

University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire

Polish Power:
A Community's Reaction to the Great Migration
And the Fair Housing Act of 1968

Capstone
History 489: Research Seminar

Advising Professor: Dr. Patricia Turner
Cooperating Professor: Dr. James Oberly

Department of History

By:
Caroline Saksefski

Eau Claire, Wisconsin
November 16, 2017

Table of Contents:

I.	Abstract.....	2
II.	Introduction.....	3
III.	Literature Review.....	4
IV.	Part One: Immigration and Migration	
	a. First and Second Wave.....	8
	b. Brief History of Milwaukee's South Side.....	11
	c. The Great Migration.....	15
V.	Part Two Politics	
	a. Zablocki.....	17
	b. The 1964 Election.....	19
VI.	Part Three: Civil Rights	
	a. The summer of 1967.....	21
VII.	Conclusion.....	23
VIII.	Bibliography.....	25

Abstract:

The South Side of Milwaukee, Wisconsin had been deemed Polish since the 1850's. When they arrived from Europe, the Poles were seen as second class white in the primarily German city and forced to live in a specific area. They showed little resistance and came to call the area Little Polonia. It was their new found country within the United States, a safe place. It would not be until 1945, when the Poles began to feel threatened by the influx of rural Black Southerners would move to the North Side of Milwaukee. They saw this new community as thieves against their economic and social position. So the white communities enacted similar policies to the Jim Crow South, separating: schools, factories and play grounds. Although, the Polish had accepted their standing and the territory that came with it, but the Black community become restless and fought for the freedoms that they had earned long ago. Through Census surveys, newspaper articles and ethno mapping, to pursue an explanation of strong racial tensions in Milwaukee resulting in a riot and over 200 marches for open housing in the summer of 1967.

Introduction:

The Polish community in the South Side of Milwaukee has been a distinguishable attribute since the 1901. Their prominence can be seen in the political, social and architectural history of the Wisconsin city. The Poles had moved into a primarily German city, a group who saw their community as an embarrassment to European virtues and had criticized the Polish for generations. The Poles quickly learned that moving continents could not stop prejudices embedded into German culture, until Polish would prove their whiteness in the 1960s. The discrimination the Poles faced when coming to America would alter their initiatives during the Civil Rights Era. The Polish from their own hardships would come to judge the African-American population that would migrate from the harsh rural South.

The First Wave of Immigration brought the Germans to Milwaukee. They created a German metropolis in the North of the city including creating the local government in the Downtown that would eventually control the whole city. In 1830, the South Side was Scandinavian and had little to no say in what happened in the North due to a lack of bridge over the river disconnecting the two halves. This disconnection still remains till this day. The first group of Poles to arrive in Milwaukee came in 1849 but quickly moved to east of the city to persevere a life in farming. The group of Poles that would remain in the city came in 1890 and stayed to be industrial workers because there was no farm land nearby. So they resided in the South Side working in German Factories.

Starting in 1910 and continuing into the 1970, there was a movement sweeping from the South to the North of the United States. Large groups of rural Black farmers were moving from states such as Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi and other southern states to obtain industrial jobs left empty by World War Two. They sought to escape the prejudices enforced by the white

population in the South but found, as the Polish did, that even moving great distance could not relieve from the disgust of their ethnic opposites.

However similar the two communities were, the Polish did not support the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s and 1970s. The Polish South Side was part of Milwaukee's fourth voting district of Milwaukee and had a Polish representative, Clement Zablocki. They were very conservative. Their views were anti-Communist, pro-segregation and pro-Polish. Their district voted for segregationist George Wallace from Alabama as their 1964 democratic presidential candidate. Even though the Polish had been discriminated against for housing and development projects, and civil rights legislation could benefit them; they refused to see the positives and focused on their distain towards the Blacks. Which would eventually cause White Flight to the suburbs in the late 1970s and 1980s.

Literature Review:

In 2000 the United States census released, "Country Level Overview: African Americans living in Wisconsin,"¹ a report stating Milwaukee is statistically most Segregated city in the United States of America. How Milwaukee became and has stayed so segregated had been a topic discussed by national and local scholars since the late 1970's. Many believe that integration of Black communities was not the only problem of incorporation that the city has seen. In John Gurda's "A Separate Settlement: a Study of One Section of Milwaukee's South Side,"² he writes about the Polish neighborhood, the South Side, as a product of German's concentration into forcing the immigrant group into one part of the city. Gurda mentions how the Polish tried to push against their proclaimed boundaries but eventually gave up and settled into

¹ United States Census Bureau, Wisconsin Branch. "Census 2000 Redistricting Data, Public Law 94-171 Summary File." Washington DC, Government Printing Office, 2000. (Accessed March 16, 2009).

www.census.gov/census2000/states/wi

² John, Gurda. "A Separate Settlement: A Study of One Section of Milwaukee's South Side." United Community Services of Greater Milwaukee, 1974

their surrounds. The community did not leave the South Side until the 1980, when a large group of Latino minorities moved into the Polish neighbors left behind due to white flight to Milwaukee's suburbs. Gurda contributed to the writing of Milwaukee's initial immigrant groups such as the Germans, Poles and Scandinavians. This paper would become a key player in this paper as it examines why the Polish would become protective of their Neighborhood.

