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Chapter I

OPERATION BOOTSTRAP: BEGINNINGS

Introduction

Operation Bootstrap began as a local offshoot of the civil rights movement with a loose connection to the national organization known as CORE.* Operation Bootstrap was established in October of 1965, in an unused warehouse at the corner of 42nd Street and Central Avenue in southeast Los Angeles, two months after what was called the Watts rebellion. The two men who started the organization--one a local CORE dissident and the other a national CORE officer--borrowed money, the labor of their most dedicated or least resistant friends, and a motto, "Learn, Baby, Learn"--an adaptation of the Watts battle cry of the summer of 1965 ("Burn, Baby, Burn"). Thus equipped, they launched an effort to direct the energy and enthusiasm of that summer's upheaval into the channels wherein might lay the potential for poor blacks to enter the occupational world, and for the ghetto to enter the national economy.

In this episode, I give a detailed account of the gradual formation, growth, internal differentiation, demise, and death of

*Congress of Racial Equality

a place guided by ideals of participatory social change. This case involves the slow admixture of people into an enterprise envisioned and nurtured into existence by black men with different but powerful leadership styles. These styles were shaped by participation in the civil rights movement of the early 1960s. Subsequently, these two men were

at the leading edge of that movement's transition from mobile nonviolent protest to more stable organizing of black ghettos for economic development and social justice.

The adventure of Operation Bootstrap proved to be intensely attractive to an improbably diverse array of people. On the one hand, this attraction was due to the continuing impetus of the changing movement, as reflected in people's desires to bring to realization the gains implied in the early protests and subsequent legislation. On the other hand, these hopes were crazily twisted by the sudden social upheaval of the Watts riots. Sympathetic, hitherto inactive people were also drawn into an immediate vortex of moral responsibility to "do something," but what?

In a classic case of charisma, a man named Lou Smith and his colleagues were the first on the Los Angeles scene with an analysis of the riots, an interpretation, and a plan. The charter of Operation Bootstrap encompassed an amalgam of racial reconciliation, individual empowerment, international peace, and social and economic equity. Individual empowerment was pivotal. It was at the core of Bootstrap's notion of participation. All who came were to be equals. Here there would be no constraining assignments. People who came were to bring their enthusiasm and personal resourcefulness to the project and discover their own ways of contributing to the "dream." Bootstrap was to create what the country lacked; that lack, they felt, explained the country's dilemma.

Congress of Racial Equality

CORE was founded in 1942 by James Farmer and pacifist members of the Fellowship of Reconciliation. Its orientation to direct, nonviolent action made CORE a particularly effective organization for the prosecution of the civil rights cause during the critical years following the 1954 Supreme Court school desegregation decision. During those years, civil rights activity took various forms, including law suits, picketing, economic boycotts, and nonviolent action. A later variant was the attempt to develop local organizations from

which more effective grass-roots protest might be launched with clearer and stronger support of local communities than had been achieved by the earlier forms of protest. This approach--community organizing--had proved effective in some small measure in the South, and some civil rights organizations began to consider testing the possibilities of community-based protest in the North. CORE was one of the national civil rights organizations interested in this sort of program, and Operation Bootstrap was, more or less directly, a result of this new thrust in civil rights activity.

The Shift to Black Organizing

The flow of civil rights protest activity since the turn of the century can be divided into four periods. The period of legislative activity carried on primarily by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) culminating in the Supreme Court decision of 1954. The period of direct nonviolent protest beginning with the Montgomery bus boycott and running through the test of segregationist laws via sit-ins and freedom rides. The intensive voter registration drives in the South, spurred by the Civil Rights Act of 1964, resulting in community involvement of organizations like the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), and culminating in the presentation of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (FDP) at the Democratic national convention in 1964. The period introduced by Bayard Rustin's famous article for Commentary magazine, "From Protest to Politics: The Future of the Civil Rights Movement." This article was a direct outgrowth of Rustin's experience at the 1964 national Democratic convention and signaled a shift from organizing for demonstrations to organizing for political effectiveness.

The march on Washington in 1963 was a dramatic statement, but its scale and finality may have drained off movement energy that had previously been devoted to local organizing. SNCC's work on voter registration in Mississippi had established roots in local communities. SNCC developed an ideological

position, based on those activities, that involved organizing the community for the needs of the community as defined by the community. The Freedom Democratic Party was the dramatic result.

Following the FDP's disenchanting failure to be seated at the 1964 Democratic convention, civil rights organizations connected with national political parties were substantially weakened. Internal battles ensued over the desired relationship between these organizations and the extant political parties. This in turn brought disenchantment with the possibilities of effective activity that required commitment to or reliance on whites. Throughout the North and the South, "white liberal" as an epithet gained new meanings, separatist movements became increasingly popular, and cultural nationalism was adopted by more and more moderate young blacks. The civil rights movement became less open to whites. James Farmer resigned as national director of CORE.

The move to exclusively black organizations began to reflect an orientation similar to that of the Black Muslims*-- developing black enclaves, building black-owned-and-operated industries and businesses, and emphasizing prideful immersion in one's "blackness." This orientation, later to achieve a political flavor in the "Black Power" of SNCC under Stokely Carmichael's leadership, required action at the most local levels.

New Strategy Announced

CORE expanded its activities to correspond to the needs of the movement during its passage through the stages discussed above. It tended, with the resignation of James Farmer, to move, following SNCC, in the nationalist direction. Its funds from

*Nation of Islam

White support dried up as the civil rights movement directed its activities north, and as the movement in general became

more militant (Bell: 187-190).

At the end of 1964, CORE, like SNCC, was in debt. There was an urgent need to reorganize. The thrusts of needed political organization, nationalism, increased militance, and the move north converged to produce a proposal from CORE's national office late in 1964. The proposal asked and answered three questions:

[W]hy is it that the accommodations and voting victories are being accompanied by a decline in the impact of the movement, the disintegration of local groups, and the immobilization of national organizations? There are two reasons: (1) the movement has been largely based on the emotionalism of the issues and appeals to conscience; (2) the movement has not been based on the effective and durable organization of large numbers of people.

The authors of the proposal identified the stage at which they felt the civil right movement stood at the time--namely, "the struggle for fundamental social and economic reforms." The previous two stages, they said, had been "the struggle for open public accommodations [and] the struggle for voting and other basic political rights."

The proposal then elaborated the strategy by which CORE must deploy its energies in this new phase:

The movement will be demanding basic social and economic reforms which will require . . . a huge reallocation of the nation's resources Victories will be possible only after tedious, well-planned, well-coordinated organizational work brings a powerful new political force out of the ghetto.

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Like many in the movement, these authors interpreted the War on Poverty as an attempt to undermine the leadership of the national civil rights movement. They understood their new efforts as an attempt to circumvent that possibility.

The national office seems to have been intensely aware of the pressures and strains that had affected CORE up to that point. "National" also understood the nature of the current requirements of effective organization.

Certainly the task proposed is no easy one. But the difficulties are rooted in CORE. There is no absence of grievances in the ghettos. Moreover, the civil rights movement and nationalist activities have greatly intensified consciousness of the nature of these grievances and eagerness to act on them. A type of organizational structure providing a number of conventional social services in an unconventional setting can also contribute to success. For example, there is absolutely no reason why CORE should not get into the job placement business. As a matter of fact, by combining such service with a campaign to get employers to hire more Negroes, it could compete very well indeed with the War on Poverty. In any case, as a technique in organizing the community, this and other services would be invaluable. It would attract thousands of unemployed people and provide an opportunity to win their confidence and persuade them to become involved in other activities.

The proposal went on to outline possible programs for women on welfare, youth clubs, and the like, and specified that the emphasis in the relationship of CORE to such community centers should not be one of recruitment for CORE but of organization for the community. The basic call was to active participation in the political decision-making process through the establishment of third-force or independent political entities developed from these stable grass-roots organizations. The limited success of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic party had convinced a significant portion of the national leadership of CORE that this was the most viable route for a movement that had exhausted the charismatic immediacy of its early struggles, and was in danger of death from its own legislative successes, but which had not yet effected a change in American society that would ensure the permanence or extension of the gains it had made.

In January of 1965, CORE announced the change in its national strategy (Rich). It directed attention to an increased

nationalism of the new militant youth who had joined CORE, but attributed the problem to the temporary fact that the rapid increase in its size had not allowed the organization time to train these young people in the techniques and philosophy of nonviolence--a philosophy that CORE was later to renounce. CORE's description of its new direction underplayed the political program on which it was based. The article said of CORE'S "future goals and problems":

During the past year CORE has emphasized in the North and in the South a program of community service to develop community roots--indigenous organizations with the ability to help themselves economically and politically. In the North there has been door-to-door can-vassing in the sprawling urban ghettos to determine the complaints that most concern the people themselves. This has led to major rent strikes, demonstrations before the offices of building commissioners and mayors. . . . It has also led to successful demonstrations to secure play streets and traffic lights. These kinds of demonstrations, if effectively followed up, can lead to permanent and significant community organization. In Mississippi, Louisiana, and northern Florida, CORE has developed a series of community centers that not only house the voter registration offices, but also have libraries, game rooms, sewing classes, and art activities.

The voter registration effort which has been part of CORE's southern activity since 1956 is now firmly rooted in the North as well. In part, this has been a natural outgrowth of the effort to service local communities more effectively. It has also been an outgrowth of the effort to defeat Goldwaterism. Soon, the national organization will establish a political action department to coordinate and develop local action programs (Rich: 117).

Louis Smith was the man chosen to put this program into effect in CORE's western region. The job was formidable, given the poor financial and organizational state of CORE chapters across the nations and especially in the West. There CORE chapters were far from the national office in New York and essentially unconnected to the flow of information, money, and other forms of support so central to the vitality

of the eastern movement. Smith, who had been active in the South, brought the community center idea to the West. His major effort was directed at Los Angeles.

The Los Angeles Scene

Los Angeles, like many northern cities, had experienced a rapid increase in civil rights demonstrations following the southern sit-ins and freedom rides. In 1960 and 1961, the northern activity was largely symbolic and sympathetic; evil was southern. As the intensity of the southern movement increased, the intensity of sympathetic northern activities increased. Marches called for federal assistance to beleaguered blacks in the South, federal enforcement of interstate commerce laws, enforcement of the Supreme Court desegregation decision, and protection of blacks under attack from southern whites.

Marches in front of local five-and-ten-cent stores had, however, caused many in Los Angeles to question the nature of race relations, the lack of job opportunities for minorities, and school and residential segregation in California. Previously, existing civil rights organizations like the NAACP and the Urban League had attempted to call attention to these problems, but had been unable to elicit protest from most Los Angeles blacks. Chief of Police William Parker was to remark--after the Watts riots in 1965--that he knew Los Angeles Negroes well. They did not demonstrate. He was essentially correct. Los Angeles demonstrations had an unusually low percentage of black participants, and the press frequently delighted in calling attention to this. Civil rights activity in Los Angeles was almost completely white.

Action and Division

The composition and vitality of local civil rights organizations had changed during the summer of 1962. The Congress of Racial Equality had been collecting information on housing and job discrimination. During this summer, the

focus of protest shifted from the South to the North--to Los Angeles. CORE's most dramatic early demonstration was a continuing picket line in front of a Torrance, California, housing development. That demonstration, which included sit-ins on the development property, resulted in numerous arrests. Crowds gathered across the street from the demonstrators, heckled, threw things, and sometimes threatened to attack. This experience solidified the CORE group into an energetic and determined organization. The CORE office became, for a time, the center for vigorous activity, attracting people and funds.

During the next year, CORE launched a series of sit-ins and shop-ins at markets that had few blacks in managerial positions. A large bank was investigated and picketed, and the Los Angeles County Board of Education became the target of study-ins protesting de facto school segregation. As the number and perceived justness of these protests increased, many other groups of blacks entered the picture. Ministers and their congregations became active prosecutors of local causes. Concerned mothers joined marches through downtown Los Angeles. The number and social diversity of blacks participating in the protests increased. Eventually, the most important of the local civil rights groups combined forces in a coordinating organization, the United Civil Rights Committee.

However, as the protests increased, a certain uneasiness developed both within the general Los Angeles population and within CORE. "You're pushing too hard" was the verbal expression of this uneasiness. The complaint came from older and more conservative blacks and whites, who began to question the tactics of CORE. At the height of the organization's vitality, it had evidently overstepped the bounds of respectability. The issue became a serious one, and internal dissension threatened to destroy CORE's effectiveness.

On Saturday, August 17, 1962, I had a casual conversation with Richard Thompson, chairman of CORE's Los Angeles Housing Committee. Amid the noise of the remodeling of CORE's original Los Angeles office, he discussed the problem of writing a workable new constitution for the organization.

CORE's administrative offices were being moved upstairs to avoid the noise of visitors bent on buying bumper stickers and freedom-song books. The important business of collecting money and bodies to picket was being separated from the publicity functions. CORE had grown rapidly, and this differentiation of function had become necessary. CORE was, according to Thompson, experiencing conflicts that threatened its program. The most important difficulty was that members could be formally termed "active" by the national office simply by contributing two dollars a year. Although the Los Angeles CORE membership lists included more than five thousand names, the real motor of the organization consisted of about thirty people who thought out actions, conditioned opinion among the regulars, and guided the organization. Others--who merely attended meetings, but were "active" by reason of their membership fees rather than their activism--had come to fear the radical protest techniques adopted by the organization. They began to vote down the proposals of those who had sat-in, been arrested, and been tirelessly involved in the design of aggressive CORE actions.

This conflict was handled as a constitutional issue. The constitution was rewritten to require a vote of the entire membership before CORE-sponsored protests could be undertaken. When this was accomplished, the "action faction"--the name given to the radicals--became increasingly disenchanted with the conservatism of the membership. One black leader within the action group had failed on two occasions to win office. He was beaten on both occasions by white members who had been, by his standards, weak in their commitment to civil rights. The action faction, although interracial, took the second loss as a final insult and formally left the chapter in 1964 with the intention of setting up another.

The group had decided that the new chapter would be called Central Avenue CORE. This name communicated to most Los Angeles blacks, and to whites who knew the area, that the organization was located in the heart of the south Los Angeles ghetto. The action faction had argued for some time that CORE offices should be moved "down to the people." So, in addition to the difficulties encountered in the original CORE chapter, there were strong ideological and strategic

reasons for the move. Underplayed in the conflict, but of some importance, was the fact that the activist group contained a few Marxists whose presence in CORE frightened many of the more conservative black and white members. There had already been some rumblings of "Communist infiltration," and the more influential of the frightened members were not unhappy to be done with what they perceived to be the major threat to CORE's respectability.

The action faction was asked by the national office not to use the name CORE in its title, so the name Non-Violent Action Committee (N-VAC) was chosen. Formed in the spring of 1964, this became one of the most energetic organizations in Los Angeles, and its move deeper into the ghetto proved prophetic. After the Watts upheaval, all of the major civil rights organizations established offices in the Central Avenue area or in nearby areas.

Smith and Hall had met for the first time when, the then Central Avenue CORE--protesting both the national office's refusal to let them use its name and the trivial nature of San Fernando Valley CORE's activities--sat in on an affair attended by James Farmer. Then national chairman of CORE, James Farmer, accompanied by Lou Smith and Robert Bailey (chairman of the San Fernando Valley chapter), was conducting a series of speaking engagements throughout southern California. Lou Smith was immediately attracted to Hall's passion and community involvement.

N-VAC's Actions

Violence changes things. The violence in Watts, California, in August of 1965, completely changed the character of protest in Los Angeles. Although some of these changes came about in areas outside the curfew zone, the most important changes came about among residents of that area.

For civil rights organizations, the depth of "the problem" suddenly became much clearer. It was clear that their actions had had little to do with what the young Watts burners were expressing. Before August of 1965, Los Angeles

CORE workers had made an extensive investment in attacking housing and employment inequities. These attacks were carried out with energy and imagination. However, the attacks and their successful outcomes seemed to have been irrelevant to those in the ghetto. Many of the jobs that were made available were jobs they were not qualified to fill. Even when talents and skills matched the newly available jobs, the jobs were too few and, because of the area's inadequate transportation system, inaccessible. The existence of a strong Fair Employment Practices Commission in California and of a strong fair housing law encouraged job and housing action. But the housing being dealt with by CORE and others was located in areas remote from the ghetto, and was expensive. Many ghetto residents expressed little or no interest in moving out of the areas in which they lived. So CORE's earlier actions, although symbolically significant to ghetto blacks at some level, had had little impact on their immediate life prospects. When the California electorate rejected fair housing with a strong "yes" vote on Proposition 13,* it put the final stamp of irrelevance on the limited and moderate activities of CORE.

But, as discussed earlier, CORE had come to an even more moderate position on action, at the demand of that large body of inactive members who had taken power in the organization. The split that ensued decreased CORE's importance to the ghetto and, especially after the August riots, made the new Non-Violent Action Committee the most important civil rights organization in Los Angeles. N-VAC had moved to the heart of the area a year before the riot. The employment problems it had attacked were those in that area. N-VAC had mounted successful and community-supported actions against the Witch Stand, a hamburger stand chain operating in the area--and had managed to close the local stand when the owner refused to bargain on the hiring of more blacks. They also began a series of protest actions against the Van de Kamp bakery chain.

N-VAC made many contacts with segments of the community that had not been dealt with by any civil rights group before that time. Robert Hall, N-VAC chairman, described some of the scenes

*Statewide referendum on the Rumford Fair Housing Act, 1964.
at their first action, a demonstration against a Witch Stand.

We had the community out, baby. Do you know, we stayed at the Witch Stand and the community fed us. . . . And then we was able to get the Slausons involved, which was a gang. They would come down and walk the picket line. When they'd get on the line they'd tell you "I don't believe in nonviolence", and I'd say, "Okay baby, give me your piece [gun] now and if you get mad or something like that just step off the line." Sometimes I used to be standing around at the Witch Stand, Jerry Farber and myself, and I'd have as much as fifteen knives, three or four guns.... We thought it was something else. And the guys would walk the picket line. Then they'd come up and say "Okay baby, I'm ready to go." We'd give 'em the knife or gun or whatever they had. And we'd say "see you tomorrow" and they'd come down.

And so that was our first community involvement, and made us feel rather proud. It involved the complete community, see. For instance, on Sunday we was picketing and Rev. Arnold brought his whole church there instead of preaching.

Such actions not only drew in hitherto uninvolved elements of the community, but established N-VAC's community connections. Word of N-Vac's success spread rapidly. Many who had become disenchanted with CORE were attracted to this new grass-roots activism. They had an alternative to consider during the August riot and the months following.

The riot was a severe testing ground for the people and organizations that had been trying to change the life of the ghetto. A young college student working with CORE describes how she turned to N-VAC after the riot:

During the four days when it was going and a couple of days after, we were working like crazy getting food in here. The stores were burned down. Some of the people wouldn't have been able to go to the store anyway, even if they hadn't been burned down. I was sleeping on the CORE floor every night

and working twenty hours a day, and, you know, making phone calls. And like all of a sudden there was a change in me, because all of a sudden I could no longer just go down to the CORE office and see what was happening down there. And I started coming down to N-VAC and seeing what was happening there, and it was just about [that] time that they started getting the idea of Bootstrap.

This was the action context into which the idea of Operation Bootstrap was dropped. This student's view of it sums up much of the feeling about Los Angeles CORE and N-VAC held by those who were ultimately attracted to Bootstrap.

When N-VAC first started there . . . the active people ready to have action, you know exactly what they [the CORE dissidents] wanted. . . . They closed down the Witch's Stand. They were working like crazy. And they also realized that they were still not reaching the people too much, even though you found more community people on their line than you'd ever seen before. They had cooperation from the local gang and everything . . . there was no snap thing--I guess they kind of evolved. So this was . . . evolving into what they did next which was working more with the people in the community. They'd start working with the teen-agers and . . . getting the gangs to come down to find out what's happening. Trying to get them into constructive things. They opened up a few classes for little kids. And they started working with the [welfare] mothers. And it was kind of a slow change away from so much action, picket lines . . . down to the slow hard working type of things where you're actually knocking heads up against the wall trying to work with the people themselves.

And then came Bootstrap. I don't know if Lou suggested it first. I think he did . . . I guess he was probably sitting around in a group of people and they kicked the idea around. He went to CORE with the idea. . . . No luck there. They were still hung up in the little petty things. And so he couldn't hang around there. Things weren't positive. They didn't want to do anything. So he came to N-VAC and approached Robert Hall, Danny Gray, and Woodrow Coleman and .

. . the idea went over with them. They could see the value behind it, probably because they were already here [on Central Avenue] and CORE was still over on Venice and still messing around.

Indeed, Operation Bootstrap was Lou Smith's idea, one that had had its most general origins in the experiences of the civil rights leadership at the national level. These experiences suddenly had become more meaningful in Los Angeles because of the riot. Fortuitously, Hall's sit-in on Valley CORE, when Farmer appeared, had directed Lou Smith's attention to N-VAC. In Robert Hall he found the energy and enthusiasm needed to give life to an idea. The convergence of the national idea, an astute leader in Robert Hall, and N-VAC in the context of the riot seems to have provided one of those occasions when "something happens."

Introducing Bootstrap

Several people at N-VAC were congenial to the idea of Operation Bootstrap. But it was Robert Hall with whom Lou Smith established the strongest relationship. These two men became the cofounders of the organization. Robert Hall describes how that came about:

Last August the fourteenth, we had the ending of what I call "urban renewal."² It started on the eleventh. I stayed out there in Watts from eleven o'clock that Wednesday night until the national guard came in that Saturday. And then the stuff broke down here, and then I moved back down into this area here which I was more familiar with and worked with.

And I heard the cry of the peoples talking about what they wanted; "jobs, no money . . ."

