

New Kind of City Emerges Out of Ruins of '68 Riot

By Leon Dash and Phil McCombs

Washington Post Staff Writers

It was a balmy spring evening here 10 years ago when Dr. King was assassinated in Memphis. As the news flashed through Washington shortly after 8 p.m., there was an unnatural lull: the paralysis of shock. Then, building slowly at first like some great flood, there welled up an enormous rage. Within hours, the flood had grown into a roaring torrent of violence.

One hundred and twenty American cities erupted in violence that weekend. In Washington, where rioting lasted three days, the damage was heaviest. The capital, shrouded with smoke and occupied by federal troops, was a mirror into which a horrified nation looked—and saw itself.

All that seems far off now in these warming days of spring a decade later. The enormous grace and charm of this city is never more seductive than at this time of year. Life is returning to the streets. The joggers are out. Everyone is beginning to unlimber from the long winter.

Washington has changed, too, in more than these superficial ways. Real American politics came to the city government here with the advent of home rule in 1974, and the energies of local citizens are now being channeled into strong new neighborhood organizations, the hoopla of campaigns, the forging of embryonic political machines.

Crime is down. The Nixon administration characterized Washington as the crime capital of the nation, but now 16 other American cities of comparable size have worse records. Relations have improved between the community and the police force, which has changed in racial composition during the decade from one-fourth to nearly half black.

Washington itself is 76 percent black today, about the same racial proportion that it had 10 years ago. But in 1976 its white population increased for the first time in a quarter century, and many more neighborhoods than ever before are now in flux with blacks and whites, rich and poor, professionals and working people living next door to one another.

Of all the decade's evident changes, one of the most surprising has been the building boom in the city that began a few years ago and is now intensifying toward a fever pitch. Real estate values are soaring and private money is flowing back into Washington to finance large development projects and widespread rehabilitation of the spacious, elegant old houses in what had become slum neighborhoods.

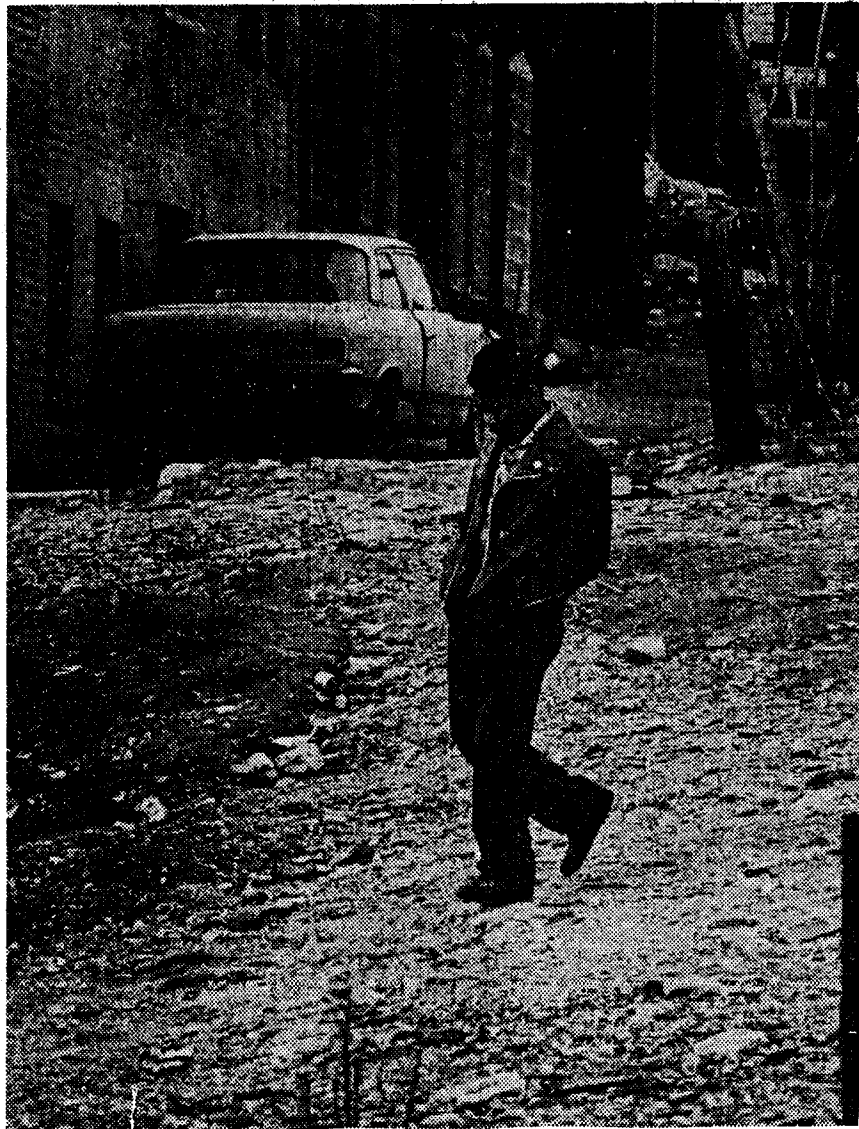
None of this has happened quickly. For many citizens, the city remained a tense, fearful and stagnant place to live in until well into the early 1970s. For the growing numbers of poor and unemployed here, it remains that way today—as if nothing had really changed.