The Great Migration Book

Politics played a large roll in Polish Pride during the twentieth century and this is highlighted in Stephen M. Leahy's *The Life of Milwaukee's Most Popular Politician, Cement J. Zablocki: Milwaukee Politics and Congressional Foreign Policy*.³ The literature capitalizes on Zablocki's popularity with the Fourth District of Milwaukee, the Polish South Side. The congressman fed off the praise and response of his conservative district. He was born and raised by two Polish immigrant parents, worked at several catholic churches as a music director to pay his way through college, and was a high school teacher before he became a politician making Zablocki a popular man amongst the community. Leahy's writing speaks about the fond light that was shined on Zablocki's career. He only came under fire once for being too liberal in voting for the Civil Rights act of 1964 and the Voting Rights act of 1965. Zablocki was loved and the book showcased this affection. He was a Pole helping his fellow Poles, Zablocki was loved and the book showcased this affection.

Gerd Korman wrote a book that relates to the topic of American immigration from Europe, but he takes a darker and wider angle on the subject in his book *Industrialization, Immigrants, and Americanizers, the View from Milwaukee*.⁴ Korman degrades the belief that America was the land of opportunities and speaks of it as nearly equal to Europe in terms of

³ Leahy, Stephen M. *The Life of Milwaukee's Most Popular Politician, Clement J. Zablocki: Milwaukee Politics and Congressional Foreign Policy*. Lewiston, N.Y.: E. Mellen Press, 2002.

⁴ Gerd, Korman *Industrialization, Immigrants, and Americanizers, the View from Milwaukee, 1866-1921*.

freedom. Milwaukee is a case study for his book, speaking about the Polish community as a key Political player for why Alabama Governor George Wallace won the Democratic nomination in Milwaukee County. Distinguishing their segregation from the German community as one of the reasons for the Polish dislike for the nearby Black community. Korman makes valid points for why Milwaukee's industrialization did not deliver on its promises of the American dream, but caused this separation between the races and classes as they competed for jobs. The book added how communities in Milwaukee came to view the Black communities in a negative light.

This discontent caused by a mix of industrialization and European immigrants leading to the segregation of the distinct ethnic communities in Milwaukee. This system of racism in the north may have been more hidden than the South, but like most white communities this was called into question in the 1960's. Patrick D Jones wrote a book published in 2009, *The Selma of the North: Civil Rights Insurgency in Milwaukee*⁵, discusses how Milwaukee compares to a southern city during the Civil Rights Era. He does a complete analysis of the N.A.A.C.P (National Association for the Advancement of Colored People) efforts in Milwaukee to Martin Luther King Jr's efforts in the South. The main theory of the Book is to discuss how the North was as racist as the South, if not more. Jones talks about how Milwaukee's founding and how it was transformed into the Selma of the North. But the Wisconsin city was not the only place in the North that displayed racist views based on old European ethnic groups' prejudices. In Anthony J. Lukas's book, *Common Ground: a Turbulent Decade in the Lives of Three American Families*⁶, He mentions three families with deep roots in Boston, Massachusetts. The first is the Twymons an African-American working-class family, next a working-class Irish family and the last a

⁵ Jones, Patrick D. *The Selma of the North: Civil Rights Insurgency in Milwaukee*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009.

⁶ Lukas, J. Anthony. *Common Ground: A Turbulent Decade in the Lives of three American Families*. New York: Vintage Books, 1986.

Yankee middle class family. Lukas goes through each families personal past starting by how each family arrived in Boston and how they are different than the ethnic groups that surround them. He focuses on the 1960s and 1970s political unrest that existed and analyses the relationship between the African American and Irish populations. This comparison is similar to the one occurring in this paper –the Poles and Blacks- as these two groups- were considered the same socioeconomic status and class. The Irish were extremely vocal about being pro-segregation, especially during the busing-desegregation from 1974 to 1988. The Irish thought by having African American children ride on the same bus as their own; it would cause their children to become deviants. The buses situation has similarities to the response to open housing in Milwaukee in the mid-1960s. *Common Ground* mentions the aftermath of desegregation as well, taking about how the Yankee family, who originally lived one block way from the Twymons moved outside of the city in the mid-1980’s due to the growing racial violence in the neighborhood next to them. Equable to the white flight, which would occur in the 1980s and 1970s in Milwaukee. The Twymons would reside in that neighborhood because they had no other opinions like the Yankees.