So after that Saturday, when everything quieted down, we got to talking in N-VAC and we realized that something had to be done because all the stores was closed. They was burned down

and things like that. So we decided that we needed food. Well, we started talking

about it, but we never did come up with an idea of what to do. And then I said "the heck with it, if we're going to get food, when the peoples call down, we'll tell them we need food." So every time somebody would call down to talk to me I'd tell the news and put out an appeal for food. The radio men and everybody was calling in. Then I started calling the companies. I got all the milk companies, and all of the stores that was burnt out, which I knew they'd be in their offices, and I'd check the telephone numbers and call and say, "We want some food." They'd say "There's nothing we can do." I'd say "Well, you either look at it this way, we get food shipped in here or we pick it up ourselves or then they're going to spread there in your neighborhood."

Then Los Angeles CORE, a group from Woodland Hills, and in the Valley, and everywhere started call-ing and saying they was going to bring food in. This is when N-VAC and CORE got back on a working relationship, because there was a problem. So, therefore, since we was distributing food, CORE decided they would be the pickup point. A person could drop the food down to CORE, since it was out of the danger area. It was in the curfew area, but it was still calm over there. And then they would transport it over to here and we'd give it out.

And while I was serving food, Lou Smith came in. I hadn't saw Lou since I was on that sit-in against Farmer. He started talking, say, "What's the answer?" I said, "I wish I knew." He said "You got a few minutes let's take off for coffee." So we went down the street to a little cafe down there and we got to talking. He asked me, say "You ever heard of Sullivan's program?"³ I said yes. He said, "What do you think about a program like that?" I said "It may be an answer." So we talked. And the more I thought of what Sullivan had done in Philadelphia, the more I thought it could work here in Los Angeles. He say, "You think N-VAC will go for it?" I said, "I don't know."

N-VAC Joins Bootstrap

The Non-Violent Action Committee was well situated to put the community center idea into effect, and accepted Smith's proposal. N-VAC was a loose collection of like-minded activists, and its structure was not as complex as CORE's. N-VAC was effective largely because of close interpersonal relations, and it could take hold of the community center idea because of Robert Hall and Woodrow Coleman.

These men were the kind of leaders needed by movements that claim or hope to be "grass-roots." They could talk to the man on the street. They could understand abstract conceptions of social problems and solutions, and could generate such conceptions on their own. And because of past experiences, demeanor, and manner of speaking, they could comfortably communicate these ideas to the winos, delinquents, and unemployed corner dwellers whose anger, when channeled, provided motive power for the movement's program. At the board of directors meeting held by N-VAC to consider Smith's proposal, Robert Hall and Woodrow Coleman were chosen as the N-Vac members to occupy central positions in the new project.⁴

Bootstrap in Avalon

In October of 1965, Operation Bootstrap opened in a large, empty warehouse at 42nd Street and Central Avenue, two doors down from its "parent" organization.

Central Avenue runs through a cluster of neighborhoods comprising south central Los Angeles. The intersection of 42nd and Central Avenue is the heart of one of these neighborhoods, known as Avalon.

Avalon, north of Watts, was poor. It was the poorest of the seven almost exclusively Negro census tracts of south central Los Angeles. Between 1960 and the Watts riots of 1965, this poverty had increased. The median income of Avalon residents in 1965 was \$3,913 a year, \$165 a year less than in 1960. The unemployment rate (14 percent) was the

highest in any of the seven south central census tracts. More than 35 percent of Avalon families were below the poverty level established by the Social Security

Administration, as contrasted with an average of 29.6 percent of all seven tracts. Only 16 percent of Avalon's laborers were engaged in "head work," compared to 23.8 percent for all seven tracts.⁵

What is more, the poverty showed. The population of Avalon was 95.5 percent black. This was the highest concentration of blacks in the city of Los Angeles. The block on which Operation Bootstrap was located expressed its poverty forcefully. The unused warehouse that Bootstrap occupied had been vacant for several months. Down the street there was a struggling used-clothing shop, a storefront church, a barbershop with few customers, the narrow two-room office of the Non-Violent Action Committee, and a beauty salon whose proprietor made money otherwise. An abandoned gas station at the northern end of the block was the daily gathering spot for a large number of winos. When the leaders of Operation Bootstrap were in an expansionist mood, they could realistically fantasize taking over the entire block of office space because many of the small offices on the block were likely to become cheap rentals in the next month.

The poverty showed in other ways. An alcoholic couple daily staggered by the corner trailing three emaciated children. Police, fire, and ambulance sirens wailed on the quarter hour. Many of the cars that pulled over to let the sirens pass had trouble regaining the little momentum their malfunctioning engines had managed.

The metaphor of the misfiring, struggling old automobile is appropriate for the economic life of Avalon. But, if standard economic activities were weak and ill formed, the market of the streets was thriving. In some very important sense the casual life on the streets was one complex "hustle." Although there were some good buys on hot goods, most operators in this market were hoping to get much more than they gave.

The hustle, though not universal, occupied the glances and gestures of many of those seated outside the used-furniture shops, those on the corners, those passing on the streets. The residents of the area who operated on the streets were extremely sensitive to others--what were they carrying, how were they carrying it (was it being offered?), how did they carry themselves (was she offering herself?).

Not everyone operated on this level, however. Many Avalon residents had steady jobs of some sort. Avalon, like the now-famous Watts, had the large number of discreet, well-kept small houses with neat lawns, painted fronts and sides, and clean cars that gave rise to the national incredulity that "it could have happened there." Part of the tension continually manifested in this ghetto may well have derived from these immediately juxtaposed extremes. One could, within less than a minute, move from an alley or vacant lot full of limping, laughing, gruff-voiced winos to a recently rebuilt supermarket or to some small business recently opened or reopened behind glittering new plaster. A pimp might climb from a Cadillac to have his hair "processed" at the new barbershop.

Important transactions took place out of general view. The "respectable" people knew where these transactions occurred and avoided or frequented them selectively. The fabric of everyday life in the area contained many interwoven threads of the formal and informal modes of getting a living, but money was visibly scarce at all levels.

Operation Bootstrap's extraordinary purpose was to reach into the streets, lure the winos and the pimps' young admirers from the little local market and make them, via job training, interested and competent in the larger economic world of industry, manufacturing, data-processing machinery, electronics. OB's first statement of purpose said:

Available data indicates that the problem of matching jobs and workers has become critical and new ways [have] to be devised for meeting this problem, which is beginning to plague the local economy. Currently, the concept of rehabilitation and retraining of the unemployed is receiving strong support. The question has been raised as to whether the unemployed can be retrained to fill jobs which are vacant today. Equally vital is the question of whether individuals are being trained for present-day jobs which actually may be obsolete five years hence. Many attempts to deal with the problem of technological change and automation have so far proven inadequate. Yet this is one of the most pressing problems facing the economy and is particularly urgent in Los Angeles since it is considered one of the cities which is in the forefront of the "overdeveloped" society. Upon the solution of this problem may rest the well being of increasing numbers of individuals and their families. "OPERATION BOOTSTRAP" is an answer for the people of the community called Avalon.

Building

Money, people, and publicity were among the resources most needed for setting up Bootstrap. Also, the program would need some sort of large physical plant soon, if it were to approach the results that Sullivan had achieved in Philadelphia.

Smith and Hall combined their skills and very quickly registered their intent with the people of Los Angeles. Hall, a tireless man, exploited his detailed contacts with civil rights workers, politicians, and businessmen and did some intricate "wheeling and dealing." Smith used his skills at attracting the attention of the mass media, eloquently verbalizing the need and hope for the project.

The newsworthiness of post-riot south Los Angeles acted as a magnet when Hall and Smith called a press conference late in October of 1965. Marva Smith, Lou's wife, recalls: "It went over big, you know, because like here were black folks trying to help themselves after the riot, you know. So we got a lot of coverage and a lot of people started coming in."

Operation Bootstrap was incorporated under the laws of the State of California on November 24, 1965.

Expanding the Core Group

While Smith and Hall were working on resources and publicity, they were also adding new people to the board of directors of Operation Bootstrap.

In October, Smith contacted Robert Bailey and asked him to join the Operation Bootstrap effort. Bailey had had a continuing relationship with national CORE through his chairmanship of the San Fernando Valley chapter in Pacoima, California. He had accompanied Smith and James Farmer on Farmer's speaking tour of Southern California. When Smith contacted Bailey about joining Bootstrap, he had just returned from a tour as field secretary for CORE.

The Bootstrap board of directors consisted, at that time, of Robert Hall, Lou Smith, and Woodrow Coleman. Immediately following the addition of Linda Clark, the only white member, Clarence Price and Sheila Tucker joined the board. Price and Clark had been infrequent participants in N-VAC activities. Tucker, an unemployed black mother of two children, lived near the area and had become interested after the riot.

Price had been a friend of Hall's before the establishment of Operation Bootstrap:

I used to work with Robert Hall He and I sold cars together. Having known him and everything, and having gotten fairly interested in N-VAC per se (this thing developed after "Urban Renewal" because it wasn't a riot to me) He called me after he and Lou had gotten together and kind of decided what they wanted to do. And he told me, you know "I'd like you to come down. I know you've got the engineering background and you've been in industry and everything. Maybe you can give us an idea. Maybe you can help. Or just come down and generally see what's going on."

Linda Clark's route to Operation Bootstrap was a circuitous one, but it overlaps that of many of the others. She had worked for the Los Angeles Police Department and was motivated by that experience to join a civil rights group. She had joined CORE in the Valley, moved to the Los Angeles chapter, and went, ultimately, to Bootstrap through N-VAC. Thus she had established close relationships with Smith and Bailey by the time Operation Bootstrap started.

Clark's membership on the Operation Bootstrap board of directors ran counter to the changing direction of the civil rights movement at that time. It was extraordinary that a white person should be brought that deeply into the center of such an organization.

Her biography in civil rights activities, no doubt, made her an important representative of experience-enlightened "white thinking." When she worked as a secretary for the Los Angeles Police Department, she had been appalled at the attitudes and practices she saw there. Near the end of her employment at the Police Department, she called CORE in moral exasperation:

I can remember calling the CORE office and saying, "I live in the Valley and I want to join CORE and I really don't want to drive all the way into Los Angeles though. Is there one in the Valley? And somebody told me to contact Bob Bailey in Pacoima and that's how I got involved in that.

And Bob used to come over and he and my roommate and I used to sit around and--we used to have long, long, long discussions and it was really through him that I got involved in L.A. CORE. I transferred my CORE membership to L.A. CORE and stayed there long enough to see that it was essentially a nice discussion group too, and that nothing was happening and that I was getting very, very frustrated.

Bailey introduced Clark to Hall near the time that Operation Bootstrap was formed. As a prospective member of the board, she seems to have been acceptable to both Hall and Bailey. During her vacation from the Police Department in August of 1965 she began frequenting N-VAC meetings. During one of the first of those visits she met Robert Hall.

Sheila Tucker came to Operation Bootstrap without any prior civil right involvement. Except for James Jones, who ran the auto body repair shop in the back of the building that Smith and Hall rented, Tucker was the only member of the board of directors who was not connected to local civil rights leadership in some active manner when invited to become a member of the Bootstrap board.

Sheila had had an informal contact, "through a girlfriend," with Robert Hall. As it had for others, the August violence in Watts had focused her attention on her own inactivity. She contacted Operation Bootstrap and was asked to become its executive secretary and a member of its board of directors.

By the end of 1965, the leadership of Operation Bootstrap was solidly established. During the last four months of 1965, a "membership" began to form from the many individuals who communicated with Operation Bootstrap by phone, through the mails, or by dropping in.

Designing the Program

One of the first groups to come to Bootstrap's aid was a cadre of black professionals who came to be known as "the engineers." They collected data on the problem of employment, and suggested approaches that OB might take in attacking it. That report was OB's most important document for several months, representing both the seriousness of its goals and the professionalism of its methods. Drawn up by Bailey, two engineers, and two psychologists, the report was detailed and skillfully written. It was often mined by the leadership for the phrasing of statements that the organization needed to make in representing itself to various audiences. The report specified OB's training goal and its target:

The most urgent need in the community is for remedial education to bring up the general educational level of applicants to the point where they may participate in other training programs. . . . To be most effective, it appears that Bootstrap must confront the problem of remedial education as its principal objective

It appears that Bootstrap's prime target is a male who has not acquired a high school education, and is chronically unemployed. He might be of almost any age, but most typically is between 18 and 30. His principal objective is to get a big paycheck regularly. His image of himself is not one of great responsibility; while he would like to occupy a role of admiration and respect as the head of a family, his earlier experiences have also given him a somewhat hedonistic self-image. He is easily frightened by a highly structured institution which is foreign to him, and easily frustrated by small setbacks. It thus appears that the member of the community whom Bootstrap most wants to attract is going to have the least inherent motivation.

For various reasons, most of the "engineers" had short-lived relationships with OB. But their influence was felt through their articulation of OB's goals and problems and through the prestige that accrued to OB because of their early involvement. In addition, one of them designed OB's first curriculum for a school.

Making Contact

Before starting classes, OB needed to establish contact with the residents of Avalon and make them aware of its program. Bailey and Marva Smith did a survey to acquaint the community with N-VAC and its project. Marva describes the conduct of the survey:

Bailey and I did a door-to-door type thing where we passed out leaflets, and we had an introduction leaflet on what Bootstrap is, and we had a form for those people who would be interested in the school. And what we did was we'd knock on doors, and we went and we told people that we were there in the community, and that we were at their service, come in and talk to us and let us know what they wanted. Just to talk. Tell us what's going on. And we did the survey and we took around applications. So for the community that was their initial contact with it. . . . And we just had people dropping in, you know, they saw people sitting in the big empty building. "What are those fools doing in there," you know. "It's raining and they're sitting in puddles with coats on," you know. And so we had a lot of people just drop in and ask us what we were doing.

A press conference drew an almost magical, favorable response from a wide variety of people throughout southern California. This was enhanced in October and November of 1965, when OB sent out mailings announcing its existence. The mailing list was long--it included names of those who had phoned in offers of help during the riot, the Los Angeles CORE list, and a purchased list of "liberal" names.

From the broad spectrum of individuals reached through the press conference, television, and mailings came requests for more information and offers of help. Widely differing clubs and organizations, including the Pacific Palisades Hadassah, the Soroptimists Club of Alhambra, the Militant Labor Forum, and the Laguna Beach NAACP, asked the leaders of OB to address them. From November 1965 through June 1966, Smith, Hall, and Bailey gave more than thirty speeches.

The self-help theme advanced by the leaders of OB proved attractive to the politically conservative members of the Los Angeles community.⁶ The leaders of OB made it a conscious practice not to reject the interest of conservatives and, indeed, often taunted their liberal supporters with this "unbiased attitude" about help from that end of the political spectrum. In early statements, OB's leaders charmed conservatives by publicly declaring that they would not accept federal funds, that they were determined to "make it" economically on their community's own

initiative. Bootstrap also began to receive letters from individuals who described themselves as conservatives and announced their approval of the project.⁷ In November 1965, new Governor Ronald Reagan--who was later to visit OB--transmitted a proposal to Smith and Hall. The proposal ("Reach One Teach One," or ROTIO), written by one of Reagan's admirers, outlined an idea for job training centers very much like Bootstrap, and specifically recommended the use of conservative white industrial workers--who believed in America and could transmit their skills and patriotism to unskilled blacks.

Offers of teaching aid flowed from relatively conservative areas of the county before Bootstrap was organized to handle them, so arrangements were made to have the help offered again later. This early conservative response proved a flirtatious conversation, at best. Given the civil rights origins of the OB leaders, its relationship to N-VAC, the professed goals of the Bootstrap idea, and its national CORE origins, any close relationship between Bootstrap and the conservative community was unlikely. Also, since a real relationship with the project involved coming to south Los Angeles, fear of violence against whites was a factor that limited involvement.

Bootstrap statements announced the desire to establish a working relationship with industry. The appeal to industry was much more direct than that made to any other group. But as the project began to collect new sets of skilled people, its literature became more and more moderate. The aggressive appeal of Bootstrap's early statement of purpose was supplemented in a later version:

We have the community organizing skills. We have a building and the desire. The ghetto community has the need. The industrial community has the means and the know-how. This program will require the complete cooperation of all these forces. Morally and economically it makes sense to pursue this project. The ghettos of our country contain a reservoir of untapped human talent. We have a responsibility to harness this resource and feed it into the mainstream of our country's economic life.

Such appeals, alone, do not account for the effectiveness of OB's leadership in attracting industry's attention. Hall and Smith were equally aggressive in writing letters to managers, announcing their availability to discuss ways that OB could work with the managers' firms. This brought hundreds of items donated for use in job training,

and commitments from Singer Sewing Machine, IBM, Scientific Data Systems, and others, for power sewing equipment, key punch machine--and jobs.

Operation Bootstrap's leaders were soon deluged with promises of teaching aid from a broad spectrum of blacks and whites, and with promises of technical and material aid from industry. Community contacts brought in more than five hundred applications for courses before 1965 was over.

Bootstrap was, almost from its inception, a stopping-off place for social workers, parole and probation officers, YMCA workers, and other "helping" professionals. For some state, county, and city workers, visits to Bootstrap became part of their jobs. A member of the County Human Relations Commission made the big warehouse a regular stop. Ie Roi Higgenbotham, a parole officer with the state, had a similar involvement:

In my work I always look for agencies, and I just happened to see it and stopped in . . . working in the community . . . is probably the most important part of my work, because this is where crime comes from. . . And if you're going to do anything about crime you're going to have to start where the weeds grow. So whenever I see an agency in the community that I work in I go in and talk to the people--even factories. So that's how I came to Bootstrap. I talked to . . . Bailey, talked to Hall, to Smith, and I liked their idea because it's the same idea that I've had.

Most such involvements didn't last, but some of the people initially attracted did stay and make important contributions.

The First Teachers

Word soon got out that Bootstrap needed teachers. By late November more than fifty volunteers had signed up to teach classes. In line with recommendations of "the engineers" that remedial education should be the first order of business, communication skills classes were set up in reading, writing, and speaking.

One of the most influential of these early teachers was Ruth Warrick. She was at the time an actress on the very popular TV show "Peyton Place."⁸ The riot had made clear to her the need to do something "other than march in picket lines," and she volunteered to work at OB, teaching a communication skills class. Her involvement became an attraction for visitors, and other young actors came at her behest. Miss Warrick came to be called the "Mother of Bootstrap," took it upon herself to publicize the place, and searched out additional sources of funds.

Another volunteer instructor, Wally Albertson, was attracted to OB when she heard Smith, Hall, and Bailey speak about their project to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr's Western Christian Leadership Conference. Albertson became one of the most avid supporters of Operation Bootstrap, and she attracted Joann Murad. Both were instructors in speech at UCLA who came to OB to teach "communication skills." Wally describes her involvement:

Lou Smith, Bob Hall, and Bob Bailey came to WCL to talk to us all about their need, and to invite people with skills, or any backgrounds. They weren't asking for money. They very rarely do from individuals. They needed . . . bodies . . . I suggested to him on the spot that I thought something I could do that might relate to the job interview and working with people--to instill more confidence in speaking. In public, maybe, but also just in the one-to-one situation. . on the job interview, 'cause that seemed to be the major problem.

And they thought it was worth exploring. So I started going down there. It was before they had any of the building partitioned off. It was just a big old open space. And I then went to the chairman of my department and told him what I wanted to do and to ask him if there was anything that they could do there to implement this. And he came through with something beyond our wildest dreams. I was looking mainly for some suggestions or advice or textbooks in the field or something that might be helpful, but he suggested that one of the graduate seminars be used as a basis for working at OB.

So we set up a situation where we could use the audiovisual equipment at UCLA if we wanted it, or anything else.

The second flare-up in south Los Angeles, in March 1966, frightened off most of the UCLA students, and the university issued a letter disclaiming all responsibility for any students injured while taking such classes. But Wally had already sent out announcements for the class and eventually did meet with fifteen students.

* * * * *

Thus, various elements of the Los Angeles community became involved in making the new place. The Watts riot made OB a very attractive alternative for a wide spectrum of the area's concerned people. The three men who were active at the outset were especially well suited to their task of getting the needed people and resources. With the financial help that they attracted, Operation Bootstrap began to operate in earnest. Within the first four months of 1966, the building was partitioned and painted, and waiting for the first offer of industrial equipment.

The Early Culture of Bootstrap

As Bootstrap became a Place where people gathered, their interactions with each other began to build a distinctive culture within the organization. The simple need to have something for all those people to do helped to create forms and forums for discussion. These soon became small traditions that, in turn, shaped the patterns of who talked to whom. The leadership skills of Smith, Hall, and Bailey made their initiatives in directing others seem only natural. These patterns helped to set the qualities of "membership" that emerged among OB's participants.

The "Sensitivity" Sessions

Bailey was an unusual man. He brought a distinctive vision to the design of the Bootstrap school, of which he later became director, and he brought a special dimension to Bootstrap in general. Bailey became the third person, after Smith and Hall, to make the project his total life's activity. He also brought his friendship with Marc Weiss, a white civil rights worker and fellow member of San Fernando Valley CORE.

What Bailey and Weiss contributed to the atmosphere of OB was a deep concern to achieve a black and white dialogue. They promoted this through role-playing, variations of sensitivity training, angry confrontations, and other devices.

Bailey and Weiss had known each other for some five years before the establishment of OB. Weiss, who came from a radical political background, had worked in civil rights in Mississippi and the North. Through it all he had come to believe that sensitivity training was a powerful mode of establishing contact between human beings. It was his major tool in civil rights activity. He and Bailey discussed the uses of this approach on a broad scale. Bailey, at one point, even took to national CORE the idea that all those occupying national executive positions should get sensitivity training. Weiss and Bailey's contacts had been less frequent before Bootstrap got started, but they began to work together in significant depth when Bailey went with OB. Bootstrap soon became widely known for these sessions. Weiss recalls the beginnings:

Bailey said, "Look, I need somebody to do something. Something's got to be done because there're people coming in here on Saturdays and I don't know what to do with them." So I suggested that we have psychodrama and use role reversal and various techniques to get people into being what a cop is, or getting on the other end of a cop's nightstick, finding out what's going on in the social work area.