To make matters worse for this socioeconomic underclass, a strong disdain for it has developed among



Three Views of Washington Today: School teachers Albert and Carolyn Preston (top) are typical of the city's black middle class, which has grown considerably in the past 10 years. A black youth (bottom right) wandering through part of the 14th Street NW neighborhood that still has not been rebuilt since the 1968 riots symbolizes the poor who have found that little has changed for them. But Robert Linowes (bottom left), an influential real estate lawyer who made his fortune in the Maryland suburbs, is among the businessmen who now are prospering from a building and restoration boom inside the District.

By James A. Parcell—The Washington Post



WASHINGTON, From A1

many blacks who were successful in claming their way into the middle class against enormous odds.

Listen to Fred Marshall, a black man who came to Washington from the slums of Winston Salem, N.C., 12 years ago and who has risen to become director of security for J. C. Penney stores here:

"My friends are black middle class and a lot of them came up like I did through segregated schooling from poor backgrounds. . . . The emphasis should be on the majority of people rather than the small, poor minority. What about us who worked hard, persevered and pulled ourselves up?"

Those who didn't manage to pull themselves up remain despairing and bitter. Here is David L. Clark, black, a \$5,000-a-year night porter with a ninth grade education:

"In the '60s, them politicians promised a lot and didn't do nothing. . . . I grew up in this neighborhood (the 900 block of Third Street NW) and the only thing that's changed is that they've torn down most of the houses. In 1968 you could rent a room around here for \$10 a week and now you'd be lucky if you could find a room for \$25. People around here have to double up, sleep on the floor. . . ."

For the middle class—both black and white—there are special new tensions in living in Washington. Many of these whites, who tend to be clustered west of Rock Creek Park, resent what they see as the probusiness orientation of the city's predominantly black government. And the middle class blacks throughout the city resent what they see as a new white threat to move in and take over political control of Washington.

At the same time, those in a position to make money from what is happening seem delighted with the city today.

"This may sound like rhetoric, but I don't think we've even begun to see what this city's going to look like in the next 3 to 5 to 10 years," said Robert Linowes, white, president of the conservative Metropolitan Washington Board of Trade, the city's powerful businessmen's association. "Its really just in the throes of beginning."

Linowes said that in the next decade the District will be solidly middle and upper class, racially balanced, and with the poor having been pushed into the suburbs. The suburbs, he thinks, will inherit the problems—including that of crime—that the city suffered from for so long.

Linowes was for more than a decade one of suburban Maryland's most influential zoning and real estate attorneys. He made his mark and his fortune there, never giving a moment's thought to the city.

But four years ago, in what was

were able to talk. We both saw the same problems: housing, jobs, economic development, the tax burden. And we both saw them the same way."

Barry, a large, powerful-appearing man, has a reputation around town as a former "street dude." Ten years ago he was director of Pride, Inc., a federally funded job training program. Today he is chairman of the Finance Committee of the City Council. Last week, dressed in a dark business suit, he sat in his District Building office and said:

"I'm just as outspoken now (as 10 years ago) . . . When I was not in government I could advocate in a different way. Now I must advocate and legislate, and that's a different role."

