# CROSSROADS:

# NEW YORK'S BLACK INTELLECTUALS AND THE ROLE OF IDEOLOGY IN THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT, 1954-1965

by

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A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in History in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

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This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in History in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

CROSSROADS: NEW YORK'S BLACK INTELLECTUALS AND THE ROLE OF IDEOLOGY IN THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT, 1954-1965

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This dissertation studies the importance of New York City, and the black intellectuals who gathered there, to the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s. The figures discussed here merit the term “intellectual” because they were makers and purveyors of many ideas that sustained and broadened the movement. Studying key activist-intellectuals from across the ideological spectrum allows for a more complete understanding of the importance of ideas in propelling the movement. Looking at the ways in which black intellectuals evolved and used different ideologies in pursuit of racial equality is another way of demonstrating African American agency. This study writes against the characterization of the civil rights movement as primarily fueled by emotionalism and impulsive. Black intellectuals actively sought to plot out the course that the movement would take.

This dissertation continues to move civil rights historiography away from the notion that Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X provided the only two approaches for achieving racial equality by demonstrating that there was a broader spectrum of ideologies that African Americans used and adapted in trying to successfully prosecute their struggle to secure racial equality. Instead of merely two approaches—liberal integrationism and black nationalism—I

argue that there were four main ideologies in conversation and contention with one another during this period—racial liberalism, conservatism, leftism, and black nationalism.

This dissertation also contributes to the growing literature on the civil rights movement outside of the South. I make two main arguments about the significance of New York City to the movement. First, New York was important because institutions of every political and ideological stripe sank roots into and influenced the intellectual and cultural milieu of black New York and black America. Second, black intellectuals who were drawn to the city flourished because they sampled the extraordinary variety of ideas on display as they matured intellectually and developed their own strategies for growing and sustaining a national movement for social, political, and economic justice. For these reasons, New York is deserving of further study in relation to civil rights agitation and activism.

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No one completes a dissertation—or graduate school—by themselves. As isolating as researching and writing a dissertation can sometimes be, there really is a collective effort to produce a full manuscript. This has certainly been my experience in preparing this dissertation—and getting through graduate school. During this process I have discovered how many people have been sharing in my dissertation writing experience vicariously and invested themselves emotionally in my journey towards becoming a doctor. I thank each and every one of those people.

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## Introduction

## Waves and Rainbows

> *Negroes did actually think things and did actually agree and disagree and did actually have allegiance to or hostility towards each other on the basis of what classes they were from and what parts of the country they were from and whether or not they were actually natives or came into this country with all the prejudices that black colonials could have toward the black descendants of people who had been central to the making of American culture.*
> Stanley Crouch[1]

The renowned musical and cultural critic, Stanley Crouch, made the observation that "Negroes did actually think things and did actually agree and disagree" in discussing Harold Cruse's intellectual contributions to African American life and culture. He made this somewhat sarcastic statement for multiple reasons. Most narrowly, Crouch was lauding what he argued was Cruse's willingness to seriously engage all of the viewpoints coming from the far-flung corners of the black community in his attempt to create an authentic, indigenous black cultural aesthetic. Crouch's comment, however, has a larger significance than just discussing Harold Cruse's intellectual production. The idea that African Americans—like every other racial or ethnic group—were not, and have never been, an ideological monolith is stunningly obvious and yet, still audacious.

That there was considerable ideological diversity among African American thinkers and leaders becomes a provocative idea because of the ways in which black intellectual production has been understudied in histories of the civil rights era with the movement toward social history in the last thirty years.[2] The effect of this shift, however, is that there is much more that can be

[1] Stanley Crouch, "Blues for Brother Cruse," in William Jelani Cobb, *The Essential Harold Cruse: A Reader* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), xii.

