

## CHAPTER 7

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# HARYOU

### *An Apprenticeship for Young Leaders*

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A conversation unfolded in November 1962, in an office in the Harlem YMCA on 135th Street. In earlier decades, the “Y” offered accommodations to scores of Black performers and intellectuals who needed lodging when downtown hotels barred them. By 1962 the Harlem Y also housed offices of community organizations—including HARYOU, or Harlem Youth Opportunities Unlimited. HARYOU’s funding came first from the New York City government, then from President Kennedy’s Committee on Juvenile Delinquency, and later from the War on Poverty’s Community Action Program.<sup>1</sup> HARYOU proposed to study and to intervene in Harlem’s neighborhoods to improve the lives and prospects of local youth. The organization endured in various forms for over a decade. But in the fall of 1962, it was still trying to find its way.<sup>2</sup>

In HARYOU’s small offices, Dr. Kenneth Clark and a colleague sat in conversation with two young men—Ford Saltus and Charles Coleman. A tape recorder ran as the esteemed social psychologist and City College professor and the sixteen- and seventeen-year-old Harlem teenagers talked about their neighborhood. The boys lived about ten blocks away from the Harlem Y, near 125th Street. They had recently established the social organization they called the “Chessmen Fraternity,” taking advantage of a time when there had not been “any gang battles for a while.” We “try to encourage the boys to be somewhat ambitious in other activities, other than

going out and fighting each other. . . . We had this idea that we wanted to help each other in the community,” the young men explained.<sup>3</sup>

Saltus and Coleman came to HARYOU in search of guidance, but Clark wanted to learn from them instead. The two young men became the first members of the “HARYOU Associates,” a group of Harlem youth involved in planning the organization’s work. In keeping with social science parlance of the day, HARYOU leaders hoped to create an “action research laboratory.”<sup>4</sup> Youth energy and ideas, from Saltus and Coleman and many peers who joined them, helped shape HARYOU.

HARYOU valued youth knowledge and skill but also recognized the need to cultivate and further develop that knowledge and skill. Prompted by its vision of youth-led community change, HARYOU created a dynamic educational space that included a mix of formal and informal approaches to youth learning and fostered opportunities for young people to share and act on what they had learned. HARYOU’s history matters, then, not only because it offered an early and influential model for what became War on Poverty Community Action programs.<sup>5</sup> And it matters not only as a window into the thinking of Kenneth Clark.<sup>6</sup> It illustrates what emerged when a group of professional-class Harlem adults created an educational enterprise guided by a robust sense of respect and need for young people’s capacities. Such a vision commands attention especially given the ways it cut against many elements of the social and intellectual context in which it developed. Material obstacles to Black young people’s flourishing were many, and they were only worsened by social science and policy frameworks of the day that identified young African Americans only as problems to be solved, as embodiments of deficit rather than potential.<sup>7</sup>

Teens of Coleman and Saltus’s generation were coming of age in a Harlem that showed both the long-term ravages of racist oppression and economic exploitation and their new forms in the post-World War II years. Strictures on Black residential mobility remained tight, as shiny new suburban developments and discounted mortgages lured white urbanites to the suburbs. The country’s Levittowns and similar mass-produced suburban developments barred all but the most daring few Black families, through a web of segregationist home finance and real estate practices reinforced at times with neighborhood violence. But many white suburbanites moved outward from previously segregated neighborhoods in the New York City boroughs of Queens and the Bronx, or to the neighborhoods of Washington Heights and Inwood farther north in Manhattan. Their movement

opened spaces for working- and middle-class Black families who sought opportunities for home or apartment ownership, or more space and light, or better schools.<sup>8</sup>

Around 124th Street, where Saltus and Coleman lived with their families, Black middle-class outmigration left a Harlem that was increasingly segregated not only by race but also by class. Fewer of Harlem's doctors, teachers, and white-collar government workers lived in the immediate area. More and more families navigated poverty, facing low-wage work or dependence on welfare payments or the informal economy. From beauty parlors to lunch counters to numbers-running, Harlem residents had long worked in small-scale and at times illicit economic enterprises, while also trying to make a way in the sharply racially divided labor market of the broader city.<sup>9</sup> The neighborhood became the geographic center of a national informal economy in the late 1950s and early 1960s: the heroin trade. Its distribution and sales network reached residents all over Manhattan, the five boroughs, and beyond, but its hub was Central Harlem.<sup>10</sup> With the trade and its human consequences visible on the streets, heroin was the starkest of the dangerous choices that Saltus and Coleman hoped to help their fellow teens avoid. The young men also worried about peers' decisions to disengage from school or other social networks and supports.<sup>11</sup>

Alongside their material struggles, many Harlem residents faced obstacles in the form of ideas—the way city and national leadership thought about them. Even those who sought to help traded in concepts that proved dangerous. The sociologist Oscar Lewis coined the term “culture of poverty” in his 1959 study of Mexican village life, but his assertions gained tremendous traction in U.S. social policy circles in the 1960s. Lewis argued that poverty marked families not only at the moment of material privation but also in enduring and generational ways. Fighting poverty meant, in Lewis's view, changing the culture of poor people. Policy makers, scholars, and welfare officials working in this tradition saw more deficits than sources of strength, knowledge, and ideas in poor communities. At times, too, HARYOU's Kenneth Clark spoke in his own terms that closely echoed Lewis's in focusing on the “pathology” of the ghetto.<sup>12</sup> A deficit orientation characterized a wide array of poverty-focused interventions of the era, from Title I federal funding in schools to moralistic and often racist regulations on public housing and welfare recipients' family structures and uses of funds. When Clark and his HARYOU colleagues sat down with Saltus and Coleman and they committed to including Harlem

youth in research and program development, their actions diverged from this developing norm. Some scholars have interpreted Clark as a pathologist, by focusing on the ideas of damage that ran through his work from the doll studies that informed *Brown v. Board of Education* through his language in *Dark Ghetto*. But the process of Clark's work with HARYOU provides another layer of complexity.<sup>13</sup>