Barry said there is now in Washington "a different mood, different times," and that perhaps nothing is more characteristic of this than the sense that people just won't turn out in great numbers anymore for a street demonstration.

"Now people are talking about jobs and housing," he said.

Ten years ago this week, Washington was an occupied city. The statistics were the statistics of war and revolution: 11,000 troops guarding the city; 12 killed and more than 1,000 injured; thousands arrested, hundreds of buildings burned out and devastated; damage in the tens of millions of dollars.

Now the city seems calm by comparison with the tense atmosphere of 1968. The elected black officials seem conservative, a far cry from the militants of those times. Culture has come to the city with a capital C, including the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, a huge national project, opened in 1971.

Yet many gnawing social and economic problems remain.

Although many blacks have prospered here in the past decade, statistics indicate how limited that prosperity has been. The 5,000 minority-owned businesses here constitute about a third of the total, but for the most part they are "Mom and Pop" operations with no paid employees, all of them together grossing less than \$200 million a year or less than 3 percent of gross receipts for all business in the city.

While census figures for 1968 and 1975 show that working class poor people—those with incomes below the official federal poverty income level—dropped from 123,000 to 86,500 during that period, the figures may be deceptive because many of those dropped from the list of working poor simply became welfare cases.

In the decade between the riots and today, the percentage of the city's population on welfare rose dramatically from 4 to 14 percent. John Jacobs, executive director of the Washington Urban League, said last week there are about 52,000 unemployed adults and 29,000 unemployed teen-

seen in real estate circles as a dramatic move, he opened an office in downtown Washington. He said he did so because he sensed the beginnings of the new inner-city real estate boom and, at the same time, a softening in attitudes among former militants who had risen to positions of power in the city government.

One day during that period, Linowes had a drink with former black activist and present-day mayoral candidate Marion Barry. "I said to him, 'If someone told me six months ago I'd be having a drink with you, I'd have said they were crazy.' . . . We

agers between the ages of 16 and 19 in the city.

The renaissance in housing rehabilitation within the city has so far not been accompanied by much growth in the city's commercial retail outlets—traditionally an area of employment for low income workers.

People are moving out of the city—largely middle class blacks seeking a better life in the suburbs, and some poor blacks. While the city's population fell sharply from 1970 to 1975, according to census data, the white population of the District increased in 1976 for the first time in a quarter of a century, according to D.C. government estimates.

Meanwhile, the black population continued to decline—a trend that started in 1973—and now stands at about 538,800, according to recent city estimates.

Walter E. Washington had been appointed mayor of the city by Lyndon Johnson just five months before Dr. King was assassinated. After the riots, with the city in shambles, the mayor set about the task of rebuilding. Today, as he prepares to run for reelection Walter Washington is first among those who see dramatic improvements in the city and a rosy future.

"We've come from one of the worst hours of the nation and this city to where the dreams and urban goals (of Dr. King) are being realized," said the mayor in an interview in his District Building office. "... I've seen a transformation from (the past) to a new spirit and a new day with concrete opportunities."

He spoke of "bringing people together" racially as his greatest achievement, claiming that, "Race relations are far better" than they were. "You still have some tension but for the most part people are working within the system to get things done."

The mayor spoke of how he had set about removing the "symbols" of repression in the black community, such as certain hated police stations. He told how he changed the racial composition of the police force from 26 to 47 percent black, noting that 10 years ago he couldn't have appointed black police and fire chiefs as he has just done because, "You'd have people feeling they weren't protected. You don't have that any more."

Walter Washington said he believes that the great rage of blacks a decade ago "has been tempered" in large part because of the new outlets that politics here now provide. Many former activists, he said, have gone into "responsible positions in government and commerce . . . from simply protesting to constructive participation in the process"

Despite the many acknowledged problems with the city's schools, the mayor claims credit for "transforming" them—at least in the

sense that some of the old, rundown schools, "symbols of second-class citizenship," have been replaced by modern ones.

And the mayor said he believes that the "climate of confidence" that he has created "undergirds the (economic) resurgence of the city. It's called resurgence, boom, a lot of things. Whatever it's called, people want to come back and live in the city . . ."

