What readers say about the biography of Marvin Gilmore:

"There are many heroes in the story of Boston's remarkable revival, and one of them is Marvin Gilmore. In fact, his story should be an inspiration to every young person in this country who wants to do great things. A black kid from Cambridge, he overcame unbelievable obstacles in a racist America to succeed in business and, more importantly, as a tireless and relentless civic leader. He is also an inspiration to those of us who are approaching old age – still working, still pushing, still making the world a better place as he celebrates his 90th birthday."

- *Michael Dukakis, twice Governor of Massachusetts (1975-1979, 1983-1991) and the 1988 Democratic nominee for President of the United States*

"When you read this book about Marvin Gilmore you will learn a lot about history, a lot about Marvin Gilmore, and a lot about the progress that has been made in race relations. This book is important and should be read by everyone. You will be inspired and impressed by the life of Marvin Gilmore – an Army veteran, a community organizer, a businessman, a faithful and loyal citizen of Cambridge. I recommend this book with great enthusiasm."

- *Charles J. Ogletree, Jr., Jesse Climenko Professor of Law, Harvard Law School, and Founding & Executive Director, Charles Hamilton Houston Institute for Race & Justice*

"This book brings to life the qualities that make Marvin Gilmore a great citizen. Those of us who know and work with Marvin witness daily his labors to promote racial harmony and to heal communities. Marvin understands that racial harmony is underpinned by socio-economic success, and this book shows how Marvin learned that truth. It also showed me where Marvin got his guts and grit, his vision and his leadership. *Find the money,* Marvin says. *Create jobs… Nurture communities... Believe in the unbelievable...* Wonderful anecdotes that show how Marvin became Marvin."

- *Jeanette Clough, President and CEO, Mt. Auburn Hospital*

MARVIN GILMORE:

Crusader for Freedom

A Legacy of Battling Discrimination & Building Jobs

World War II Black Hero-Soldier, Entrepreneur, Civil Rights Activist, Musician, Community Builder and Defender

Paul Katzeff

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Chapter 12

Community Leader

By the early 1970s, Marvin had become a perpetual motion machine.

In a typical day he combined work for state and city boards wrestling with weighty issues of housing for the poor, block busting, and racial harmony. He also tackled tasks for the Boston branch of the NAACP. He performed his duties as vice chairman of the board of directors of Unity Bank & Trust. He was director of business development and marketing of the bank. In addition, he had his real estate business to run, a full-time obligation.

Overseeing the Western Front was another full-time responsibility. A magazine profile showed how Marvin juggled all of these responsibilities.[265] The profile appeared some years later, but generally Marvin's daily routine had not changed. With the writer shadowing him, Marvin's day began as usual at 4 a.m. after three hours sleep. Tasks related to his businesses and public-service and racial justice groups consumed his morning and early afternoon. The Front grabbed hold of his schedule the rest of the day and wouldn't let go.

Throughout the day, Marvin was a one-man band – banker, property investor and manager, civic activist, club impresario. In his red Jaguar sports XJ6, he crisscrossed Cambridge and Boston, attending meetings, talking with business associates, pow-wowing with politicians.

The pace only quickened as the day advanced, leaving Marvin less and less time to square away preparations for that night's show at the Front. He returned a phone call to the jazz recordings buyer for the Boston store of Towers Records, then a huge national retail chain, to negotiate a promotional arrangement for pianist Cecil Taylor, who was performing that night. He drove across the city to a former shoe factory that he had helped redevelop into professional office condominiums and an incubator for new start-up businesses. He drove back across town to his night club, where he supervised the delivery of a piano through a wide upstairs back

door, keeping a nervous eye on the instrument as it swung through the sky, tethered to the arm of a 50-ton crane.

He drove across the Charles River to a hotel to check in on Taylor, who would make magic with that piano. In his car again heading back across the river, Marvin made the first of several phone calls to his limousine service driver. Marvin didn't need a lift – he was fine transporting himself. It was Taylor he was concerned about. The driver was due to pick up Taylor shortly, but he wasn't waiting outside the hotel and he had not checked in with Marvin. Marvin suspected the driver and his paramour had slipped away to some love nest, which meant Taylor would need alternative conveyance. One more task piled onto Marvin. But first he was back at his club, 40 minutes before Taylor's first set was scheduled to begin at 8 p.m. He hopped on stage and fingered a brief melody to hear for himself if the piano had survived its airlift into the club.

Then Marvin ran back to his Jaguar and hustled downtown to the Back Bay Sheraton to make an appearance at a dinner board meeting of the Metropolitan Area Planning Council, a regional agency focused largely on economic development, housing, transportation, public safety, and safeguarding natural resources. When he was done with that, he hurriedly returned to the Front. He bounced upstairs, where he took a seat at the end of the bar. From there, he enjoyed Taylor's music and oversaw his club. When "Shirt," lead singer of the I-Tones, a popular reggae band that often plays the club, walked by, the men exchanged warm greetings.

During a break between sets, Marvin huddled with some of his staff, then took a phone call. The call was from a local politician, inviting him to a meeting – *right now* – at the Middle East Restaurant in nearby Central Square. So once again Marvin hopped into his car, keyed the engine to life, and drove to a back-room rendezvous. The sit-down was with Mel King, who was a longtime activist, one-time Boston mayoral candidate, and then instructor in MIT's urban studies program. Marvin and King were not on the best of terms, having drifted apart over some philosophical differences, but on this night King was offering to bury the hatchet if Marvin would run a fundraiser for him at the Western Front.

Marvin returned to his club a little after one in the morning, shortly after the end of Taylor's second set, as smiling patrons were reluctantly departing the Front for the night.

After a brief rest at home, Marvin would start the cycle again the next day. One key to being able to maintain this schedule was Marvin's ability to get by on just three or four hours sleep a night. "I've always been able to do that," he once said.

With small variations, Marvin generally had been following a similar daily schedule for years. From time to time, a new organization worked its way into Marvin's daily lineup. He always seemed to be adding more organizations than subtracting. His overflowing plate of activities was – and still is – a result of ceaseless networking. With each new organization that he joins, he becomes even more attractive to more suitors from additional corporations, charities, and civic boards.