Stories like the Twymons are common place across the United States, the Fair Housing Act may have passed in 1968, but its power would never be fully enforced. Many families in Chicago, Boston, Milwaukee and other cities will suffer from unfair evictions or housing discrimination in the present day. *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*⁷ by Matthew Desmond is recent addition to a list of books written about systematic racism and classism in American Cities. The book factors in landlords, tenants, police and local politics in to colorful display of housing in America’s most segregated city, Milwaukee. Desmond is careful to examine Milwaukee under a microscope while still applying the actions in Wisconsin to that of

⁷ Desmond, Matthew. *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*. London: Penguin Books, 2017.

instances around the country. It is the power of movement that upper-class and the white-class have held against the impoverished and the minorities in the United States.

These separate topics combined lead to explain the reason the Polish community initially separated and then persecuted the Black community. From their own persecution in their homeland following them to Milwaukee, leading to their chosen confinements to the South Side. The Poles had obligation to protect those they deemed outsiders. They had their own valued conservative congressman Zablocki and believed in segregation to protect the Polish-American way of life. These beliefs were similar to that of other second-class whites, like the Irish. This paper will encase these topics to create an answer on why the Polish population was threatened by the growing African-American community. Then how their devotion to their community got the better of them during the Civil Rights Era.:-

Part One: Coming Home To Milwaukee

In *We, The Milwaukee Poles: The History of Milwaukeeans of Polish Descent and a Record of their Contributions to the Greatness of Milwaukee*, is a celebratory journal written about the South Side Polish Community compiled by Thaddeus Borun. The journal was created in order to commemorate the hundred years passed from the arrival of the John Szulakiewicz the *first* Polish man to come to Milwaukee in 1849.⁸ Szulakiewicz would be one of few Polish immigrants, who would come during the first wave of European immigration. The newly founded United States of America would see their first wave which would span from 1790 to 1849, which include people pouring in from Britain, Ireland, and the German Principalities. There for the Polish immigrants who came during this time would still be considered minorities, but why did they leave Poland? Or rather Prussia, as Poland did not become a country until 1918.

⁸ Thaddeus, Borun. *We, the Milwaukee Poles: the history of Milwaukee of Polish descent and a Record of their contributions to the greatness of Milwaukee*. Milwaukee: Nowiny, 1946.

Polish people came to the United States for similar reasons to that of any Eastern European during this period. Immigrants were looking for economic advancement, land, free speech and relief from political strife.

What was Poland Before?

Prussia during the 1800's was constantly either in a conflict or on the verge of starting another one. In the 1860's the empire was involved in conflicts and wars involving German provinces and Austria. Along with the annexation of German Holstein, political battles with local Jewish and Polish populations. When the Franco-Prussian war began in 1870's and Napoleon III declaring war on the newly unified Germany many like the Jewish and Polish people decided to immigrate to America on the principals of escaping the war torn territory that they had called home for centuries. The Jewish and Polish did not only leave because of the conflicts, but because knew that even after the conflicts had ended nothing would change for them. Their prosecution by the Prussian Elite would continue and some left, but most would stay until the end of World War One. Prussia would completely dissipate by 1918

~~The First Great War devastated Eastern Europe: the economy sank, inflation rose and the second case whites, like the Jews and Poles, felt the greatest turmoil. Land was harder to acquire, along with jobs, food and prosperity. The populations of Eastern Europe could see the writing on the walls and many decided to leave fearing that another great war would arise and they would be forced to flight in another conflict that would not improve their status of wealth or popularity among their Prussian cohorts. Poles were not respected and the countries that held parts of the soon to be formed country, such as Prussia, Russia and Austria, had made that clear. In all three countries young Polish men were required to serve in their militaries, even though they were not~~

considered native born and not treated equally to their native born cohorts. In Prussia, if a child spoke Polish in School, they would be forced to wear a dunce metal. Polish were Catholics and the religion itself had been oppressed since the 1517 Lutheran Reformation. The Polish communities tried to rebel, but all resistance ultimately failed. By the time the 1860 rolled around many Polish families decided to leaving for America in hope of a better future. During this period between 1850 and 1930 in the United States of America would see a second influx of European Immigrants. This era was primarily Poles, Irish Catholics, Hungarians, Greeks, Jews and Italians. This wave of immigrants was not welcomed as warmly as the first, as many who had previously arrived in America believe that this crowd would cause political discourse and economic downturn. These settled immigrants, especially the Germans viewed groups, such as the Poles and Hungarians, as second class whites because they were not pure German. Poland and Hungary were both formed out of what was Prussia after World War One. Germany was formed from Prussia, but had unified in 1871 because they were a more present and vocal ethnic group. Thus, Germans and German-Americans saw themselves as a group of first class whites, as they previously did in Europe. The German prejudices that were created before immigrating to America would continue into the 1960's. But it was easy seen in the city of Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

In the 1830's, The North side of Milwaukee was founded by Solomon Juneau and Byron Kilbourn. The two settlements were built on the Milwaukee River in the area that would later become downtown. However the two founders struggled for dominance and both competed for local business opportunities. The rivalry between the two founders became so intense that settlers moved to the new city just to participate or to observe. But the separation between the two sides

resulted in a short war called the “Great Bridge War,” proving Kilbourn to be the superior leader and he combined the two halves of Northern Milwaukee.