His two major opponents, City Council Chairman Sterling Tucker and Councilman Barry, seem to be preparing their strongest attacks against the mayor around traditional political charges that his administration has been inefficient and unimaginative. They are not making radical sounds.

Even Douglas Moore, the leading candidate for council chairman and who has frightened businessmen in the city with a militant rhetoric that advocates social programs for the poor, supports Walter Washington for mayor. Moore describes him as "a man of integrity . . . the old water buffalo" being encircled by "two young

While Moore supports the mayor, the mayor himself did not speak much in his interview about the problems of the poor although he was asked about them. There are "so many civic organizations and government organizations to help them," the mayor said.

Moore, on the other hand, said he thinks young unemployed blacks continue to be a "powder keg in this city." Moore said that "one thing that seems to be emerging that I didn't see in 1968 are some class cleavages which means that the black masses see themselves separated from the black bourgeoisie."

Ten years ago Sterling Tucker, a short, intense man, was executive director of the Washington Urban League, an organization that seeks increased employment opportunities for blacks.

During an interview last week Tucker went out of his way to show he was probusiness. He criticized rent control and the proposed speculator's tax as being "negative" and "like fingers in the dike."

"We need a planning process to get at the rent issue—housing for all income groups," he said. "... We need to have a comprehensive plan, to get rid of business disincentives." He said that by bringing business into the city, the government can lower the unemployment rate.

Arthur Cotton Moore, a sixth-generation white Washingtonian and a successful architect who designed the Canal Square and Foundry retail malls in Georgetown, said in an interview recently that he always had faith in the ability of this city to resurrect itself after the riots.

In 1971, Moore tried to get a shopping mall project started at 14th

Street and Park Road NW, one of the three major areas of the city left threemajor areas of the city left burned out and desolate by the riots three years earlier.

"There was tremendous chaos at the District and federal government levels trying to get the idea moving," Moore said. Investor fear and strong community opposition also stymied the project, he added.

"The community would be more receptive to the idea now," Moore said. "Before it was a time of confrontation."

Moore said he doesn't know if the city will in the future have housing for the poor. "They have extremely marginal resources. They have nothing to bargain with."

James G. Banks, former top city housing official and now vice president of the Washington Board of Realtors, has been intimately involved in pushing for development of new town house clusters for the middle class in the section of the city where he grew up—Anacostia.

While working as an assistant to Mayor Washington for housing programs in 1969, Banks and then-City Council Chairman Gilbert Hahn, developed a housing plan for Anacostia which was aimed at halting continued construction of large, low-rent apartment buildings. By the early 1970s, after zoning changes, development money which had been blocked in the suburbs by growth moratoriums began to trickle into Anacostia, Banks said.

"Those zoning changes and the desire for developers for areas to invest in set the motion of change in Southeast," Banks said. "Anacostia now has a (new) town house surge."

Other city policies, according to Banks, have also contributed to the District's soaring real estate values.