The first one we ran down there was . . . powerful. There were about thirty people there, and TV people, and . . . two high school principals, and a number of social workers, some welfare mothers. And we did role reversals with them and all kinds of wild things like that . . . People would get to listen more deeply to the meaning of the words that are coming out.

In the empty warehouse, these sessions became the main activity. In an area where "get whitey" had been as common as fires during the riot, Bootstrap was presuming to bring blacks and whites into emotional contact. It was a drawing card. Community people, and blacks and whites from the local civil rights circuit began to frequent the building. Confrontations were sometimes held outside the framework of the sessions. The result was that an air of newness, excitement, and relevance was imparted to Bootstrap as a meeting place. The intense

atmosphere left by the riot made conversations interpreting black and white relations even more commonplace in the area than they had been. These new activities, drawing into them youth from local gangs as well as social workers, TV people, and visiting officials, proved to be magnets for liberal whites.⁹

Soon after the first sensitivity sessions, Lou Smith, Robert Hall, and Clarence Price took the idea of OB to an organization known as Everywoman's Village. This was a fateful encounter. Everywoman's Village, "dedicated to self-understanding and creative expression," was in a small housing court in Van Nuys, California. Lectures and classes were offered to women in the area. EV was a self-help organization for women, especially those who were full-time housewives and who sought some creative outlet. OB's contact with EV grew into a permanent relationship that provided OB some much-needed financial support and expert help with the problems of publicity. Some of the EV women's husbands were connected with show business, and the women had learned public relation skills to use in making EV a going concern.

Late in November, Lou Smith told a group of these women about Operation Bootstrap's sessions:

We've had one session and we're going to have another one... . We brought people together, schoolteachers, dropouts, counselors, welfare mothers, social workers, just plain Joe Blow out of Beverly Hills. And it was about three hours before we broke for lunch the first day. We had them really communicating with each other. And they went out--even at lunchtime the blocks had broken up. And people were talking. We just had people role-playing, sociodrama, talking to each other. We had the schoolteacher trying to become the dropout. Some interesting things came of that. The schoolteachers really saw how difficult it was for that kid. And some kids began to see how difficult it was for that teacher. We're going to hold it monthly. We think this is extremely important.

Describing the origins of the seminars, Lou made them intelligible to the women at EV. He announced the session to take place that following weekend and added:

We've kind of decentralized ourselves. We have fifty- some volunteer teachers . . . and they hold their meetings and they look around for new ways of teaching people. . . . And this is one of the things that came

out of it, just starting to get people to communicate with other people, to understand something about the other people. And . . . that's a two-way street. As I pointed out, it's a serious problem peculiar to all our ghettos, whether they be in Beverly Hills or . . . on Central Avenue. And we know very little about each other. We think that's first. . . . We think the seminar is going to be a very important part of Bootstrap.

The response was vigorous. Members of Smith's audience repeatedly described that evening's discussions as "beautiful." Many from that audience went to the seminar the following weekend.

One member of that audience was so impressed with the evening, and with the seminar that followed, that she decided to lift the project over major barriers impeding the physical construction of the school: the need for money for partitioning its big, old building with walls, for lighting, for plumbing--for rooms. A bishop of the Los Angeles Episcopal Diocese had already loaned OB the funds to buy lumber, nails, and other equipment. These were lying about the floor of the warehouse when the Village women went to that next weekend seminar. The EV woman* describes how she was moved to provide the money the group needed.

The first time I heard about it [OB] was when Ruth Warrick spoke . . . at a monthly meeting of the General Semantics thing [at Everywoman's Village] That was very eloquent, but it was mostly a plea for monetary support. And then, shortly after that I went to a meeting over here at Everywoman's Village and Phyllis Cramer . . . had these people from Bootstrap Phyllis called what she was doing through the General Semantics groups "Bucks for Bootstrap" and

*She requested anonymity.

tried to help them in raising funds in a very stirring way Phyllis told us at that meeting that all that was required was a couple of thousand dollars to get the thing up, and there was no way to raise this--the building and the money both. So, anyway, then Lou Smith and Robert Hall and Bob Bailey came out and there was a very inspiring and heated description . . . of the whole idea and their ideals . . . it captured my imagination. I thought, "Here is this magnificent project and it doesn't seem possible that for the want of under two thousand dollars they're stymied--they can't get the thing up. . . . They had

the plans drawn up and everything, and here they were, they were just stymied. So I made up my mind very impulsively. I'd thought at that time I would just get them the money to get the whole thing going and I wouldn't even go down again. I mean I just wanted to feel that here I stumbled into something that for the sake of what was not a large sum of money in my family . . . that it was unthinkable that they couldn't put the building up, you see. So, I thought I would help them do that.

The Bootstrap idea, the project itself, and the people who directed it were continually to elicit this sort of response from individuals and groups with money, materials, and human help to offer. But the money given by this benefactor was essentially responsible for Bootstrap coming into full existence.

Life in the Office

During the week of April 18 to 23, 1966, Operation Bootstrap held open house. The eighteenth was its official opening day. The month or two prior to that had been both exciting and critical for its future.

In early March of 1966, the corner of Forty-second Street and Central Avenue was an exciting location in the southeast Los Angeles ghetto. Many different people began to frequent the building. OB became a center for discussion, a meeting place for many civil rights activists. People from the streets dropped in regularly. Some stopped to join the never-ending conversations in which the riots were interpreted and reinterpreted. Some came to question the validity of the OB effort. Some came to wait. Some used the building much as a juvenile gang's "set" is used--to establish "what's happening," to work out status arrangements within a local movement riven with conflicts and contradictions. All through the early months of 1966, but especially in March and April, the flow of people from CORE or closely affiliated with it also increased. Some visitors were looking for work. Bootstrap's announcement of its purpose attracted many people who wanted jobs, not job training. OB was not equipped to meet their demands, but some of the connections that the leaders had established with politicians, local businessmen, and poverty agency officials did enable them to place a few individuals. This further enhanced OB's attractiveness. Even more

people came whose reason for "hanging around" was unclear, even to themselves.

As time went on, the range of individuals who frequented the building became narrower. The first to disappear were the "movement wanderers." For example, one young black volunteer, who had worked for CORE in the South and in Los Angeles, got a job through OB and then failed to show up for it. As a result, in one session at OB, he was used as an object lesson in why black people could not rise above their low level. Lou Smith and Robert Hall launched the attack. The volunteer came to OB less and less often in the next two weeks, then stopped coming altogether.

A young man named Cornell Henderson came regularly. The first time he appeared in the office, he placed himself squarely in the midst of the activities and proceeded to dominate the conversation. He was just out of jail, he said. He was dressed in a powder blue slack suit. Cornell's pants were pulled high up on his waist, revealing a pair of long silk socks below. Cornell spent the rest of the day in OB, talking, while others were sanding walls, sawing wood, nailing beams.

"Get out of those fancy clothes and do some work," said Hall, to no effect. Cornell said "shit" and went on to explain how stupid and futile the whole effort was, since it wouldn't get anywhere and there were better ways to make money. He described a pimp in the neighborhood who was doing well, saying "The cat's got a Kitty [Cadillac], a whole lot of bread in the bank, and about twelve broads [prostitutes] going for him." Bailey pointed out from the periphery of the conversation that there were many others like that pimp serving long prison terms. Cornell grunted his dismissal of the dangers and continued telling the virtues of criminal modes of getting ahead. Nonetheless, he became a fixture at OB. Always critical of the enterprise when he was in the building, he was its staunch defender on the outside.

Through the days leading up to OB's formal opening, in April of 1966, people were dropping in. The prime goal of the leaders was to get the physical building constructed and painted by opening day, but much more than that took place. Joking sessions were frequent. Someone was talked into sanding a wall. A young white civil rights worker complained about how complex it was to wage the fight in the North, as

contrasted with the simplicity of his recent task in Mississippi. And so on.

One very obvious feature of OB at this time was that, although there was an authority structure, the place was open to anyone who wished to enter. Smith, Hall, Bailey, Tucker, Clark, and occasionally Coleman were the members of the board who were almost always on the premises. Whatever rejection of individuals took place was exclusively on an individual level. The leadership never agreed collectively to exclude or formally reject anyone. A verbal attack by Smith or Hall could have the effect of ending one person's visits, but that was seldom the intent, and almost never the effect.

Joking hostility was the commonest mode of communication in the building, in those first months of OB's existence, and it lessened only slightly as the organization became more structured. Most of the humor related to sex, race, and money. The contractors who came in to build the partitions picked up the flavor of the place quickly, and soon began propositioning the secretary explicitly and incessantly. Their requests ran over, under, and around the sounds of saws, hammers, the phone, and conversations with prospective students who came into the office. Another woman worker was jokingly asked to go out and "turn a trick" so the phone bill could be paid. Hall described, in his booming voice, just how quickly he would make use of that often-fantasied chemical that would turn Negroes white. He changed his mind and decided he would stay white just long enough to get rich. A girl parried a boy's flirtation by questioning whether or not "you can handle it." There was a guffaw between Smith and Hall over Bailey's shiny blackness in a photograph received in the day's mail. Bob Hubbard, an ex-CORE worker now head of a local teen post,* told about the day's incidents with his kids. Bailey intercepted Smith's request that someone fetch him a soda from the local store with "That white girl just went to get her own, so I know you can walk."

The label "Sapphire" was used to attack difficult black women.** "Nigger" and "motherfucker" were used liberally, and with complete disregard for offended ears. Even seemingly serious matters were handled in this cavalier manner; it was frequently difficult to weed out the real jokes and discover the information used to conduct serious business. Only phone calls, student applications, and getting the building in shape were handled with recognizable gravity.

*An activity funded through the Community Action Program; part of the federal "War on Poverty."

*This was the name of Kingfish's shrew of a wife on the "Amos 'N' Andy Show."

The interpersonal style of the organization was not novel in the community, but it was strange for the type of organization that OB was trying to become. The combination of verbal put-downs and competition ("woofing" and "capping") so characteristic of black high school and street corner life--with the casualness of racial and sexual allusions that took such a peculiar form in the civil rights movement--was almost consciously created by the leaders. Bailey's comment, for example, was a mock criticism of Smith's "uppity-ness" and a direct criticism of the pedestalyzed white woman. Hall's was an open flirtation with an almost universally recognized but seldom discussed issue: the more or less unconscious desire of black people to be white.

Although many of the visitors were confused or angered by the OB style, most found it exciting. The sophisticated, complex verbal interplay became one of the distinguishing features of the place, second only to its openness. This peculiar mixture of casual style and the burning desire to accomplish something continued to characterize life at OB. But it posed problems of real, internal conflict as the organization began its first project, the school.

Leadership and the Division of Labor

The OB building was dominated by the personalities of Smith, Hall, and Bailey in the early months. But they did very different things in the organization, and their leadership styles differed radically.

Smith hovered personally and intellectually over the entire operation. His interpretations of everyday events, world affairs, Bootstrap, or human nature were incessant, and they fascinated most people who frequented the building.

Smith worked at the less demanding physical jobs because of a back injured in a southern sit-in, but he was extremely active in writing appeals for money and speaking before groups. Smith was abrupt when his injury was acknowledged by anyone. It caused him to walk with a side-to-side waddle that was very noticeable. His entire back seemed one

fused bone so that he had to lean back to look up and turn his entire upper body to look to the side. He once explained to me, reluctantly, that he and several CORE colleagues had been dragged from a restaurant sit-in in Virginia where they had been protesting segregationist laws. The group of white men lapsed into a frenzy of kicking, beating, and stomping that left the entire group unconscious, injured, and abandoned.

Smith's injury was symbolic of his purpose and painfully reminded everyone of his sacrifice in contrast to their own. They took on the burden of his wound, especially when he spoke. He was an astonishingly intense speaker who mesmerized all who heard him. (His father had been a minister.) His voice seemed to originate from some distant place inside himself, powered by vision and anger. He was a magnet at Bootstrap and his appeals to outlying groups for support drew people and resources to the project.

Bailey's softness in his meetings with visitors, his physical smallness and seeming fragility, were striking. The intensity of his caring about humanity, and the other-worldly quality of his discussions of human problems were Ghandi-like in their effects on those who met him--especially women. Bailey, for reasons of health, was not allowed to do physical labor.

It was Robert Hall's style and ability that most propelled OB's development at this point. Many workers came as a result of knowing one or another of the leaders. Hall's extensive local community connections, in combination with his driving personality, were largely responsible for the speed with which money was supplemented with volunteer labor and material. Hall's effectiveness was not simply a matter of exploiting his friendships. Most who knew him were impressed with the sincere urgency of the goal he had set. Because of this, and his peculiarly commanding personality, even some of the street-corner drunks and bookie-gophers suspended their usual noninvolvement and submitted themselves to his command.

"Blue," a street person with a broad black face whose big smile comfortably took shape without the customary two front teeth, was for a time a devoted servant of Hall's. Blue was uneducated and, some argued, slightly "off." He could get your check cashed any day of the week, and could deliver commodities not generally available. He survived, to some extent, by scraping off a few cents of the change from the money you gave him to fetch a hamburger, a pack of cigarettes, or some soap powder. He was deeply committed to OB, was its "official" janitor, and

was always treated as a person by the leaders. The leaders communicated this respect to many others who were inclined to dismiss Blue's thick, mumbled speech as that of an inconsequential nuisance who had wandered in by accident. Blue was a symbol of the black man at the lowest rungs of the socioeconomic ladder. And all who came into the building had to deal with him; they were not allowed to go directly to the "bright, articulate Negroes" who they had heard were running OB.

Hall managed this early working period by mediating OB's relationship with the streets and with prospective workers from the streets. He also filtered the real helpers from the large number of street people who saw OB as a "mark." OB did not serve meals, but there were well-dressed, cash-bearing types constantly around. Why, the street types seemed to ask, should Operation Bootstrap be that different from the Salvation Army?

Hall's interchanges with some of these people were masterpieces of a "wheeler and dealer" outmaneuvering a local derelict pulling an honest con job or a someone scanning the OB scene for a score. His conversations at these times were liberally sprinkled with "Naw, uh uh," and "Okay, if you're ready to . . . ," which effectively set up a deal for the visitor to do some work or get lost.

One particularly aggressive man came into the office in March, announcing to the room that he was available to work for money. Hall, working with his back to the door, was part way down the recently built hall in the middle of the building. He intercepted the man's announcement and had half-completed the negotiation with the man before confronting him at the door. He said, finally: "This is a volunteer organization. We would be glad to have your help, but we don't pay." Hall's tone of voice contained finality not expressed in words. The man, conducting a man-to-man bargain for work, said in angry disbelief, "Fuck all that," and left in an agitated state. Hall turned from the door and returned to the work and the conversation he had interrupted. He seemed able immediately to disengage himself from the encounter; there was no visible residue of concern about the after affects of such rejections. He was quite comfortable, or fatalistic, about the street rumor system or anger level.

Bailey had expressed some concern that there might be resentment of OB for the time lag between the sign-up of students and the actual start of classes. Several local people (some of them street people or their women) had stuck their heads in the door and demanded to know when

the "god-damned school" was going to get started. OB's reputation could have been damaged by failure to come through. Worse, street hostility might have made OB's front window the target of a molotov cocktail, should "the shit come down" again. Hall never referred to these possibilities. He was confident of his ability to gauge the streets, which he claimed as his natural habitat.

To some extent, Hall may have been effective in attracting the street help because of the example he set. He worked extremely hard, with the abandoned disregard for his physical self that characterized many of the local winos at play.

* * * * *

One of the larger rooms had been sanded and sealed and was ready for painting. Hall had recently negotiated free paint. He was sitting in the front office complaining that the paint would be hard to work with because it was oil-base rather than water-base. At the end of a "fuck it," he leapt up, grabbed a borrowed spray-painting outfit, and headed for the back room. You could hear the spraying machine for a full hour and a half. When Hall came out, his hair, eyes, nostrils, and ears were literally dripping with green paint. His body was covered. He had clearly come out to catch his breath. Several people complained that he ought to wear a mask because of the fumes. He asked, aggressively, if anyone had the money to go out and buy or rent one. When no one said yes, he headed back into the room, saying "I got to die sometime. We have to be ready for open house."

Sonny was a wino from the lot down the street who, according to various people, spoke several languages and used to play trumpet in a well-known forties jazz band. During the course of this day he was popping in and out. He was very drunk. He seemed ready to keel over. He said that he was currently making his living painting. Hall asked him if he'd paint the hall. The scaffold was already erected. Sonny said yes. Hall helped him onto the scaffold and put the mechanism in his hand. Sonny, clearly experienced, staggered about the scaffold working like a madman. Exhausted after about two hours work, he fell into one of the chairs scattered about the place. With familiar bravado, he pretended not to be tired. Softer-hearted people complained to Hall that he was working Sonny too hard, that the scene was pathetic. Hall ignored their complaints.

Heavy, consistent drinking was common at OB when it was primarily a construction site. Beer was the routine diet during the day. Some of the contractors, electricians, and other workmen participated. Hard liquor was popular at the end of the day. A collection usually was taken very quietly. After the booze had been secretly passed out in small cups, several people, including Sonny, sat around and talked. During one short period when Hall was out of the room, Sonny said, "Shit, that cat has more drive than any motherfucker I have ever met in my life. If anybody is going to make it, Robert Hall is."

And Hall was relentless. Bailey started a sentence at the end of one work day: "Russ, you really have put in a lot . . ." Hall interrupted with "Damn that. He ain't done shit." Someone asked Hall if he was going to the N-VAC fund-raising party. It promised to be a great one. He said he'd love to go to the party, "but if we fail here, the community fails," and ended saying that OB was the party. Hall put a lot of pressure on many people not to go to the party, so that more work might get done at OB.

Many other people helped during this period. Bailey's long working relationship with "the engineers" had brought them in. Lou Smith attracted many people and resources with his great ability to tell the aspirations of the poor, and to describe the program through which OB hoped to provide a conduit for these aspirations. A hospital technician volunteered his evenings and weekends to work at OB and publicize it. He and many like him were welcomed, but were mostly left to their own devices to find ways to be useful. The expectation of some work was automatic.

Bailey handled most of the student applicants, the volunteer teachers, and many of the businesses that had instructional materials or devices they hoped to sell or donate to OB. For those industry representatives, the style of welcome in the building was elaborately casual. No one leapt to his feet to greet a representative from any important corporation. It was as though the project, and the enthusiasm that permeated the premises, were adequate welcome. This had peculiar effects on those who had expected a more vigorous response from an organization that was asking for free help or resources. Many whites were quite frightened to be "in Watts" for the first time, but the leaders could not really afford to be seen comforting them. Indeed, the kind of personal imbalance this caused in many business people and white helpers posed some bargaining advantages. It said: "See, we are running

a project you admire. You probably wouldn't feel comfortable running it yourself. But we can do it, so you sort of owe us something."

"Membership"

In much the way that Robert Hall filtered out irrelevant street people, the three leaders selected people with motivation. Theirs was a wide-mesh filter, however. The results periodically produced conflicts in values between leaders and their followers on one side and, on the other, those who came to work with different conceptions of "ought."

From the beginning, Lou Smith was the ultimate authority in Operation Bootstrap. The idea of the organization had been his, and he was identified as its president in the articles of incorporation. But his real authority was personal. Smith's ability to "hover over" tasks and issues in an authoritative way was impressive. His command was also more general than Hall's or Bailey's, covering more people and functions. Incidents of disruption when he was absent showed this.

James Moxley, black leader of the "engineers" and director of the school, had to leave OB after a few months. Bailey replaced Moxley as head of the school, and the board of directors was expanded to include Clarence Price and James Jones (occupant of the auto repair garage in back of the OB building). Jones' garage was Bootstrap's true backstage. At the end of most days--and especially on difficult ones--it was open only to selected black men. The liquor brought to these occasions was usually of high quality. Winos were excluded through some silent code. Smith usually reigned. Hall participated when not committed to a major task. Bailey occasionally came but drank little. These were interpretive sessions of the most detailed sort. Major problems were always brought to the garage.

Meetings of the board were not held particularly regularly, but the board represented, more or less accurately, the official center of authority. In the casual atmosphere of OB at this time, there was rarely need to refer to the board for action.

From the beginning anyone could enter the building and start a project, such as a reading class or arts and crafts for kids, and that project became his or her responsibility and jurisdiction. OB's definition of participation in this respect can be summarized as: "We

set the framework. You decide how you can productively fit into it." There were many such small jurisdictions within OB that did not overlap with the larger jurisdictions over money, representing the organization, or planning--areas that were handled by members of the board.

Personal allegiances, of course, confounded these arrangements, and played a continually important role in the life of Operation Bootstrap. One became a member of OB in a casual way, and influential groupings developed with equal casualness. Gross structural changes in OB came about as the result of no decision at all, but as accidental developments inside the small jurisdictions of OB helpers.

Varieties of "Members"

Larry Wilson, a street person--always nattily dressed--was a close friend of Hall. Larry had an extensive police record, and was not fully extricated from the underworld relationships from which he came to "join" OB. His "membership," however, was very much in line with OB's ideology and intent as an organization.

At the start, it was easiest to be a "member" in the fullest sense if you were black. However, whites with specific skills or strategic social connections--especially those doing volunteer teaching--were regular and free participants in most OB activities. Other whites were not so welcome. For example, one group of women from the San Fernando Valley came to OB hoping to be of general aid to the organization on its premises. They came prepared to scrub floors, clean up. They were rejected by the leadership as "pushy white women." A group of young black women came, and one of them was attending board meetings as "recording secretary" within a month. There was a continual flow of both black and white volunteer secretarial help. Many of these people were students from Los Angeles colleges, such as UCLA or USC. Community people also came in on weekends or evenings to do clerical work.