HARYOU operated with initial funds from the Kennedy administration's Committee on Juvenile Delinquency. But Clark and his colleagues forcefully rejected the "delinquency" language. HARYOU sought to call attention not to the supposed faults of Harlem youth—as much delinquency discourse did—but to the injustices of the broader world they inhabited. "The President's committee wanted us to direct ourselves to delinquency control, but we refused to do so. What HARYOU is talking about is the built-in delinquency which exists in the type of racist society which accepts ghettos as norms and which gets irritated when the people within the ghetto get mad and defiant. The type of delinquency which HARYOU is trying to deal with is that of social delinquency."<sup>14</sup>

The network of Harlem-based social workers, community activists, educators, and health professionals who composed HARYOU's first leaders chastised earlier New York City social programs as "social work colonialism" for failing to involve Harlem residents in the planning of programs for their benefit.<sup>15</sup> Clark claimed that they wanted to do more than target programs at youth. They wanted to create alongside them. When Clark sat down with Saltus and Coleman, he was following through on this idea, seeing the young men as people who knew what HARYOU should do. For Clark, these boys and their knowledge about their community and its youth should be the heart of the organization's efforts. In essence, Clark was working out an early form of "maximum feasible participation" of local residents. The concept helped shaped other efforts such as the Lower East Side's Mobilization for Youth, and even more so the War on Poverty's Community Action Programs nationally.<sup>16</sup>

In their conversation at HARYOU's offices, Clark tried to set Coleman and Saltus at ease, explaining that they were the experts on a subject that he cared about but was still trying to figure out. He had been inspired, as had many, by the powerful example of youth activism in the southern Black freedom struggle, from the Montgomery children's march to lunch counter sit-ins, and by the absence of "anti-social" activity accompanying these intense protests.<sup>17</sup> But Clark did not claim to understand fully Harlem's youth

culture, nor the approaches adults could take to engage and motivate young people to protect and improve both their own lives and those of their community. He argued, in writing and in actions such as listening to Saltus and Coleman, that the most important questions about Harlem's current challenges and future possibilities for youth had to be answered not only by experts but also by local youngsters.

HARYOU staffers' appreciation for the "zeal" and "enthusiasm" of youth came alongside a desire to cultivate "real *understanding* of the issues and their implications, an *awareness* of the many operative forces within and without" Harlem, and exposure to "the various possibilities for action."<sup>18</sup> Guided by respect for and desire to cultivate youth knowledge, HARYOU's youth program created an intensive educational, developmental space that offered young people the training and platform to share the ideas they had and the new ones they cultivated.

After describing HARYOU's initial foray into youth research, this chapter examines three aspects of HARYOU's work that illustrate the desire and the complications of seeing young people as knowers. HARYOU ran a Leadership Training Workshop, engaging young people in a variety of internship and learning experiences. Africana studies pioneer John Henrik Clarke sought to train HARYOU teens as vessels for African and African American history too often missing from local schools. Dance students and other artists crafted their technique and then displayed their work to local and citywide audiences. It notes too that youth helped organize Harlem into multiple elected neighborhood boards, seeking to counter city disinterest with heightened political organizing at the micro scale.

None of these venues for youth research and youth contribution fully achieved the "action-research laboratory" that Clark and his colleagues envisaged. Various strains appeared, as youth voices diverged from and challenged adult perspectives, as adults failed at times to cede authority even as they sought to cultivate youth knowledge and leadership, and as HARYOU at times did not recognize or credit the networks of knowledge and action that women had created. Despite these limitations, HARYOU (and HARYOU-ACT, as the entity was called after 1965) created an educational space that developed young people as agents in the advancement of their communities. A variety of kinds of instruction, mentorship, and apprenticeship together constituted an intentional curriculum for engaged young Black life and leadership. HARYOU pursued this work even as powerful national and local discourse viewed city neighborhoods like Harlem and

Black youth like HARYOU's participants as symbols of pathology rather than possibility. HARYOU wrestled deeply but imperfectly with the question of who knew Harlem, who knew African American youth and Black urban life, and how to build and share this knowledge.

HARYOU's work shifted significantly from the early 1960s through the late 1960s and early 1970s, prompted by major transitions in leadership, scale, and focus. Yet its central commitment to identifying and cultivating local youth knowledge and leadership animated the work across the decade. This commitment helped the organization develop a dynamic set of educational experiences that provided young people expert guidance, apprenticeship, and low-stakes exposure to a variety of learning settings.<sup>19</sup> In today's era of national-scale educational expertise and educational interventions celebrated for their portability across communities, HARYOU offers a reminder that, previously, those committed to strengthening local communities first thought to ask what the children knew. Then they built educational spaces to support and further develop that knowledge and its power. Thus HARYOU asks educators and policy makers today to reflect on which epistemic orientations and assumptions their work reflects.

HARYOU was suffused with a social science research ethos, and staffers recorded the project's work in intricate detail, via audio recordings or extensive field notes. A HARYOU staffer recorded the conversation of Clark, Coleman, and Saltus at the offices in the Harlem Y, then transcribed it and filed it with the organization's research director, Kenneth Marshall. The social science approach symbolized by the presence of the tape recorder in many HARYOU venues may have created a barrier for some Harlem residents and made them feel less welcome and more examined than HARYOU's rhetoric promised. But it also provided a robust and detailed documentary record. This record indicates that HARYOU not only claimed to seek out, listen to, and build on the experience and ideas of local teens, but it in fact did so in at least a portion of its work.<sup>20</sup> Because of the project's unusually extensive documentation of conversations with and among young people, it offers a strikingly direct—if certainly not unmediated, disinterested, or comprehensive—account of teens' ideas about their neighborhood and their futures.