In 1971, one such newcomer was the Roxbury Children's Service. Marvin became assistant executive director. "I was working at the bank. One night at a meeting with Roxbury Children's Services, they explained that they wanted a new building on Dale Street [in Boston]. I helped them get the building. Next thing I knew, they voted me in as second in command," Marvin said.

Marvin Joins the CDC of Boston

Two years later, the CDC was looking for an executive director. "My name came up in community discussions," Marvin said. "People knew me through Roxbury Children's Services and through the bank. The CDC interviewed me three times. The third time I said I'm willing to take this, but I want full control. If you can't give me that, you shouldn't hire me."

The CDC had been born not long before that. It was created in 1969 as part of the federal Model Cities Program. Overseen by the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Model Cities initiative was part of campaign to reverse the deterioration of inner-city businesses and neighborhoods. Its goal was to save jobs, which would save neighborhoods.

Boston's CDC was the economic development arm of Boston's Model Cities Program. But the CDC was in big trouble by the time the organization was interviewing Marvin for its presidency. President Richard Nixon was in the process of dismantling the Model Cities Program. Nixon, a fiscal conservative, saw the Program as an expensive and wasteful boondoggle that was not producing its intended results.

Resistance to ending the program came from bureaucrats who didn't want to be cut off from Model Cities funding they were already receiving.[266] But many big-city politicians, whether they were liberals or conservatives, quickly grasped that Nixon was aiming to change how money was spent for urban community development, not end it. And, more important to local officials, Nixon's reforms would give them more control over those federal dollars.[267] So an army of local politicians nationwide supported pulling the plug on Model Cities.

By 1973 the directors of the Boston CDC knew that the end was near for the program that had given birth to their organization. That year Nixon began a moratorium on funding for Model Cities and related federal programs. The following year congress would axe the Model Cities Program outright.[268] What the CDC trustees did not know for sure in 1973 was what the future held. How could they pursue their mission of helping Boston's inner city? Yes, they could see that there would still be federal dollars for community development. But they lacked a crystal ball that could show how their organization might avail itself of new funding. They had no roadmap. No one did.

So at this moment when they were seeking a new chief executive, they asked candidates to explain how they would operate. Interviews would last for several months.

"As part of the interview process, the CDC wanted to know where I would take the CDC," Marvin said. "They wanted me to talk with neighborhood boards [which the CDC was obligated to consult]. And they wanted to know if I would take care of their friends. I told them I would talk with the neighborhood boards, which I did. I told them the CDC would help them, not hurt them, if I became president. And I told the CDC I would stop people from draining its blood. I demanded the freedom to do what needed to be done. And one of the important things I asked them was this. I asked the board if they would authorize me to keep the CDC charter, which authorized its continued existence even if its parent program, the Model Cities Program, died or was closed. And I could see that Nixon was going to do that."

The way this CDC was set up, the decision to let the CDC stay in existence would also be up to the mayor of Boston.

Marvin felt his appearance before the neighborhood board – a consultative body required by the Model Cities Program – went well. A

week after his third interview with the CDC itself, Marvin was offered the CDC post, which at that time was titled general manager.[269]

"I fired most of the staff," he said. Now Marvin had to figure out what the CDC could do next.

A New Direction for the CDC

Marvin studied other CDCs, to see what lessons he could learn. He looked at other regional CDCs. And after retaining a knowledgeable consultant named Andrew Bennett, he visited CDCs across the country. "I looked at a CDC in Watts [a black neighborhood in Los Angeles], and I went to Chicago," Marvin said. "I saw that Mayor [Richard] Daley in Chicago had authorized their CDC to set up an industrial park. I asked him if he thought I could develop an industrial park in Boston. He said yes, but you'd have to deal with the politics."

After studying CDCs first-hand for a month, Marvin returned to Boston. Marvin began to oversee the Boston CDC's reorganization as an independent nonprofit economic development organization. Its focus shifted from making investments in local businesses – basically, giving loans to small businesses – to a broader, longer-range economic development strategy, one with an eye to creating an industrial park to spark job creation and business development in Roxbury, Boston's minority neighborhood.

Marvin even knew where this miracle should occur. A huge swath of barren land cut like a knife through the heart of Lower Roxbury, in an area stretching northwesterly roughly from today's Massachusetts Avenue exit off the Southeast Expressway to the Penn Central railroad right of way north of Tremont Street, near Ruggles Street. At its greatest expanse, this waste land would encompass nearly 200 acres.[270]

This open expanse was the corpse of the Southwest Corridor, land taken from largely African-American homes, businesses, and work places to build a highway to ease commuting into the city for suburbanites. But that highway plan had been killed in 1972 as a result of community opposition, in which Marvin had played a key role. What had not been flattened by planned demolition for the highway project had fallen into ruin when banks refused to invest in this no-man's land. Fires had added to the desolation.[271] Now Marvin saw a way to use that land so that it again played a nurturing role in this minority community. The CDC would

help develop it as an industrial park, hosting businesses that provided jobs to local blacks.

"You've got to have uptown as well as downtown in the city," Marvin told the *Boston Globe* years later. "There used to be an uptown here, but it was destroyed. Now it's being recreated."[272]

Eventually, this development would be called CrossTown Industrial Park.

But, just as Chicago's Mayor Daley had forewarned, Marvin had to find a way to persuade Boston's key politician, its mayor, to buy in. But how?

Marvin's attempts to pitch city of Boston planning agencies on helping the CDC lure manufacturing jobs to the city went nowhere. Manufacturing employment in Boston had plummeted in recent decades. City planners were convinced that the service economy was the city's best hope for the future. Marvin's vision, they thought, was a pipedream. An official of the Boston Redevelopment Authority told a panel meeting at Massachusetts Institute of Technology, "If you ever get any industry in there, I'll eat my shirt."[273]

Desperate for money to pay its own bills and small staff, pay for planning and feasibility studies, and to cover the costs of reaching out to potential tenants of any industrial park, Marvin scrambled for support.

A small foundation in Boston gave the CDC a small grant. "It was just enough to pay the secretaries," Marvin said. "I foregoed my own salary."

Nearly at the last moment, the Ford Foundation provided a $100,000 grant.