The teaching staff was the largest group of regular "members" that included both blacks and whites. Twelve to fifteen volunteer instructors taught electronics assembly, key-punching, communications skills (reading, writing, and speaking), and computer programming. Of seven teachers involved in the communications skills classes, six were white, and three of these were full-time television actors. Of the four who taught programming, three (two black "engineers" and one white) were

often identified by Bailey as his assistants. The direction of OB's growth was influenced by the actions and attitudes of these volunteer instructors. A few other people made it their business to be at OB frequently, and offered opinions about its character and direction. But almost all of them had other jobs and, at best, borrowed time from their work to spend at OB or came during the evenings.

The Extended "Bootstrap Family"

One very important group of OB "members" differed substantially from all others. Their role in OB's growth was significant, but their relationships with it were conducted from a distance. They were sometimes identified as members of the "Bootstrap family" by Smith, Bailey, and Hall. This group came to call itself Sherman Oaks Bootstrap and, later, Friends of Bootstrap. The Friends were women who had decided to form a small affiliate group to support OB's efforts. Almost all were housewives with comfortable incomes, active in "community affairs."

Other "friends of Bootstrap" were similar solely in their common interest in the organization as a whole, or in one of the leaders in particular. Since the doors of the building were always open, many people "discovered" OB, worked with it for a while, and then settled back into their previous daily routines. Because most left after having collected good experiences, they often sent others, who came to the building for a time and attempted to be useful. This development of a casual network of friends proved very beneficial to OB's growth.

Relations with the "Outside"

Any goal-directed group has to manage a relatively complicated set of external relations when its goal includes even the slight transformation of society. OB's announced purposes involved the lives of local Avalon residents and overlapped the goals of existing groups. And so it had to deal with these groups, and it had to interpret its aims to them satisfactorily. The genius of OB's initial leadership group was that it included so many connections to a broad social and political geography--black and white, high income and low, outsiders and "the community."

The Community

OB's relations with the everyday community of Avalon were enhanced by the inclusion of Hall and Coleman from N-VAC, and by the support of N-VAC. This support, in turn, implicitly engaged other social circles, since N-VAC included militants from the area, left-militant blacks, and whites from outside the area. There was some suspicion among local community people that both OB and N-VAC were Communist fronts. But this seems to have made little difference in the number of students who registered for classes. This number approached two thousand near the end of OB's first year of operation.

A house two doors down Forty-Second Street was rented. It was to serve as a day-care nursery for working mothers and for the women students who needed a place to leave their children while they were in OB classes. The grasses and shrubbery inside the fenced yard were allowed to grow thick with weeds, and this caused some tension among the owners of houses in the immediately surrounding block, people whose yards (unlike the rest of the block) were well-manicured. An OB block party brought out most of the older residents in the block, however, and the tensions diminished over time.

(photo of block party)

Small local businesses also had generally favorable attitudes toward OB. OB's presence brought a steady flow of new patrons to the small restaurant, the hardware store across the street, the liquor store on the corner. The new patrons were welcomed. The nervous white customer at the restaurant often left a conspicuously large tip after finishing his ham hock dinner, which he desperately needed after a four-hour, nonstop session at OB. Pop bottles were often returned by the bagful without a request for the three-cents-a-bottle deposit. Such small differences in spending made a big difference in the tight economy of the immediate area, and helped to build community acceptance of OB.

Civil Rights and Nationalist Groups

N-VAC's (Hall's and Coleman's) local connections mediated OB's relations with the nebulous world lying somewhere within the boundaries of formal civil rights organizations, the local community at large, and the underworld of local youth gangs. Curiously, although OB's relations were not close with any of these groups as such, elements of all were represented in the regular and irregular membership of OB. One of the earliest and most regular members of OB was a "businessman"* who had retained

his gang connections when he moved into job rehabilitation work for the State of California. Kisasi, an ex-member of the powerful Slausons gang, had his relationship with OB made official through the Office of Economic Opportunity's Neighborhood Adult Participation Program. Ties like these evolved into more "legitimate" ones as community people were attracted to, and became politicized members of, black nationalist and semi-nationalist organizations such as Ron Karenga's US (United Slaves), Karl Key and Tommy Jaquett's SLANT (Self-Leadership Among All Nationalities Today), and Bob Hubbard's rough teen post.

*Member of a large Avalon gang.

No formal ties existed between OB and any gang, nationalist group, or civil rights group (other than N-VAC) until the events surrounding the police slaying of Leonard Deadwyler as he raced his pregnant wife to the hospital in May 1966.¹⁰ The Deadwyler slaying was so totally condemned by the black community that it was to provide the basis for the Temporary Alliance of Local Organizations (TALO), the most extensive coalition of groups and organizations to develop in Los Angeles.

This purposely loose confederation of nationalist and civil rights groups was created specifically as a response to that particular incident, although there had been rumblings earlier about the need for a broad-spectrum group to mediate the grievances of the community and avoid a "hot summer" in 1966. The Alliance and its subsidiary Observer Corps--later to be called The Community Alert Patrol--were largely comprised of nationalists and unemployed youth, many with police records. These groups were meant to be concrete expressions of the anger and frustration of the total community. The Deadwyler affair--

especially the acquittal of the officer who shot him--was felt to be "the last straw" of police brutality against the community.

The Alliance was an uneasy one. It combined the entire range of ghetto groups, including gangs, churches, moderate civil rights organizations, and nationalist movements--groups not accustomed to working together. It was effective for a short period, for example in its boycott of a Deadwyler police hearing to which certain militant members of the Alliance had not been invited. The controversial Observer Corps was a motorized group of young militants who followed police cars through Avalon, Watts, and other ghetto areas.¹¹ Its members drove whatever cars they could find. They were equipped with walkie-talkies and, on occasion, weapons. For a while it even operated out of the office building of the highly respectable United Civil Rights Committee.

The Corps, however, proved to be too volatile to be a base on which to build a continuing coalition of such disparate groups. The United Civil Rights Committee soon severed relations with the Alliance. And very soon after that Bootstrap, SNCC, US, and others left TALO over the majority's refusal to take more militant action and its refusal to boycott a meeting with the Los Angeles Police Department and other community mediators. There was also much conflict over the group's interpretation of "Black Power."¹² Lou Smith chose to cast his lot with the more militant interpreters of the slogan. The Alliance was effectively broken.

Smith and Hall had taken the side of militance and the youthful Observer Corps members. OB's relationship with the militant youths expanded rapidly after that, mainly through the activities of Hall. He had occasion to save one well-known young nationalist from apprehension by the police, and bailed another out of jail with money urgently borrowed in OB's name. He was called to intervene on behalf of a young group of semi-nationalists enrolled in a class of OB's heavily financed "competitor" in job training (OIC), when a white teacher there advanced an ideologically impure interpretation of Negro history and the youths threatened to burn the building down. By the end of the summer of 1966 OB had staked out a strong position on the militant and nationalist end of the local political spectrum.

Politicians

The offices of local politicians Billy Mills, Merv Dymally, and Bill Green* were fully open to OB. Dymally was on close personal terms with Hall. In tight periods, OB was free to use needed resources or printing services available in those offices. Stationery was provided by one of them.

A member of the Los Angeles City Council attended OB's first open house. OB was in his district, and he had helped with the hurried hookup of OB's building to the city sewage system, and had arranged for placement of an attractive trash receptacle outside the building, and for the blocking off of Forty-Second Street for a block party.

Aspiring new "politicians" like Clifford "Gene" McClain frequently attended OB's Thursday night sessions. McClain was running for assemblyman of the Fifty-Sixth District as a Black Panther party candidate. His slogan: "Move on Over, or We'll Move on Over You."

Complicating these relations was the fact that Willard Murray, Los Angeles Mayor Sam Yorty's black aid and representative in the area, was a constant visitor at OB and a solid acquaintance of Hall's. Yorty was deeply mistrusted by almost all black activists, militant or not. His initial campaign in the ghetto had contained consistent promises to get

*At the time, elected members of the Los Angeles City Council and the California State Assembly.

rid of William Parker, chief of the Los Angeles police force, but Yorty refused to do that after his election. As Yorty's assistant, Murray was widely regarded as an "Uncle Tom." But he managed to maintain relations with many activists in the ghetto, including Hall.

OB never got or gave any "action" as a result of its leaders' relations with politicians. Hall did allow his name to be used in defense of one local politician (Bill Williams, then running for secretary of state), who had been incorrectly accused of inciting a Deadwyler protest rally to riot. But this was a rare exception. The major benefit from these political ties was the prestige they brought to the organization. Even Ronald Reagan's visit brought a kind of prestige, by pointing up the organization's existence in its early days,

and by giving the impression that a future candidate considered OB important enough to say he'd been there.

OB had kept good relations with local poverty agencies, and in July of 1966 the organization was visited by Sargent Shriver, then head of the federal Office of Economic Opportunity. He talked with the leaders for five hours. A few days later Smith and Hall were interviewed at OB by CBS-TV, and asked about the long meeting with Shriver. Shriver's visit attracted even more attention than Reagan's to OB and gave it added importance as a "place" in the ghetto. In August, Governor Pat Brown paid a visit to OB.

On August 18, 1966, Shriver said at a nationally televised Senate hearing on poverty, "A year ago in Watts they were crying Burn Baby Burn. Today they are saying Learn Baby Learn." OB's name and slogan were used with increasing frequency in the local media. Smith, Hall, and Bailey were quoted in feature articles on Watts in *Life* and *Look* magazines. OB had become more than a community "place to be"; it had become a political place as well. It was, for a while, the main ghetto site for dialogue between the black community and the outside world.

Later in the year, Bootstrap played host to local militants and black nationalists and to a group of intellectuals from the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions. Another later session, which took place at the Center's Santa Barbara location, was taped and broadcast by Los Angeles's liberal-left radio station, KPFK. And an interview with Smith and Bailey was printed in the center's publication.¹³ Both meetings were intense and angry interchanges between the Bootstrap contingent and the resident Fellows of the Center over the meaning of American democracy, race, and class relations. In short, this extraordinary group of men and their enterprise managed in a very short time to become a stable feature, not only of the local ghetto scene, but of the regional and national scenes as well. Bootstrap had sunk its roots well.

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I have tried to give a palpable sense of how an idea took social form. The entire civil rights movement shifted its focus. One of its organizations--CORE--propounded a new national strategy. One of its officers--Lou Smith--gave his version of its enactment a name, wove his way through the sociopolitical maze of Los Angeles, gathered people,

resources, and commitments to the organization's style and ideals, and gradually assembled a little world with a life of its own.

Operation Bootstrap had become a vibrant light in a ghetto that had been darkened by angry smoke at the time of Bootstrap's birth. Widely known and publicized, it had extended its reach from a ghetto street corner to sources of potential sustenance across the city and state, across race, class, and political divisions. Here was an instituted place, the place-ness of which was defined by this widening reach. But the ideals of participatory open-ness were severly tested as Bootstrap grew.

The second half of this story describes how the leaders articulated their ideals and plans, how they succeeded in building toward the Bootstrap dream in practical terms, and how ideals and success confounded and ended the dream.

Chapter II

OPERATION BOOTSTRAP: IDEAS CONFRONT ACTION

Ideals

The beacon of the leaders' ideas attracted increasing numbers and types of people to participate in the Bootstrap enterprise. These ideas, which grew from CORE's new national strategy, took their own peculiar form at OB, and set the conditions for the assembled group's charter. The three men--Lou Smith, Bob Bailey, and Bob Hall--differed in their emphasis but agreed, and forcefully, on a number of ideas that

became central to OB's place in the debates of the time. The following speech gives some flavor of the ideas they developed together:¹

Early Ideals

"Learn, Baby, Learn": An Imaginary Speech

Surely, race and its importance for white people is the source of American and international conflict. Mine is a racial theory of society. It is not a racist theory of society, however. I use "white" not in color, but in values. I believe that the historical accident of white world dominance has determined the destructiveness of the values connected with their race. Race is a convenient, though not infallible, identifier of those who support and perpetuate a social system which violates the social contract, destroys the world of tomorrow's children, and limits man's aspirations to vulgar financial gain.

Although a "black white man" or "chocolate covered white man" may participate in and perpetuate the same evil system, the tenacity of race for white men keeps even those Negroes who satisfy the requirements of white existence out of the white world. The racial barriers which described the American problem are intact and strong.

The black ghettos that white dominance has produced are filled with people with hope. They are filled with people who, even when violating their neighbors or lovers, are rooted in morality, in a sense of humanity, and in the social contract. This fact is not the result of black germ plasm, but the result of an historical necessity. They are left with nothing but their humanity in the face of the fact that the pillar of their pasts, their culture, their identity, has been removed to support their oppressors, which would tumble without it.

Having only their humanity, black Americans have had only that to develop. Thus they are not the ghostly forms that whites are, but have Soul, have vital substance which has only to understand the power it possesses--the power of blackness--in order to achieve its freedom. The relationship between whites and blacks is an inevitable one. Whites have a tiger by the tail. Indeed, they created that tiger by providing

him with such an extraordinary freedom and necessity to develop his vitality. When the black man achieves his freedom, the white man will discover that he has his also. He will understand at what an awful personal and social cost he has held his black fellow men in bondage. He will understand that his children will be free to make their own decisions about the kind of society they wish to have. The white man freed from the bondage of structure, and the black man freed from the bondage of oppression and colonized thinking will be free to use the vitality and the material of life to fully live their time of being.

How is this to be overcome? Five minutes of instant anarchy might be necessary in order to reorder the priorities of whites. It might be worth the price of five minutes if that might stave off the conflagration that will ensue if white America continues to develop and export its racism, if the white man insists on clutching the tiger's tail. But before the radical experiment with anarchy which might dislodge whites from their devoted attachment to their color(lessness), the tiger and the white man must occupy the same room, and, on a one-to-one basis discover what they each are, what they each lack, and how they can help each other. The white man must bring his material, his skills, and himself. The black man must bring his soul, his hunger for identity, and his anger. They must talk with each other. The black man must not talk up or the white man down, but both must talk across to and with each other. This way the whites are not "helping the poor Negro," nor is the black man "begging from his white master." They are giving to each other.

This same transaction must take place in the occupational, political, and economic arenas. Moral action can only truly reenter American institutions if this transaction is allowed to take place. And if it is allowed to take place, the self-determining poor will insure the infusion of that morality. That and their vitality is what America needs to survive. These will provide the moral and vital amps which will give power to the billions of volts licking off the finger of affluent America.

Operation Bootstrap is a job training center. But it is also a life training center. Within its walls both black and white can learn. In basic human confrontation in teaching or just sitting together in a room, whites can learn what they are, what they lack, and what they

truly want. Black men can see what has been done to them, can decide to gain the skills which will allow them to explore the affluence of whites, can undo their colonialized thinking, and can achieve the psychological strength lost with their lost identity.

Openness

These ideas in practice soon become subject to the altering influence of action. The first to show this influence was the ideal of an open organization, with enough structure to exist but not so much that most of those who entered could not have some influence on programs. This orientation, most thoroughly worked out in the thinking of Smith, but also clearly present in the thought of Bailey, was tested as the structure of Bootstrap evolved.

The personalities of the leaders, the diversity of the "members," and the shabby character of the location seemed, in combination, to make an ideology of openness redundant. The place started with openness and kept it for a long time. The finger-popping and long laughs, the aggressive and rambling conversations, were considered a part of the "soul" and morality of the ghetto. OB was to reflect the "community" and all were invited to participate in the openness of the ghetto community.

During the early phases of Bootstrap's existence the commitment to an open organization operated to OB's advantage and to its disadvantage. The stress on self-help attracted both young black militants and middle-aged white conservatives. Because a person could come to OB with a program and run it--or come with nothing and just sit--Bootstrap attracted people of different motives. Some construed the invitation as one to license; and others came with thought-out-plans, because they shared the leaders' aversion to over-structured bureaucratized life. The invitation to psychological openness--in which Hall was never very interested--attracted both psychologists and psychotics.

Managing Diversity: The Early Basis of Cohesion

There were few specific roles in the early days. There was some agreement on goals. These were "on paper," but it was not clear to

anyone just how the goals would be achieved in action. This operated, to some extent, to the advantage of the organization, giving it freedom to develop spontaneously. While the diversity of the membership threatened OB's cohesion, the fact that walls had to be scraped, sanded, and painted, that floors had to be swept and errands run, tied improbable clusters of people together in common short-range efforts and made the long-range goals seem more immediate.

But these short-range efforts did not provide the social consistency around which Bootstrap could achieve stability. The daily attendants at the OB building included many highly mobile individuals who had been active in civil rights organizations and demonstrations before OB existed. They had known each other through CORE, N-VAC, picket lines, sit-ins, and other forms of activist politics. The implicit common purpose that carried over from those experiences formed a supportive backbone when the motivating power of Bootstrap's primitively developed purposes was weak.

An incident that occurred during the wall-sanding days was one of the last expressions of this substratum of strength. On a particularly noisy and productive day, a large number of people had come to the building and swarmed all over the makeshift scaffolding, armed with sanders, sandpaper, and other tools.

Near the middle of the day Smith mentioned to me that he was going to have to "put in an appearance" at a CORE picket line to be thrown up in front of a See's Candy Store later that day. I asked him if I could go along. Hall overheard my request and shouted angrily, "Ain't nobody going to no picket line. There's too much to do here."

Although Hall was usually able to direct all energies within the Bootstrap building, anticipation of the demonstration ended the work day for many of those present, who abandoned work and began singing freedom songs. The songs were sung on the sidewalk and the singers were pleased to draw the attention of bus and auto passengers who passed the intersection. We sang louder when the regular patrol car passed by, with Robert Hall, who by then had joined the group, increasing the volume.²

The common identification with the passions, memories and music of the civil rights movement provided an overreaching cohesion at Bootstrap. Smith, Bailey, and Hall did not exploit this basis of cohesion consciously. Bootstrap had, in fact, been defined from the

outset as not a "civil rights" organization. Nonetheless, this feature of both the central and casual membership played an important role in maintaining OB's strength, ideological flavor, and charisma in the early phase of its existence.

The major problem of managing diversity persisted. This problem was handled by special devices--particularly sociodrama and "open-to-all-comers" talk sessions in the front office. But mostly it was handled through the interpersonal artistry of the leaders who, during lulls, and during conflicts between members, had to be agile enough to hold the members by creating a feeling of purpose and by mediating divisive conflicts between radically different people.

Filling the Empty Spaces

During the months of building, the verbal and interpersonal skills of Smith, Hall, and Bailey were particularly apparent. They used "empty" periods of time to create the new interpersonal ties, and the new shared understandings of the world, that would allow Bootstrap to take its next steps as an organization, despite the diversity of its "members."

The leaders' way of occupying the front office on these occasions allowed everyone, including the street people, to feel valued if they chose to join in. Smith and the others welcomed, and sometimes started, abstract discussions of American history and social structure, or critiques of the philosophies of the other groups. They were particularly pleased to engage businessmen, teachers, social workers, and street people together in these discussions.

These open-ended sessions taught the Bootstrap "dream" and "correct" ideology. For example, one day a black civil rights service employee walked into the building to find a young street type in the same chair and same physical position he had seen him in a few days before. He exclaimed, "Damn, boy, do you sleep here or something?" Hall interrupted: "So what the fuck are you doing down there with your head stuck up the white man's ass. At least he's doing what he wants to do and not messing up."

Sometimes the points were made by interpreting world, national, and local news events. This was very common in the front office.

Someone might come in and relate a news item he had heard on the radio, or news about events in the area, such as a violation the police had committed. This was fair game for heated discussions. Of particular importance, of course, was news of race, and of the civil rights struggle.

Headline topics were frequently introduced by one of the three leaders. One day, Hall was seated behind his desk with his feet up, reading the newspaper. He shouted out from behind the paper, "Boy, these motherfuckers done got themselves a tiger by the tail and don't know how to turn it loose," referring to the war in Vietnam. He then went on to talk to no one in particular about American racism, and finished the discussion with the announcement: "I don't believe in no nonviolence. I am not nonviolent," in support of the refusal of North Vietnam to buckle under American military might.

A good deal of what went on in the front office was arguments--earthy and abstract by turns, always colorful and spirited. These were occasions for getting clarity on issues, as the leaders tested their ideas on all comers.

There was the clear understanding that a "poor black brother" was "officially" the most highly regarded person in OB; except for this, little ranking took place. Periodically, however, it became clear that the news interpretations of some people were more readily responded to than those of others. Then-State Assemblyman Mervyn Dymally got more attention than Blue, for example.

Another important function of the sessions was communicating the desired interpersonal style. The front office was a sort of "style school." Entering it in early 1966, one got the clear feeling of being at a performance--not because the leaders were acting, but because they had taken what they were as black Americans to be something good. They consciously chose, I believe, to let that "something" happen to them, in order to teach both blacks and whites that this was a way to be that had been overlooked by serious America and, when noticed, had been relegated to the realm of dignity-destroying humor. The joking style, for example, functioned to teach the racially mixed group of the office how to be about issues of race. If the topic was painful or otherwise disturbing to discuss, their style said joke, but discuss.

The free-flowing style forced people to create their own work and social roles. In the earliest period, everyone faced the task of

learning to "occupy" a place in the office. It was genuinely possible to attend regularly and not act or speak; you could just listen. It was much easier to find a concrete job to do when there was work, and one was generally free to participate in clerical work or heavy labor. Except for people like Blue, who was given the job of cleaning the building and took "orders" from Smith, Hall, and Bailey, no one's progress in finding a way of occupying the place was ever commented upon. It was assumed that if you chose to be in the building you were available for work, and specific requests were made.

Concrete ideological lessons were taught as the opportunity arose. For example, Woodrow Coleman got a job with a state agency concerned with poverty and employment. Unlike the three leaders, who were constantly on the Bootstrap premises, Woodrow stopped coming regularly. Some tension was created by the fact that he would not be working full-time at Bootstrap as they were, but the leaders did not begrudge him the job. However, every time Coleman did set foot in the office, attention was called to his "nigger bag"--the attache case in which he carried materials for his job. He was constantly kidded in mock asides: "Ah-ah, Woody's done got all up in the power structure now. Got him his little nigger bag and working for the STATE!" Such remarks helped to manage the tension of Coleman's absence from the front office as a stable figure. They were also reminders of one of the main dangers that, it was felt, black people faced: their leaders were drawn into comfortable jobs and incomes and forgot about the black brothers and sisters in the ghettos. When black men found employment, even through Bootstrap, they were subjected to this kind of ritual.