At the same time George Walker settled in the South Side of the city, which is currently known as Walkers Point. He built in a geographically significant area as the land was separated from North Milwaukee by a large swamp and the North Side could only be reached by boat. The physical barrier soon became a socioeconomic one, as the settlers who could afford to hire a river charter traveled north and those who could not remained in the South Side. Walker was south side proud, he refused to build a bridge system connected to the north because he believed his constituents would leave. As Milwaukee continued to grow, the South Side grew restless with Walker as in 1944, a referendum was held to determine where bridges would be built across Milwaukee and South-siders were not invited to give input. This would start a trend that would last to the modern era of the South Side feeling that their voices were not being heard downtown. This Division between the North and South persist to this day, even though the swamp dried but the signs of this separation between downtown and walkers point has shaped Milwaukee early on.

After the “Great Bridge War,” the first wave of immigration would bring fresh blood into the Milwaukee area, primarily Germans. By the 1850’s the Germans would become the most prevalent ethnic group in Milwaukee. This initial group of Germans came between 1835 and 1844 and sought religious freedoms. Many of the Germans were facing religious persecution for being Protestant in Prussia, a primarily Lutheran state. When this first group came to Milwaukee, they had spent their last dime to settle in Northern Milwaukee. The large group of immigrants instantly set up communities with their own culture, schools and leadership. The Milwaukee

German's population continued to grow obtaining another group of immigrants from 1844 till 1854, this group was leaving due to political strife caused by the unification of the German.

The community thrived, eventually having their own schools, hospitals, lawyers, gymnasiums and their own lawmakers. The German-American population out-grew the North side and eventually expanded into the Walker's Point area, which at this time was mainly a small group of Scandinavian immigrants. During the 1860's industry began to develop in Milwaukee providing many German residents with jobs. Farming, which initially existed when the first Yankees like Kilbourn and Walker lived in the city, was being replaced and land became less available.

The German population dominated most of Milwaukee, leaving only the South Side to the current Scandinavian population. The Scandinavian, primarily farmers, decided to leave the South Side to search for more open land outside of the City limits. They moved to the northern part of Wisconsin, along the shores of the Mississippi River and some in the newly found state of Minnesota. Some remained in the city, but their influence would never be as strong as the Germans who now surrounded them.

In John Gurda's "A Separate Set Settlement: A study of one Section of Milwaukee's South Side," the professor discusses the separate ethnic groups that paint the walls of Milwaukee's colorful past. He focuses on the German's Scandinavians and Polish as the three most prevalent groups and his case study is on the Polish South Side. Even though the South Side was as German as the North; many, including Gurda, conclude it to be Polish because as he states, "The foreignness of the Polish community was highly visible in a city so heavily German, especially since the Poles were the second largest ethnic group. The Germans were spread

throughout the city, and the Poles were grouped on the South Side.”⁹ Gurda goes on to talk about the prevalence of the Milwaukee Polish Population.

The First large group of Polish immigrants to arrive would come to Milwaukee in the 1890’s. Their arrival is considered part of the Second Wave on immigration into America from the European countries. The new Poles desired to become industry workers. Many had come specifically to Milwaukee due to an advertisement campaign by local industry. Since most Poles were working in the fields of landowning Germans or Prussians, they came to Milwaukee. They built homes near the developing industry in the South Side. They filled in the blank spaces left behind by the Scandinavians that once inhabited the south side, but they were able to create their own neighborhood. Starting at Greenfield South to Oklahoma Avenue, extending to South 27th Street and then to Lake Michigan. Lincoln Avenue was considered their main street and then Mitchell Street was known as “the Polish Grand Avenue.” These limits would define the Polish neighborhood up until the 1970s.

In *Industrialization, Immigrants, and Americanizers: the View from Milwaukee*, Gerd Korman mentions, “Any immigrants who thought that moving to the Land of the Free made them masters of their own destinies – or even of their economic well-being – were in for a rude shock.”¹⁰ Korman’s writings relate heavily to what the Polish would come to find when they initially attempted to transform the South Side into their own. They had entered a German Town, with a German attitude toward the Polish ethnicity. Which explains why the Polish community was confined to the limits mentioned above, but they also preferred to be separated from the other groups that surrounded them. However, the separation would harm the economic

⁹ John, Gurda. “A Separate Settlement: A Study of One Section of Milwaukee’s South Side.” United Community Services of Greater Milwaukee, 1974 p.11

¹⁰ Gerd Korman, *Industrialization, Immigrants, and Americanizers, the View from Milwaukee, 1866-1921*.

advancement of the group, as most factories were German owned, so they could never surpass the position of foreman.

