arrested skewed the conclusions Wolfgang reached about black criminality." *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime: The Making of Mass Incarceration in America* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2016), 224–25. Kenneth Salaam, interviewed by Dr. Diane Turner in Philadelphia, May 9, 2011, 8–9, Charles L. Blockson Afro-American Collection, <https://digital.library.temple.edu/digital/collection/p16002coll1/id/18/>.

⁶² Kenneth Salaam, interviewed by Dr. Diane Turner in Philadelphia, 16–17.

⁶³ Kenneth Salaam, interviewed by Dr. Diane Turner in Philadelphia, 5–6, 11.

⁶⁴ The Electrical Association of Philadelphia, "Live Better...Electrically in the Fabulous Sixties with 100-A Housepower (Advertisement)," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 10, 1960, 32; Frigidaire/J.J. Pocock, "Just What You've Been Waiting for to Replace Your Obsolete Refrigerator! (advertisement)," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, May 11, 1952, 19. <https://www.newspapers.com/image/172755365>, accessed 6/10/19.

⁶⁵ Similar sentiments about white business practices were expressed by Black letter and opinion writers reflecting on the riot in the community's *Tribune* newspaper. See J.R. Moses, "Riot's Cause Derived From 400 Years of Slavery and Oppression," *Philadelphia Tribune*, September 5, 1964; A Negro American, "N. Phila. Riots, Looting Should Be a Lesson to Dishonest Businessmen," *Philadelphia Tribune*, September 5, 1964. Kenneth Salaam, interviewed by Dr. Diane Turner in Philadelphia, 13; Berson, *Case Study of a Riot*, 42–43. Hannah Fagin, "A Long, Hot Summer: The 1964 Columbia Avenue Race Riot and the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Philadelphia" (Undergraduate thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 2017), 85.

⁶⁶ Berson, *Case Study of a Riot*, 18. Fagin, "A Long, Hot Summer: The 1964 Columbia Avenue Race Riot and the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Philadelphia," 5; Lou Scheinfeld, "Loot Victims Give Mann the Business," *Philadelphia Daily News*, September 3, 1964.

⁶⁷ The year before, Evans had helped to organize a local contingent to the March on Washington. Michelle Osborn, "Jewish Mother Speaks up for the Black Panthers," *Evening Bulletin*, January 6, 1970; Berson, *Case Study of a Riot*, 16.; Joseph H. Trachtman and William B. Collins, "Victims of Riot Looting Boo Mann at Aid Session," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 3, 1964.

⁶⁸ Scheinfeld, "Loot Victims Give Mann the Business," 10.

⁶⁹ Scheinfeld, 10.

⁷⁰ Rose DeWolf, "Beatles Thrill 13,000 Girls," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, September 3, 1964. Dick Aarons and Tom Fox, "Ringo Tips His Mop to Star Police Work," *Philadelphia Daily News*, September 3, 1964.