[2] This is not to minimize the importance of social history to the study of the civil rights movement. Social historians and sociologists have largely been responsible for the shifts toward local studies of the movement, as well as for the increase in studies that chronicle the existence of a simultaneous civil rights movement outside of the

said about the influence of ideology on African American culture and protest.[3] Recent studies on African American intellectuals, even those that use Harold Cruse's *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual* as a touchstone, such as W. D. Wright's *Crisis of the Black Intellectual*, tend not to examine the civil rights movement between 1954 and 1965 in much depth. Wright is more concerned with how contemporary "Black and black" intellectuals are writing about the history and current status of African Americans in the United States in order to critique the current state of Black intellectual thought. Kevin Gaines's *Uplifting the Race* ends in 1954, Anthony Bogues's *Black Heretics, Black Prophets* adopts a transnational approach in writing about how "black radical intellectuals" during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries developed various strategies to resist oppression and improve the condition of black people in different parts of the world. But his figures are not primarily involved with the African American civil rights movement during the 1950s and 1960s. William Banks's important study of African American intellectuals spends only two chapters out of twelve discussing the period between 1954 and 1965. The same can be said of Nikhil Singh in his study of African American intellectual production, *Black Is a Country.*[4]

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South between 1940 and 1980. Both trends have been extremely illuminating to our general understanding of the civil rights era. Important southern local studies include: William H. Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina, and the Black Struggle for Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980); John Dittmer, *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994); and Charles Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995). Important local histories on the civil rights movement outside of the South include: Martha Biondi, *To Stand and Fight: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Postwar New York City* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003); Brian Purnell, "A Movement Grows in Brooklyn: The Brooklyn Chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and the Northern Civil Rights Movement During the Early 1960s" (Ph.D. Dissertation, New York University, 2006); Clarence Taylor, *Knocking at Our Own Door: Milton A. Galamison and the Struggle to Integrate New York City Schools* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997); Jeanne F. Theoharis and Komozi Woodard, eds., *Freedom North: Black Freedom Struggles Outside the South, 1940-1980* (New York: Palgrave McMillan, 2003); and Jeanne Theoharis and Komozi Woodard, eds., *Groundbreaking: Local Black Freedom Movements in America* (New York: New York University, 2005).

[3] Steven Conn, "Who You Callin' an Intellectual?" *Reviews in American History*, vol. 33, no. 1 (2005), 64-5, 69.

[4] W. D. Wright, *Crisis of the Black Intellectual* (Chicago: Third World Press, 2007); Kevin Kelley Gaines, *Uplifting the Race: Black Leadership, Politics, and Culture in the Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Anthony Bogues, *Black Heretics, Black Prophets: Radical Political Intellectuals* (New York: Routledge, 2003); William M. Banks, *Black Intellectuals: Race and Responsibility in American Life* (New

This study, by contrast, uses the civil rights movement as a lens through which to examine the major ideological currents that existed among African American intellectuals during the middle of the twentieth century. Unfortunately, the dominant narrative of the civil rights struggle still rests, in part, on the premise that the integrationist racial liberalism of Martin Luther King, Jr. and the separatist black nationalism of Malcolm X were the only strands of black thought between 1954 and 1965.[5] This dissertation continues to pull away from the notion that black thought during the civil rights era began and ended with the liberal/militant ideological binary represented by Martin Luther King, Jr. and Malcolm X.[6] This false binary, which still shapes popular understandings of the era, obscures the myriad perspectives African American intellectuals held at midcentury. Thus, it is more useful to speak of a "spectrum" of African American intellectual thought because it allows scholars to more easily encompass the range of ideological perspectives among blacks—from conservative to communist—like the blended, yet distinct colors of a rainbow. Historically, black intellectuals have never thought in a singular fashion. Neither have blacks confined themselves to only two ways of seeing the world.

Constructing black thought in this bipolar way also perpetuates other false binaries that recent scholarship has been working to break down. Namely, that the civil rights movement suddenly moved northward and became more urban, angry, and less-deserving of public support

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York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1996); Nikhil Singh, *Black Is a Country: Race and the Unfinished Struggle for Democracy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004).

[5] Theoharis and Woodard, *Freedom North*, 2.

