

**" Killing Maxwell Street is like  
taking opera from Milan "**

**A Maxwell Street Anthology**

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These names are but a sample from the thousands who signed petitions to save the Maxwell Street Market .

4/11/94

## A Plea to the Chicago City Council

Mayor Daley has his mind set to eliminate the Maxwell Street Market. The vote in the City Council is set for April 13. The Hispanic and Afro-American grassroots communities are very upset about this. People are already asking how can the President and the Vice President talk about Empowerment Zones when their ally Mayor Daley is set to kill one.

The Market works as a de facto enterprise zone and business incubator; it serves the poorest of the poor; and does not cost the government money.

1. **Did you know** that building contractor/rehabbers from South Shore (those responsible for the "South Shore miracle") use the Market to buy materials, find people to be partners, and obtain personal loans there through social networks?
2. **Did you know** that the Women's Self-Employment Project (a Grameen Bank replication) uses the Market to have its clients try out their business ideas?
3. **Did you know** that Alex Counts, a senior fellow at the Grameen Bank in Bangladesh, comes to Chicago to study Maxwell Street?
4. **Did you know** that Maria Nowak and Rory O'Sullivan of the World Bank came to visit Chicago to learn about the Maxwell Street Market, and possibly to use it as a model for their work in Eastern Europe?
5. **Did you know** that Kathy Stearns at Accion International is interested possibly in setting up a micro-loan program for the Market?
6. **Did you know** that Bob Giloth, Director of Economic Development Programs for the Annie E. Casey Foundation, is interested in using the Maxwell Street Market as a model for inner city development?

It is easy to defuse the situation in Chicago. All parties to the dispute are willing to compromise but Mayor Daley has told his allies not to compromise.

You know in your heart-of-hearts that President Clinton and Vice President Gore would love Maxwell Street if they visited it. It represents everything they stand for: micro-enterprise, community development, racial harmony, great blues music (the home of Muddy Waters, Sunnyland Slim, Big Bill Broonzy, Kid Dynamite), training for the "forgotten half" - the non-college bound, helping low income people acquire human and money capital, environmental recycling, and poverty alleviation.

What minor externality problems the Market has can be easily solved through vendor self-management and better cooperation from the City. It deserves to exist intact. You can force something to eventually exist on Canal Street but it won't be a replication of the Maxwell Street Market no matter how many planners you hire.

Professor Alfonso Morales from the U. of Arizona found that 40% of the households that sell at the Market start formal businesses throughout the Chicago area due to their experience selling at the Market. Research has found that closing the Market will cause a minimum of a 49 million dollar loss on poor and minority residents in Chicago. Maxwell Street works: it is a generator of self-employment for the poor because it involves real-world experience, inter-ethnic networking, and opportunities for mentoring. The poor need the Maxwell Street Market.

**Try a Market shared-space co-existence with-the-UIC solution for 18 months. Study it. Get the facts. Put it on probation. After 18 months, if you are not satisfied, then move it.**

In me you will find treasured gems discarded by former owners as worthless junk, that will enrich your home. I always have antiques for sale, things that you have not seen since your Grandparents was young. In my Market you will find the same merchandise sold in department stores, but in the Market it will be more affordable.

I will always be a vital part of Chicago, I can only be destroyed by short-sighted and greedy individuals who would sell anything in the name of progress (Especially if there is a profit to be made!!!). Even now, false friends of the Market are misleading others with inflated statistics of crime, and trash on my streets. These false friends manufacture lies in order to justify my relocation (and certain demise) to an unsuitable place out of their way so they may claim my land. It was those false friends who withdrew the garbage containers, and stopped garbage pickup in order to create the very condition they complain about.

Should a city sell its citizens, its birth rights, its heritage, its landmarks and institutions in the name of progress? Never may that happen! These are things that can never be replaced or duplicated. There can be no price put on the city's heritage, our landmarks must be protected and maintained forever as a historical part of Chicago.

I am Maxwell the Street Market

I am not a Flea Market

I am a Social and Economic Institution

I must survive to nurture future generation of Chicagoans

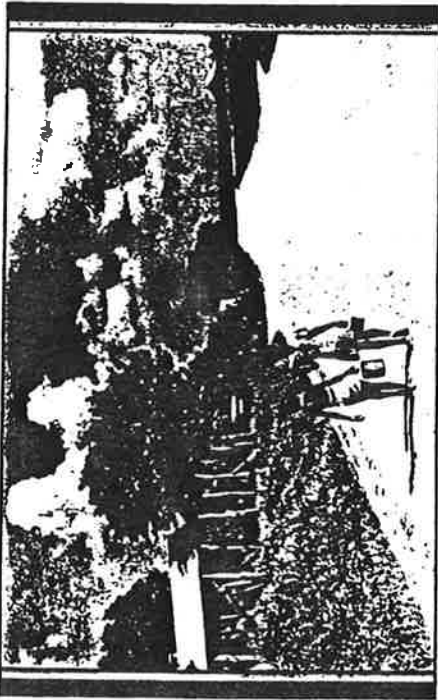
I must not be relocated

I must be declared a historical landmark

I must not die

I am Chicago!