Interpersonal Artistry

During this phase of Bootstrap's growth, when everyone was welcomed into the building, this welcome had a number of benefits. The presence of a great variety of people symbolized Bootstrap's ambitions for itself and for society at large. Also, the variety increased the personal and monetary resources contributing to OB's growth.

Another benefit was that the general welcome and lack of specified roles allowed anyone who chose to participate in OB and to feel some responsibility for the functioning and success of the organization. Thus, when a white Southerner visited OB, a member of a local gang (an OB regular) took him on after the visitor and Bailey finished talking.

In the process, the regular displayed his own knowledge of the place to all concerned, and did the job Bailey had defined as necessary. A visiting YMCA group was shown around by a person who had only recently become familiar with the place, until Hall could be found to speak to them briefly.

But there were many times when the leaders not only had to handle visitors, but had to mediate the relationships between them, or between casual and regular members, to preserve the stability of the enterprise and to keep individuals and groups affiliated. There were no established devices for handling such problems, and their management depended on the interpersonal artistry of the three leaders.

An incident related by Ruth Warrick ("the mother of Bootstrap") to The Single Adults Group of the Valley Cities Jewish Community Center summarized the kind of problem, occurrence, and resolution to which the skills of Bailey and Smith, in particular, were so adequate. Warrick described her first experience of direct racial hatred. While conducting one of her communications skills classes, she had heard shouting behind her. She turned to discover a black man with his face close to the large window that faced the sidewalk. He was emitting a stream of invective--"bitch," "blue-eyed devil," and worse:

I thought "Well, I won't react in anger to this, so I'll smile" for which I got a venomous "Wipe that silly grin off your face!" And I found something peculiar happening inside of me. For the first time in my life I found myself the victim of animosity, of hate. . . . I thought, "So this is what happens to the Negro who is minding his own business, applying for a job, smiling at somebody, doing his work, and he feels hatred pouring at him--not for anything he is, not for anything that he's done, but for the color of his skin." The motto of Operation Bootstrap is Learn, Baby, Learn--and Baby learned in that moment. I learned what it feels like and I wanted to run and hide. A few minutes later when Bob Bailey helped me out to my car, I said, "Bob, will you answer a question for me honestly?" And he said, "Oh, you're going to run away." I hadn't even asked the question yet. I said, "No, but I just want an answer; am I hurting you by being down here? Maybe I'm keeping people away by being here. Because of our storefront window you can see who's in there. We're right on display like Macy's window." I said, "Maybe I'm keeping some people away that ought to come in here, that would come in here, but won't come in if there's a white devil there." Instead of saying, "Oh now, now, you know, don't be silly. I mean we love you here, it's wonderful to have you here," he didn't say

that, he said, "Yeah, we've thought about that." (If you don't want honesty, don't fool around with Bootstrap.) "We've thought about that, and we've had several meetings on that. We took a vote and we decided it wouldn't be fair to you not to let you come down. We decided that if we're ever going to get anywhere in this business, we have to expose you people to each other." (Now, for the first time, I was "you people"; usually they're "those people." "It's a good idea to let you come down here and see what it's like and to let them see what you're like and we do have to have bridges. So we decided you could be a bridge." So I've been a bridge ever since and the traffic's been marvelous. So I stopped worrying about what it was I was going to teach down there, because I teach a class called communication skills, and found out that the idea of communication is to communicate.

Clusters and Conflict

The free-flowing character of the earliest encounters between visitors, regular members, and irregular members began to give way to clustering. Members clustered around activities, and around the key concerns of getting and using new resources, communicating Bootstrap and its idea to the world at large, and conducting job training. Though never codified, roles became more concrete. The central people of Bootstrap became more selective in the kinds of activities they allowed within the building, and the kinds of people allowed to participate.

This clustering adventitiously reduced short-range tensions that arose from contact between members with widely differing attitudes, but it also created discrete bodies of competitive sentiment and activity. These clusters played increasingly important roles in the evolution of Bootstrap as OB attracted more people, became structurally less vague, and moved toward work on its announced goals.

Cluster One: Black rapping

The Bootstrap office began to see a kind of discussion--rapping--to which whites, even those most immersed in the structure of OB, had very limited access. Rapping involved talking from deep inside "the black experience," using the expressions characteristic of black culture, showing one's expertise in the conversational style and

contemporary content of that culture. Rapping rested on the assumption that only black people could know the meaning of their existence; that there was some basic--even ontological--difference between black people and whites. The whites who spent time in the Bootstrap office with any regularity, and who did not accept this assumption, tended to avoid involvement in these discussions, and never presumed to claim any knowledge of "the black experience." The deepest involvement achieved by any white was in joking probes by blacks designed to test the white person's attitude toward the contentions being set out, or to elicit information about what white people thought on the topic. Sometimes white "members" occupying the front office would fail these serious or unserious tests. After such failures they were used as examples of the inability of whites to understand the basic issues.

Part of the difficulty whites had was not realizing that the important thing about these interchanges was not necessarily the correctness of the black's or white's interpretation of national, international, local, racial, or economic affairs. It was in the white's acceding--by keeping a strategic silence--to black people's demand for rectitude. The whites who were most successful at being present in these discussions--and being acknowledged as present, even though silent--were those who were known to have strong opinions and commitments but who chose carefully the occasion for expressing those opinions.

Any black person could take part in the rapping activities if s/he felt suited to do so. There was always the danger, of course, that s/he could be labeled a "chocolate covered white person" and "false-conscious." Those who chose to get involved either had their ideas well in mind or had the personal skills necessary for this kind of interchange. The core of the rapping group included some members of the BOD (Bootstrap's Board of Directors) if they were present, local regulars like Bob Hubbard and Cornell Henderson, and civil rights workers who continued to come regularly.

Bob Hubbard's part in these raps was important for Bootstrap. Hubbard had been an aggressive organizer for Los Angeles CORE during its period of greatest success. As he had become more and more disenchanted with the direction in which CORE had moved, he gradually reduced his involvement with it and became the head of a teen post funded by the Office of Economic Opportunity. This teen post was one of the roughest in Los Angeles because of its location. Hubbard's methods of dealing with the kids who attended the teen post--many of whom carried guns--

were extraordinary. He never attempted to define respectability for them, never counseled removing their weapons or ditching their assorted drugs, and gradually he gained their confidence. Hubbard said of himself:

Ever since I've been in CORE I've been against, like, participating in them national conventions because . . . we don't get nothing going on the home front. How in the hell am I supposed to be justified in going up trying to set up some kind of national shit? I couldn't give a damn what they're doing nationally, you know because what they're voting on and all that shit won't be affecting me if I ain't doing a damn thing. So for the past six or seven years I been trying to get something going around here.

What he managed to get going was a teen post organized around the theme of black power, by which he meant the ability to control the political and economic lives of black communities. The kids wore black power sweat shirts showing a young man with a "natural" hairdo carrying a sack of money in one hand and a ballot box in the other. Although the teen post was his primary concern, Hubbard also frequented the OB building. Invariably he filled the room with serious and humorous anecdotes from his day's experiences, or with angry generalizations about the ghetto's problems and what was keeping it from improving. During these sessions, he often engaged one of OB's leaders in discussing some delicate aspect of their interpretation of the world. This not only instructed those standing about, but also identified Hubbard's stance on issues on which the leaders had strong ideological positions.

One late afternoon, Hubbard drove up to the OB building and brought his hamburger in with him. He immediately began a lively discussion of the Watts riot. The conversation shifted to riots he had been in in the army--riots he said he had caused. He said he had caused riots on about ten different army bases. He had consistently violated all the rules and totally refused to cooperate with the army system. He had always disrupted indoctrination sessions, which contrasted democracy and communism, with purposely naive questions stressing that he had not experienced democracy, either in the United States or in the army.

Lou, who had been sitting quietly drinking beer, affirmed all of Hubbard's points and related similar experiences of his own. He had been in the army in 1947 when it was still segregated. He had learned

never to compromise in the direction of obeying army rules. As long as one violates them systematically, he said, one's place in the army is comfortable and understandable. He recounted how he used to perform his clerical army job. He would take a couple of bottles of whiskey and his girl and typewriter to a room somewhere. He would drink and make love, and she would type up his work. He related the story as a recommendation, saying, "Once you start acting 'right' the army has you. You are spoiled for civilian life and it's like a civil rights worker trying to get back into society.

The anecdote seemed to contain the germ of Lou's antistructure position. He was a veteran of both the army and the civil rights movement, and he was choosing to remain outside society by setting up an organization that was attempting to create new forms. The ideological message for those standing around, and the convergence of the ideas of Smith and Hubbard, were impressive.

Cluster Two: Relating

There developed a way for the "chocolate covered white person" to be knowledgeable and for the white person, so inclined, to "take his troubles to the chaplain." In fact, both of the persons to whom Hubbard referred were encouraged by the leaders to express themselves the way they did, outside the front office rapping sessions. As more and more community people came into the office, the relationship between them and the outsiders (whites and blacks) became more and more difficult to manage. Bootstrap's early work in sensitivity training and role reversal was used to create sessions in which soul-searching could take place outside the office setting.

Mark Weiss, the architect of those early sessions and the primary influence on Bailey to continue and develop them, was much more congenial to the rapping than he was to the job-training program. He said of Bootstrap's efforts:

Historically, I see them as having done the only thing they could do, which was to start and to work it out as best they could and to hammer the thing out as it came along. I think right now they're on the verge of some-thing that could make it the most powerful program in the country and that's this interactional set-up . . . it may turn off a lot of people at first, but it's going to produce such a powerful form,

within a year they're going to be turning people out of Bootstrap [who] are capable of running sessions, [who] are capable of moving into the white community and changing the white community rather than being changed by it, which is something I'm looking forward to and I want to be a part of that.

Weiss worked vigorously, especially on and through Bailey, to help Bootstrap realize what he felt to be its major asset: using the honesty that he believed to exist in the ghetto. Weiss believed that ghetto blacks, by using these sessions and variations on them, could change the world of the white man, who had lost much of his ability to be honest. This estimation of both blacks and whites Weiss shared with Smith and Bailey.

Weiss' investment in the sessions was deep, and his zeal for spreading the idea of them was always as present as he was. It was his hypothesis that America was on the verge of a major psychological breakthrough that could redefine life in this country and around the world. He saw a "correlation between the psychedelic revolution . . . and the honesty revolution" and was committed to working out the revolutionary implications of the latter in connection with Bootstrap. He was convinced that the center of strength that could cause the honesty revolution to run its course was in the ghetto. He was a believer in the fact and value of black "soul." It was his hope that this black strength might be combined with systematic sessions to bring people closer to themselves and to each other.

It proved impossible to conduct the role reversal sessions and third-ear games, which had figured so prominently in OB's initial stages, on the premises with all the work and equipment about the building. When the building was completed, the role reversal sessions were not reestablished. But OB had attracted many people who had found these sessions important and personally useful, and many of these people continued to visit periodically. The activities that had been so effective earlier began to reappear, in a much less intense fashion, in the communications skills classes. These classes were taught exclusively by white volunteers. Because OB had received very little hardware with which to conduct its job-training activities, and because the initial action plan had identified remedial reading and writing as one of the most important features of this training, these classes were for some time the only ones being conducted.

These classes came to be frequented more and more by people who wanted to "talk about the problem." One Thursday night class became a regular substitute for the relating seminars that OB had previously conducted. They became sessions during which feelings about race, violence, and other people were expressed. When a black nationalist attended, these sessions became shouting black-white confrontations, with the blacks doing most of the shouting. Sheila Tucker was the only member of the board of directors who attended these sessions with any frequency, and her visits were irregular. The usual style of the leadership, and of interested parties from the streets, was to drop in for a while, perhaps shout, leave, and return later. There were two or three black regulars. Most whites came for three or four sessions, but there were usually only a few whites (other than the instructors) who had been there two or three times before.

Of the OB leaders, Bailey was the one most pleased with these sessions, although he almost never attended them. Smith was also pleased, but his interest was largely due to his commitment to unstructured contact between people. He was excited by the sessions because they conformed to, and promised to confirm, his beliefs. Hall did not like the sessions and found them basically useless, to the participants or in the realization of OB's plans.

With the emergence of these first two clusters, Bootstrap began to take on more structure. Conflicts came to be managed less and less by the interpersonal artistry of the leaders and more through the separation of activities in time and place, allowing individuals to cluster around the activities as they saw fit. Some young militants, for example, would periodically attend the relating sessions, although their main activity centered in the daily life of the Bootstrap front office. Provisions was made for the soul exchange, as Smith had desired, but as I will show, with effects more complicated than he had anticipated.

Cluster Three: White Support

The white women from Everywoman's Village had participated in the early Bootstrap sessions and had tried to find some way to work in the office. Finally they decided to form an affiliate support group that they named Friends of Bootstrap. Initially Phyllis Kramer, who taught general semantics at Everywoman's Village, had organized a campaign at

the Village called Bucks for Bootstrap. Village members did not want Kramer to mix Bucks for Bootstrap with other Village activities. So, with a core of women from her class, Kramer set up the Friends group in the affluent white enclave of Sherman Oaks. Friends of Bootstrap did not, as a group, get directly involved in Bootstrap office activities. They raised funds, supported specific activities suggested to them by the OB leaders, and hosted occasions in their suburban homes.

Friends was composed of a small core of six hard-working people: Linda Brody, Linda Friedman, Patti Bernard, Tom Bernard, and Don Freed--the last a writer and sometime play director who had taught existentialism at Everywoman's Village. Linda Clark had been assigned by OB to the Friends of Bootstrap as liaison. But as a white woman who had won a favored position at Bootstrap this was exactly the kind of activity she did not want to be involved with, so she seldom attended their meetings. Linda Friedman, whose husband Ken taught computer programming at Bootstrap, became a Bootstrap regular--she was the only member of Friends of Bootstrap who did so.

The Friends were all either enmeshed in a concrete set of "beliefs," or very actively in search of one. Bootstrap seems to have served as one aid to their quest. Each of the Friends--including Freed--subscribed to some sort of "life philosophy," religion, or personal or political ideology, and readily invoked it in relations with other people. General Semantics, United World Federalism, Vedanta, psychoanalysis, existentialism, and similar systems provided substructures for the various individuals' thinking about personal and social ultimates. Each member also found some important way in which Bootstrap represented something good that was at the heart of his or her beliefs.

One member of OB, an active worker in the United World Federalists,* was interested in Bootstrap and its sessions because she was interested in "what you do to get this dialogue going--people talking, all kinds of people--all over the world." Phyllis Kramer, describing a "childlike approach and spontaneity" as the essence of what is needed by our civilization, argued that when you:

expose yourself to new thoughts in general semantics . . .
then you go into each new encounter with . . . spontaneity, and you
establish--I heard it at

Bootstrap--the one-to-one relationship . . . it is true

One afternoon last summer, Patti Bernard, a lusty, platinum-haired 34-year-old Southern Californian, was planning her family's entertainment for the evening while throwing together the remains of a meatloaf for their dinner. It was not an uncomplicated task. First, she had to find a sweatshirt labeled WOODVIEW PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL (donated by an inmate friend), which her husband, Tom, liked to wear to a course in oil painting he was going to attend that night. Her 14-year-old daughter, Marci, was scheduled for a course in drama, so Patti ran through the lines of "The Member of the Wedding" with her child, dabbing tomato sauce on the meatloaf. Ten-year-old Kim had a course in guitar-playing coming up, and Patti swore as two fingernails split while she was helping Kim tune the E-string.

For Patti herself, the evening was to be an orgy of educational rapture--three hours of General Semantics. She glowed in anticipation as she recalled the other academic pleasures she had experienced in the preceding two years. "I took a semester of Sig-baby (Sigmund Freud)" she said, "and then there was 'The Beyond Within' about LSD with Sidney-baby (psychiatrist Dr. Sidney Cohen). I liked the course in interior design given by Antoine Dalu, and there were lots of other fun things. What I've liked most, I guess, was Don Freed's course in existentialism. I learned about Nietzsche, Spengler, Dostoevski, and St. Paul. The one I really dug was St. Paul, especially when I realized the great guilt he carried around with him until he had his vision on the road to Damascus and made his leap of faith." Just then Patti's husband, Tom, came home from work. He is a handsome, bearded man of 39 who owns a company that does silkscreen printing. He listened glumly to his wife's explanation of why St. Paul must be considered an early existentialist, and then he muttered, "She never used to dig me, and now I have to do a lot of extra reading to dig her." He sat down with the rest of the family to consume the meatloaf. After that, they all piled in the family car to be transported to their various educational endeavors of the evening. As the car spend down the San Diego Freeway, other motorists stared at the unique bumper sticker on the Bernard's Lincoln Continental. The bumper sticker slogan (which originated in Watts after last year's Negro riots) reads: LEARN, BABY, LEARN.

The Response at Bootstrap

Some of the Bootstrap regulars had attended the party and witnessed the confrontation between the leaders and the party audience.

Stories, accounts, and variations on these became important material for front office rapping sessions. Those who had attended gave their versions of the encounter to those off the streets who had not. Conclusions drawn by the leaders about "those people out in the Valley" were reflected in the stories related by other Bootstrap members about their similar encounters with "some ol' broad who kept saying . . .". The general conclusions drawn from the party encounters were:

The "swimming pool set" really was as ignorant of their own and the nation's plight as had been argued by the core members of Bootstrap.

By and large, the only meaningful relationship that could be achieved between Bootstrap and that audience was joint fund-raising activities and/or education "to get their heads together on some things."

The party encounter also crystallized many issues hidden behind the OB/Friends relationship. And it functioned to redirect some commitments. Smith observed: "Those people really ignored Calvin Jackson [the pianist at the party]. It was a shame. I'll bet they were disappointed because he didn't play 'nigger music.'"

It had been Smith's contention that one of the most important problems in dealing with such groups was the quiet racism, manifested in the white liberal's bias for the Negro and enjoyment of "his music." Ruth Warrick's great value for Smith was the fact that she understood this and, at occasions like the party, was able to speak effectively to whites on the subject. Bailey, Hall, and Price were inclined to agree with Smith. But all three had felt, prior to the party, that when the issue was fund-raising or public relations, it was important to suppress some ideological positions in favor of getting those jobs done. Bailey and Hall had discussed at length Smith's inclination to attack liberals and lose the contribution of precisely the people who could be of use to Bootstrap.

After the party, Bailey and Hall, though still convinced that Smith's attacks were unwise, were "converted" by the experience and tended to be more congenial to those attacks. Price, on the other hand, was even more convinced that the attacks were inappropriate, not because

they were incorrect, but because they contributed nothing to Bootstrap's purposes in that relationship. He suggested that both OB and FOB, in the future, keep this in mind.

Smith was upset with the variety of social causes represented at the party by the antiwar and world-peace literature being passed around. Sitting back in his chair, he mused: "There was an awful lot of stuff going around that didn't have anything to do with Bootstrap. Don't let them tie that Vietnam albatross around your neck."

Bootstrap was experiencing internal difficulties with its relationship to N-VAC, because Woodrow Coleman and others in N-VAC were beginning to see Bootstrap as "a trick," if it was going to concentrate on job training to the exclusion of protest against the war and involvement in critical political concerns.

This conflict had arisen before. Causes were constantly attempting to attach themselves to OB's location and legitimacy. Robert Hall had been flattered by the Progressive Labor Party into including a strong printed protest of the "persecution" of one of its members in a PLP document, alongside statements by Jean-Paul Sarte, Simone de Beauvoir, and other international figures on the left. Indeed, in February of 1966, Hall had been flown to New York to give a speech. Hall's comments came to the attention of a local newspaper and forced a resolution of the whole issue within the leadership of Bootstrap. Hall, though defending his comments, agreed that Bootstrap should express no political positions directly endorsing particular candidates, parties, or causes. The squelching of this activity in Bootstrap was so successful that, when N-VAC was later accused by a group of black nationalists of being composed of "a bunch of Communists," it was rumored that that was why Hall had left N-VAC.

The peace literature distributed at the FOB party touched a nerve only recently repaired by the working out of the Hall affair. Smith's observation served to reinforce the consensus that antiwar issues were outside of OB's concerns, and should remain so.

The Response at FOB

"I only wanted to invite friends from my other life to meet my friends in the Bootstrap family," Phyllis Kramer protested to Lou Smith,

when he--with Clarence Price--put in a rare appearance at an FOB meeting after the party. Smith listened patiently but somewhat unsympathetically as Kramer and Brody gave their opinions of the event and its effects:

Brody: A lot of people invited there could have been very helpful and could have given large sums of money. I think you guys offended a lot of people with your militancy.

Kramer:After all, it was a fund-raising party. The guys should have kept that in mind.

Brody:I invited my friends, the _____'s to the party. When I saw them last week, they barely spoke to me. They brought their maid to the party. Robert (Hall) said some terrible things to their maid. Mrs. _____ said Robert was pretty aggressive with her. Mr. _____ was very upset.

Kramer:Since it was a fund-raiser, it seems to me we could have cooled it a bit.

Smith:First of all let me say that I think the party was a success. Some people went away from there thinking--shook up. They needed that, too. Anyway, I can't possibly spend the days and nights I do in the ghetto and then come out here and act like it isn't going on just because your friends are there and it's a fund-raising party.

Price:In the future I think we should just make up our minds that we can't mix fun and work. We should make sure that we separate education, partying, and fund-raising. That's the only way to do it. Otherwise, we're going to be running into this same problem over and over again. That's all there is to it.

(Kramer, Brody, and Patti Bernard nod their agreement.)