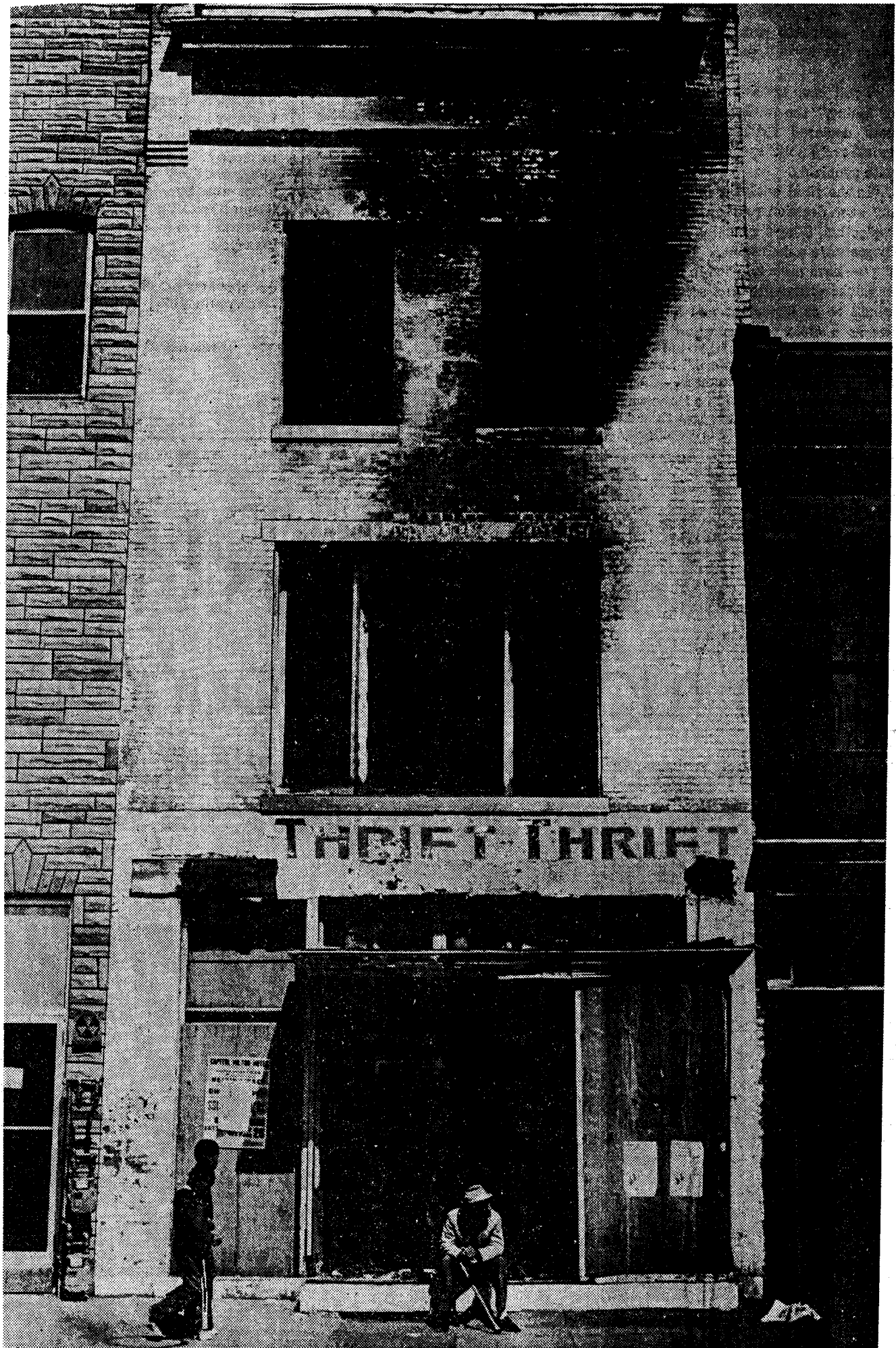
Before 1972, Banks said, many single family homes were rented but with the imposition of rent control a few years later, owners began to sell. "Rent control precipitated a selling boom and you now have owner-occupied single family dwellings where you had a lot of renters before."

As housing in the District spirals out of reach of the poor the city "certainly will be a helluva lot more middle class than it has been," Banks added.

As middle class people move into formerly low income neighborhoods, the transition is not always easy.

Early last month, a young white man who describes himself as a liberal, moved into the 1700 block of Seaton Street, which only three years ago had been a slum. He moved to a newly renovated house from his far upper Northwest Washington white middle class neighborhood, he said because he had felt isolated from the city.

Seaton Street, bounded by Florida



By James A. Parcell—The Washington Post

A burned-out shop on H Street NE is one of scores of such scarred remnants of the riots here 10 years ago.

Avenue and 17th Street just on block north of U Street, was the scene of an intense year long fight by low income families fighting eviction by developers who bought their homes and prepared to renovate them for resale. The nine low income families raised down payment money at community fundraisers and won a legal battle with the new owners that permitted them to buy the houses but other houses on the block were sold to newcomers.

The man, who asked not to be identified, said he moved to Seaton Street because he liked the ethnic and class diversity on the block. But he is fearful that other whites and even middle class blacks may follow.