Still, those were mere stopgap measures. Marvin went to Washington, D.C., and won a $104,000 technical assistance grant from the Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration. But it came with a slipper string attached. The CDC had to persuade the city of Boston to match that money with a Community Development Block Grant.

The trouble was that Marvin could not get an audience with Boston Mayor Kevin White.

Marvin felt like a knight on horseback eager for a meeting with a mighty king, only to find himself locked outside the castle walls, barred from the inner court. "I tried for days to make an appointment," Marvin said. "But he wouldn't see me."

"I began to consider how to approach Mayor White," Marvin said. "What was his Achilles heel?"

Marvin finally hit on the idea of recruiting a key ally. "Kevin White's Achilles heel turned out to be Melnea Cass, the 'First Lady of Roxbury,'" Marvin said.

Melnea Cass was a civil rights dynamo. She was a tireless campaigner for better educational and economic opportunities for African-Americans in Boston. She was everywhere, working every which way. She joined well-known organizations such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). She founded several groups serving black working mothers. She helped unionize black railroad porters. She worked to assure Social Security and other benefits for black domestic workers. She helped black women register to vote and cast their first ballots after women received the franchise in 1920. She was a founder of Freedom House, a nonprofit advocacy organization for African-Americans in Boston. As her impact grew, so did her renown. She became an icon of Boston's black community. In 1950 she was the only woman appointed by Boston Mayor John Hynes as a charter member of the anti-poverty agency Action for Boston Community Development (ABCD). In 1966 the governor declared May 22 Melnea Cass Day to honor her on her 70th birthday and many years of volunteerism. More than 2,000 helped her celebrate.[274]

Best of all for Marvin, he knew Mrs. Cass from her service to the NAACP. She had been president of the Boston branch from 1962 to 1964, not that many years prior to Marvin's appointment as general manager of the CDC. He contacted her.

"Kevin [White] loved her," Marvin said. "I told Mrs. Cass what I wanted to do. She loved it. She said she would help by arranging a meeting with the mayor.

"We met White in the mayor's office. Mrs. Cass told the mayor she wanted him to do something for her boy – me – who was there to help poor citizens. So White agreed to let me keep the [charter]. He was looking for some cover anyway, because the Feds had started investigating White's use of Model Cities money."

White also agreed to match the federal Economic Development Administration funds.

Marvin still faced the arduous task of persuading potential tenants to sign on. He was trying to create something out of nothing, filling vacant

lots with real businesses that would employ inner-city residents. But his pitches to corporations had to overcome the off-putting fact that the city, not Marvin's CDC, owned the land that Marvin was proposing as new business sites. The city also controlled the review and approval processes. Furthermore, even after Mayor White himself agreed to support Marvin's vision, that did not change individual city planners' skepticism about luring manufacturing to the city. It remained hard for Marvin to get troops in the planning trenches to contribute needed work.[275]

But Marvin was a man with only one gear – forward. He had bled for his country during the charge into Germany. He had defied crackers in the Army. Unarmed, he had stared down gun-toting racists in Jackson, Mississippi. He was not about to abandon this campaign for Roxbury.

Landing a Technology Giant

Still, there was no denying how difficult the goal was. Like the mythological hero Hercules grappling with his epic tasks, Marvin faced a seemingly impossible set of challenges in his campaign to solve the CDC's riddle. He had enlisted the aid of Melnea Cass, secured a green light from Mayor White, and won grants from the Ford Foundation and Economic Development Administration as well as a Community Development Block Grant.

But time was running out. It was already 1976. He needed to complete a development that would generate jobs for Boston's blacks as well as provide the CDC with an ongoing source of income so it could focus on its mission, not just on survival.

Marvin kept knocking on doors. One of those belonged to Digital Equipment Corporation. Also known as DEC and Digital, in the 1970s the fortunes of the Maynard, Massachusetts-based manufacturer of minicomputers were skyrocketing. It was becoming a giant in the computer industry.[276] At its peak in 1988, Digital would have a then-colossal $11.5 billion in annual revenues and a huge market capitalization, making it the second largest computer company in the world, trailing only International Business Machines.[277]

In 1976, as Marvin tried to blaze a new life path for the CDC, Digital was still expanding and the company was on the lookout for advantageous manufacturing sites. Marvin was offering that very thing: a new low-cost factory site. In addition, he was offering a location in the city of Boston,

near a large pool of motivated labor, which was also close to the education centers of Boston and Cambridge. Universities like Harvard and MIT produced valuable research as well as fresh yearly crops of skilled young technical talent. It was a natural marriage. But that alone could not assure that a wedding would take place.

In fact Marvin's efforts to seal the deal with Digital were not succeeding. Digital president Kenneth Olsen as always had many irons in the fire. Why focus on this particular one? The last time a similar opportunity had come up, just a few years earlier, he had found many of Boston's black leaders more interested in demonizing corporations than in landing jobs for their community. He had found no such hostility in a far-more-welcoming Springfield, Massachusetts, so that's where Digital had opened its first inner-city plant anywhere, in 1972. By the time Marvin was trying to persuade Olsen that Roxbury was ready too, Digital employed 800 to 900 mostly black and Puerto Rican workers in Springfield.[278]

There were additional reasons that Olsen was proving to be a hard sell. For one, there was the complexity of the deal. The CDC did not own the land that Marvin had dangled like bait in front of this biggest of corporate fish. The Economic Development and Industrial Corp., then Boston's lead hands-on economic development arm, owned most of the land (the state owned some parcels[279]), had power of eminent domain to take and assemble parcels, and was empowered to borrow money through revenue bonds.[280] As a result of the deal with Boston that Marvin had arranged, leveraging the respect that Mayor White had for Melnea Cass, the EDIC had leased the land to the CDC. Marvin and the CDC would do all of the heavy lifting, trying to create development deals. They would have the satisfaction of any successes. Mayor White could take the political credit since his EDIC owned the land.

But what assurance did Olsen have that Marvin could make this happen? Where was his clout? In the face of so many doubts, it was imperative for Olsen like any top executive to concentrate on other Digital business, opportunities that had valuable prospects of reaching fruition.

Marvin knew he was at an impasse. The question was how to break this logjam?