HARYOU operated for just over a dozen years, first with Clark as director and with a cadre of powerful African American social work professionals alongside him, a group that was heavily but not exclusively male. In 1964, Clark lost a political tussle with Harlem's congressman and the

longtime pastor of the Abyssinian Baptist Church, Reverend Adam Clayton Powell Jr., and HARYOU merged with a community organization called Associated Community Teams, which was led by Powell and his allies, including many longtime Harlem activists.<sup>21</sup> HARYOU-ACT continued operations for the remainder of the decade, largely via funds obtained through the federal Community Action Program it had helped inspire.

The leadership transition changed HARYOU, but so did Harlem itself. The organization had been growing at a slow pace—with a year and half of research before an intensive summer program for thirty-two students in 1963, and three hundred in the summer of 1964. This scale no longer felt sufficient after the July 1964 Harlem uprisings. Prompted by the police killing of a Harlem teenager near his Upper East Side summer school, days of street violence and property destruction worried officials from New York to Washington, D.C. Seeking to bring more youth into “constructive” structures quickly, to discipline their anger and their desire for change, HARYOU-ACT moved quickly to a summer employment model to reach more than six thousand students.<sup>22</sup>

The transition from Clark’s to Powell’s leadership as well as the quick escalation in scale strained the organization’s capacity and its public perception. Controversy around HARYOU seemed to fit with long-standing views of the War on Poverty. In these accounts, grand ambitions of “community action,” “maximum feasible participation,” and democratic engagement almost always foundered on the shoals of local political conflict. Recent scholarship, however, focuses not exclusively on leadership and politics, but on practice and grassroots action, and challenges this story of decline and failure.<sup>23</sup> HARYOU had more than its share of conflict and it failed to achieve its most ambitious goals. But, like many Harlem visions that were not fully realized, the story resounds with hopes and strategies that merit consideration for another era.

### Youth Research as Education

Describing HARYOU in its earliest years, Kenneth Clark explained, “It is the fundamental premise of HARYOU that the youth of the community are the chief victims of the frustration, despair, apathy, and the quiet and strident conflict and dehumanization which characterize the ghetto. . . .

Too many of Harlem's youth are doomed to live lives of despair and hopelessness and have become the human casualties of pervasive social neglect and injustice." These words ring with tones of pathology and deficit—but as he did throughout his work at HARYOU, Clark pivoted from pathology to power. "The youth of Harlem can be salvaged, nurtured, and stimulated to assert and attain their rights to dignity as human beings."<sup>24</sup> In his work as a community psychologist at the Northside Center, Clark spoke of the necessary "maladjustment" Harlem residents needed intentionally to cultivate rather than overcome—a maladjustment to the unjust constraints they faced, rather than any "adjustment" to them.<sup>25</sup>

By the early 1960s, Clark and his early colleagues from organizations such as the Harlem Neighborhood Association, local churches, and social work networks began to see community research as part of the process of necessary maladjustment, a precursor to powerful action. In addition to their commitments to youth engagement in principle, they were seeking ways to bridge what they felt to be a growing gulf between themselves and Black urban-dwelling youth. Some of this distance was geographic. By the mid-1960s, many middle- and upper-class Black professionals, such as those who led HARYOU, had left Harlem for more suburban areas inside or beyond the city limits. Some of the distance felt cultural, as adults worried that they would be perceived as "placating sops" by young people enthralled with "hipsterism" or "sub-cultures" of "bobs," "cool cats," and "slicksters." Adults worried that youth would not accept their "honest efforts at social reform." HARYOU leaders (in at times exoticizing tones) desired access to "authentic" youth, to inform their work.<sup>26</sup>

Alongside Ford Saltus and Charles Coleman, a group of students from early high school through college age became the HARYOU Associates and made themselves frequent figures at the Harlem Y offices. HARYOU's own writers thought the young people were motivated by the altruistic, the practical (as in the acquisition of skills and opportunities for themselves), and the social benefits of participation, but that the overriding attraction was "the opportunity . . . to be involved in real and serious dialogues concerning their own future."<sup>27</sup> In 1963, students accompanied adult staffers or completed their own ethnographic-style observations and fieldwork in various community centers, on stoops, and on street corners.<sup>28</sup> One recording captures an example of the practice: a team of two teenagers and a college-aged student spent an hour or so on the corner of 133th Street and Eighth Avenue, starting conversations with young passersby about their

lives and their community. They heard from children recently returned home from reform school and others who expressed their desires to grow up to be scientists. The youth conducting the interviews commented on wanting Harlem youngsters like themselves to participate in HARYOU, not to be “under the spyglass” of other researchers as “indigenous informants,” but as researchers themselves.<sup>29</sup>

Through their research, young people contributed to a report of more than six hundred pages that, although its format resembled an unpolished typescript, circulated in New York City and beyond in social work and urban affairs circles. The report later provided the empirical base for Clark’s 1965 national bestseller, *Dark Ghetto*. Young people did not write either the 1964 HARYOU report or *Dark Ghetto*, but they were part of the knowledge-creation mechanisms that shaped HARYOU’s understandings of Harlem’s needs and its proposed solutions.

As they participated in research efforts and organized projects including the Harlem event aligned with the August 1963 March on Washington, some tensions emerged. The students who had presented themselves at the Harlem Y offices to become involved in the HARYOU Associates were largely middle class or from upwardly mobile families, and HARYOU staffers judged some to be “reluctant or unable to function with the other less privileged young people.”<sup>30</sup> When pressed to expand their group to include what HARYOU adults described as the “more marginal,” “damaged,” or “obviously deviant young people,” the participating youth resisted. When these “marginal” youth did join, they often left quickly because, as HARYOU adults perceived it, they felt unable to meet the challenges of the research tasks involved “either because of lack of training and skill or inadequate motivation or other types of character defects.”<sup>31</sup>

Youth research participation created many tensions with HARYOU’s adult professionals. The HARYOU Associates youth were “virtually a ‘staff team’; yet, their youthfulness and lack of experience warranted close direction and supervision by adult staff members.” Some of those adults felt the expected power dynamic shifting: “The [youth] group held the adult staff team in a ‘heads I win, tails you lose’ bind.” A program could falter because the staff had “not . . . really shown faith in the group.” Or the staff could err in allowing them “to go off half-cocked.”<sup>32</sup> Youth could have at once too much authority, and not enough.