Smith:Speaking of keeping those things separate, there was some literature going around the party that didn't have a whole lot to do with the purpose of the party, which was Bootstrap. I don't want to tell anybody that they can't be involved in other causes, but when we are doing Bootstrap we ought to do Bootstrap. Frankly, I'm interested in socialism and peace too. I wouldn't be doing what I'm doing if I wasn't. But, I'll tell you like I used to tell the socialists in the civil rights movement, if you want to turn out some real peacenicks, just get involved in this nation's racial problems.

Brody:I am, myself, very concerned with the cause for world peace. I am a member of The United World Federalists. I couldn't possibly work just with Operation Bootstrap.

Smith:I'm not asking you not to work with your group. Just keep the two separate.

At this point the discussion turned to what projects might possibly be worked on by FOB.

Price:As some of you know, I have been working pretty closely with Jimmy Brown and the Willowbrook Job Corps. And Bootstrap and the Job Corps are after pretty much the same things. We ought to be able to tie these two things together.

Clark:Marva (Smith) and I have been working with the girls at the teen post. We need dolls, toys, books, and a lot of other things.

Price:Remember, now, Bootstrap can use a lot of things you're trying to get for other people.

Smith:Nothing much has ever been done to work with the exconvictsthe paroleesin our area. A lot of these guys have tremendous talents in the area of art. It is something that a lot of you people

out here know about and have talents inif we could get a kind of art gallery for the paintings the parolees do, that could be very exciting.

You know, another thing, a lot of people have been affected by the fact that when they make it down to the Bootstrap building they don't feel as welcome as they used to. Since we got the school going good, the students, teachers, and the staff are really the only people welcome in the building. What we need is a whole new building where people can come and talk. A lot of people out here in the Valley need to hear what the [black nationalists] are saying. That's really what's going on in the streets.

The directions suggested in this meeting were solidified in the next two meetings. FOB's function became exclusively that of finding novel ways to raise funds. Their participation in activities at the Bootstrap building fell off dramatically. This remained true until FOB met at the home of Mel and Lorraine Barron, new members who along with Barbara Nash essentially displaced Brody and Kramer as the central figures in FOB.

Price, who was business oriented, moved closer to the KramerBrody segment of the FOB group, while developing increasingly strong relations with Friedman and the Bernards. In the meetings that followed, Price became the "official" OB representative to FOB, and Clark dropped out of FOB altogether. Price was identified by the FOB people as a "nice guy who knows how to scream at the right people."

After FOB's specific function was established, it became much more effective with the help of Price and the energy of Freed and the new members at carrying out fundraising activities. FOB became an economic necessity to Bootstrap for a while, and formed the model for other Friends of Bootstrap organizations that were to spring up around Los Angeles.

Ultimately, Friends of Bootstrap became a dramatically effective organization, especially with the infusion of the Barons and other people. Don Freed's Los Angeles Art Theater produced benefit performances of plays, which Freed directed, and helped to encourage the development of Bootstrap's own theater group. Freed moved farther away from Bootstrap and more deeply into radical Los Angeles politics,

running for the city school board and becoming a central figure in peace activities. Price eventually left FOB and Bootstrap to become director of a business in Watts, taking the Brody-Kramer support with him.

These events distilled out those who could stand the "trial by fire" that contacts with the people at Bootstrap often required. The specification of a function for FOB helped, after some conflict, to strengthen the ties between the Valley and Avalon. Most important was the realization that many who chose to work with Bootstrap did not necessarily agree with its ideology, but they were committed to its goals and remained participants.

The Final Accommodation with FOB

The description of the FOB party points up some important facts about the problem of managing a relationship between such groups. The Bootstrap people were not perceived as "beautiful" at the FOB party because FOB members had, with one or two exceptions, been attracted to Bootstrap because of its stress on feeling, personal communication, and one-to-one relationships. They shared very few other social or political views with Bootstrap's central members.

Warrick's salvaging effort concentrated almost exclusively on this aspect of the relationship the party members were being asked to establish with Bootstrap. Warrick was able to turn the discussion inward, to self-inspection, to a look into the heart, to self-analysis rather than social analysis. The Bootstrap leaders, however, were led by Bailey's dictum: "Let's talk about the problem and not your feelings about the problem." This contradiction of his usual position was brought about by the hostile setting. A relationship between the two groups was manageable as long as the Valley friendship circles were not included. The FOB people had been mostly silent in the face of denunciation of "swimming pools" and other features of their lives that came in for consistent attack by the Bootstrap group. The "friends from the Valley world" had come to the party for the "beauty" and the party, not for the denunciations.

What came about as a result of this encounter was an unworkable relationship between the two groups until new members came into FOB. The Bootstrap leaders and the original FOB group had tried to extend their relationship into the rest of the FOB world, and they found that

it strained the tenuous, introspective strands that constituted the original connection and the membership gratifications of the FOB group. What had been a distant cluster now became a body that functioned specifically to raise funds and to interest individuals in "going down to the Bootstrap sessions," which themselves became highly structured and stylized.

Occasions such as the party speeded the crystallization of OB's external and internal relations. The leaders had refused to speak the "beautiful" language of feeling. The language of militant indictment had forced Warrick, Gilbert, and others to play for the outside world the roles they had come to play inside OB. Theirs was an interface problem: managing the relationship between two very different worlds.

In some measure, the soul exchange had failed its first test. After the party the decision was taken to separate the talking sessions from OB. Fun would be fun and money-making would be money-making. Conversations would be only casually ideological. Entangling alliances with other causes would be avoided to protect the goals of OB. FOB's functions would become more specific and less connected to those at Bootstrap. More important for OB's internal relations, this and other smaller occasions increased the pressure to bring some order to OB's primitive internal structure.

Resisting Federal Funds

Managing the relationship with the Valley group was not the only problem of external relations facing Bootstrap. The problem of establishing an understanding within OB as to which outsiders could legitimately claim a connection with it haunted Bootstrap throughout the first year of its existence. The Office of Economic Opportunity made repeated contacts with Bootstrap, through various political channels and visits from Sargent Shriver, in a serious attempt to fund Bootstrap after it had become an important community symbol. The serious flirtation tested the self-help, anti-federal-aid plank in the Bootstrap ideology. In some financial crises that FOB could not hope to solve, the thoughts of OB's central members began to turn abroad for help. These crises were doubly difficult because few other Bootstrap members shared the leaders' aversion to federal money. And some segments of the Avalon community had interpreted the leaders' televised critiques of the

Poverty Program as meaning that "Bootstrap is trying to keep poverty money out of the community."

Although he got sporadic verbal support from others, Smith was the major figure sustaining the refusal to consider federal funds. When Hall rode in Shriver's car in the first Watts Festival, Smith criticized him for the way this act symbolically interfered with Bootstrap's efforts to project an image of "an alternative to the poverty program--its enemy."

Smith, Bailey, and Hall did collaborate in writing a proposal to "wild" politically adventurous private funding agencies. Such agencies had given money to extraordinary projects. It was hoped they might fund Bootstrap for one year without trying to have a say in the organization's program. But, as Bootstrap began to attract more offers of external support in the form of materials, and as groups like The Feminine Touch--a social club of middle class black women--and new FOB clubs developed, Smith's interest in other funding agencies diminished.

The development of additional FOB clubs was very important for Bootstrap's claim to self-support, since these groups were technically "in the Bootstrap family." A dress shop, Bootstrings, was started in south Los Angeles with the help of Valley women, many of whom also bought clothes there.

Most important, however, was the effect that these new sources of support had on the attitudes that were allowed to flower inside Bootstrap. Hall's flirtation with local and national poverty agents became more condemnable ideologically as more resource-producing agencies joined the Bootstrap family. Hall was subjected to increasing pressure, and his contacts with these agents decreased substantially.

Getting Off the Civil Rights Circuit

Many people in the civil rights movement knew the Bootstrap leaders on a first-name basis, from common experience in protests or on some more casual ground. As Bootstrap continued its open-door practice, the civil rights "circuit" began to include members of CORE and SNCC, recently up from the South, who saw Bootstrap as a familiar harbor in the confusing northern setting of Los Angeles. Bootstrap's leaders feared that Bootstrap was becoming a "half-way house" and "decompression

chamber" for disoriented activists fresh from organizing efforts in Mississippi and Alabama. Tucker, Hall, and Bailey were extremely critical when a bishop of the Episcopal Diocese, who had loaned Bootstrap three thousand dollars for equipment, paid a young white CORE worker from Mississippi five hundred dollars for two months of work at the Bootstrap building. They were determined that Bootstrap was not going to become a CORE outpost, and argued that the bishop's money would be better spent "paying the salary of someone from the community." Smith replied angrily to the critics that they should go ask the bishop for the money, and defended his commitment to people with whom he had worked in the South. Nonetheless, the rising criticism soon began to have its effect, and fewer civil rights workers from both the local and the national circuits came to Bootstrap.

The Crisis of Success

On June 21, 1966, during a rap session, Smith and Bailey enthusiastically told how "two Sapphires" had come in the day before and "worked out" (done a good job).

"They told those students that they were down here to work and there wasn't going to be no bullshit and to keep that in mind." Bailey continued, with punctuation from Smith, "They told those students that they would have to behave here just the same way as they would on the job. So they had better get with it."

Attracting these women represented a major success for Community Project No. 2, but it also precipitated a major crisis in the internal structure of Bootstrap, and posed a threat to Bootstrap's continued adherence to its ideology. The women, both keypunch machine operators at UCLA's Western Data Processing Center, were clear examples of the success the Bootstrap school was to experience. They worked late hours. In an effort to "make a contribution" they sometimes put in six evenings a week at OB, teaching local women, and a few men, how to operate the keypunch machines. Keypunch operation was not considered the most useful skill taught at Bootstrap, but it was symbolically the most important activity in which the Bootstrap teaching staff was engaged. The five machines sat in the picture-windowed room next to the front office, where they visibly symbolized to passersby the modernity of the Bootstrap program.

However, the drive and dedication of these teachers was accompanied by their dislike for the lack of cleanliness and orderliness of the work surroundings, and for the way in which outsiders intruded into the classes almost at will. It was quite usual for young men in the area, or the boyfriends of the students, to stop outside the window, sound their horns, call to mates inside, or spend from five to thirty minutes "hitting on" (flirting with) one of the female students. It was not unusual for some of the male Bootstrap regulars to do likewise. This was coupled with the noise of rapping sessions carried on in the next room by Bootstrap staff members, regulars, and irregulars munching hamburgers, sipping beer secreted in brown bags. These activities violated the sensibilities of these instructors and disrupted their teaching. One day during a temporary lag in class attendance, conflict broke out in the front office between one of the teachers and a local wino. Some instructors, they said, failed to hold classes regularly. Leacock and Anderson, living symbols of Bootstrap's job training, complained bitterly about the state of affairs, directing their major criticism, at Smith, Hall, and especially Bailey, director of the school. The pressures of the crisis devolved entirely on Bailey, but the fault, from the standpoint of Leacock and Anderson, resided also in the structure, philosophy, and general personnel that comprised Bootstrap. Leacock argued:

What Bootstrap wants to do--their dream--is great. However, I feel that with the people they have now that dream will not be implemented. What they want to do requires people with a great knowledge of the structure of training development. The people they have now are not the people who can say yes or no--let me say, the administration of Bootstrap, Bailey, Hall, and Smith, are not capable of providing this kind of structure. They are too civil rights oriented, and [concerned with] getting down to--the term they use--the "grass roots and the people on the streets." There's always going to be the "nigger," black, white or yellow . . . someone to occupy that position. In my opinion, we are really wasting time with that when there are so many others who want to achieve something but don't know how to be reached. So honk that wino! There's more attention being paid to that wino than there is to the teen-ager.

The Directive

Confronting Bailey with the teachers' analysis, Leacock drew up a directive to be tacked in various locations in the Bootstrap building and rigidly enforced. Bailey was caught between his own insecurities, demands of his volunteer teachers that he could hardly deny, and his ideological commitment to Bootstrap's openness. He allowed Leacock to post the directive, but said it would be best if Leacock signed it himself. Leacock did so. It read:

DIRECTIVE

The following rules and regulations shall be effective as of 8/24/66. They shall be adhered to by all personnel on the premises of Operation Bootstrap's Administrative and Training area.

1. Faculty Behavior

A. Instructor's attire shall always be neat.

B. Instructors shall be on time for their specific classes.

Instructors shall notify the administration if they are to be late or absent.

C. Instructors shall make an effort to acquire a substitute teacher in case of absenteeism.

D. Instructors shall at no time eat nor drink during class time.

E. Instructors shall not leave their classrooms during the class session to loiter in other areas.

F. Instructors shall limit telephone usage. Anyone who does not adhere to the segments of this directive pertaining to them shall be dismissed from the premises. This directive is enforced by the board of directors of Operation Bootstrap.

II. Student Behavior

A. Students shall always be neat in appearance.

B. Students shall be on time for their classes.

C.Students shall inform administration when they know they will be late or absent.

D.Students shall not eat or drink during the class session.

E.Students are restricted from telephone usage, unless authorized by the administration.

F.Students shall not loiter in the building before or after their class sessions.

III.Language

A.No loud obscene or abusive language shall be permitted at any time.

IV.Loitering and Telephone Usage

A.All personnel who are not members of the administration, faculty, and student body, shall not be permitted to loiter in the building during class or counseling sessions.

B.All personnel who are not members of administration, faculty, and student body shall not use the telephone unless it is a case of extreme emergency.

V.Eating and Drinking

A.All personnel who are not members of the administration, faculty, and student body are not permitted to eat or drink during class or counseling sessions in any part of the building.

B.No alcoholic beverages are permitted on the premises at any time.

VI.Cleanliness

A.The faculty and their students shall be responsible for the cleanliness and neatness of their class area.

B.Administration is responsible for overall general cleanliness.

Anyone who does not adhere to the segments of this directive pertaining to them shall be dismissed from the premises. This directive is enforced by the board of directors of Operation Bootstrap.

Stan Leacock

Assistant Technical Director

Smith had used the argument to the FOB group that the Bootstrap building was rapidly becoming too small to house all the activities that made Bootstrap the great place that it was. The directive was the first clear indication at Bootstrap that a crisis existed. It offended young black regulars like Cornell. Sonny, the wino, felt that because he had done a good deal of the work in painting the building, he had greater priority in access to Bootstrap as a social and physical place than a newcomer like Leacock. Higgenbotham was moved to ask, "Who is this guy Leacock anyway?"*

Leacock wondered the same thing, saying:

They need some little johnny-come-lately [like Leacock] to come in there and write a directive to tell them _____

*The insulation of clusters often resulted in people in different groups not knowing some central OB figures.

not to use obscene language. . . . And if I have to come in, a late type character, and say that, then there's something missing in that whole administration. . . . To be involved there you have to be involved all the way, but there's no middle ground for you so that everybody is going to like you. And this is the status that Bailey is trying to play, that everybody will like him, and you can't do that. And it's got to be regimented. For a training program you have to have rules and regulations. And there has to be some organizational

structure for this thing to go on. Whether who likes it or who doesn't like it, somebody has to play that role.

Marva Smith and Sheila Tucker tried to mediate the conflict. But the attitude taken by the Bootstrap regulars toward the front office space was hard to change, and discipline was not rigorously enforced. Smith had not intervened before the crisis and, in August, while he was away at a CORE-sponsored sensitivity training workshop in Utah, Leacock and Anderson threatened to quit Bootstrap if the directive was not seriously enforced by the "administration." I entered the Bootstrap building one morning late in August to find a tearful discussion in progress between Marva Smith and Linda Clark on how Bootstrap was in danger of falling apart. Bailey's health had begun to reflect the tension at the Bootstrap building, and he was on vacation. Hall, upon who the main authority had devolved, was being roundly criticized for ineptitude at managing the affairs of Bootstrap.

The essential conflict was that Bootstrap had reached a point at which the two most important aspects of its ideological and programmatic content--rapping sessions open to all, and job training--had attracted and produced mutually contradictory persons and activities. The search for solutions was desperate. Dossie Gilbert proposed: If we could put up soundproof walls, if we could get the church building next door, you could have classes going on in one section--people coming in and out from another part, but we'd still be very much a combination, a community center [and] a job training center.

These solutions required money, and there wasn't enough.

Making Relating "Relevant"

At the time of this crisis, the relating sessions were a regular institution. They attracted a relatively steady group of blacks and whites who spent from two to three hours per session discussing issues ranging from the war to sex, from income to identity, usually with a hair-trigger tendency to become probing and emotional no matter what the topic. At the height of the "directive crisis," when Leacock and Anderson were threatening to quit, the Thursday night relating sessions--now held in the back room of N-VAC's office two doors down--inherited the people and problems of that crisis.

One Thursday evening session took a strange turn. These meetings periodically attracted verbose ghetto theoreticians who used these sessions to promote their views; this Thursday was one of those evenings. A middle-aged man name Bill, who said he had published several books on philosophy and other subjects, began the evening by explaining to Wally Albertson, the teacher, why he was certain of his identity.

Bill:You have the Universe, you have Forces, and then there are the Substances, which are the last. We are the combination. We are everything you see.

Wally:(Not really understanding, but moving the discussion along.) In that frame of reference, I agree with you completely, and I guess I know who I am too. But I thought you were talking in more specific. . .
.

Bill:You can't get no more specific than that.

Wally:No more specific than that?

Bill:Right . . . because there ain't no division line in it, or (pointing) between you, him, the floor, couches, or anything . . . the separation point comes in a knowledge of things . . . a process of learning . . . and then you get your process of learning which is a process of forgetting.

Wally:Oh, that's beautiful. I never actually heard it said that way. Then you would probably subscribe to the old question that's never been answered, "If a man lived all alone on an island and never saw another human being before--just himself and nature, what kind of intelligence would he eventually show? What would happen to him when he became an adult?"

Bill:His intelligence would continue to a maximum, as long as he didn't communicate with another human being. . . . Intelligence actually has to do with communication between two human beings on a certain order. . . .

Wally:That's why man is in such a mess. . . .

Bill:It's another thing too, although some of you might not be able to take it (directed to the twelve people present), but, every living thing--and I can explain life itself--is a God. You are a God.

The discussion continued in this vein, moving through startling convulsions regarding free will, evolution of the universe, and perception of the past and future, for nearly half an hour. This was somewhat unusual; most sessions, if abstract at all, had come more and more to deal with race, and often dominated by persons such as Ernie Smith, a local black nationalist who frequented them. Leroy Higgenbotham, the parole officer who had become increasingly involved in the casual affairs of Bootstrap, entered the session during an intense, metaphysical discussion of time. After listening for about five minutes he said:

Hig:What the hell is this all about? Can you tell me? You know it seems sort of senseless.

John:I notice that every time somebody comes down here he's got to take the floor.

Hig:I think it ought to be relevant.

All:To what? What's that?

Hig:Relevant to what's happening now.

Murad:What is happening now?

Hig:(Deep sigh) The lights need fixing at Bootstrap. That's relevant. Bootstrap needs bookcases. Bootstrap needs someone to come in and fix the printing machine. And Bootstrap needs a janitor. What the hell are we sitting here talking about Universal Force for, when we need things that are reality.

Murad:Well, if we got all those things, what would we talk about.

Hig:Then we could sit down and talk. Until the problems of Bootstrap and places like it are solved, if you think the people of the ghetto are going to come down here week after week and listen to this esoteric . . .

Higgenbotham outlined the state of affairs: Bootstrap, though off to an excellent start, was stagnating now. The hard-won materials gathered from all over the city and state were now in need of repair, and so were the fixtures in the Bootstrap building. The "Chiefs" (Hig coined this term to refer to the BOD) were in a lot of trouble, fighting among themselves, and it was time for the "Indians" to organize to help Bootstrap out of this situation. A keypunch instructor echoed Hig's sentiment; Sheila Tucker added a critique of Hall's leadership ability and his tendency to trade too extensively with outsiders.

The Chiefs-Indians distinction became for a short time a popular acknowledgment of the crisis. When attention was turned to the first practical contribution the Indians might make to Bootstrap's improvement, it was decided that the sewing room would be cleaned the following weekend. That room contained several giant, used electric motors that had been donated to Bootstrap, and a large number of other items; it had come to be known as "Bailey's Junkyard." The cleanup effort was launched by the "Indians." Bailey, on vacation and suffering from great fatigue, was roundly criticized for the state of affairs in the school.

Bailey Plans a Change

Bailey was essentially in hiding, avoiding all phone calls and work connected with Bootstrap, on the advice of many who were concerned about the state of his health. He was reconsidering the Bootstrap school curriculum, staying at the home of one of the Valley women, who was on vacation. He was trying to get Bootstrap off his mind, but found himself,hesaid,thinking about little else. He wrote the following outline of "an entirely new curriculum."

Most Important Curriculum for World Citizen

I. Make it -- Interaction

A. The relationship between what I believe and what I do (at-one-ment).

1. Beliefs

2. Action

B. Tools of communicating what I believe.

II. Unitary Science: Known principles of interaction in the universe.

A. How people act

B. How physical energy interacts

C. How matter interacts

D. Principles of motion

III. Practical Application

A. Vocationally

1. Power

2. Confidence--Trust in others and the self

3. Craft

4. -----

Bailey planned to use the new curriculum in a confrontation with the teachers, which never came about as he envisioned it. It is crucial to note, however, that as Higgenbotham and others were attempting to make relating relevant to the Bootstrap crisis--by organizing a body of acting "Indians" from the relating cluster--Bailey's inclination was to get the Bootstrap teachers more involved in sensitivity to others. He planned to involve them in orientation sessions that would help "each individual . . . reach a certain level where he can be honest with himself." In other words, he also saw relating as a key to OB's regeneration.

Bailey's plans were to run afoul of changes brought about by the teachers' demands, which produced a radical reorganization of Bootstrap so that favored activities might continue.