Therefore the Polish began to create their own economy. They had their own doctors, lawyers, clergy and soon Polish lawmakers. Their pride was strong, along with their will to progress their own ethnicity. The Polish were one of the few Catholic groups in Milwaukee, leading them having their own clergy and being an important part of Milwaukee's young archdioceses. In 1901, Saint Josaphat Basilica was completed and became a pinnacle of Polish pride. It was a huge display of prominence sitting at the Junction of West Lincoln Avenue and 6th Street. It loomed over the Neighborhood with its large dome and saints carved out of stone. The church was a symbol of how developed the Polish population was becoming.

The Great Migration:

In 1870, the United States Census reported that ninety percent of *colored* individuals lived in the Southern States.¹¹ This was five years after the end of Civil War and Slavery within the United States, Black southerners still felt the pressures of the Era that had just ended. Many former slaves ended up working for the white plantation owners that had just recently lost their free labor. Sharecropping is where individuals rent land from, in this case from plantation owners, and would work the land for the landlord. They went from being slaves to being tenants, but their economic status never rose. The Black went from being owned to paying rent with money they didn't nor could earn until the 1865, leaving most families in a tough economic situation with no light at the end of the tunnel.

At this time Blacks may have not been owned, but they also did not enjoy the freedoms that the common white man did. They could not vote without being deterred by angry whites

¹¹ Campbell, Gibson. "Library." Population of the 100 Largest Cities and Other Urban Places. June 01, 1998. Accessed December 08, 2017. <https://www.census.gov/library/working-papers/1998/demo/POP-twps0027.html>.

either creating by preventive legislator or he legally backed Grandfather Clause, a preventive measure that deemed anyone with a non-voting grandfather unfit to vote, so if one's grandfather or father was enslaved then they could not vote.¹² They were also physically threatened when they tried to cast their vote. They ran the risk of being beaten or killed for trying to peruse their freedoms. It would not be until 1965 Voting Rights act that would prevent would make legislation, like the grandfather clause, illegal, but did nothing to prevent social and physical backlash. Even the Milwaukee Polish South Side condemned their own Democratic congressman Clement Zablocki for voting in favor of the federal law, believing it to be the end to their America. These events were not solely happening with in the states below the Mason Dixon line.

Between the 1910 and 1970, many Black Americans moved to Northern States believing that leaving the Antebellum South would provide them with greater economic opportunities and would allow them a greater amount of freedom, this era of movement was named The Great Migration. The movement would peak in 1940s, while World War Two was occurring, there were many industrial jobs available in Milwaukee. The jobs offered better pay to African-Americans than those in the South. Therefore, they made the move north. These reason ring eerily similar to that of why they Polish communities left Prussia, Russia, Germany and Austria. Everyone wanted a chance at a better life, the American life. The Polish community in Milwaukee was forced to live within the limits boundaries of their neighborhood, and they accepted their territory. The Black community that would move into North Milwaukee, however did not want to be confined by their settlement, they want a space to grow, to integrate, something different from the Southern roots they came from. Milwaukee, however, was not the

¹² Alan, Greenblatt. "The Racial History of the 'Grandfather Clause.'" NPR. October 22, 2013. Accessed December 08, 2017. <https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2013/10/21/239081586/the-racial-history-of-the-grandfather-clause>.

Eden they believed it to be, instead found it to be as difficult for a minority Black individual or family to rise in socioeconomic status as in the South.

Segregation occurred in the schools and in the streets, the northerners may have been less vocal than southerners and actions speak louder than words. Schools were not separated by race, but classrooms, playgrounds and grocery stores were. In the factories, which were the main reason from most Blacks to make the move, paid them less than the average white class worker. When claims of racism were made against the schools or factories, they waved it off as none of these separation policies were written. It was a social norm to displace the now growing Black American population, to place them lower than even second class whites, like the polish.

The Black population resided on the North Side of Milwaukee. These neighborhoods were immediately labeled Black and became the only places where the community to find housing. If they were to look anywhere else in the city they would be denied. If more Blacks moved to Milwaukee, they too would be forced into these neighborhood, which lie just north of the Polish South Side. The rise in population caused these neighborhoods had close to unlivable conditions due to overcrowding and became ghettos. The 1964 election occurs the results proving systematic racism being seriously established in Milwaukee as know segregationist George Wallace won several districts. One very Polish district in particular, the 4th district which lies in the South Side.

