Simply responding to "incidents" usually means that underlying neighborhood *problems* (drugs, gangs) go unaddressed and "incidents" continue and even multiply.

A new strategy, buttressed by much recent experience, is "community-oriented policing." At its best, it involves police working with other city agencies and the residents of a targeted neighborhood to establish public order and safety. Some proven remedies: cleaning up alleys, fixing broken windows, improving lighting, tearing down abandoned buildings (havens for drug users), repeatedly sweeping drug-infested areas, and deploying foot patrols. The results are more than cosmetic: "Law-abiding citizens who are afraid to go out onto streets filled with graffiti, winos, and loitering youths yield control of these streets to people who are not afraid."

Focusing on one neighborhood does not simply push criminals into adjoining territory, say the authors. Most crime in most neighborhoods is local: offenders live near their victims, and many crimes are opportunistic. In parts of Houston, New York, Los Angeles, and other cities, the new police strategies have succeeded.

However, Wilson and Kelling note, much remains unknown. Neighborhood Watch programs, for example, still need assessment. So do the costs and benefits of having police officers help bring in help from other city agencies—not normal "police business." And, they add, "no way of [permanently] wresting control of a neighborhood from a street gang has yet been proved effective."

## *Civil Rights During the 1940s*

"Opportunities Found and Lost: Labor, Radicals, and the Early Civil Rights Movement" by Robert Korstad and Nelson Lichtenstein, in *The Journal of American History* (Dec. 1988), 112 N. Bryan St., Bloomington, Ind. 47401.

Most histories of the U.S. civil rights movement begin with the Supreme Court's historic *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in 1954. In fact, say Korstad and Lichtenstein, historians at the University of North Carolina and Catholic University, respectively, the effort began "dramatically and decisively" a decade earlier.

During the early 1940s, two million blacks left Southern farms to seek wartime jobs in the industrial centers of the Northeast and Midwest; another million moved to Southern cities. Fostered partly by Washington's egalitarian wartime rhetoric, black political awareness grew. Membership in the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) soared from 50,000 in 1940 to 450,000 in 1946. Even in the Old South, black voter registration quadrupled.

But the chief source of the new black activism was the growing labor union movement. Half a million blacks joined industrial unions during the 1940s. Franklin Roosevelt's support and "the 'industrial citizenship' that union contracts offered once-marginal elements of the working class" generated rising expectations and a new set of goals to aim for. At Ford's famous River Rouge plant, most of the 9,000 black workers became solid supporters of the United Auto Workers (UAW) after 1941. They began to demand equal treatment on the shop floor. Some black unionists moved into the UAW hierarchy; others swelled the ranks of the Michigan NAACP. The UAW's top leaders backed "mass rallies, picket lines, and big lobbying delegations to city hall, Lansing, and Washington" seeking protections against job discrimination. Even the staid NAACP joined demonstrations for fair housing.

By 1950, 10 states had created fair employment practice commissions; four major cities (e.g, Chicago, Philadelphia) had enacted tough laws against job bias; and the Americans for Democratic Action gained a strong civil rights plank in the 1948 Democratic Party platform.

Then the movement sputtered.

What happened? Automation and post-World War II cutbacks eliminated many

factory jobs for blacks, the authors say. And many of the most militant civil rights activists within the unions were Communists, who were forced out as anti-communist sentiment grew. And, finally, the unions themselves abandoned ideological militance and simply tried to win for their members a greater share of the nation's postwar abundance. As a result, the authors observe, unions played only a small role in the "second" civil rights movement during the 1950s and '60s.

## *Checkerboard, U.S.A.*

"Patterns on the American Land" by Vernon Carstensen, in *Publius* (Fall 1988), 1017 Gladfelter Hall, Temple University 025-25, Philadelphia, Pa. 19122.

In 1785, Congress passed a law, now obscure, that was to change the face of America during the next century.

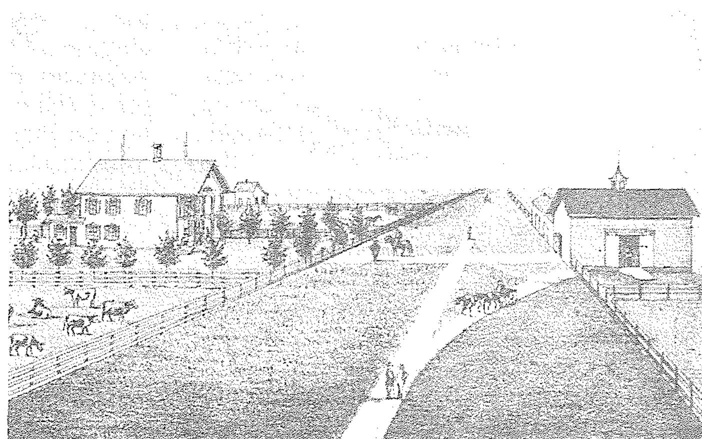
The Land Ordinance of 1785 provided for the division of the nation's then-limited public lands west of the Appalachian Mountains into townships six miles square, subdivided into 36 one-mile-square (or 640-acre) "sections."

"Like bees or ants or other well organized societies, Americans, once they fixed upon the rectangular survey, were inflexible in their devotion to the idea," writes Vernon Carstensen, of the University of Washington. Gradually, Congress extended the rectangular grid westward, eventually encompassing 69 percent of the land area of the continental United States.

In the original 13 colonies, as in most places throughout history, land was divided more or less haphazardly, which "invited a host of misunderstandings about boundary lines between individual holdings." However, between 1800 and 1900, more than five million rectangular farms and ranches were marked out in the West under the section system, as were many towns and counties. Because, as poet Robert Frost put it, "good fences make good neighbors," much conflict was avoided.

In 1804, Congress allowed the sale of "quarter sections" of 160 acres, and that came to be viewed as the ideal size for the family farm. (Today, many Western and Midwestern farmers and ranchers refer to their holdings simply as "half sections," "forties," or "eighties.") Rectangular fields "virtually decreed straight-line tillage," says Carstensen, until 20th century researchers discovered that it spurred soil erosion.

The 1785 Land Ordinance also set aside one section in each township for the common schools. Much of this land was sold "early and cheap," and the proceeds wasted by local officials. But the precedent later allowed educators and others to demand and win local government support for public schools. That, writes Carstensen, may be the chief legacy of the little-known law that left much of the American landscape a checkerboard.



*The ruler-straight "section" roads of the West and Midwest, as in this view of 19th-century Minnesota, are a legacy of the 1785 grid survey. Curves would have chopped up farmers' square fields.*