[6] Some scholars attack this false binary by complicating the traditional portrayals of one or both men. Nikhil Singh, for example, demonstrates the intellectual evolution of Martin Luther King, Jr. after 1963 in order to make the claim that there were two Martin Luther Kings. The liberal-integrationist King that is widely celebrated today and eulogized yearly, and also the more radical, peace activist, that is largely forgotten today. George Breitman uses Malcolm X's speeches and interviews in order to chart his intellectual development in the year between his excommunication from the Nation of Islam and his assassination in 1965 in order to show that Malcolm was increasingly being influenced by other ideologies and coming to new understandings about the current state and future needs of the Afro-American fight for equality; including endeavoring to redefine black nationalism. George Breitman, *By Any Means Necessary: Speeches, Interviews and a Letter by Malcolm X* (New York: Pathfinder Press, Inc., 1970). Martha Biondi emphasizes the importance of activism by members of the Communist Party and the Party's ideology in furthering the African American civil rights movement in *To Stand and Fight: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Postwar New York City* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003).

after 1965, and that this represented a distinct break from the rural, southern, more moral movement of the previous decade.[7] Scholars that have written about the civil rights movement in the South have often characterized the movement as springing entirely from the types of social, political, and economic structures considered to be present in the South. Therefore, Aldon Morris asserts that the civil rights movement "emerged in the South because of the tradition of protest there" without acknowledging the traditions of protest that existed throughout the country. Jack Bloom argues that "the racial practices that the civil rights movement confronted . . . were [exclusively] embedded within the class, economic, and political systems of the South." And James R. Ralph, Jr. does not recognize a homegrown, northern, urban, freedom struggle before 1965 in his study of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference in Chicago. Conceptualizing the movement as a solely southern phenomenon introduces severe limits for effectively analyzing the trajectory of the black freedom struggle for other regions of the country. It becomes much easier to dismiss the existence of civil rights activism in the North and more difficult to produce an accurate historical narrative of the black freedom struggle.[8]

The assumption that Bloom was operating from depicted the African American civil rights struggle as only taking place in and, therefore, only relevant for the South. His argument also implies that these racial practices were not "embedded" within the various structural systems of the North. While southern states may have mandated racial segregation, racial discrimination was by no means confined to a single region of the country. None of these works conceive of the black freedom struggle as truly national and interrelated (except for northern activists going South to help southerners further *their* movement).

[7] Theoharis and Woodard, *Freedom North*, 5-7; Singh, *Black Is a Country*, 5-11.

[8] Aldon D. Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change* (New York: The Free Press, 1984), x-xi; Jack Bloom, *Class, Race, and the Civil Rights Movement* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 1; and James R. Ralph, Jr., *Northern Protest: Martin Luther King, Jr., Chicago, and the Civil Rights Movement* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993).

In the last twenty years scholars have been hammering away at the argument that there was no northern civil rights movement before 1965 and, therefore, there was no significant relationship between what was happening in the South and in the North.[9] Books such as *Freedom North: Black Freedom Struggles Outside the South, 1940-1980*, edited by Jeanne F. Theoharis and Komozi Woodard (2003), for example, explicitly desire to dispel the "southern paradigm" in civil rights movement scholarship. According to Theoharis and Woodard, our typical ways of thinking "miss the systems of racial caste and power—pervasive and entrenched across the North—that denied people of color equitable education, safe policing, real job opportunities, a responsive city government, regular sanitation services, quality health care, and due process under the law."[10]

New York's black intellectuals often made connections between what was happening in the South and what was going on in New York City. They worked to conceive of the problems that African Americans were battling against as national phenomena, even as they fought against problems such as school segregation, separate public accommodations, housing discrimination, and job discrimination in local contexts. What made them intellectuals was that they self-consciously attempted to "devise concepts, analytical categories, critiques and bodies of thought for Blacks to help themselves."[11] As William Banks writes, intellectuals actively worked to "transmit, modify, and create ideas and culture."[12] New York's black intellectuals made use of the ideologies available to them, modified those ideologies in order to make them applicable for the time, place, and goals they intended to accomplish, articulated those ideologies for black and

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[9] In addition to the earlier works that study the civil rights struggle outside of the South can be added: Matthew J. Countryman, *Up South: Civil Rights and Black Power in Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006); Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996); and Thomas J. Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North* (New York: Random House, 2008).
[10] Theoharis and Woodard, *Freedom North*, 3.
[11] Wright, *Crisis of the Black Intellectual*, 26.
[12] Banks, *Black Intellectuals*, xvi.

white Americans, and in the process evolved those ideologies so as to create new ideas and ways of seeing race relations, racism, civil rights, and the condition of black people in the United States.