The Ejection of Rapping

All members of every subsegment of Bootstrap felt a need to discuss the directive crisis. Even Hall, who was one of those under criticism and who had no fondness whatsoever for the relating sessions, was suggesting "reevaluating what are we doing to the Bootstrap Dream so we can keep on course." By this he meant open discussion.

Hall was being criticized for contributing to the disarray of Bootstrap and the decline of the school. The resultant clamor for order compromised one of his most important qualities as a Bootstrap leader: his skill at relating to the streets. The following event exemplifies this.

I accompanied Hall to Mt. Sinai Hospital to collect some beds that the hospital was donating for Bootstrap's proposed nurse training program. On the return trip, Hall took a detour to show me a display he had convinced North American Aviation to mount in South Park, a popular hangout for young people in Avalon.

The display--a series of color transparencies depicting military hardware and some outer-space devices in action--was mounted in the park's club house. On our way out, the park director engaged us in a long discussion of how important things like the display were for getting the young people thinking about their futures. Hall was agreeing when Cornell Henderson spoke up from the periphery of a game of dominoes, which was being played and watched by about seven young men from Hubbard's Teen Post.

CH:What kind of shit you cats talking?

RH:Now Cornell don't give me all that. . . . You messing around and you ought to be getting yourself a job and getting some education.

CH:I ain't got nothing to worry about, brother. I am going to make it. I have a three thousand dollar allotment coming when I'm twenty-one. I can open up a shop, or anything.

RH:(Laughing) Three thousand dollars ain't shit. You can't get nowhere with that.

CH:(Getting serious) Yes I can too. And I don't have to work for "the man" and have him tell me how to wear my hair and how to dress and all that shit.

RH:(Moving toward the parking lot.) Cornell, you . . .

CH:I'm only worried about working with the brothers on the street. That's what's happening. There are some brothers on the streets so fucked up they can't be reached. All the brothers ain't going to make it. I'm not worried about me making it, 'cause . . . Are you driving back to Bootstrap?

RH: Uh huh!

CH: Drop me off at the teen post.

RH: I ain't got room.

CH: Aw, Robert Hall, c'mon . . .

RH: C'mon, then and get your ass in the truck.

(We arrive at the teen post and Cornell, seeing very little action at the post, changes his mind.)

CH: I'll go on with you to Bootstrap.

RH: Okay, but you can't come in wearing just that tee-shirt.

CH: (Incredulous, on the border of outrage.) What!

RH: (Looking straight ahead. Driving deliberately.) You heard what I said.

CH: Aw . . . (Searching for an expression.) You cats are getting BOO-ZHWAH, man . . . Russ, these cats are changing.

RH: Naw, the teachers have to have the place quiet and neat so that they can teach the students like they would on the job. And so we can't have people hanging around dressed just . . . (Parks the truck)

CH: (Serious) You mean that?

RH:That's right. If you want to come in you're going to have to get you a shirt.

CH:Man, I can't think much of a place if some bourgeois sisters can come in and change a place like that.

(Hall attempts an explanation, but Cornell becomes very angry and will not be explained to. Hall repeats his statement about appropriate clothing and goes into the Bootstrap building. Cornell shouts after him:) I don't give a fuck! I'll burn the mother-fuckin' place down! Russ, what do you think of this shit?

RE:(Surprised at Hall's demand, but trying to be transparent.) I think they're having troubles with some of the teachers and are sort of giving in to them in order to keep things steady right now.

CH:Well, they ought to just let them jokers go rather than . . .

Lou

Smith:(Back from the CORE workshop in Utah, he came out to help unload the beds.) You're right, Cornell, things have changed around Bootstrap. I'm not even welcome in the building anymore, sometimes. The school is going and we just have to find another place for a hangout. We're not putting down the idea of a hangout. Hangouts are great. Most of our most important ideas for Bootstrap have come out of just sitting around and bullshitting. But our teachers are not paid and they have to do a job. We're working on getting a new place now.

CH:(Standing at the front door of Bootstrap as though he is going to enter. Looking at Hall, he shakes his head and leaves.)

I asked both Smith and Hall their estimations of the incident. They both indicated that they had no choice but to accede to the teachers' demands. Smith felt that Hall was not diplomatic enough, since the real issue was not clothing as much as it was people hanging around and using loud and obscene language. It had become really

critical, Smith indicated, that Bootstrap find another place for rapping. He also felt that there had to be a BOD meeting to deal with the problem Bootstrap was facing. He called the meeting for September 12, 1966.

Crisis Acknowledged

Anticipation of the coming board meeting cast an ominous aura about the Bootstrap building during the few days before it took place. There were hints that someone would be kicked off the board of directors for playing hanky-panky with the students and flirting with politicians. The leaders were aware that they were in danger of losing the casual place Bootstrap had been. Higgenbotham, as a representative of the "Indians," was trying to preserve that casual Bootstrap. The Teachers, especially those with technical classes, were seeking to get their conception of order introduced to the Bootstrap building and program. There was feeling abroad that something was going to give at this meeting.

Although Smith was formally chairman of the board, he surrendered the chair to Bill Anderson for the conduct of this meeting, in Bootstrap's sewing room. Smith was very much aroused by his recent experience at a CORE sensitivity training session and seemed anxious to have the meeting get down to business. All members of the board were present, with the exception of Bailey (although the minutes read that he was present). Because the school was the primary topic to be considered, several teachers were present who would not ordinarily have been allowed to participate.³

The agenda contained an itemized list of affairs to be considered, including finances, additional research on the school, funding a Bootstrap nursery school, public relations, recalling obsolete literature on Bootstrap, and office supplies. No mention whatsoever was made, in the agenda, of the issues of order in the office.

Smith: Before we get into this, let's remind ourselves that Bootstrap is less than a year old. We have come a fantastically long way in less than a year, and we shouldn't lose sight of that fact. Talking about our problems now, one of our biggest ones is that the BOD had not communicated well enough with the faculty, and that's one of the reasons

why we're here. We should be clear on how we are organized. (Draws diagram on the blackboard.)

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Bailey

Etc.

Community
Project #1
(Welfare
Mothers)

Community
Project #2
(School)

Community
Project #?

Only one person has direct say over what goes on in the school, and that is Bailey. Some people have said that Robert Hall has been interfering with the school. That may be so, but legally, Bailey is the only person who has the right to give the orders there.

Ethyl Lewis:*

Well, if nobody except Bailey has any say over the school-- since the BOD has no jurisdiction, why don't they move their desks out of the building?

Smith: There is a problem now, of money. We don't have any, and there is no place to go to right now, anyhow.

*A new black woman member. A social worker. Leader of the new group of black women volunteers.

Hall: We are waiting for the nursery to get finished. This will happen about September 20. We may be able to move the desks into there for the time being.

Tim Crawford:*

The structure of Bootstrap should be clarified, typed up, and copies passed around to the faculty.

Price:I don't see what good a new directive is going to do. Certain people on the BOD are not obeying them now.

Leacock:What guarantee do we have that the BOD will enforce the directives: They're out there talking to themselves during class.

Hall: (To Leacock:) There's going to have to be noise out in the front office until the desks can be moved out. A lot of people from the community come in here and have to be dealt with. We have to be careful with the community.

Leacock:You either enforce the directive or you don't.

Smith:Good, but we have to live here. We have to use finesse.

*Young actor friend of Ruth Warrick's; taught communication

skills.

Leacock:Finesse is fine, but at least you should help get the winos out of the building. Be consistent and they'll get the idea.

Price:Finesse hell. Bootstrap is alienating the students with all this special attention we're giving winos.

Smith:(Very angry at Price. Aiming to hurt.) We either live here or move out to the Valley. The black power groups and the businessmen* cannot be run out of their own area. They understand what's happening at Bootstrap and don't come in so much during classes. You ought to spend more time teaching your class and less time worrying about those folks out in the Valley.

Wally Albertson:

Bootstrap's image is bad right here in the community.

Smith:(Still mad.) Frankly, that's due to the interracialness of Bootstrap. Despite the nationalists, we can't back down on that. We just have to get back to our door-to-door methods to let the community know what's going on here.

For a short while Smith tried to move the meeting in the direction of the money problem. The group was divided over the

*local gang

question of how much money should be raised. Current methods were described, but when it was suggested that this was the province of the BOD, [Smith said]:

LS:We have a problem with that "leave it to them" attitude. This points up the fact that the BOD has that responsibility, but we need to be thinking all of us about ways Bootstrap can get money. But we got off the subject we were talking about.

SL:There's just too much lollygagging going on around here. There's a lot of talk and very little action. We'll leave this meeting and nothing will get done.

EL:Look, Stan should not have had to sign those directives on the board. Seems like nobody around here wants to take responsibility for anything negative. Everybody wants to be liked. When you're in a position of leadership, you have to take responsibility.

CP:That's right.

TC:I had an important phone call last week and sent word to Robert. He sent back word from the garage saying he was watching some ball game. This call had something to do with a check. I should not have been left with the responsibility to talk to that man about the check.

RH:I didn't have nothing to do. And anyway, phone calls are not important at that hour of the day.

EL:(Voice rising out of a chorus of objections to Hall's statement.) You talk about alienating the community. Well, don't call any phone calls unimportant! What is Larry's function in OB? Can somebody tell me?

LS:Larry was sent to school at Singer sewing machine manufacture. He is the one who knows how to fix the sewing machines.

SL:Larry obeys the directives.

LS:Let's face the thing we're talking about. Let's not pussyfoot. We're dealing with people's lives (here at Bootstrap.) If we can't face these kinds of things among ourselves, we can't do our job. We brought up Robert's refusal to come to the phone. Let's get it on paper and present it to the board.

RH:I agree. I think that should be done.

The discussion that ensued did not remain focused on Hall but spilled into many different areas--the need to remove all the "junk" from the Bootstrap building, to catch up with and reorganize the two thousand student applications Bootstrap had, to cooperate with OIC, not to do so, and so on. Then it settled on the issue of student attendance drop-off in some of the classes.

SL:Why have so many of the students stopped coming to classes?

LH:The community does not know what's going on here, for one. And the place is getting too structured. Let's not let this place get academically all laced up. If you're going to get the man on the street, you're going to have to continue to deal with the foul-mouthed dirty man. Bootstrap is lacing up.

TG:This has not been my experience in the communications skills class I teach.

LH:How many of my parolees are coming in there [to your classes]?

LS:Hig is right. Look at Hubbard's teen post. When he first started, he had the roughest bunch of kids in the whole town. Now he's got them coming in there and he's got them organized. That is an example of what can be done if we keep open lines of communication to the community.

SL:That's fine, again, if it can be made clear that he has to dress and talk right.

LS:But you have to watch that. Eighty percent of job training takes place out of the classroom. We are going to have to go through that teen post thing I just described, if we are going to get students into these classes.

BA:Turn in your agendas. We want to keep Bootstrap's business off the streets.

LS:Let's not be so formal next time we meet. The BOD is here and it's people we all know. Let's handle some of these things just like people do.

JJ:We should have more of these meetings.

WA: (As meeting breaks up.) Could we have those directives taken off the board?

* * * * *

Bootstrap Transformed

The addition of people--especially black professionals--bent on the accomplishment of Bootstrap's state job-training goals brought into focus the irreconcilability of the mix of people and activities the organization tried to house. The emerging emphasis held that, if poor black people were to be taught the skills of employment, those skills had to be taught in an environment that modeled the discipline of employment.

White volunteers, even those whites involved exclusively in training, had to accept the leaders' definition of the organization's desired make-up. Indeed, most valued it. They were brought into contact with Blue, Sonny, Cornell, Bob Hubbard and struggled to learn and to do good work in a time that called them to good works. They could, in a protected setting, witness a version of the ghetto trying to right itself and could see their contribution to that effort. They could bare their feelings about "the problem" in an area of the city that had the problem and in a place that officially valued the expression of feelings as the first basis for solving the problem.

Black professionals, on the other hand, had little patience with the winsos, the loud, fast-talking rap of the streets, the sloppy casualness, the romance of feeling-ful race contact or participatory openness. Nor did they identify with the murky, implicit political goals for changing society. They came to help lift poor blacks from ignorance and poverty. Paramount for them were Bootstrap's themes of job training, jobs, economic development of the ghetto. The white people they looked to were not civil rights activists, suburban housewives, or sensitive relators, but businessmen, directors of corporations, and bankers. The value of black professional volunteers was too high for the leaders--particularly Smith--to ignore, if the large Bootstrap dream was to be reached. Gradually, Bootstrap was transformed into a more businesslike place.*

*From this time on, my participation and observation were limited by other professional obligations.

People Changes

The board meeting on September 12, 1966, irrevocably separated the strands of activity that had made up the Bootstrap cloth to that time. As had happened at the time of the FOB crisis, many of the most enthusiastic Bootstrap members found their enthusiasm diminished. But a new clarity was achieved in the functioning of Community Project No. 2, and of Bootstrap in general. The board meeting had, in effect, been the first conscious acknowledgment of the conflicts brewing among Bootstrap's internal clusters. Its practical outcome was the loss of many of Bootstrap's most important workers.

In the next six months, the following events took place:

Stan Leacock stepped down as technical advisor of the school. Bill Anderson stayed and became the central figure in this cluster. Stan vowed to continue his affiliation with Bootstrap, but on a much more casual basis. He left without rancor.

The decline of Bob Bailey's health confirmed the necessity that he cease his involvement with the school. He never recovered his effectiveness at Bootstrap. Bailey's departure discouraged further involvement by some, including Phyllis Kramer, Patti Bernard, and Linda Brody.

Clarence Price left Bootstrap and took a job as a personnel director of the Watts Manufacturing Company.⁴ This move coincided with his attempts to wed Bootstrap and Willowbrook Job Corps.⁵

Lou Smith convinced Bob Hubbard to come on as director of the school.

Clark left the board.

Leroy Higgenbotham switched his main allegiance to a group called Sons of Watts, saying "I'm going to work where the real nitty gritty soul brothers are."

More Relating, New Constituencies

Events following the school crisis moved fast. Most surprising was the expansion and institutionalization of the relating sessions that had grown out of the communications skills classes. As suggested earlier, the felt necessity to discuss Bootstrap's problems, and the permeability of the relating activities boundaries, opened the sessions to invasions from other activity areas. At least four new forces come into play in the next months:

1. The urgent enthusiasm of the Indians to get organized, get something done, and "save Bootstrap" continued.

2. The casual social needs served by the front office, left unserved after the directive changed its character, partly transferred to Jones' garage but also spilled over into the Thursday night sessions.

3. Smith's Utah experiences increased his enthusiasm for sensitivity training as a relating and organizing device.

4. The reputation of Bootstrap in general and the sessions in particular spread very rapidly within "a mother lode of white liberals." This reputation was enhanced by the activities of the new FOB leadership.

Smith had returned from the Utah sessions with high praise for the possibilities of well-supervised sensitivity training--and activity that dovetailed with Bootstrap's openness ethic. So a program was

immediately arranged whereby CORE's Scholarship, Education, and Defense Fund would conduct a series of community organizing sessions in southern California, starting with a weekend sensitivity marathon. By the middle of 1967 the size of the group attending these sessions had increased so much that they were organized as a systematic educational introduction to Bootstrap, arranged as follows:

First visit: Orientation: Introduction to Bootstrap, its nature and purpose. This introduction takes place in Jones' garage at 8 P.M. on Thursdays. Lou Smith gives a weekly talk to new-comers. Discusses local, national, international affairs with stress on racial conflict. Stresses that Bootstrap is dedicated to human contact. Blacks and whites can discover each other in these sessions.

Second visit: Those who have attended before break up into confrontation groups where "gut issues" of feelings about race are expressed.

Subsequent visit: Same groups gather for as many meetings as they wish.

As these sessions grew and their reputation spread, they began to attract many more whites and a large complement of local, more affluent black people. Among the local blacks attracted, the nationalist representation increased dramatically. The content of the garage orientation sessions often became, not dialogue, but white questions with black answers, usually in the form of an attack meant to teach. The smaller group sessions became somewhat stylized as the same group leaders dealt with the same issues over and over again. "How can I help?" "Look, young man, six million of my people . . ." and so on. I attended what must have been one of the most extremely stylized of these sessions. The leader, Ernie Smith, said simply, after everyone was seated, "You're all a bunch of motherfucking hunky liberals. Any questions?"

At one point contribution buckets were introduced and passed around after the orientation session and the group sessions. At another point a new theme was introduced to deal with liaisons, developed in the sessions, that tended not to help Bootstrap. "Sensitivity without a program is ineffective," the leaders said. But Bootstrap's organized

relating sessions ultimately became the most effective vehicle Bootstrap had for its varied programs.

The Clear Primacy of Program

Inevitably, Operation Bootstrap had to decide just what its farthest external boundaries were--and, by implication, its internal boundaries. While conflicts were growing with the instructors who needed quiet orderliness in the school, Robert Hall was being watched carefully for his degree of involvement with external political groups to whom, it was feared, he might commit Bootstrap. While Hall was attempting to enforce the instructors' requests for order by controlling people like Cornell, Smith was initiating joint community organizing work-shops with CORE's Scholarship, Education, and Defense Fund.

The outside boundaries of Bootstrap did become clearer over time, and, as they did, outcomes that ran counter to the early ideological framework suddenly appeared: Rapping was no longer welcome in the Bootstrap building, and there was a directive on the wall confirming that. Now the soul exchange brought its much needed white businessmen into relating sessions on Thursday nights. And even as the size and organization of these activities grew, their interpretation changed. "Sensitivity without a program" became anathema.

There was a point and a purpose to these shifts. Soul, kicked out of the front office, converged on relating, but so did the Indians. Rapping, relating, and relevance all vied for the open space left after Bootstrap became primarily a school. The success of the school cost something in terms of the original OB ideology, and the wide-open setting of Bootstrap in its formative period gave way to "structure." Bootstrap was becoming fully instituted, inside and out.

A building halfway down the block was rented. The BOD's desks were moved there, and it became a location where rapping could again take place. It did, but was now restricted to this specific location. Relating was extended beyond the Thursday night sessions, but also in this specific place and at specific times to avoid rapping. Bootstrap had become something different from the images in the leaders' Bootstrap Dream. The insularity of the clusters could cause Higgenbotham to ask, "Who is this guy Leacock, anyway?" And that insularity cost Bootstrap

the support of Hig, who went "where the nitty gritty soul brothers" were: deep in Watts, not at the corner of 42nd and Central.

The accommodation worked out with the white support groups allowed them to focus their energies more productively, as it did the people at Bootstrap. Many elements of the Bootstrap Dream were handed to groups of Friends for development.

Baby Bootstrap, a daycare and educational center, opened in a rented house around the corner from OB. Valley Friends of Bootstrap helped support an OB gas station. Kiwanda, a boutique selling African-style clothing and other imported adornments, opened in an exclusive area of west Los Angeles, managed by a new, vigorous group called Pacific Palisades Friends of Bootstrap. Kiwanda and Bootstrings (a similar shop located in the Avalon area) were supplied by black seamstresses working largely out of the OB building.

Gradually, the frequency of the Thursday night relating sessions at Bootstrap decreased. Through the agency of Bill Anderson, however, this activity was exported to other places, including TRW Systems, a major southern California Aerospace corporation where Anderson was employed. Eventually a group there formed a nonprofit corporation (TRW Systems Employees' Bootstrap), which engaged interested employees in Awareness Sessions ⁶ and involved those enthusiastic enough to join in the development of support projects coordinated with Bootstrap activities.⁷

Shindana Dolls

In 1968, during the growth of these new programs, Shindana Dolls, Inc., a Division of Operation Bootstrap, opened its doors. Shindana (Swahili for "competitor") manufactured black dolls designed to look like black people, not like "chocolate covered" whites. (See photo) It became the economic jewel of OB's development and was meant to provide funds for further diversity and growth in the Bootstrap dream. Its future profitability was intended to be a source of autonomy from outside support, and Bootstrap developed new spin-offs based on Shindana.

Honeycomb Child Development Center was one such spin-off. Located in a building adjacent to the toy factory, the center was conceived as a

place where the children of the ghetto--including children of Shindana's employees--could be cared for, find strong black identities, and get an educational head start on the public school system. Honeycomb was intended to be the bottom tier in Freedom City's alternative school system, envisioned as providing education for young people, from prenatal care of their mothers through the first two years of college.

Thus, the long-imagined program of job training, black identity expansion, manufacture, and profit-turned-to-education began to function. Shindana was its centerpiece and flywheel. Bootstrap and Shindana became stellar causes in Los Angeles⁸ and attracted national media attention.⁹

Lou Smith was constantly required to interpret OB's path to both white liberal supporters and black nationalist critics. Some nationalist and black power groups argued that OB's efforts had descended to making black dolls with white liberal guilt money. Smith wrote an "Open Letter to Black Power Organizations." His defense read in part:

The answer I have come up with is that we must use the system's weapon against it. It is a must that we establish our own economic base from which to finance our struggle. . . .

The time has arrived when Black Power organizations, if they have any hope of surviving, let alone being an influence, must broaden their base to include people who have ideas along economic lines. Our initial ventures should be things directly relating to the black revolution, and should be small enough in the beginning to give some assurance of success. Bar-B-Que pits, Afro-American bookstores, soul food restaurants, and Afro barber shops are a few examples of what I am talking about. All the profits from these ventures should be used to finance the work of the organization as well as creating jobs for our ghetto-trapped brother.

With the least amount of imagination you should be able to see how this would open doors to areas not yet explored by our movement. Industries with real growth potential could start to develop once we jump into the economic sea. From this type of thinking, avenues should start to appear that will lead us to where I think we should be headed--

a society that allows black people to accumulate the material advantages of the middle-class value system. In short, we must inject the "soul" of the black community into the economic area.