Marvin turned to a friend he had made a decade earlier, Mike Dukakis. Back in the Sixties, Dukakis had been the state rep from the affluent, almost entirely white Boston suburb of Brookline. They had spent

hours together in automobiles, crossing the state, exchanging ideas about how to provide housing to the poor, housing that would not turn into Dickensian slums. Marvin had earned the respect of the young state representative. And now that young public servant was Governor of the Commonwealth. Time for another phone call.

Marvin called Dukakis, explained the situation, and asked for the governor's aid. Understanding the potential reward for Boston and for the men and women who could end up as Digital employees, Dukakis contacted Olsen and advocated on behalf of the industrial development project in Roxbury.

That answered some of Olsen's key questions. Marvin had clout. He had the contacts necessary to facilitate the development and other approvals Digital would need. Boston's mayoral administration was onboard. And Marvin was willing to spend valuable political capital to help bring Digital jobs to Roxbury.

Olsen gave the go-ahead. When he decided the project made sense for his company, a special coordinating team under the Boston Redevelopment Authority's deputy director for development Stewart Forbes was assembled to line up the city's ducks and to provide a single key contact city planning, zoning, and regulatory issues.[281]

Forbes told the *Boston Globe,* "Marvin had trouble because he was promoting something over which he did not have complete control. There were inherent tensions in the roles different parties had to play."[282]

But those tensions and myriad challenges were resolved. Ground was broken on September 26, 1978, and in 1980 Digital opened its 62,000-square-foot computer keyboard assembly factory. Officially, the CDC and the Economic Development and Industrial Corporation, were co-developers.

When it opened, the keyboard plant employed 300 people. Nearly 70% lived within seven miles of the facility. Over 50% of the plant's employees were minorities. The facility's general contractor, John B. Cruz Construction, was minority owned. So was the architectural design firm, Stull & Lee. Digital was the first major occupant of CrossTown Industrial Park.

Kenneth Olsen, who was famous for avoiding the limelight and staying out of politics, described the Boston black community's new open-arms attitude as a "miracle."[283] Marvin was the mastermind behind that

new stance. At the factory's opening ceremony, Marvin told a crowd of dignitaries including the governor and mayor, "I wore out four sets of tires going back and forth and around town."

Years later Marvin said, "For our goal of encouraging hiring from within the black community, that was Mission Accomplished," Marvin said.

CrossTown's Evolution

Digital's decision to build a factory served as a giant advertisement for CrossTown Industrial Park, which was the CDC's pet project. Less than a year after Digital broke ground, medical and dental supply manufacturer Healthco agreed to build a 166,000-square-foot building – more than two and a half times bigger than the Digital plant – in the Park.[284] The facility would provide jobs to 330 people.[285]

That deal did not come to fruition, but it showed how attractive CrossTown had become.

Nearby, after trying to find someone interested in developing the old Baltimore Brush Building at 801 Albany Street, directly across the street from the Digital site, the CDC itself bought the 50,000-square-foot paintbrush factory in 1984. In the early 1900s the site had been a horse-carriage factory. The locale had also housed Hurley's Log Cabin, one of Boston's most famous saloons. It was a match made in whip-and-buggy heaven. *Industry* magazine reported, "For many years the Log Cabin provided the local workers with live entertainment and cold draft beer after those long hours at the factory."[286]

The purchase price was a modest $60,000. Still, the CDC was unable to secure a conventional bank loan for the acquisition because Boston's downtown banks largely ignored Roxbury.

Marvin's mother helped out. Lee Augusta Gilmore, who always scrimped to save pennies and nickels and dimes, reached into her purse and wrote a check for $65,000.

"She loaned that money to us because no bank in Boston would lend money for a vacant building to a nonprofit in a black neighborhood," Marvin said. Lee Augusta proved to be a shrewder judge of the CDC's prospects than the banks with their professional analysts. "She was right. The banks were wrong," Marvin said. "We repaid her in about a year."

When the CDC began to renovate the two factory buildings, the activity caught the eyes of nearby Boston University School of Medicine. Needing more space for its biomedical research, B.U. partnered with the CDC to plan and create a biotechnology facility at 801 Albany Street. B.U. occupied 90% of the structure on a lease than ran until 2014. CDC took the remainder of the address for its corporate offices.[287]

In the years that followed, Boston University developed other nearby parcels.[288] While those improvements were not part of CrossTown Industrial Park, they were part of the fulfillment of Marvin's dream. His vision, his goal, was that CrossTown would be a magnet for additional investments in and around the Southwest Corridor from entrepreneurs, businesses, and other organizations, boosting property values and creating jobs there and nearby.

That's exactly what happened, and it happened repeatedly. Two years before the renovated 801 Albany Street opened in 1989, Morgan Memorial Goodwill Industries opened a 104,000-square-foot headquarters in the Park itself. Morgan Memorial is a nonprofit that provides job training and placement services to people with disabilities. The charity's multi-use facility included office, industrial, and retail space. The building was developed by the CDC and the EDIC. "The facility now provides training and work programs for individuals with disabilities, programs that promote self-reliance for youth, and a recycled goods program," the CDC reports.

Morgan Memorial's new quarters enabled the charity to operate more effectively. One of the charity's key tasks is to teach job skills.

Marvin's efforts to spur economic advancement for the black community sometimes have paid dividends at the individual level too. His collaboration with Morgan Memorial, he says, helped lead to the appointment in 1989 of Deborah Jackson as the first black president and CEO of the Boston organization or any of its 165 independent sister affiliates in the U.S. and Canada. (Jackson is now president of Cambridge College.)

Jackson was not privy to Marvin's efforts on her behalf. "But I heard second-hand that he was an advocate and excited about my candidacy," Jackson said. "And I know what my appointment signaled about diversity."[289]

And Jackson says she is certainly not the only African-American to benefit from Marvin's support. "As our city of Boston has become more progressive and diverse in some ways, we should never lose sight of people who broke ground for all of us.… Marvin is in that group…. He is in a special, small group of mentors, advocates, and community leaders. And he did this while leading a nonprofit, the CDC, while he was also running private businesses. He is an amazing role model, and an amazing entrepreneur."