New York's black intellectuals did not divorce their intellectual production from on-the-ground activism, however. Their writings and speeches were one dimension of their involvement in the civil rights movement. New York's black intellectuals also participated in demonstrations, boycotts, and were even arrested for their efforts to win political, social, and economic equality for blacks. New York's black intellectuals strove to bring about change at the local and national levels. In some instances, they sought to change local circumstances by affecting national policy—such as, in the case of Kenneth Clark's research for the *Brown v. Board of Education* case. In other instances, New York's black intellectuals sought to improve the lives of black New Yorkers and, thereby, perhaps set precedents for more extensive changes throughout the nation. An example of this trend was Reverend Milton Galamison's attempts to coordinate a multi-city boycott of the public school systems in the winter of 1964 in order to dramatize the perpetuation of racial segregation outside the South. All of the cities that Galamison hoped to enlist in the boycott were northeastern and Midwestern. Whatever differences there were between the North and South did not make the racism that blacks were subjected to any less enduring. Discrimination needed to be struck down wherever it was found.

Black intellectuals agreed on the ultimate goal of bringing about a more equitable society in the United States, but they differed on the best ways to achieve that largest of goals. I argue, however, that there were more than two major strands of black thought between 1954 and 1965. Rather, I posit that there were four major political ideologies in conversation and conflict with one another during this decade: racial liberalism, conservatism, black nationalism, and

socialism/communism. The intellectuals who evolved and applied these ideologies to the question of how to achieve black equality in the United States sometimes found their ways of seeing the struggle for freedom compatible with each other, and in other cases antithetical. Nevertheless, black leaders and intellectuals often were influenced by—or continued to pull from more than one of—these ideologies over the course of their careers. Whether the issue was the efficacy of pursuing racial integration throughout American society, the value of working within governmental groups or committees to achieve substantial social change, or the future direction of the civil rights movement by the mid-1960s, New York's black intellectuals such as Kenneth Clark, A. Philip Randolph, Malcolm X, and George Schuyler, among others thought deeply and differently about each one.

The figures discussed throughout this dissertation resided in New York City for all or most of the years between 1954 and 1965. They were also dedicated to producing scholarship, social commentary, or a philosophy related to activism and leadership over the course of this decade. The particular black intellectuals included in this dissertation were involved in civil rights protests both in New York City and around the nation, so their influence on the philosophy and tactics of the movement was broader than affecting only the movement in New York City. These figures, although by no means an exhaustive list, also represented many of the characteristics associated with each of the four major ideological categories well. This is not to argue that they were "pure" in the sense that they did not draw from any other ideological category. However, each of the figures are used to demonstrate how each of the four ideologies were employed in the pursuit of African American civil rights.

Racial liberals of the mid-twentieth century believed in the fundamental principles expressed in the Declaration of Independence and that became associated with the emergence of

a meritocracy following the American Revolution; that all human beings were created equal and were entitled to ascend the social and economic ladder to whatever heights their talent, intellect, and hard work could take them. While liberals believed that democracy was being degraded in America, the fault did not lie with the "American creed" or with governmental institutions. Rather, the problem was that the people administering these institutions were twisting their purposes to serve the prerogatives of white supremacy. Racial liberals believed that liberal democracy could be reformed.[13] As a result, liberals were typically willing to work for racial equality through existing democratic institutions: exercising the suffrage, pushing to obtain the vote for more blacks, fighting for civil rights in the courts and through legislation.

Critics characterized the reformist orientation of racial liberals as "conservative," because as Alfred Kelly commented about Thurgood Marshall and the lawyers of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, "[t]here was a very conservative element in these men in the sense that they really believed in the American dream and that it could be made to work for black men, too. . . . They felt the social order was fundamentally good."[14] But the idea that democracy could be transformed in such ways to serve all the people can also be seen as revolutionary. The problem with democracy, as far as racial liberals were concerned, was that it had not really been tried in the entire history of the country. The American creed could be redeemed, however. The survival of the country depended on it. And racial liberals believed, by the 1950s, that they were the ones to bring about true democracy.