The presence of adolescents in typically adult-only work spaces brought quotidian challenges. The young people thought that they had been invited

to fully participate in HARYOU's work and expected to be welcomed at HARYOU's offices at all times. "They often seemed to 'take over' the HARYOU offices," at the Harlem Y, testing the patience of the professional and secretarial staff. The youth group won assignment of their own space in the office. Adult staffers hoped to confine them there, but "this hope was not fulfilled."<sup>33</sup> When given a space where their contributions felt welcome, these Harlem youth seized it enthusiastically.

Alongside their work as junior social scientists, interviewing neighbors and tallying U.S. census data alongside research associate and sociologist Olivia Frost, HARYOU Associates did crucial leg work for multiple organizing efforts, including a mayor's youth summit and the major school boycotts in New York in 1964.<sup>34</sup> HARYOU youth helped conceptualize a wide range of programs, institutions, and opportunities that ultimately drew more than \$4 million in federal and local support for youth-led Black history workshops, youth-run coffee shops as community centers, and a "neighborhood board" program that would elect block-level leadership for Harlem neighborhoods.<sup>35</sup> Although it is hard to know exactly which of these suggestions originated with youth ideas, some adult comments linked proposals to youth contributions. Early HARYOU documents proposed conventional "job training"—testing, training, and placement services for out-of-school Harlem youth.<sup>36</sup> A few years later, however, Kenneth Clark reported having learned from his young associates that "Negro youth in Harlem did not have the opportunity to learn how to manage even a small business or store since, unlike other lower-middle-class groups in the city, their parents did not own stores." For a few years, HARYOU shifted to creating youth-run businesses as more locally based and richer sites for on-the-job training.<sup>37</sup>

Both the contributions and the tensions that came from youth presence attest that youth participation in HARYOU was significant for the organization. Participation changed the young people as well—and at times, HARYOU adults complained about this. As social work professionals, they had been in search of "authentic" Harlem youth voices who could inform and translate their program ideas. Rather than celebrating the increase of skill and social capital that youth participants demonstrated, HARYOU colleagues complained that "these workers often lose the very qualities for which they were recruited from the community once they are placed on the payroll and brought into contact with professional colleagues whose style they sought to imitate."<sup>38</sup> As they learned from their new context,

HARYOU Associates were no longer the “authentic” youth HARYOU sought to understand and access. Another aspect of HARYOU’s work, however, wanted to cultivate change in participating young people.

### An Apprenticeship for Leaders

In the summer of 1963, as HARYOU was wrapping up its research phase, a selected group of thirty-two adolescents, some from HARYOU Associates and some new to the organization, participated in a six-week-long Leadership Training Workshop (LTW). The LTW was an educational space committed to listening to and furthering youth knowledge and skill. Students of high school and college age spent their mornings working on research and action teams on housing, heritage (African and African American history), group social work, and a coffee shop/cultural center. These placements put the young people in positions of authority and contribution, as they organized tenants or led groups of children of elementary school age. Like historic forms of apprenticeship, young people in the program learned through example, experience, and low-stakes engagement with informed adults. As one adult participant described it, the goal was to build not only on young people’s “apparent ‘knowledge’ of ‘what makes things wrong in Harlem,’” but also on “a real *understanding* of the issues and their implications; an *awareness* of the many operative forces within and without the Harlem community,” to help develop leaders “in a systematic, honest, and rigorous fashion.”<sup>39</sup>

Afternoon discussions and debates motivated and informed students’ continued civic action. The LTW’s schedule demonstrated the power of HARYOU’s connections, with figures from a New York City deputy mayor to parent activists to Malcolm X all making time in their schedules for extended conversations with the young trainees. If the program had been shaped in part by the idea that Harlem youth should have the opportunities for learning that came within a family business, it was a family where local political leaders came to dinner.

Many pressing issues came up for discussion in the LTW. The question of school desegregation was one contentious example. In 1963, Kenneth Clark was only nine years past his contribution to the *Brown v. Board of Education* litigation, and was still deeply enmeshed in New York City integrationist activism. Many of the adults working with HARYOU in its early

phases shared his focus on desegregation as a strategy for educational equity. Yet Clark also invested heavily in attempts to improve the lives of Harlem students and residents immediately, not waiting for desegregation's stuttering progress given the many forms of resistance on display in New York City. Before HARYOU, Clark helped initiate the Higher Horizons program that brought additional human and material resources into select Harlem schools.<sup>40</sup> For HARYOU's adults like Clark, desegregation remained an important strategy for equity, but not the only one.

When the Leadership Training Workshop scheduled an afternoon of student discussion about schools and segregation, the young participants likely sensed that HARYOU's leadership favored an integrationist perspective. In conversation, though, students were clear on their ideas and their concerns, even when they diverged from those of HARYOU's head staffers. Laura Pires, a recent graduate of Columbia University's School of Social Work and a key staff leader (and documenter) of the Leadership Training Workshop, described school "integration" as the students' "favorite topic." They relished the opportunity to argue against integrationist currents and in favor of "improvement" instead. The local activist Mildred Bond visited the workshop for an afternoon discussion, and students opined that "it was not necessary to have Susie Cohen sit next to the little black boy to have better schools." For Sherron Jackson, a Harlem native home for the summer from college and participation in the Black freedom struggle in the South, "The biggest problem in Harlem schools is that to learn to read and write is impossible." Jackson resisted the idea of integration as facilitating school improvement, saying it was a "white yardstick" applied to a "black community."<sup>41</sup>

At times HARYOU adults bristled at the ideas youth expressed in the organization's educational spaces. Pires captured students' resistance to Bond's arguments in favor of integration, and criticized them for it. Students, including Sherron Jackson, had "pulled out all of their 'black' arguments—emotional and moral as they may be." HARYOU staffer Larry Houston pressed against this: did the students want "separate but equal"? Houston took an extreme view of the students' ideas, equating them with those of a Mississippi segregationist: "You sound like Senator Eastland."<sup>42</sup> Despite these sharp comments, HARYOU youth continued to press their position. Elsewhere Pires worried that some youth were increasingly interested in Malcolm X and his leadership, or were enamored of what some at HARYOU thought of as the more separatist approaches of John Henrik

Clarke and his cultural heritage work, to be described later. Pires, like many of her HARYOU colleagues, was both professionally and personally committed to valuing youth knowledge and ideas. But she and some of her colleagues were afraid of youth frustration and anger produced by the many manifestations of racism and divestment in Harlem. Would tensions simmer, or explode?