801 Albany Street was also the site of Boston University and biopharmaceutical company research, much of which sought cures or treatments for diseases that ail African-Americans, such as sickle cell anemia and thalassemia, two blood disorders. B.U. School of Dental Medicine faculty did research there on restorative dental materials. NitroMed developed a drug there in the 1990s for treatment of congestive heart failure in blacks. The address has also been home to and an incubator for a number of biopharma and biotech start-up companies that sought cutting-edge treatments.[290]

"The really key aspect, and it cannot be understated, is that Marvin has been a community partner," said William Gasper, who was associate vice president for financial and business affairs of Boston University medical campus. Gasper was the university's point person for its tenancy at 801 Albany Street. He added, "Boston University as an institution is here for the long haul. We've been in [Boston's] South End as a medical school and medical campus since the 1800s. So we've been here well over 150 years. We'll be here for the next 150 years. We'll be here 300 years from now.

"Our approach can often be long-term. What's been interesting working with Marvin – look at the name of the company. It is Community Development Corporation, and it is nonprofit. It's been focused on what's good for this area. How can we make jobs? How can we make this area better?

"Ours is not just a tenant-landlord relationship. We have been partners in this never-ending effort to improve our community, improve where we work, where we study, where people live.

"And B.U. and Marvin and the CDC have often joined together, whether on small or large initiatives, in support of one another in activities or initiatives that support or improve our community."[291]

As examples, Gasper cited a number of infrastructure projects in the area. Those may sound prosaic. But in the real world they are essential. Without the right underground wiring and plumbing and above-ground street work, no developer will invest in new research labs, offices, hotels, dormitories, apartments, factories, and so on. And infrastructure does not build itself. Some gets rejected. Infrastructure that gets built has survived a brutal gauntlet of public and political review. It often happens only after respected community figures – like Marvin and like Gasper – weigh-in and ask public authorities to greenlight the work.

Gasper also cited Marvin's support for additional developments, such as CrossTown Center, a hotel-office-parking garage complex which, among other things, makes it easier for people to visit and use Boston University's medical facilities. And he cited Marvin's support for the new Albany Fellows complex that provides housing for B.U. Medical School graduate students.[292]

Gasper's point is that those and other developments would not be possible – or would be many years in the future – if Marvin had not built a foundation for improvements in the CrossTown area, starting back in the 1970s.

Gasper said, "The immediate area is undergoing a renaissance, and Marvin has been there since the beginning."

Planting Seeds

Of course, in the real world not all businesses survive and thrive. In CrossTown Industrial Park, businesses have come and gone. After flying high, Digital is no more. Its site and adjacent property have since become redeveloped as CrossTown Center, which includes Boston's first majority black-owned national-chain hotel – possibly its first black-owned hotel, period.[293] CrossTown Center also features a parking garage, retail space, and two office complexes whose tenants include a variety of hospital and medical professionals.[294]

In that too, the CDC – and Marvin – succeeded.

The CDC has also been an ally of the Newmarket Business Association, encouraging redevelopment in the Newmarket Industrial District, an industrial zone just southeast of the Southwest Corridor. "The CDC took dilapidated Newmarket buildings and turned them into textbook examples of urban revitalization," Marvin said.

The CDC reach has even been felt in Cambridge, Marvin's hometown to this day. Through the Cambridge Enterprise Collaborative, a nonprofit run by Marvin, the CDC became the developer of the Cambridge Business Center. Once up and running, the Center provided office and incubator space at 432 Columbia Street. Before its renovation, the site had been the Hyde Athletic Shoe Building. The Collaborative purchased the old sneaker factory with a $1 million grant from the U.S. Department of Human Services.

"We did it with major support from Tip O'Neill," Marvin said, tipping his hat to Thomas P. O'Neill, Jr., the powerful Cambridge-born congressman who represented his home town's district a breathtaking 34 years, from January 3, 1953 until January 3, 1987, and served as Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives in the ninety-fifth through ninety-nine congresses.[295] "He orchestrated it. He did it for me."

The CDC of Boston also helps small businesses and start-up companies gain access to capital and business services they need to grow. The CDC of Boston does that by working with other community development corporations through the Community Business Network (CBN). The CBN also helps small businesses network with each other, form working relationships among themselves, and create partnerships with the overall business community.

The CDC of Boston has also conducted informational exchanges with businesses and developers in Canada, China, and South Africa. "We've been through a lot of the processes that those foreign organizations are encountering for the first time," Marvin said. "We can explain how we've learned to work with private businesses and government bodies to promote economic growth. These are lessons they can adapt for use back in their own homes."

Replacing the Southwest Corridor

On August 11, 1978, a hot summer Friday, U.S. Senator Edward W. Brooke – who in 1966 became the first African-American elected to the Senate since Reconstruction and the first ever elected by the direct ballot of a state's voters[296] – stood near an immense granite block wall along Columbus Avenue in Boston's largely black Roxbury. Painted on that wall behind Brooke, giant graffiti block letters shouted, "STOP I-95."[297]

The graffiti's anonymous artist could rest easily. The battle was won. Federal interstate highway 95, known locally as the Southwest Corridor, had been stopped, choked to death by a constrictor python of public opposition and waning political support. And now, in that unwanted eight-lane road's place, a huge new development was taking shape.

Instead of a single-purpose highway ramming its way through the community and ignoring the neighborhood's needs, a multidimensional concept was taking shape that would bring jobs to the area and provide mass transit to other jobs, services, and recreation nearby. This replacement project would include improved new housing, a community college, park-like outdoor public space, and a new local road. Before all was done, the undertaking would also lead to antidiscrimination changes in state and city of Boston minority hiring rules for construction projects.

And groundbreaking for the new Digital Equipment Corporation plant, part of the Crosstown Industrial Park that was a key segment of the Southwest Corridor, was just weeks away.