"Here I am, a white person, moving in because I like diversity but if every other white person does the same this neighborhood will become homogeneous," he said. "There were already several professional blacks here when I moved in, so its possible this street will remain ethnically mixed but all middle class. That'll be too bad."

Having grown up in the mainly white, middle class community of Pasadena, Calif., he said he had only read about people who lived in the inner cities before moving to Washington nine years ago. "Now that spring is here people are beginning to sit on their stoops and the kids are playing stickball in the street. That's nice, it creates a sense of community."

"Yes," he continued, "it's not going to be easy for all of us on this street to get to know each other. So far only the other newcomers like myself have introduced themselves to me.

"No, I haven't introduced myself to the old timers on the block," he continued. "I don't want to be the new whitey on the block trying to impose himself on people."

Three blocks east of Seaton Street in the 1800 block of California, Yves Savain, who is black and middle class, lives in the condominium apartment he bought a year ago after moving into town from Bowie. Now he is trying to sell it.

When Savain and his brother Roger brought separate apartments in the same building for \$30,000 each last year, they intended to stay. Roger Savain sold his apartment recently for \$60,000 and Yves, who has decided to move to New York, is asking the same price.

"This is going to be an all white neighborhood in time," Yves Savain said. "Between my brother and me, we've seen 50 whites (looking at their apartments) and no blacks."

While the changing inner-city may seem attractive to many middle class whites, many older Washingtonians and a sprinkling of disillusioned liberals still prefer the mostly white neighborhoods of the city west of Rock Creek Park.

"I've seen quite a deterioration in

city services over the years," said M. J. Eisman, a retired pharmacist who has lived in the city since 1934 when Washington was a rigidly segregated city. Eisman and his wife live just west of Wisconsin Avenue in the predominantly white Friendship Heights area. "... There's a distinct disrespect for the needs of the people. I don't think this (city) administration is as efficient as when Congress was running things."

Eisman believes that home rule has not worked. Living in an area near the Maryland line that has been rapidly built up with huge stores like Nieman-Marcus and where more development is planned, Eisman also thinks the city government is "turning away from the individual citizen and toward business." A member of his Neighborhood Advisory Commission, he believes that the voices from his neighborhood are not being heard downtown in the District Building.

The most important city service that Eisman feels has slipped is police protection. "It's impossible not to feel apprehensive when you walk outside at night," he said.

"It was a lovely city when we moved here," said his wife. "... Now I couldn't walk up to the corner at night. It has changed."

There's a racial side to the frustration the Eismans feel, too. As Mrs. Eisman put it, "I feel like a minority ... I guess it's prejudicial. It seems like the whites are the minority now, and they're getting the shaft."

Eisman said he has been a liberal "about a lot of things. Blacks: I like them, I feel free to invite them into my house. But there is a distinct element that's responsible for the increase of crime. You walk along (nearby streets) and the trash is unbelievable. I've seen (blacks) throw things out of cars."

"I've seen whites do it, too," his wife put in.

The Eismans said they have watched the city's schools decline. "I don't feel education should be downgraded to meet the requirements of a minority," Eisman said.

They criticized welfare recipients; as a pharmacist, Eisman said he had often observed these recipients cash their welfare checks and use the money to buy liquor. And they criticized affirmative action programs, which they said have gone too far.

Mary Rose Cooke began teaching at Anacostia High School in 1969 when "everything was an issue" among her students. "They had a sense of themselves and challenged me as a white, as a teacher and as a liberal."

In the intervening nine years her students have changed, she said, and she has also. "The kids at (Anacostia High School) today accept anything you tell them," she said. "They're more docile, more naive."

Before she moved two years ago to

her present home on Morrison Street NW in a mainly white, middle-class neighborhood near Chevy Chase Circle, Cooke said she lived on Capitol Hill.

"I thought I would like living an integrated life but Capitol Hill was a hassle," she said. "I woke up one morning and man was standing at the foot of my bed carrying out the TV. That was too much.

"I like Morrison Street where the living is easy," she said. "I'm not hassled here. I can go out and not worry about the door being locked."

Cooke said that outside of her

teaching, she is not involved in what happens in the District. "I live in a microcosm (of the city) not much of which is integrated. People are not really integrated socially."