Brenda McCoy was a high-schooler when she participated in the Leadership Training Workshop. Her team worked alongside Jesse Gray of the Community Council on Housing, to organize tenants against decrepit and dangerous conditions on a block of West 117th Street. The students' efforts helped set the groundwork for a major 1964 rent strike that Gray led.<sup>43</sup> But at the end of the summer, what mattered most to McCoy was not what she had contributed, but what she had learned. McCoy grew up in what she described as a "bourgeois black area"—the Riverton Houses on 135th Street, built as the segregated Black counterpart to Metropolitan Life's segregated white Stuyvesant Town farther south in Manhattan. Talking about the gap between her own relative comfort and the conditions she observed via her summer work reduced her to tears. Her Riverton neighbors "seem to have no identity with the type of people [she] worked with on 117th St." She took home a message of unity in Black identity that cut across class: "Until all of our black brothers are free, the ones down on 117th St. nodding [in a heroin trance] and the ones up in [Riverton], we can never be free."<sup>44</sup>

HARYOU created spaces for young people to hear various ideas and try their hands at civil discourse about these concepts. The Leadership Training Workshop provided a political and intellectual apprenticeship. It presented a striking counterpart to the often low-skill job placement and training ethos of the era's Job Corps or manpower programs that had been conceptualized with a much less powerful, or, in Clark's terms, less constructively and purposefully "maladjusted" Harlem young person in mind.

In her remarks at the end-of-summer banquet for the Leadership Training Workshop, Sherron Jackson expressed the ideas of participation and youth influence that Kenneth Clark and his adult colleagues had articulated at the project's inception. "HARYOU must be taught by the young person in Harlem. HARYOU must be molded by the young person in Harlem. HARYOU must in essence *be* the young person in Harlem."<sup>45</sup> The LTW engaged only a small group of Harlem youth, and at times it was clear that HARYOU adults struggled to accept the youth perspectives they said

they wanted. Nonetheless, the LTW exemplified a dynamic learning space motivated by respect for and desire to cultivate youth as knowers and leaders in their community.

### John Henrik Clarke and Youth History Teachers

Another distinct feature of HARYOU's work with young people—and its approach to community development more generally—was the infusion of historical learning throughout the organization. As one HARYOU leader put it, teaching Harlem residents about African and African American history helped “give them memories they can respect, and use to command the respect of other people . . . to develop an awareness and a pride in themselves, so that they can become a better instrument for living together with other people.”<sup>46</sup> HARYOU imagined historical knowledge to be central to building self, community, and change in Harlem.

Some Leadership Training Workshop participants spent portions of their days on HARYOU's “Heritage Program.” They worked as history teachers at St. Philip's Church day-care center, the Dunlevy-Milbank Center for children, and other spaces. Teenagers could benefit from learning as they taught, and the placing of youth in positions where they could make direct contributions to their community was consistent with the project's overall vision. But HARYOU and Harlem needed youth history teachers because so few schools and other state-run educational venues in the early 1960s made African and African American history central to their work. Some Harlem teachers created materials to fill this gap for their students, but they were exceptions in an educational landscape that gave people of African descent too little attention and often the wrong kind of attention in the curriculum. (This was a problem that some educators and artists sought to contest in Harlem from the 1930s onward, as discussed in chapters 4 and 5 of this volume.)

HARYOU's historical work was led by John Henrik Clarke, a pioneering scholar and a founder of the field of Africana studies. Educated in a mixture of Harlem-based study circles and periodic classes at New York area universities, Clarke served stints as a faculty member at the New School and Hunter College. He made HARYOU his base of operations in the mid-1960s. Clarke's mentee Ronald Drayton was a teenager and LTW participant in 1963, working alongside Clarke in preparing materials and

teaching approaches for Harlem youngsters. Drayton continued on as Clarke's partner after that initial summer, teaching history classes in after-school settings for children and evening sessions for adults through the mid-1960s. Clarke, Drayton, and a few colleagues contributed to the rapidly growing HARYOU staff, offering introductory heritage workshops to new hires.<sup>47</sup>

Black educators had worked for decades to comment on the shape of the dominant U.S. curriculum and its effects in reinforcing white supremacy rather than celebrating or even including Black humanity. Clarke's work, both inside and outside the academy, sought to address this distortion in myriad ways—from producing original classroom-friendly illustrated materials and circulating them to anyone who wrote to request them, to crisscrossing metropolitan New York to deliver lectures whenever invited, to contributing to media as an expert on Black history. Either because of the particular nature of historical knowledge or Clarke's own preferences, his history pedagogy had a less distributed view of knowledge production than did other aspects of HARYOU.

Clarke had been educated in study circles and other community-generated—and in some cases less hierarchical—venues for sharing and building historical knowledge. Yet in his work at HARYOU he held to a pedagogical vision in which young people could become conveyors of scholarly knowledge more than generators or contributors to it. He taught by lecturing, and the available documentation suggests that this was the approach he encouraged among his fellow heritage teachers. His young HARYOU colleague Ronald Drayton, however, began to explore more interactive pedagogical modes in the late 1960s.<sup>48</sup> But neither saw youth as producers of historical knowledge.