"It's a great day for the community," said Senator Brooke. Standing nearby were a host of public figures, including Brock Adams, U.S. Secretary of Transportation since January 23, 1997, who had come to Boston to deliver the first $44.6 million installment for the $607 million project. The federal share of that budget, $486 million, was the largest single award in the Department of Transportation's history.[298]

The mass transit and rail aspects alone were huge. The project would relocate the Orange Line of the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority's (MBTA) subway system to the Amtrak (successor to the Penn Central) right-of-way. It would hide the new part of the Orange Line below street level, and it would eliminate the old southwesterly portion of the Orange Line, which was elevated on steel stilts, straddling Boston's Washington Street. The elevated structure had deteriorated into an aged eyesore, which cast a baleful shadow on the street, sidewalk, businesses, and pedestrians below it. Old rail embankments – such as the stone one behind Brooke, Adams, and the other gathered dignitaries – that had become barriers between the black and white communities, reminiscent of walls imprisoning residents of an old-world Jewish ghetto, would be torn down. Nine new transit stations would be built here and elsewhere along the subway system. Three new railroad tracks would be introduced to the Amtrak right-of-way, for use by Amtrak and local commuter trains.

On this day that Senator Brooke led cheerleading along Columbus Avenue, an MBTA official said about 13,000 construction jobs would be created during the five years it was scheduled to take to build the subway and railroad portions of the new Southwest Corridor project, and that 2,500 permanent transportation jobs would follow.

It was a grand day indeed, and the public figures from Senator Brooke and Transportation Secretary Adams on down had every right to congratulate themselves. Savvy public servants one and all, every single one of the participants understood that the unprecedented, huge federal infusion of dollars was the grease that made all of the parts slip into place. Uncle Sam's checks made possible all of the benefits, including state funds, that were about to flow.

Marvin Gilmore, standing among the smiling celebrants, could take special pride. He had played a key role – perhaps *the* key role – in securing those federal dollars, even as he was hard at work persuading Digital Equipment to become the first tenant of CrossTown Industrial Park. Here's how it happened.

A Better Idea Emerges

Before CrossTown Industrial Park was born, the area was home to a living, breathing, largely African-American neighborhood. Unfortunately for its residents, businesses, and workers, it found itself in the crosshairs of an old-fashioned urban renewal project. Between 1966 and 1970 the Massachusetts Department of Public Works bulldozed the nearly 200-acre neighborhood flat to make room for the Southwest Expressway, an eight-lane, 10-mile, divided highway. That road would connect downtown Boston to Interstate Highway 95 in suburban Canton, Massachusetts.[299]

"Stop I-95" became the war cry of a United Nations of diverse people and groups from the neighborhood, elsewhere in Boston, and the suburbs as well as antihighway environmentalists, all of whom joined the battle to stop the Expressway, which became known as the Southwest Corridor.

Against mounting political opposition and skepticism about urban redevelopment projects that displaced poor people, Governor Francis Sargent declared a moratorium in 1970 on highway construction within Rte. 128, the state highway that loops around Greater Boston and is home to many technology companies among other types of businesses. After

having a major regional transportation analysis done, Gov. Sargent killed the Southwest Corridor outright in 1972.

But severe damage had already been done. One thousand thirty-nine families, almost all in Boston, had been forced from their homes as 416 residences were destroyed along with 156 businesses. The federal government had spent $38 million just to acquire the land.[300]

And now the question was what would be done with this vital, large tract of urban land, strategically located close to downtown Boston and the Mission Hill, Back Bay, South End, Roxbury, and Dorchester neighborhoods? It was blessed with rail and mass transit links. It was adjacent to the crucial Southeast Expressway. It was not far from the Massachusetts Turnpike. Its next-door neighbors included Boston City Hospital and Boston University Medical Center Hospital.

The state formed the Southwest Corridor Land Development Coordinator's Office, headed by Anthony Pangaro, to guide planning and development. When local groups didn't like something that was being run up the proverbial flag pole, even the smallest group got a larger voice by virtue of being in the Southwest Corridor Land Development Coalition, an umbrella group formed by 50 community organizations to keep an eye on the tract and to provide grassroots feedback about development proposals.

But what to do with the Southwest Corridor was not entirely a mystery. Remember that regional transportation study ordered by Gov. Sargent? That study, the Boston Transportation Planning Review, concluded not only that the long-planned Southwest Expressway should not be built. It also concluded that the relocation of the Orange Line rapid transit branch should proceed, full speed ahead.[301] The old elevated subway line, which had thrown a dark frown onto Washington Street for a long time and had decayed into a rusting pigeon roost, would be torn down. Sunshine would be allowed to return to Washington Street, and the subway would be moved to a parallel route several blocks north as part of the sunken, out-of-sight railroad right-of-way.

Commuters coming and going to the relocated line's spanking new mass transit stations would spark urban renewal and redevelopment around each station, like grains of sand giving birth to pearls. "New stations typically become catalysts for renewal, attracting people who spend money in surrounding stores, restaurants, and retail

establishments, invigorating nearby businesses," said Anthony Pangaro, now head of the Boston office of Millenium Partners-Boston, a major development firm, who in the mid-1970s was the Southwest Corridor project coordinator – basically the ringmaster of the show.[302]

And quite a show it was shaping up to be. It would include a new local arterial road, housing, and provisions for training youths in everything from construction to architecture. Marvin was hard at work trying to make a reality of the CrossTown Industrial Park. Before long, broad consensus had been reached among local residents and city and state planners. And a new worldview dominated the entire, sprawling enterprise. The old highway proposal had been guided by an old-fashioned, top-down model of decision-making. Planners acted as if they knew what was best for everyone else. But the new Southwest Corridor project embraced a consensus-building model. Decisions were not imposed on local residents and business people. Residents and business people were brought into the decision-making process.

But debate could not be allowed to drag on forever. At some point decisions did in fact have to be made, votes taken, and construction contracts drawn up. Then everyone had to move on to the next decision that needed to be made.

"It was a process with an incredible number of moving parts," Pangaro said. "We held hundreds of community meetings. For each transit station, we had to make decisions about design, functional details inside each station, elements on the street, a park plan. We had to do that for each of nine stations, over and over. So the permutations were extreme. And that process went on, even once construction began. We kept elaborate minutes of every meeting, and we mainlined them to everyone involved. It was important to keep the process moving, even when new people joined the process and old people left. That applied to public members and public officials, who changed all the time. So it was important that newcomers who joined the process late could not reopen issues that had already been settled."

Marvin, Pangaro says, played a crucial role in keeping the process moving.

"Marvin was good at saying to newcomers who wanted to rehash old issues that we already talked about that and settled it," Pangaro said.

"Marvin could be as passionate as anyone about his favorite details. But he was practical and fair. He did not let newcomers hijack the process."