Part Two: Politics

Zablocki:

In 1942, a Milwaukee born Polish man named Clement John Zablocki was elected to the Wisconsin State Senate. After, Zablocki earned the position in The U.S. House of

Representatives representing Wisconsin 4th district from 1949 till his death in 1983. His parents were both Polish immigrants and his father worked as a laborer and owned a grocery store with his wife. Zablocki paid his way through college at Marquette University by playing the organ and directing choirs at local catholic churches. He taught at a local High School when he decided to run for State Senate, the first time. He was a star of the South Side, glimmering with Polish pride. The neighborhood felt as if they had finally become a major player in American Politics.

Zablocki was the Chairman of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs during the presidencies of Jimmy Carter and Ronald Reagan. He made decisions related to the Iran Hostage Crisis and the Taiwan Relations Act that would define American international politics for decades after. The South Side was enamored by their politician, he was from the generation that suffered through the strain of World War Two and showed the reserve that the Polish respected and responded too. He was a reserved, democrat, incumbent congress man. According to Stephen M. Leahy's *The Life of Milwaukee's Most Popular Politician, Clement J. Zablocki: Milwaukee Politics and Congressional Foreign Policy*.¹³ Even though Zablocki lived the last years of his life in Washington D.C, he spoke about his constituents with such fondness that he was even quoted in his obituary as stating, "I think my constituents are more conservative than some of my Democratic colleagues. They are supportive of a strong national defense, and are fiercely anti-Communist, and in that respect I reflect their views to a T."¹⁴ He often made statements appealing to the intelligence of the South Side.

However his favoritism toward the Polish population would eventually become a problem in the Civil Rights Era. He represented conservative constituents, so he did what any

¹³ Stephen M, Leahy. *The Life of Milwaukee's Most Popular Politician, Clement J. Zablocki: Milwaukee Politics and Congressional Foreign Policy*. Lewiston, N.Y.: E. Mellen Press, 2002.

¹⁴ Steven V, Roberts "Clement J. Zablocki of foreign Affairs Panel Dies." *The New York Times*.<http://www.nytimes.com/1983/12/04/obituaries/clement-jzablocki-of-foreign-affairs-panel-dies.html>.

politician does to keep his incumbency and he listened. Zablocki voted in favor of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which enraged many Polish constituents. The Protesters believed Zablocki to be a fundamental racist, as stated in David Anderson's, *The Human Tradition in America since 1945*, "Certainly, Zablocki's attitude toward civil rights showed that he supported integration in principle but not necessarily in practice."¹⁵ This characteristics of Zablocki, as he voted against the open housing measure in a civil rights bill in 1968 in an attempt to keep the South Side Polish. Ironically, the bill was largely backed by one of the Congress man's own Constituents, a white Italian, Catholic priest, civil rights advocate, and South Side Native Reverend James N. Groppi.

The 1964 Election:

As mentioned by Zablocki his constituents were conservative, which during this time in American politics mean that they voted for the Democratic Party. Zablocki was a liberal Democrat making his more moderate. Hence, why he voted to pass both the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. These actions caused many local Poles believe that their way of life was near an end. They feared that if Blacks had more power than they already did they would move into the South Side and ruin their class system. With these attitudes in mind, Zablocki's districts headed to the polls to vote for their presidential democratic candidate. There were five main democratic candidates on the ballot: Lyndon B. Johnson, the incumbent; Pat Brown and Sam Yorty from California, George Wallace from Alabama and John W. Reynolds from Wisconsin. Reynolds would win the Wisconsin's primary, but Wallace would win the Fourth District.

¹⁵ David L, Anderson. *The human tradition in America since 1945*. Wilmington, Del: Scholarly Resources, 2003. P. 121

Wallace was an aggressive segregationist governor from Alabama and is famously known for standing against desegregation of Alabama's schools and quoted saying, "In the name of the greatest people that have ever trod this earth, I draw the line in the dust and toss the gauntlet before the feet of tyranny, and I say segregation now, segregation forever," stated during his inaugural speech. The Governor had found his footing in the primarily white districts the city of Milwaukee, even making speeches downtown and at churches claiming that Civil Rights would 'bit the dust' by 1968. He thought Civil Rights was an effort to destroy American life and the whites knew it and Milwaukee's South Side strongly agreed.