Charlie Joe Henderson



"Robert Palmer's *Deep Blues* is a classic study of black music from the Congo to Chicago. His portrait of musicians and their worlds is an eloquent tribute to the blues."

—WILLIAM FERRIS,

Director, Center for the Study of Southern Culture, and author of *Blues from the Delta*

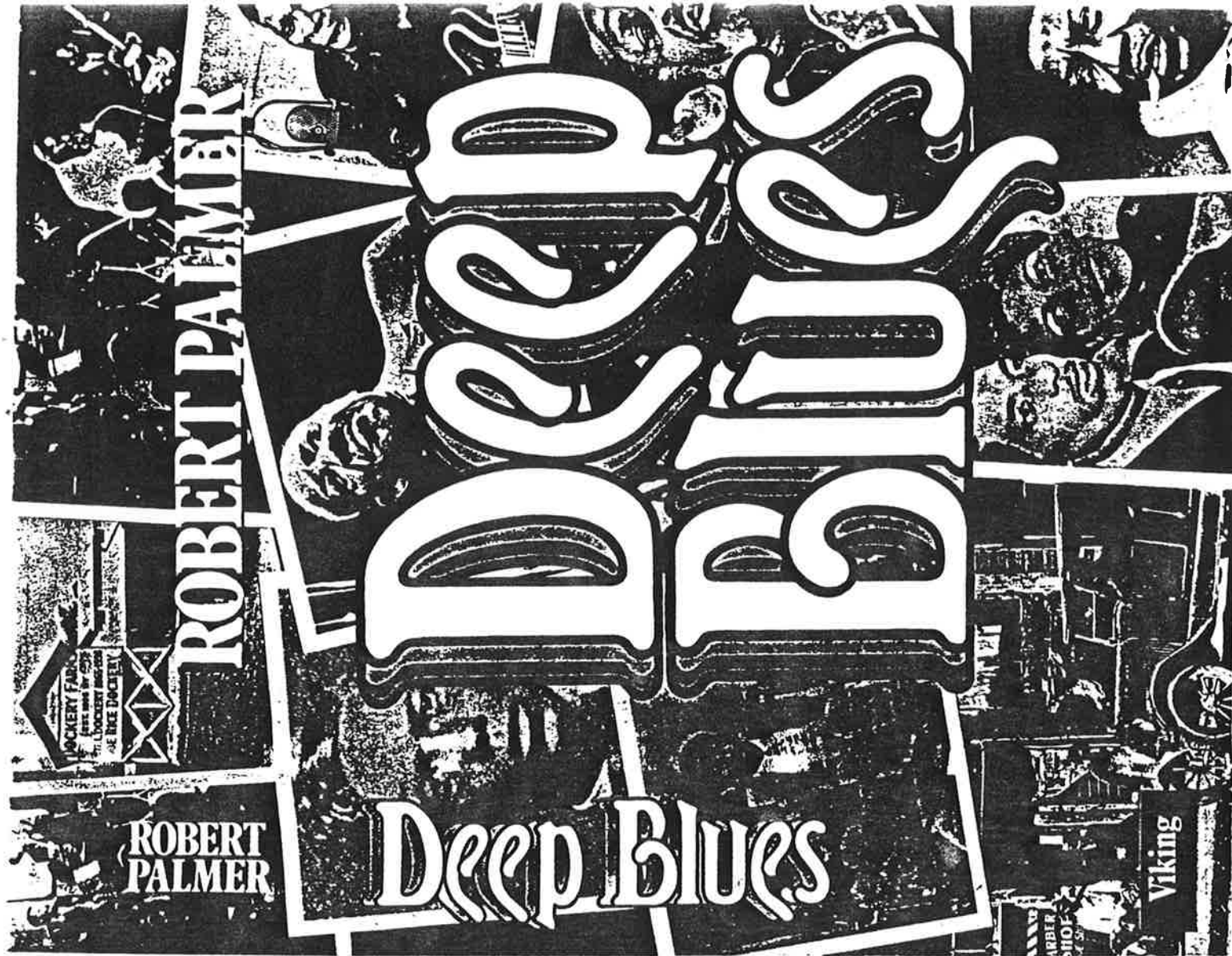
"Palmer's book is full of rich black history, details and dialogue, wonderful memories of recording sessions, parties, performances, and most important, crucial information about the precise points at which deep blues became the highly profitable commodity fetish called 'rock' in the early 1950's."

—CHARLES KEIL, author of *Urban Blues*

"It's a brilliant book, a landmark publication in blues historiography and armed, at every page, with the special Palmer talent: insight, and power of cultural portraiture."