Marvin was just as willing to tell a newcomer that the group had been there, done that, regarding some issue, whether the new person was a powerful public figure or a little-known resident of a nearby neighborhood.

"One pivot point was when Ed King beat Mike Dukakis in the Democratic primary at the end of the first Dukakis administration," Pangaro said. "King campaigned on a platform of building expressways, and everyone wondered whether he was going to come in and resurrect the old Southwest Corridor or something like it. But he stopped talking about that during the campaign. Marvin was one of the people who went to King's advisers and said forget that, at least here. You will roll back a lot of progress and economic potential and you will create turmoil by advocating for a return of that highway."

Breaking a Logjam

Even before helping to influence the new governor's stance on the Southwest Corridor, a major logjam had developed. The federal administrators whose interstate highway had been turned into political road kill refused to sign off, releasing their respective agencies' funds and rights to the turf. And why should they? They were Feds. They were in far-off Washington, D.C. They didn't care what the local public officials in Massachusetts were saying. And it began to seem as if no one would be able to change their minds.

Without their sign-offs, no alternative plan could move forward. Their obstinacy also bottled up federal funding for any alternative plan.

"On the federal level, there was a lot of bureaucratic inertia working against us," Pangaro said. "We had turned an approved plan on its head. Massachusetts had upset those bureaucrats, and they were powerful heads of federal agencies. They were used to getting their way. They didn't like being told, No."

It was a stalemate. The federal bigwigs ignored the Bay State delegation's pleas for action.

Even if Massachusetts somehow had succeeded in persuading just one of federal officials to collaborate, it would not have been enough, explains Frederick Salvucci, who was then state secretary of transportation

in the Dukakis administration. “Tony Pangaro was in charge of the process on the Massachusetts end,” Salvucci said. “He was having a substantial problem getting cooperation from the federal government because land in the Southwest Corridor came under three separate federal jurisdictions. One was the Federal Highway Administration because federal highway funds had been used to buy houses there and knock them down. This was Alice in Wonderland stuff. Even though those former residents were gone, that money gave the highway people a reason to be involved.

“Another jurisdiction was the Federal Highway *Commission*. The land had been taken to build a federal highway, and now we wanted to build something else, so we needed the permission of the Commission. And the Commission hated us for the major humiliation of stopping an interstate highway and proposing to substitute rail, which they also hated. So *they* stonewalled us.

“The third jurisdiction was the Urban Mass Transportation Administration, which is now the Federal Transit Administration, because at the end of the day this would involve urban mass transit funding to build a transit line, do work on what is now the Amtrak line, and build commuter rail and stations.

“So you had three agencies within the U.S. Department of Transportation, with guidelines and regulations that weren’t always consistent with each other, and you needed all three to agree to transfer the land, primarily away from a federal highway administration and into the hands of private developers and local government agencies and so on. So we were badly stuck, and it was getting frustrating.”[303]

At one of the countless community and task force meetings, attendees demanded that Pangaro explain why progress was bogging down. Pangaro explained that the federal transportation czars had set up roadblocks. People in attendance began to talk over one another. Order began to break down in the room. Then, Pangaro’s explanation sank in. As the meeting’s participants began to understand their lack of power, a gloomy silence settled over the gathering. Then Pangaro heard Marvin speak up.

Salvucci describes what Marvin said: “Tony told me later that Marvin basically said, ‘If you’re having trouble with the federal government, I can help.’”

The next day at his office, Marvin made three phone calls. One was to Senator Brooke. The other was to Senator Edward Kennedy. Marvin considered both men his friends. Marvin explained to both that he needed to arrange a meeting with U.S. Secretary of Transportation William T. Coleman, Jr., Brock Adams' predecessor. These were political courtesy calls. "That was the protocol that you used," Marvin said. "I was their constituent, and I was going to call someone in the [President's] Administration. Ed Brooke especially was a close friend of mine. If I could bring in additional political clout by getting the senators involved, I would."

The third call was to Coleman. Shortly before this, in 1975, President Gerald Ford had appointed Coleman as Secretary of Transportation, making him only the second African-American to hold a cabinet-level position. That was merely the latest in a string of firsts by Coleman. After law school, he was appointed U.S. Supreme Court Associate Justice Felix Frankfurter's law clerk, becoming the first African-American to clerk for the high bench. Before that, he had been selected as the first black man to serve on the board of editors of the *Harvard Law Review*.[304]

It was while he had been a student at Harvard Law School – before and after serving in the Army during World War II – that Coleman, unable to find university housing because he was black, had become a tenant of Lee Augusta Gilmore, Marvin's mother, in Cambridge. Now nearly 30 years later, he was very pleased to hear from his old friend Marvin.

Brooke had already called President Ford, but it was overkill. Coleman was only too glad to arrange a meeting in his office with his old friend Marvin and other representatives of the Southwest Corridor project from Massachusetts as well as the foot-dragging federal highway bureaucrats.

"We were sitting in the office," Salvucci said. "I was there, Tony Pangaro was there, Senator Brooke attended, and Marvin and about eight other black people. And Secretary Coleman said he had never had the three federal agency heads – the head of federal rails, the head of federal transit, and the head of federal highways – in the same room at the same time. But he looked at the three of them and said my friend Ed Brooke here says he's having a problem, and no one's getting out of this room until the problem is settled. That was it. In 10 seconds the intransigence was resolved. Everything moved forward after that. To me, it was a memorable occasion. If it weren't for Marvin, we'd still be arguing with

the federal highway administration about whether we could transfer that land. It was Marvin's connection to Brooke and Coleman that broke the log jam and allowed the thing to move forward."

It was a project well worth the effort, says Dukakis. He refers to the Southwest Corridor as the Melnea Cass Corridor, for the park-flanked boulevard that became part of the new, multimodal project. The road was named for Cass, the defiant community and civil-rights activist who helped Marvin get his hearing with Mayor Kevin White.[305] Cass Boulevard traverses the Corridor, serving local residents and businesses, unlike the originally planned interstate highway that crushed the neighborhood in order to whisk white suburbanites past it as fast as possible.