The Poles should have not stood with Wallace. He may have spoken to calm their white fears, but the community failed to understand how Civil Rights would affect them. The Polish were still considered second class whites according to the Germans and Scandinavians Americans that still lived inside the city. They were discriminated against, not as much as the Black population, but old prejudices still stood. The difference was the Polish community was shirking not expanding, unlike the Black neighborhoods, as many wealthier Poles had moved to the Suburbs. The poorer Poles remained in the South Side, fighting development from Milwaukee City Hall. In 1957, many Poles and Blacks were evicted from their homes in order to build Interstates 94 and 43. The wealthier communities diverted the interstate construction away from their own homes and placed only three blocks east of the Polish pinnacle of pride, Saint Josaphat Basilica. Their Polish strong neighborhood was split in two. If any Pol attempted to move to a still predominantly German Neighborhood, they would still be denied housing. Those who still remained in Factory work, and did not work in a Polish Factory, found it hard to gain promotions unless they had a higher education than high school. Even though the Poles believed that they had distinguished themselves in Milwaukee, they only had prominence in their own

neighborhood. Hence, the Polish community would have benefited from Civil Rights and aftermath legislation as it would allow them to more easily secured housing in a German area or be able to avoid having an interstate built through their neighborhood.

On the contrary, the Polish community was wholly conservative and thought that Civil Rights Legislation and beliefs were a threat to their way of life. The group's political views were enforced when Wallace had won in their district. One of the primary reasons the Polish had negative view of the Black Population, who had come up during the Great Migration, was that they believed that they posed an economic threat. The southern migrants had moved to the north for the same reason the Polish did and that was to gain industrial jobs in a managed economy. The Polish had come to Milwaukee nearly a hundred years before the Great Migration during hit its peak in the 1940s, but most of their population remained in the industrial jobs that the grandparents and parents had before them. The American Dream that their ancestors had come for had not yet been obtained and the American-Poles had become complacent. Their community settled and saw the South Side as a safe spot. This was their way of life they were protecting.

Part Three: Civil Rights

The summer of 1967:

In the 1965, there was a weak open housing act in the local Milwaukee laws that held little to no ground with white landlords, who deemed it a necessity to discriminate against potential black tenants. Then the NAACP office was bombed by a Ku Klux Klan member as an attempt to settle the growing discontent of the African Americans in 1966. This did not prevent the NAACP from moving forward to start their open housing marches near the homes of members that belonged to the all-white Eagles club in downtown, this include Polish Congressman Clement Zablocki. As the protest grew, so did the safety measures to protect the

white individuals that resided in those homes, so the National Guard was activated, even though the protests were peaceful.

The summer of 1967 is marked as the peak of Civil Rights Movement of Milwaukee. An act of police violence and gunfire would cause riots, leaving a hundred hurt and over fifteen hundred arrested. These four day, July 30th to August 2nd, would be engraved in history as the day that Milwaukee was on Fire. The consequences would echo in Black politics in Milwaukee for decades to come. Father Groppi, a local Italian reverend, was a white civil rights advocate and supported the integration of Milwaukee's schools, buses and primarily housing. He became the face associated with the open housing marches. Groppi with the Youth NAACP would lead over two hundred marches in 1967 and 1968.

During the initial months of the marches the Polish Community was bubbling with rage, even stating their own mission of Polish Power. They protested that marches bearing white signs with block writing deeming the South Side for Poles only.¹⁶ The Polish had been pushed around by the Germans and they would not be pushed around by the Blacks either. Their fears of an economic downturn due to integration of their neighborhood and Polish pride overwhelmed their morality and consents to see that their black neighbors were dealing with the same problems the Poles had dealt with when they first came to Milwaukee. They were doing to the Blacks, what the Germans had done to their ancestors. The oppressed had become the oppressors.

The Polish were not the only groups that objected to fair housing the on August 29th, of that same year, white Milwaukeeans would crowd outside the NAACP offices and burn it down to the ground. The police unwilling to accuse the white for the delinquencies, blamed their own police force for teargassing the white supremacists causing one of the protesters to *accidentally* throw a firebomb into office. Luckily, no one was harmed during this tolerated burning. In

¹⁶

September of that year anti-open housing rally was held in Humboldt Park, followed by a march from Bay View to Wisconsin Ave. The start of fall in Milwaukee marked the time white power was strengthened in Milwaukee. Signs were displayed around Milwaukee, saying a 'Good Groppi is a Dead Groppi' attacking the white reverend for standing by the despised Black Man. Many whites during this period thought that Open Housing meant the end to private property as landlords could no longer pick who lived in their properties. That owners would have to allow criminals and deviants into their properties. No, Fair Housing meant that they could no longer discriminate based on skin color or religious affiliation.