Early in the operation of Shindana, Mattel Toys--the world's largest toy manufacturer--gave Shindana \$500,000 in loans and technical assistance. This was soon followed by one million dollars in capital expansion loans from various financial institutions, including Chase Manhattan Bank, Sears Roebuck & Co., and Equitable Life Assurance. At the height of its productivity, in 1974--in the midst of a national economic recession--Shindana had established a nationwide sales network with sales representatives in New York, Washington, D.C., Atlanta, Chicago, Houston, and Los Angeles. The company even acquired another company, which produced a variety of games and puzzles that Shindana marketed as The J Five Game, The Black Experience, The Afro-American History-Mystery Game, Captain Soul, The Learning Tree, and so on. Dolls were made to look like black entertainment figures Redd Foxx, "J. J." Evans, Marla Gibbs, and football star O.J. Simpson. New lines of Asian and American Indian dolls were produced, and a Wanda Career Doll--physically similar to Mattel's original Barbie--was equipped with a full set of outfits linked to career opportunities. (Doll photos here)

Dissolution of the Old Leadership

The recession of 1973-74 had been admirably survived by Shindana. Sales had climbed steadily through the period, to \$2,000,000 during 1974-75, its first and only profitable year. But Bootstrap's other enterprises did not fare as well. The easy largesse of the late 1960s slowly disappeared. The open pocketbooks of outlying Friends groups seemed gradually to close, perhaps because of the recession but for other reasons as well.

Shindana's market success had come because of the attractiveness of the product, in times when an egalitarian spirit pervaded many people's choices in polling booths, voluntary associations, philanthropy, and the marketplace. But Shindana's success in the market did not go unnoticed by competitors who were more secure financially and more sophisticated at distribution and sales techniques. New lines of ethnic dolls began to join "Baby Nancy" on retail shelves.

Shindana had internal troubles, too. Some were overcome by the natural management skills of Lou Smith, who gradually withdrew from other Bootstrap activities to devote his energy exclusively to Shindana. But Robert Hall, the company's first president and chief executive officer, found it impossible to adapt his street skills to the stark setting of management. He was finally asked to step down and, after a series of unpleasant episodes, left the company and all Bootstrap work. Six months after his departure he died of his second heart attack at age 42. He had been unwilling to curtail the hard-driving, hard-living life that was the trademark and charismatic source of his early leadership.

A succession of new CEO's at Shindana fared somewhat better, but it was Lou's constant presence that kept spirit and productivity alive. In November 8, 1976, Lou Smith, driving to Philadelphia for Christmas vacation with his wife and two children, was killed in a head-on collision. All the troubles that he had held at bay with the shield of his leadership soon emerged to disrupt the Dream. After Smith's death Art Spear, president of Mattel Toys, said: "Lou was the only real leader. No one could fill his shoes. He could inspire his people and get work out of them. I'd say to him, 'Lou, you can keep your dream or make this business go.' He'd curse me and then do what was necessary."

But handling Shindana's necessities meant the abandonment of Bootstrap, where his shoes also could not be filled. Smith made forays into the worlds of the white Friends groups, trying to explain the troubled finances and ultimate closure of OB's gas station, shops, and the other enterprises that the Friends had organized their social networks to support. They accepted his explanations but were never convinced by them. "At Shindana's first big open house we felt like strangers," said Mel Barron, the most energetic of all OB's white supporters at this time and the leader of Valley Friends. "That hurt," he said. "I guess we felt like daddy had abandoned us. We did things like pack dolls at the factory for Christmas sales, but it just wasn't the same Bootstrap anymore."

Despite such troubles, until the time of his death Lou Smith was still able to hover over the extended Bootstrap world and keep the participants actively dreaming. At his death, all but a very few woke to new interests. The hard facts of the economy and the loss of his leadership led to the reduction of Shindana from 60 to 12 employees. Its ovens were shut down. It began buying toy parts and clothes in Hong Kong and Japan, to avoid the overwhelming costs of American labor. A handwritten sign was posted on the door of the factory reading "No work"

in English and Spanish. As the recession took its toll, the social and physical scene outside Bootstrap became one of physical and economic decay greater than the day the Bootstrap began.

A New Accommodation

In 1978, in the promenade on Central Avenue, every third passerby was Mexican American, part of a major demographic change that continues in Los Angeles. Marva Smith said: "We offer classes in keypunch, remedial reading, and typing. We have a job referral service and we had one woman offer bilingual classes, but the Mexicans don't come in. The women say 'My Husband didn't say I could take any classes.' We've thought about moving the office."

At Christmas, 1978, Operation Bootstrap was the four people who made up its board of directors: Marva Smith, chair; Kisassi (John Lewis), secretary; Bill Anderson, vice chair; and Earl Coss, who moved from Mattel's accounting department to become president of Shindana.

OB now owned the original N-VAC office, which included two apartments and two commercial spaces containing a beauty parlor and a bookie joint. "We haven't raised the rent in ages," Marva said, "but the rent pays the mortgage." Except for a small printing service, operated out of the back room by two young men, very little happened at the office. People dropped in off the streets to talk, and people from the old days came around just to say hello and see what was happening. Marva felt this was justification enough for keeping the doors open. "I tried getting some of the support groups going again, but nothing really happened. When Bill Anderson retires I think he can devote time to Bootstrap. He has some good ideas. It's time for me to move on to something new."

Of the old-style, street-oriented leadership, one man remained. At Bootstrap's outset he was named John Lewis. A nondrinker and quiet in manner, he was consistently on the periphery of the old rapping sessions. Now named "Kisassi," he was the only remaining bearer of the high ideals with which the Bootstrap Dream began. "It's still out there on the streets," he said. He expected the Dream to be renewed and to flourish. A critic of black nationalist organizations, he still believed that the original thrust of the Nation of Islam was correct, although they, like Bootstrap, had lost track of it. "We must bring

with self," he emphasized. Losing sight of that, he said, was Bootstrap's biggest mistake. Of the outlying white Friends of Bootstrap groups he argued, "As soon as they couldn't just give us old clothes and turkeys, they took their candy and went home."

In November of 1980, the Federal Economic Development Administration finally approved a long-stalled loan of \$300,000 to Shindana. Mattel's Art Spear, while pleased, worried that its coming was too late to help with Christmas sales and, consequently, to assure Shindana's survival. Marva Smith reflected pensively, "I never thought we'd go that way. Remember, federal money used to be hands off." Herman Thompson, an old Bootstrapper, now Shindana's vice-president for marketing and sales, explained: "This is a different kind of federal money!"

Operation Bootstrap

Direct Alternative Participation

[White radicals] think that our business is the spreading of "the redemptive warmth of personal confrontation," "emotional enrichment," "compassionate and sympathetic personal relationships," and other varieties of mouth-to-mouth resuscitation derived from the vocabulary of group therapy and progressive liberal witch doctors. But we ain't got enough redemptive compassion and cultural enrichment to go around. (From A SNUCC memo, 1964. Cited in Paul Starr:253)

The direct action movement against segregation differed from previous movements seeking Negro rights in its spontaneity, its unpredictability, and its lack of coordination--in short, its charisma. But since February 1960, there has been constant tension and interplay between spontaneity and institutionalization, as the attempt to organize a "good thing" has beset the sit-ins. What began as an uncontrolled, spontaneous, rapidly spreading movement in the 1960s was soon virtually taken over by various organizations as a program . . . herein lies the paradox of direct action: by definition its purpose is to remain unbounded, to create unexpected crises, and to function as a charismatic catalyst." (Laue:114-115)

The tension between integration and separation as opposing responses to denied rights had accompanied debate and action among black people since the colonial era. In this century, from Garvyite back-to-Africa schemes through the activities of the Nation of Islam to Roy Innis's proposed black residential and economic enclaves, internal or external flight from American racism has remained on the black agenda for liberation (Blair: 3-28, 61-85). Among integrationists and between separatist and integrationists, the argument is ceaseless over the appropriate degree of black involvement in the economic, social, and political affairs of the white majority. Thomas Blair (1977) has summarized and evaluated these positions. Their vocabularies are different:

Both themes, whether expressed pacifically or belligerently, tend in the same direction--namely, freedom from discrimination and segregation and the achievement of full equality of opportunity. But they differ in several crucial respects. The integrationist vocabulary is filled with phrases like collaboration, assimilation, equal rights, and peaceful nonviolence. Appeals are made for loyalty to the two-party political system, alliances with power elites, and the brotherhood of all Americans. The language of separatism emphasizes the defense of community institutions, racial unity, self-determination, and independent economic and political activity. Separatists speak of land, territorial separation, and emigration, nationhood and reparations, Pan-Africanism, and a universal brotherhood of men of color.

Their strategies are different:

The integrationist position is based largely on a strategy of political alliances with white liberal and labor forces to put pressure on power elites in the ruling classes. The method seeks legal and judicial changes in the black man's status to allow for more effective participation and integration into the society. This often leads to being co-opted into the power structure, small incremental gains, and only marginal improvements for the poor and laboring classes. The separatist strategy is one of power based on building a movement within the black community capable of remaining autonomous and free of external manipulation and control by whites. It stresses the formation and consolidation of a countercommunity with separate needs, values, structures, and life styles. It accepts the black community as the focal point of collective advancement in which alternative solutions to

problems can be developed and possible challenges to the status quo kept alive. Pursuance of separatism often founders for a lack of financial resources and is associated with a highly inflated sense of power severely lacking in substance.

Their goals and problems are different:

Each goal poses painful choices about self, race, whites, and the nation. Integration, in American society, tends to mean acceptance of the principle that blacks genuinely absorb and assimilate patterns of culture and enterprise determined by whites. It also means and requires the loss, as a black man becomes more successful, of his own distinctive characteristics. Separatism requires the mobilization of the race toward the construction of a new group status and identity, and the clear recognition that survival in the face of white racism must be predicated on group cohesion around group-led institutions. (Blair: 26-27)

What has remained common to all versions of these conflicting stances is the felt need to jettison exclusive dependence on whites and a corresponding achievement of some form of self-help or self-determination, or both, through education and economic development.

Enter Operation Bootstrap. It formed in the midst of a decade turbulent with theorized and enacted permutations of these vocabularies, strategies, and goals. Bootstrap was an astonishingly subtle amalgam of them all and more. In varied settings, American black and white youth were reexamining other thematic features of the national-makeup. In the civil rights movement, the pioneering Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee began its struggles organized around an anti-authoritarian and personally empowering anarchism. The student movement was founded in a reexamination of participatory democracy to find a modern, practical meaning for it. Out of those reexaminations came the deemed necessity to form institutions parallel or "alternative to" the perceived glacial structures of established life--places where these new meanings could be acted out and realized. These, too, were blended into the Bootstrap charter through the experience and beliefs of its leaders and founders.

Thus, what might appear to whites as separatist could be argued as a self-help alternative. What appeared to concern black people as simply integrationist could easily be seen as a ghetto-based setting where sincere whites could meet with black people in a noninvidious

mutual exchange of values, styles and perspectives, both black and white openly participating in black community development.

Operation Bootstrap was a projective test artfully and charismatically conducted by the leadership: A political Roschach open to many readings. Arthur Stein (1985) lists "seven fundamental ideas or affirmative values" that grew out of the 1960s and took root in the alternatives movement:

1.A willingness, and a desire, to become more self-reliant and less dependent on "the system"

2.An inclusiveness rather than exclusiveness in dealing with people and ideas, and a commitment to the pursuit of social justice

3.A movement toward human-scaled institutions and new, more cooperative forms of community

4.An emphasis on quality of life, including care for the natural environment and all life-forms

5.Reference to a principled ethos or set of values as a guide for daily living

6.A quest for greater self-understanding, to become more centered

7.A movement toward voluntarily simplifying one's lifestyle and applying the principle of nonviolence to one's social philosophy (Stein: 3)

None of these bears any immediately apparent relation to the black political agenda of the 1960s, yet all but life-simplifying and ecological concerns found expression in Bootstrap life. Chief among them was self-reliance: self-help in the Bootstrap charter. It was the net of meanings surrounding this idea that trapped those otherwise attracted and drew them into the organization's improbable amalgam.

Self-help, lent a system-critical Marxist tinge, bound the radical N-VAC to the Bootstrap effort at a crucial early phase, providing it with an essential grass-roots legitimacy consonant with the lingering themes of the increasingly radical civil rights remnants.

Ronald Reagan, then governor, was endorsing billboards around the state that read "He's your uncle, not your dad," accompanied by a picture of Uncle Sam. For the governor, conservative commentators, and the business world, Bootstrap's self-help was bread-and-butter Americanism worthy of touting as an antidote to what they saw as mindless rioting.

For the "engineers" and middle-class black teachers, self-help was the focused, prideful, and serious work of education by black people and for black uplift.

Although there was never an illusion that Bootstrap was a nationalist organization, its support of civic autonomy for Watts and the vision of a Freedom City to come identified it as an implicit colleague in the quest for self-help in self-determination terms that were code for black separation.

For many black and white participants, self-help was helping the self to a better understanding of racial problems.¹⁰ It also meant self-determination of the mode of individual participation.

Separated from the failed participatory interventions of the federal government and the choke hold of federal purse strings, distanced from nationalist programs, standing one-quarter profile to sincere suburban whites, Bootstrap blended these diverse attractions into a neutral space, where a place for ghetto rebuilding could begin. Its goals were unimpeachable: "Learn, Baby, Learn." Here was an autonomous, open-door alternative shimmering with all the best values emergent from the previous years' struggles.

Participation was immediate or direct in a special sense. Smith, Hall, and Bailey were central sources of inspiration and leadership, carrying over the leadership styles of the civil rights movement. They provided guidance and interpretation. Their demonstrable protest experience and connectedness to a wide variety of ghetto dwellers and activists provided a legitimacy that insulated the warehouse from external threat and simultaneously attracted a core of participants prepared to work. Inside this bounded space, formal rules were minimal. One had only to have a project consistent with the goals of Bootstrap and work independently toward its achievement.

Decision-making was not consensual. Rather, a standard of openness was maintained. The practical meaning of this standard was, at

first, simple: Once one had passed certain tests and had worked inside the hard walls of Smith's, Hall's, and Bailey's leadership, decision-making was ad hoc and emergent. Since structure was abjured, ideas for projects and organizational direction could, presumably, seep as readily from the rapping as from the relating realms. The flux of informal interchange was to be the fount. This mode of working was to be a model for the new world being built in the ghetto and the larger world from which the whites came, as they exported their experiences from the soul exchange to their suburban lives.

In fact, major decisions were initiated by the leaders and, for a time, validated by the board of directors. But, until the crisis of success, the heady feel of openness of participation was maintained and was the major contributor to the enthusiasm participants brought to Central Avenue.

The varied motivations of those attracted to this openness proved to be incommensurable. As Bootstrap gradually assembled the human and material resources to build its place, the place could not hold them all and achieve its practical ends. The communitarian joys of joint building, mutual discovery, and the soul exchange could not be sustained in one location. Thus, Bootstrap was forced to differentiate its activities in time and space. The imagined integral world of rapping, relating, and participatory building, once practically shattered as a motivating myth, freed Bootstrap to pursue its concrete goals but drained away the magic of the original single place. Banished in time and space, rapping and relating died. The soul exchange, exported to the world of white supporters, could not thrive outside the ghetto setting. The rewards of charismatic communal intensity and a sense of doing a visible social good were lost. Reports of these experiences to an outside world of upper-middle class white supporters (Friends) of Bootstrap was one thing. Exposure to the ideas without the place was another.

The success of Shindana Dolls further compounded the problem. Established now in the world of corporation and banking support--and outcome consistent with Bootstrap's goals--the organization was even further distanced from its committed outside supporters by the exigencies of business. With the recession of the civil rights movement and the advent of assassinations and an expanded Vietnam war, the "conscience constituency" as Peter Clecak labeled it, turned its attentions elsewhere.

Operation Bootstrap grew directly out of a reorienting movement. It capitalized on a huge residue of commitment to social justice and a longing for participatory community. It was one of the earliest efforts to package the moral intensity of the 1960s in one world-reconstituting place. It failed because it succeeded and because the world changed around it. Its main product is the memory of its best times and a dim sense of possibility among those who were part of it. Nonetheless, Operation Bootstrap was, for a decade, a vigorous participative alternative to the world it tried to reject. For an exemplary moment it was what it tried to be.

Midway through Bootstrap's evolution, in the public schools of Berkeley, California, another group sought to confirm and institute the political gains of the sixties.

Endnotes

1. D. Hoed, undated manuscript. Circulated nationwide, 1964.

2. The manner in which one referred to the four violent days in Watts was a very important identifying mark. "Urban renewal" seems to have been the somewhat jocular, but critical, designation of the concerned but nonmilitant Negroes. "Revolt," "rebellion," "revolution," and so on, are the more ideologically pure designations used by nationalalists and militant black leftists. One identified the group to which one was referring, the argument one was advancing, or the ideological position with which one was identifying through the use of one or another of these terms.

3. Reverend Leon H. Sullivan, founder and chairman of the board of Opportunities Industrialization Center in Philadelphia. The motto of this job training center was "We Help Ourselves."

Accounts of who originated the Bootstrap idea and when varied according to who was speaking and to what audience. The whole issue was subject to much myth. A review of Bootstrap files turned up the following description:

It was one of these nights in September of 1965, when all the righteous whites were home in bed. There sat a handful of radical "Blacks and Whites" trying to find a way to make "a future for the Black youth of America." The place to start was the Los Angeles ghetto. This we knew. But how? Lou Smith, Western Regional Director of CORE, spoke of what was going on in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, about job training. Robert Hall, Co-Chairman of N-Vac, said "Pick up on this," and threw some ideas on the floor. This was the beginning of a long road we were going to travel. We did not know that the making of Bootstrap would leave its mark on all of us. ("Operation Bootstrap in the Beginning . . .

Present . . . and, I hope The Future." Undated, unsigned, pp. 1-2)

4. Los Angeles Times (October 1, 1965) reported:

"A militant civil rightist, who got little more than blisters on the picket line, put his feet under a desk Thursday to try a new tack toward solving the problems of south Los Angeles.

Unemployed himself, Robert Lee Hall, 38, and another civil rights worker have borrowed \$1,000--with no collateral--from a Negro businessman to open a job-training and education project in the heart of the area, scene of the recent riots.

He wants to pattern it after the Opportunities Industrialization Center, developed by the Rev. Leon Sullivan in Philadelphia. The center has received nationwide acclaim for pulling unemployables up by the bootstraps into paying jobs.

This is what Hall and his partner, Louis Smith, a Negro field representative for the Congress of Racial Equality, will call it--'Operation Bootstrap.'

An out-of-work salesman, Hall's only public notice before the riots was in the list of those arrested in demonstrations conducted by the Non-Violent Action Committee--an offshoot group which thought CORE was moving too slowly.

Then he saved a white reporter from rioters in Watts, grabbed a bullhorn, and in the mob's own vernacular tried to talk them out of violence.

Thursday, it was obvious Hall, a Negro, had convinced others to listen to him.

Surrounded by politicians, ministers, and wealthy businessmen, he talked in his own unschooled language of the need for education, skills, and jobs to lick the frustrations and hopelessness of the Negro poverty area.

City Councilman Billy G. Mills was among those who showed up for Hall's kickoff announcement.

'N-VAC,' said Mills, 'has the ability to get on the sidewalks and marshall forces.' They get down to the grass roots, he said, where others have had no communication."

5. These data are adapted from "Special Census Survey of the South and East Los Angeles Areas: November 1965," Current Population Reports: Technical Studies (No. 17; Series P-23; Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, March 23, 1966).

6. Conservatives seem to have found the following passage in Bootstrap literature attractive:

"We do not solicit government funding. Our experience with government-sponsored projects proves that they are paternalistic and exactly opposite from the approach needed. Technical assistance instead of welfare is required. Our program is designed to stimulate the community and once moved, assist it in bettering its lot. The times demand that we produce individuals with pride and dignity instead of obedient vegetables."

7. Letters like the following from La Crescenta, California were common:

"Dear Mr. Hall:

Having read the article about your project "Bootstrap" which was in the Los Angeles Times, I wish to volunteer my services in any capacity in which I am qualified. My background consists of over thirty years of work in the machine shop field--everything from machine operating, rebuilding, tool and die making, machine shop supervision, and tool engineering. I am 50 years old, married, Caucasian, employed

during the day, but I would be happy to conduct evening and/or weekend classes in any of the above at no charge. All that I would need would be a place to teach and some willing students.

If you would be interested in my help or advice, please get in touch with me. . . . I would welcome an interview with you if you think that my experience could be of help to you in this fine effort."

8. See "Ruth Warrick Is Many Women," Los Angeles Times (January 7, 1967).

"Active in Operation Bootstrap in the Watts area, Miss Warrick works with Negro youngsters who have reading problems. She also teaches them job interview techniques. 'It's important that these kids learn to express themselves without somebody taking umbrage,' she said, discussing the project."

9. It is important to recall that "T" Groups, sensitivity training, and encounter groups were a major national preoccupation at the time. Its variants were particularly florid in California. A good journalistic account, at the time, was "California's Group Therapy Binge," West Magazine (Los Angeles Times), Jan. 8, 1967.

10. See The Los Angeles Times, May 31-June 1, 1966, for an account of this tragic episode. Leonard Deadwyler was a young black man shot by a Los Angeles policeman at the end of a long auto chase in south Los Angeles. Deadwyler was speeding his pregnant wife to the hospital thinking she was in labor. This major episode produced citywide discussion of the fact that there was no hospital in the southeast Los Angeles to which Deadwyler could have driven, forcing him to speed out of the ghetto.

Subsequently, a bond issue, Proposition A, for hospital construction was placed before Los Angeles voters. It was rejected.

11. Los Angeles Times, June 6, 1966.

Los Angeles Times, June 14, 1966.

Los Angeles Times, June 11, 1966.

Los Angeles Times, July 19, 1966.

12. Los Angeles Times, West Magazine, "Black Man in a Gray World," April 2, 1967.

13. Center Diary, 16 (January-February), 1967. For an interesting description of the Bootstrap session--the kind of session for which it was to become popular--see Jean Hoffman, "Let the Rage Uncoil," Liberation (March 1967), pp. 7-10.