

The following month, Baker, the NAACP committee chairman, testified before the State Joint Committee on Crime and reiterated these views. According to a digest of his testimony, he championed the severe sentencing policies recommended in the report, adding that drug pushers “should be subject to indefinite imprisonment until they reveal [the source of their drug supply]” and that mugging should be punishable with a minimum five-year term, with no time off for good behavior or possibility of commutation. Baker appeared unconcerned with the potential consequences of these sentencing proposals. Although he acknowledged that such sentences would create an overcrowding problem in prisons, he felt that early release of these “hoodlums” caused much more serious problems to innocent citizens. “The avowed purpose of these recommendations is to rid the streets of these criminals,” he said. He also seemed uninterested in the racial consequences of aggressive policing strategies and maintained that people of Harlem favored “such measures as police saturation and use of the ‘stop and frisk’ law.” Baker dismissed the protestations of other African American leaders, insisting that a reckless minority of community figures had misled white politicians and the public about black public safety concerns. “The silent majority in Harlem.” he asserted. “would welcome a police order to get tough.”<sup>10</sup>