"I became interested in the potential of the Melnea Cass Corridor as a job-creating and economy-building project, benefiting people in the South End, Roxbury, and Dorchester," Dukakis said. "And Marvin was deeply involved in making the new Corridor happen, both in the planning stages and in his work at the CDC, creating the CrossTown Industrial Park. He argued all along that the Corridor was an ideal place to develop new businesses and jobs."

Legacy of Help for Working Men and Women

An additional layer of community oversight was provided by creating task forces – special interest groups – for each of the planned subway stations. A task force was also created for a 5.6-acre site along the planned subway line known as Parcel 18. The heart of Parcel 18 would become the Ruggles Station, at Ruggles Street. It also included nearby land that would be the temporary new home of the Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles before becoming Northeastern University's Renaissance Center. The parcel also included what became the new site of the Boston police department headquarters. Because it would be concerned with these additional nearby site as well as Ruggles Station itself, this task force was named Parcel 18+ Task Force.

Minority developers found themselves competing with white developers for tracts within the Southwest Corridor. This became a political issue as minority developers complained about a lack of reciprocity. They were in effect locked out of competing for development rights elsewhere in the city, especially downtown. But they had to share the emerging bounty on their home turf. It wasn't fair, they complained.

Sure, downtown opportunities had nothing to do with the Southwest Corridor. But the minority developers complained that a combination of politics – was it discrimination? – and higher costs for bigger projects in choice downtown sites barred them from those downtown opportunities.

The Parcel 18 Task Force, the most vibrant of the station-area task forces, developed an alliance with Asian-American developers. With Marvin as its chairman, the Parcel 18 Task Force hit on the strategy of requiring certain downtown developers to team up with minority developers. By the 1980s, the Task Force had won support from the Boston Redevelopment Authority, Mayor Raymond Flynn, and Governor Michael Dukakis.

Linkage first played out in development of the downtown Kingston-Bedford multilevel parking garage adjacent to Chinatown in Boston's financial district. The "majority" developer had to team up with minority partners. Developers' fees, net operating income, net refinancing proceeds and net resale proceeds would have to be divvied up among the majority developer, the Chinatown community (where the garage was located), and the Roxbury community.

In Roxbury, a similar share-the-wealth formula was applied to the Ruggles Street Station along the newly built subway line and the adjacent Ruggles Center office site.

The linkage policy succeeded in making sure that black entrepreneur-community advocates got a slice of publicly funded development pies. Philip Hart, who had been on the board of the CDC of Boston, described the linkage arrangement decades later in a professional journal: "The 45 minority investors from the African American, Asian American, and Latino communities walked away with a substantial return on their investment. The four community development corporations realized upward of $1 million each. Roxbury and Chinatown community trusts received $15 million in community benefits, some of which was to be invested in affordable housing.

"After fits and starts, the parcel-to-parcel linkage plan thus far has yielded a 36-story office tower in Boston's financial district, a nine-story office building in Roxbury and a multilevel parking structure, nearly $20 million in community benefits, several new minority millionaires, a rejuvenated Roxbury, and a positive working relationship among three key racial and ethnic groups in a city still addressing its image problems."[306]

Entrepreneurs weren't the only African-Americans to benefit from the linkage policy. Professionals like engineers did too.

"Pangaro hired some young guys, Stull and Lee, as architects," Salvucci said. "Their firm got the master contract for urban design of the whole Corridor to establish the 'vocabulary' of how [transit] stations would look, where bike paths would go, and so on. They were also given the actual architectural work to design Ruggles Station. So the Southwest Corridor became a place where minorities participated in the construction, engineering, and design of the physical development of transit, housing, and office structures. Marvin played a key role in getting that done."

Marvin was also a key advocate for creating benefits for minority construction workers, not just in the Southwest Corridor but on an ongoing basis, Salvucci says. In talks with the Parcel 18 Task Force and groups like United Community Workers, the state agreed to what became known as the Altshuler Plan – a goal of setting aside 30% of construction jobs to blacks.[307] Later, that agreement inspired Boston and the state to adopt minority-worker allocation targets for publicly-funded and large private construction elsewhere in the city and state. Today Boston requires at least 25% of the pay for such work to go to minorities, for example.[308]

"Dukakis extended it to all state construction, and Mayor White extended it to all city construction," Salvucci said. This ended an era in which blacks were largely shut out from big construction jobs in Boston and Massachusetts.

Unique Contribution

Boston's African-American community has had many advocates. Two things make Marvin's contribution unique. One is that he was effective. Some other advocates have been louder and have garnered more attention. But Marvin's batting average is peerless. His tireless efforts got results.

The other thing that is distinct about Marvin's contribution is that his focus is not on handouts, but on creating jobs. Jobs put money into people's pockets, jobs are the mortar that binds together the bricks of a community. Jobs and earned income flower into dignity and hope. Jobs and earned income are the life blood of freedom.

And he did it in the face discrimination and hostility.

"Marvin has done what was, especially at the time years ago, the toughest thing an African-American could do," Dukakis said. "He went out as an entrepreneur and succeeded in the white community. There weren't many folks of color who could do that, especially in those days, but he did it.

"And having actually done it, accumulating some affluence for himself and his family, what does he do? He comes to Roxbury and uses his business tools and skills to help the poorest part of the city find and build employment. That's pretty unusual.

"If you think back to that time, how many people could do that? How many people actually did do that? And he started out as a percussionist yet. What he's accomplished has been an amazing thing.

"He's very unselfish. His work is serious and hard. Yet he's a guy who finds time to be a mentor, who *loves* being a mentor. He takes the time and makes the effort to sit with young people and provide guidance.

"And there is his musical interest. He created a real estate empire. He recreated the CDC. He fought in a war. He fought discrimination. He helped make everything in the Melnea Cass Corridor possible. And he still found time to pursue his musical interest by running his club. Marvin comes as close to being a Renaissance man as anyone I know.

"And I've got to say, on a personal level, he's always a fun guy, an interesting guy, and he is always interested in not just what he was doing but in what *you* were doing. I don't remember anyone quite like him, at least in Boston back then. Marvin is a guy who has opened that door to many young people today."

You can't show me anyone else who's done so much, Dukakis says.

Adds the two-time governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts: "Marvin is a special guy, who's had a special impact on so many people in so many places."