A white Friendship Heights resident, Sandy Linden, complained that "living up here in this section is total isolation for me because I never see black people."

Linden said her daughter's social life is more integrated than her own. Her daughter attends a nearby private school that has more black students than white. The black students, she said, include children of Washington's black middle class, some inner-city children, and embassy children. "My daughter had one or two of her (black) friends up here to play—and you really see the neighbors look," said Linden.

Many of the city's black middle class, while living in mainly all-black neighborhoods, send their children to integrated private schools maintaining the drive of upward mobility through quality education. They are also apprehensive about whites moving back into the city, fearful they will lose political power.

Albert and Carolyn Preston live in the mainly black middle class Bunker Hill Northeast Washington area near Eastern Avenue. "Living out here is like living in another city," said Mrs. Preston.

Both work in the city's school system. Albert Preston is a teacher at Sousa Junior High School in Southeast and Mrs. Preston is principal of Bunker Hill Elementary School.

The Prestons' have two boys, ages 15 and 8. The eldest has been in private school for the past four years. The Prestons react defensively when asked about that. "That's because people say all public school teachers send their children to private school," Prestons said.

Their oldest boy, Mrs. Preston said, was sent to St. John's College High School, which is run as a military academy, "because he needs discipline to learn; he does very well with strict

we have in the back and wanted to buy the backyard to build a house on it. But we're not selling."

After college, an Army stint and five years as an assistant U.S. attorney, Thomas H. Queen is now a downtown Washington lawyer who says he "works all the time." In 1973, Queen, a bachelor, bought a house in one of Anacostia's middle class enclaves south of Pennsylvania Avenue.

"I moved into the house because I liked the neighborhood," Queen said. "It's quiet, like being in the country."

"Washington is a funny place," Queen said when asked whether he felt the city was integrated. "Blacks and whites can work together, side by side, but they live in different societies."

"I socialize in black middle-class society, with people I've known all my life and in an integrated society, the latter made up of lawyers, people I've met professionally."

Indeed, class has supplanted race as the social issue in the minds of many.

"All of a sudden we're faced with the stark reality of class differences of people, regardless of race, and it's a tougher nut to crack because when you begin to deal with class differences you begin to tamper with the basic structure of a society," said William Barr, a top official in the city's vast social welfare agency, the Department of Human Resources.

"The renovation is bringing back the best of urban life," he said, "but the bad thing is that it's bringing a harder life for the underclass of people. It's harder and harder even for the middle class. Young people, regardless of race, have no hope of (being able to afford) a house."

While the city is becoming more and more "exciting" from many points of view, Barr said, "If you want to preserve a good mix of people in Washington, how do you do that and preserve free enterprise?" He said that rent control and other government economic controls may be necessary to preserve a mixture of different types and classes of people in the city.

Barr said he thinks there is still racism here but "you have to dig deep to find it." Enough progress has been made that middle class blacks no longer feel the pressures they did 10 years ago.

Barr said that many black middle-class persons have "attitudes toward poor people that make you forget about the color of the skin. Black middle-class communities are the same as white. They don't make a distinction of brotherhood. They just don't want (poor people) in the neighborhood."

One Great Society program, covered by the media in 1967 with great hoopla and fanfare was a \$3.5 million Labor Department-funded program

teachers."

The Prestons built their home in the 3800 block of 26th Street NE in 1967 when the community was all black. Today they are concerned about changes they have noticed in the neighborhood and the pressure they have been under from developers to sell their house.

"This section is turning white very quietly," said Mrs. Preston. "I now notice five adult whites standing at the bus stop down the street every morning. That has only happened in the past year."

"And for the past three years people have been calling us asking us to sell our house," she continued. "One man even knew the amount of land

here, Pride, Inc. It was the brainchild of mayoral candidate Barry and Mary Treadwell, his former wife and one-time assistant in the local chapter of the black militant Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee.

In its first year, Pride had 1,000 unemployed ghetto youths working at street cleaning, rodent control and landscaping. Today it operates on a \$1 million budget training 200 men and women in housing renovation, auto mechanical repair, computer operation and for the depressed employment market of retail store sales.

Washington Post researcher Regina Fraind also contributed to this article.