In February 1968, President Lyndon Johnson would begin the Kerner Commission to investigate the riot in major cities, like Milwaukee. The commission would blame the lack of economic inequality and lack of opportunity for the African-Americans violent reaction to police brutality. The commission would find this reasoning from surveys they took amongst black and white populations. Both blamed the others for the unrest in their communities. In April of 1968 the Fair Housing Act would be passed in the American Congress which would make it illegal to deny housing to any human based on race, religion or national origin. Zablocki, the Polish congressman, voted against this measure due to the fowl reactions of his constituents when he voted in favor of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Conclusion:

The German, the Polish, and the African-Americans were all communities that were brought together in Milwaukee to try to obtain a better life. The Germans faced religious persecution within their own principalities. The Polish were treated as the undesirable ethnicity in Germany, Austria, Prussia and Russia. The African Americans were separated from the whites and treated as if they were unhuman. They came to Wisconsin to try and change their fates and

the way they were treated. The Germans and Poles would eventually accomplish this task by the 1960s, as they are able to blend in as part of a greater white community. But the African Americans are still fighting for that equality that was promised to them when they came to work in the industries of Milwaukee. The Polish community should have seen the similarities between their immigrant ancestors and the Black southerners that were coming to the north to escape oppression of the deviant White Southerners. But they were subject to the same intense hatred they felt in the past and had to continue to fight in the North for their rights. They fought for their peace of the American Dream, unlike the complacent Poles who settled into their defined neighborhood. The Polish should have risen to the aid of the Blacks, to help and obtain their part of the American Dream too, but instead they claimed Polish Power and refused to see that their future could have been brightened by the Fair Housing Act of 1968.

Bibliography:

Primary

Borun, Thaddeus. *We, the Milwaukee Poles: the history of Milwaukee of Polish descent and a record of their contributions to the greatness of Milwaukee*. Milwaukee: Nowiny, 1946.

Gibson, Campbell. "Library." Population of the 100 Largest Cities and Other Urban Places. June 01, 1998. Accessed December 08, 2017. <https://www.census.gov/library/working-papers/1998/demo/POP-twps0027.html>.

Groppi, James. Papers 1959-1986. Wisconsin Historical Society Archives Collection, Madison.

Milwaukee Committee on Social Problems in the Inner Core Area of the City, *Final Report to Mayor Zeidler*. Milwaukee, WI. 1960.

O'Reilly, Charles T. *The Inner Core North: A Study of Milwaukee's Negro Community*. Milwaukee: University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 1963.

Roberts, Steven V. "Clement J. Zablocki of foreign Affairs Panel Dies." *The New York Times*. <http://www.nytimes.com/1983/12/04/obituaries/clement-jzablocki-of-foreign-affairs-panel-dies.html>.

United States Census Bureau, Wisconsin Branch. "Census 2000 Redistricting Data, Public Law 94-171 Summary File." Washington DC, Government Printing Office, 2000. (Accessed March 16, 2009). www.census.gov/census2000/states/wi

Secondary

Anderson, David L. *The human tradition in America since 1945*. Wilmington, Del: Scholarly Resources, 2003.

Baldwin, Davarian L. *Chicago's New Negroes: Modernity, the Great Migration, & Black Urban Life*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007

Desmond, Matthew. *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*. London: Penguin Books, 2017.

Geenen, Paul H. *Civil Rights Activism in Milwaukee: South Side Struggles in the '60s and '70s*. Charleston, SC: The History Press

Greenblatt, Alan. "The Racial History of the 'Grandfather Clause'." NPR. October 22, 2013. Accessed December 08, 2017. <https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2013/10/21/239081586/the-racial-history-of-the-grandfather-clause>.

Gurda, John. "A Separate Settlement: A Study of One Section of Milwaukee's South Side." United Community Services of Greater Milwaukee, 1974

"How far has Milwaukee come since the 1967 Civil Rights marches?" Projects Server Index - Milwaukee Journal Sentinel. 2017. Accessed October 27, 2017. <https://projects.jsonline.com/topics/50-year-ache/>.

Jones, Patrick D. *The Selma of the North: Civil Rights Insurgency in Milwaukee*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009.

Korman, Gerd. *Industrialization, Immigrants, and Americanizers, the View from Milwaukee, 1866-1921*.

Leahy, Stephen M. *The Life of Milwaukee's Most Popular Politician, Clement J. Zablocki: Milwaukee Politics and Congressional Foreign Policy*. Lewiston, N.Y.: E. Mellen Press, 2002.

Lukas, J. Anthony. *Common Ground: A Turbulent Decade in the Lives of three American Families*. New York: Vintage Books, 1986.

Schmid, John. "An epidemic of childhood trauma haunts Milwaukee." A Time to heal from generation to generation: The challenge facing Milwaukee and similar high-poverty cities goes beyond education, crime and jobs. March 23, 2017. Accessed October 27, 2017. <https://projects.jsonline.com/news/2017/3/23/epidemic-of-childhood-trauma-haunts-milwaukee.html>.

Referenced

McCarthy, David. "Black in a White City: Racism and Segregation in Milwaukee, 1960-1970." Edited by James Warren Oberly. HIST B.A. Theses. UWEC 2009. Minds at U.W., July 14, 2009.

Vande Zande, Jenna. "Healing "Sick" Cities: Analyzing Mid-Century Urban Renewal Literature." Advised by David Soll, Erin Devlin. HIST B.A. Theses. UWEC 2009. Minds at U.W., July 14, 2009.