The Heritage program may not have embodied the fullest view of the “action research laboratory” that HARYOU promised, yet Clarke made an important contribution to the educational space that was HARYOU. Largely thanks to him, HARYOU made history inseparable from the other elements of community action. He offered a rationale for historical understanding as foundational for HARYOU staff, HARYOU youth, and Harlem residents engaged in any aspect of community improvement. As he put it, “African and Afro-American” history offered them “a greater awareness of themselves and the role they must play if their community is to be revitalized,” seeing history as a force in teaching “the people of Harlem to use their talents . . . and love their own memories in order to fulfill

themselves more completely.”<sup>49</sup> Clarke made Black history available by creating the materials and the venues in which he could spread historical knowledge within HARYOU and farther. Both the absence and the demand for such materials well beyond Harlem had been so profound that Clarke soon found himself responding to requests for his pamphlets and curricular guides from educators and Freedom School leaders around the country and presenting to school districts and other groups in the New York area.<sup>50</sup>

### HARYOU Arts—Youth Ideas in Performance

HARYOU underwent a major leadership transition in late 1964 and 1965, alongside a transformation in the scale of its work. HARYOU’s executive director, Livingston Wingate, characterized the growth in terms of dollars. Over six weeks, the organization went from a \$96,000 per week program to a \$396,000 per week program. HARYOU had planned to grow, but the July 1964 Harlem uprising created a new sense of immediacy and a new set of goals. Both local and federal leaders feared African American urban youth as “social dynamite,” in James Conant Bryant’s term that appeared in HARYOU discourse.<sup>51</sup> Officials wanted HARYOU to bring as many young people into its net as possible, in the not-at-all-veiled hope that youth engagement in summer programs could reduce the likelihood of further unrest. Now HARYOU–ACT tried to serve thousands of children—and its previous intensive engagement with a small cadre of young people took a backseat to broader-scale efforts.

Nonetheless, HARYOU’s core modes of working with young people—in research, organizing, and display and performance of arts and culture—remained the center of the project’s youth programs. Dance, music, and theater, offered in summer intensive as well as yearlong training programs became new spaces for student knowledge to be both fostered and shared.

HARYOU’s research director and veteran social worker Kenneth Marshall had already spoken of the centrality of “art as equipment for living” in his work for HARYOU. Addressing a 1962 gathering of Harlem-based painters, musicians, playwrights, and others who were interested in shaping HARYOU’s work in the arts, Marshall explained his appreciation for youth culture as a meaningful response to the conditions of young Black people’s lives. Marshall hoped to recognize the artistic and cultural contri-

butions of Harlem youth and to pair it with expert artistic guidance. Rather than add to the era's censorious discourse about culturally disconnected youth, Marshall saw "some of the so-called 'sub-cultural' stances . . . [as] a kind of collective poem or creation." Black youth saw a society "based on the comings and goings of commodities," but a society that denied them the ability to acquire these commodities. Experiencing this exclusion, they "utilized the very scraps and dregs of our rich society to form and mold a world that has some coherence and purpose to it . . . to seize upon the scraps and fuse them into a kind of mystique and make of this a kind of life."<sup>52</sup> Marshall's appreciation for young people as resourceful culture makers paralleled Kenneth Clark's interest in learning from young people's views of their community in HARYOU's research endeavors. And both shared a commitment not only to valuing but to developing youth skill.

HARYOU's dance program looked much like an intensive preprofessional training endeavor that linked interested (but not necessarily previously trained) young people with highly skilled instructors. The discipline of dance structured much of the day (especially in the summer), and students felt a culture of high expectations and striving for aesthetic and physical accomplishment that pushed them beyond where they had been previously. One HARYOU dancer, George Faison, recalled the intense physical and emotional effort required to reach the professional standards his instructors expected. Success in dance depended on rigorous discipline, and the lessons extended beyond the studio. Otis Sallid participated in HARYOU's dance program in 1964 and 1965. By chance he dropped in at a community center where classes were under way, a step that launched him toward a career in performing arts. He appreciated the dance training as well as the development of disciplined work that carried him to Juilliard. "HARYOU-ACT was really a big deal because in the midst of all this poverty, this mis-education, just being out there on your own in a lot of ways, they taught you really big things. They taught you how to show up on time. How to . . . make sure you cleaned your tights before you come in the next day. And put them by the door and get ready for your next class. They taught you . . . how to be in the pursuit of excellence."<sup>53</sup>

Although apprentice housing advocates in the Leadership Training Workshop had an experience that was different from that of apprentice dancers like Faison and Sallid, both found in HARYOU a platform for expression and growth. Dance performances became venues for expression not unlike the opportunities that other parts of HARYOU created for

young people to speak out about housing conditions or lecture about Black history. HARYOU dancers performed for audiences all over the city. Faison recalled the power of expressing his frustration with the world through his body and his movement, looking directly at his audience in the final movement of a trenchant dance piece.<sup>54</sup>

Youth knowledge shaped other kinds of performances as well. HARYOU's theater program created and staged a play at a 1968 local conference on the problem of school suspension. In a setting focused on enrollment and graduation statistics and school construction plans, HARYOU youth brought their knowledge to bear via drama, in a work titled *The Voice of the Ghetto*.<sup>55</sup>

From Kenneth Marshall's early comments through community performances in the late 1960s, artistic performance and training was one of the ways in which HARYOU created spaces for the cultivation and expression of youth ideas and knowledge. At times, as in the controversy over Amiri Baraka's Black Arts Repertory Theater that led to HARYOU's withdrawing its federal funds, arts programming became the center of political conflict. But beneath the controversy, adults and youth worked together as creators of culture.<sup>56</sup>

HARYOU saw young African American Harlem residents as sources of knowledge, energy, and contribution. This commitment was visible in part in the organization's initial 1961–1962 conversations with the New York mayor's office, and in the proposals that led to funding via President John F. Kennedy's Committee on Juvenile Delinquency. It became clearer via the engagement of young people such as Ford Saltus and Charles Coleman, Brenda McCoy and Sherron Jackson. Despite major leadership transitions and new pressures brought to bear by the fast-shifting landscape of urban life and politics in the mid-1960s, this commitment remained in HARYOU's work into the late 1960s.