—ROBERT FARRIS THOMPSON,  
author of *African Art in Motion*

"Easily the most pleasing history of the blues we've seen. . . . The writing is clear and crisp, and it's an especially human telling of the story, which Palmer tells with rich detail and an emphasis on the people involved. *Deep Blues* is as much a social as a musical history." —Playboy





## National Center for Neighborhood Enterprise

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Op-Ed Submitted to the Chicago Tribune

By Robert L. Woodson, Sr., President, National Center for Neighborhood Enterprise

March 31, 1994

### The Maxwell Street Market: Precedents and Priorities

The current debate regarding the fate of Chicago's Maxwell Street open market is but one more chapter in the continuing struggle of low-income individuals throughout the nation who are striving to take steps toward self sufficiency. A tragic schizophrenia permeates a policy arena in which stifling regulations are imposed on businesses (on small businesses and grassroots entrepreneurial ventures, in particular) at the same time that discussions of welfare reform and community development focus on the primacy of work.

Chicago's proposal to impose what would effectively be a 5,000 percent increase in vendors' fees, from \$25 a year to \$25 each Sunday has a precedent in Washington, D.C., where, just last year, city officials attempted to impose a thousand percent increase in street vendor's annual fees from \$106 to \$1500. The ramifications--and intentions--of such fee hikes are clear. In the mid 1980's similar legislation was passed in Washington which decimated the ranks of enterprising street vendors. As bond requirements rose from \$100 to \$500 and license fees jumped from \$15 to \$106, 4,000 of the 5,300 active vendors were forced to close up shop.

Vending has historically been a stepping stone to economic independence. Even during the days of slavery, white landowners allowed their slaves to maintain small gardens of their own, from which, every Sunday, they would harvest their produce and sell it in town in makeshift markets. A number of slaves eventually were able to purchase their freedom through this enterprise. In

## Why I as a Christian Believe That Maxwell Street Must Be Saved

Rev. Dr. George F. Cairns  
Peoples Church of Chicago

The city is a holy place. It can be a place of hospitality and grace. It can be a place where the hungry are fed, the naked clothed, and the people are set free. Maxwell Street provides a unique place of community and grace-filled hospitality for just such people of Chicago.

Maxwell Street is a raw and human place. It is a humble place. It is a place where people, some of whom are the outcasts of our society, gather to serve one another. It is a place where Christ is found. Remember that Jesus did not dine with the elite of his society. He hung out with the outcasts. If he physically walked among us today, he would not be shopping on North Michigan Avenue -- he would more likely be found on Maxwell Street. He would be too poor to shop elsewhere.

He would find the human scale, the smells and sights, the many languages, the struggles engaged and kindnesses given on Maxwell Street more like home. We too may see glimpses of the realm that He promises us in places like Maxwell Street. Here beneath the rough exteriors of people we see acts of kindness, occasionally even acts of compassion for the other.

Jesus offers those of us who follow Him a way of becoming more fully human. This is not a way without pain and errors. It is not a way without pain and mistakes. It is a way that calls us to love God and our neighbors as ourselves. The city is a pressure cooker that provides us the opportunity to test this calling. In the words of the prophet Jeremiah (29:7) "But seek the shalom, the peace and justice of the city, where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its shalom, its peace and justice, you will find your peace and justice." My friends, it is in places like Maxwell Street that we find our shalom. I pray to the Lord on its behalf.

Shalom.

Finally, there is the preposterous allegation that the market is for selling stolen goods. Proponents of this argument would have you believe that everyone there is a criminal fence. Such a position falls on its face simply by a casual Sunday morning stroll through the Market. Most of the people there -- both buyer and seller -- are too poor to buy such expensive items as stolen furs and jewelry. However, selling of stolen goods is a crime and the danger is present in any large market enterprise so loosely organized. This is an easy problem to address with the police and vendor self-management organizations working together. This problem has become an irritant only because there is no market management to have effective lines of communication between vendors and police. The fault here is with the police. Community policing, something very sexy for the Chicago police right now, will surely help here.

In sum, you can best keep Chicago safe by keeping Maxwell Street Market alive and in place. Not only is it an historic tradition but a modern day institution that serves a positive good to the poor and ethnic and adventurous of Chicago. Its loss -- in the name of a sprawling urban university -- would be tragic and shortsighted.



**You won't throw this book away !**

**You realize it's  
valuable,  
useful,  
interesting,  
precious,  
rare,  
a help,  
something to hold on to, and  
a part of Chicago's legacy to the world.**

**Likewise, don't throw away the real thing.**

**SAVE THE MAXWELL STREET MARKET**



## **SAVING THE MAXWELL STREET MARKET:**

EXPLORING THE ARCHITECT'S ROLE IN RESPONSIBLE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT



CONTENTS *and more PDF reports at*

### **PROPOSED PROJECT:**

HISTORY *of the neighborhood and market and plans to close it*

SHORT-TERM PLAN *to save the market*

LONG-TERM PLAN *for future planning and cost*

POSSIBILITIES *for future development and sustainability*

### **PAST PROJECTS:**

RESEARCH *on the history of the neighborhood and market*

TECHNOLOGY *for the market and neighborhood*

ENVIRONMENT *for the market and neighborhood*

HISTORY *of the neighborhood and market*

**Front page of a recent grant proposal.**