HARYOU has enjoyed attention from historians interested in its fate as an embattled War on Poverty program. And Kenneth Clark's difficult and often paradoxical language of pathology and deficit have likewise attracted attention. The educational ideas and educational spaces HARYOU generated, however, provide a different perspective.

HARYOU built a dynamic set of educational spaces—some formal, such as summer dance instruction, and some much more informal, as when young people milled about the offices on 135th Street—guided by a com-

mitment to Black youth as powerful interpreters and actors in their communities. HARYOU thus offers an example of an educational space designed to respond to and foster the knowledge and skill of local youth. In the context of social science, educational, and social policy discourse of the early and mid-1960s, when so many attempts both to support and denigrate urban Black communities emphasized forms of pathology and deficit, HARYOU made a conscious turn in a more affirming direction. In some ways, the centrality of this idea even in HARYOU's work speaks to the power of the deficit-focused, often demeaning discourse about young Black people that was circulating at the time.

Elements of HARYOU's work can be seen in later educational efforts in Harlem, including in the continued development of autonomous (and often more radical) educational spaces (as discussed in chapter 9 of this volume) or efforts at local democratic governance of schooling (as discussed in chapters 8 and 12 of this volume) that followed HARYOU's initial foray into "Neighborhood Boards" to organize local Harlem residents.

Over its lifespan, HARYOU encountered many critics, some rightly frustrated about the organization's initial investment in programs for a few rather than broadly distributed benefits for many. Others questioned, especially given the depth of poverty in Central Harlem at the time, whether extensive federal resources could be fairly distributed if so many went to professional staff.<sup>57</sup> Despite these and other limitations, in its initial years of the mid-1960s HARYOU exemplifies a commitment to viewing young people not only as students but as thinkers, contributors, and leaders—people who know things, and can be supported in knowing and doing in the interest of themselves and their communities. Like other educational visions that developed in Harlem in the twentieth century, this one was only partially realized in practice historically, but nonetheless is worth the attention of educators and those who imagine a different future today.

## Notes

1. HARYOU's work first started with a \$330,000, eighteen-month-long study of conditions and opportunities for Harlem youth, funded by the Kennedy administration's presidential Committee on Juvenile Delinquency, and the City of New York. This study phase ran from mid-1962 to early 1964; programs for youth began in the summer of 1963. HARYOU, *Youth in the Ghetto: A Study of the Consequences of Powerlessness and a Blueprint for Change* (New York: HARYOU, 1964), 22–29.
2. I would like to thank Deidre Flowers for early research assistance on this paper.

3. Harlem Youth Opportunities Unlimited, Inc., "First Meeting of the HARYOU Associates," November 1962, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York Public Library (hereafter Schomburg), Kenneth Marshall papers (hereafter KMP), box 5. This encounter is also memorialized in a comic book created by HARYOU: William Robinson, *Harlem Youth Report #5: Youth in the Ghetto* (New York: DC Comics, 1964), 31, reprinted in Cyril Tyson, *Power and Politics in Central Harlem, 1962–1964: The HARYOU Experience* (New York: Jay Street, 2004).
4. "HARYOU Associates: An Action-Research Laboratory," Schomburg, Northern Student Movement Papers, folder 3, box 24.
5. Noel Cazenave, *Impossible Democracy: The Unlikely Success of the War on Poverty Community Action Programs* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006) explores the consequences and struggles of HARYOU as a War on Poverty precursor and example. For recent work on War on Poverty programs, see Lisa Gayle Hazirjian and Annelise Orleck, eds., *The War on Poverty: A New Grassroots History* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011); and on New York particularly, Tamar W. Carroll, *Mobilizing New York: AIDS, Antipoverty, and Feminist Activism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015).
6. On Clark, see Daryl Michael Scott, *Contempt and Pity: Social Policy and the Image of the Damaged Black Psyche, 1880–1996* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); Daniel Matlin, *On the Corner: African American Intellectuals and the Urban Crisis* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2013); Matlin, "Who Speaks for Harlem? Kenneth B. Clark, Albert Murray and the Controversies of Black Urban Life," *Journal of American Studies* 46, no. 4 (November 2012): 875–94; and Gerald Markowitz and David Rosner, *Children, Race, and Power: Kenneth and Mamie Clark's Northside Center* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1996).
7. On the power of the "culture of poverty" idea in the era's policy and politics, including the impact of the work of Oscar Lewis and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, see Alice O'Connor, *Poverty Knowledge: Social Science, Social Policy, and the Poor in Twentieth Century US History* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2002).
8. In an extensive literature on white suburbanization, leading works include Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); and David M. P. Freund, *Colored Property: State Policy and White Racial Politics in Suburban America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007). On Black suburbanization, see Andrew Wiese, *Places of Their Own: African American Suburbanization in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004); and Steven Gregory, *Black Corona: Race and the Politics of Place in an Urban Community* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998).
9. On Harlem's informal economy, see LaShawn Harris, "Playing the Numbers: Madame Stephanie St. Clair and African American Policy Culture in Harlem," *Black Women, Gender and Families* 2, no. 2 (Fall 2008): 53–76.
10. Eric C. Schneider, *Smack: Heroin and the American City* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008).
11. Harlem Youth Opportunities Unlimited, Inc., "First Meeting"; and HARYOU, *Youth in the Ghetto*.
12. The most expansive version of Clark's thinking in this regard is found in his bestselling *Dark Ghetto: Dilemmas of Social Power* (New York: Harper Torchbook, 1967 [1965]).
13. *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, KS*, 347 U.S. 483 (1954); and Clark, *Dark Ghetto*.
14. "Summary of the Dinner Meeting of the Arts and Cultural Affairs Committee, July 8, 1963," Schomburg, John Henrik Clarke papers (hereafter JHCP), box 21, folder 56, 4;

- and “CAI Staff Meeting, Tuesday, Dec. 8, 1964, Community Action Institute 1965,” JHCP, box 21, folder 13.
15. Kenneth B. Clark, “Profile of HARYOU,” n.d. [1963], Schomburg, Harlem Neighborhood Association papers (hereafter HNAP), box 7, folder 5.
  16. Cazenave, *Impossible Democracy*.
  17. “Summary of the Dinner Meeting,” JHCP, box 21, folder 56, 4.
  18. “Leadership Training Workshop,” JHCP, box 21, folder 56.
  19. These ideas resonate with present-day calls for youth participatory action research in school improvement. See, for example, Nicole Mirra, Antero Garcia, and Ernest Morrell, *Doing Youth Participatory Action Research: Transforming Inquiry with Researchers, Educators, and Students* (London: Routledge, 2015).
  20. This is a more favorable view of youth participation in the organization than that offered by Cazenave, *Impossible Democracy*. Most previous accounts of HARYOU have focused chiefly on the political conflict between Kenneth Clark and his allies and Congressman Adam Clayton Powell Jr. and his, and the media debates that followed from this. Asking less about the structure of control of HARYOU and its more quotidian practices with young people offers a different view of the organization.
  21. Cazenave, *Impossible Democracy*, 105–16.
  22. HARYOU-ACT, “1/2 Way Report: Is the Demonstration Experiment Working?” 1965, Library of Congress, Kenneth Clark Papers, box 133, folder 4.
  23. Orleck and Hazirjian, *War on Poverty*.
  24. Clark, “Profile of HARYOU,” 1–2.
  25. Matlin, *On the Corner*; and Markowitz and Rosner, *Children, Race, and Power*.
  26. “HARYOU Associates: An Action Research Laboratory.”
  27. HARYOU, *Youth in the Ghetto*, 90.
  28. Hundreds of pages of transcripts from this fieldwork as well as planning meetings are available in the papers of Kenneth Marshall, Cyril Tyson, Kenneth Clark, and the Harlem Neighborhood Association at the Schomburg Center.
  29. Harlem Youth Opportunities Unlimited, Inc., Program Planning Department, “Street Interviews: Hilton Clark and Liz Ulla, by William Jones,” n.d. (ca. 1963), KMP. Note that Hilton Clark was the teenage son of Kenneth and Mamie Clark.
  30. HARYOU, *Youth in the Ghetto*, 84.
  31. HARYOU, 84.
  32. HARYOU, 575–76. These questions about how to balance youth autonomy and the need for guidance still engage those working in youth participatory action research today.
  33. HARYOU, 91.
  34. Tyson, *Power and Politics*, 42; and HARYOU, *Youth in the Ghetto*, 580–81. On Frost’s work at HARYOU and later at Youth in Action in Bedford Stuyvesant, see the Olivia Pleasants Frost Papers, Schomburg.
  35. HARYOU, *Youth in the Ghetto*, 585–96; and Clark, *Dark Ghetto*, xiii–xiv.
  36. “A Proposal for the Planning of a Comprehensive Youth Services Program in Central Harlem Submitted by Harlem Youth Opportunities Unlimited, Inc., in Association with Harlem Neighborhoods Association, Inc. Under Public Law 087-274,” May 15, 1962, HNAP, folder 7, box 7, n.p.
  37. Clark, *Dark Ghetto*, 40.
  38. Clark, 53.
  39. “Leadership Training Workshop,” n.d. (ca. 1963), JHCP, box 21, folder 56.
  40. Markowitz and Rosner, *Children, Race, and Power*, 113–14.

41. Harlem Youth Opportunities Unlimited, Inc., "Leadership Training Workshop 'End of Program' Banquet, September 5, 1963," September 11, 1963, KMP, box 2, folder Haryou Leadership Training Workshop, 6–11.
42. L. [Laura] Pires, "Memo to J. Jones and K. Marshall," August 12, 1963, KMP, box 2, folder Haryou Leadership Training Workshop.
43. Roberta Gold, *When Tenants Claimed the City: The Struggle for Citizenship in New York City Housing* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2014).
44. Harlem Youth Opportunities Unlimited, Inc., "Leadership Training Workshop 'End of Program' Banquet, September 5, 1963," 43–46.
45. Harlem Youth Opportunities Unlimited, Inc., 11; emphasis added.
46. John Henrik Clarke, "Workshop #1," May 16, 1985, JHCP, box 20, folder Course Outlines—NYC Board of Ed., District 17 Workshop on African-American History for Teachers, 1985, 6.
47. John Henrik Clarke to Robert MacBeth, n.d., JHCP, box 21, folder 46; "Heritage Classes," n.d., JHCP, box 21, folder 43; and Documentation on HARYOU staff workshops, JHCP box 21, folder 25.
48. "Proposal for a Community Action Institute," n.d., JHCP, box 21, folder 29.
49. Clarke to Organizing Committee, Community Action Institute, September 15, 1965, JHCP, box 21, folder 29; and Prospectus for A Summer Heritage Program, n.d., JHCP, box 21, folder 29.
50. See, for example, letters in JHCP, box 21, folder 1.
51. James Bryant Conant, *Slums and Suburbs: A Commentary on Schools in Metropolitan Areas*, 1st ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961). The term appears, for example, in "Summary of the Dinner Meeting."
52. "Summary of the Dinner Meeting."
53. Otis Sallid oral history with Ansley Erickson and Deidre Flowers, November 30, 2015. Recording in author's possession.
54. Sallid oral history and George Faison oral history with Ansley Erickson and Dina Asfaha, December 12, 2016. Recording in author's possession.
55. "HANA Confab Stars HARYOU-ACT Youth," *New York Amsterdam News*, February 10, 1968.
56. Larry Neal, "The Black Arts Movement," *Drama Review: TDR* 12, no. 4 (1968): 29–39, 32.
57. See, for example, Lee Cook, "Harlem Youth Seek Power," *Amsterdam News*, July 8, 1972.