Many black nationalists, by contrast, were convinced that America was beyond redemption, and that rather than engage in this inevitably futile project, African Americans

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[13] Peter C. Myers, *Frederick Douglass: Race and the Rebirth of American Liberalism* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2008), 1-2.

[14] Richard Kluger, *Simple Justice: The History of* Brown v. Board of Education *and Black America's Struggle for Equality* (New York: Vintage Books, 1975; reprint 2004), 642.

should extricate themselves as completely as possible from this country.[15] Elijah Muhammad and Malcolm X taught members of the Nation of Islam that African Americans and whites would never be able to live together harmoniously in the United States because whites had no genuine interest in integrating with blacks.[16] As far as the Nation of Islam was concerned, the solution, therefore, was territorial separation.[17] The calls for territorial sovereignty harkened back to the Garvey movement of the 1920s and the emigrationist movement of Martin Delany during the mid-nineteenth century.

Not all nationalists advocated territorial separation, however. Harold Cruse, for instance, argued that the calls for an independent black nation were not viable and "pessimistic." Rather, Cruse worked for cultural and political autonomy for blacks within the United States through his advocacy for the creation of an indigenous African American cultural aesthetic and his attempt to cultivate the Freedom Now Party in Harlem in 1964.[18] Nationalists did, however, push for blacks to cultivate black-owned institutions that could adequately serve their own communities and for blacks to develop a strong sense of pride in their African history and culture. Those institutions could be retail establishments and restaurants, schools, or cultural and artistic venues, but they needed to further the goal of black independence.

Leftist intellectuals and activists argued that capitalism disadvantaged blacks by privileging the white elite in the United States and subordinated people of color to whites. Therefore, capitalism needed to be replaced by socialist or communist economic and political structures. Socialist intellectuals such as A. Philip Randolph and Bayard Rustin were also

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[15] Elijah Muhammad, "Mr. Muhammad Speaks," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 13 April 1957, B2.

[16] Malcolm X, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1964), 186, 217; Karl Evanzz, *The Messenger: The Rise and Fall of Elijah Muhammad* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1999), 167.

[17] "Black Muslim Aide Berates Whites," *Chicago Daily News*, 27 February 1963.

[18] Harold Cruse, "Why We Need a Freedom Now Party," September 1963, Box 7, Folder 1, Harold Cruse Papers, Archives of the Tamiment Library, Robert F. Wagner Archives, New York University, New York.

distinguished by their perpetual efforts to establish substantive partnerships between African Americans and the organized labor movement. Since the 1910s, Randolph preached the benefits not only of organizing black workers—as he did in forming the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters in 1925—but also in trying to get blacks included within white labor unions in order to build an interracial, class conscious struggle for racial and economic equality.

African American leftists had to balance, and reconcile, allegiances to race and ideology that were fraught with tension within their respective political parties (the American Socialist Party and the American Communist Party), as well as in the larger society. Even though the influence of leftist activists may have been stronger in New York City for a longer period of time than in other parts of the country, as Martha Biondi argues, leftist activists and organizations were actively marginalized in the 1950s. Nevertheless, their beliefs remained important for the dwindling memberships of the Communist or Socialist parties, as well as for many who no longer formally affiliated themselves with either party, as an alternative vision for organizing American society.[19]

As a result, for example, according to historian Gerald Horne, the Communist Party in the United States was of at least two minds when it came to racial integration. "[O]n the one hand they questioned being co-opted by imperialism but on the other hand they welcomed the entry of blacks at all levels of U.S. society."[20] Leftists struggled to implement a radically different social structure here in the United States, trying to operate both within and against the predominant American liberal-democratic tradition simultaneously.

Finally, there were also black conservatives who believed that blacks must take more responsibility for bettering their own condition in this country. Conservatives acknowledged that

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[19] Biondi, *To Stand and Fight*, 182-3.

[20] Gerald Horne, *Black Liberation, Red Scare: Ben Davis and the Communist Party* (Newark, Del.: University of Delaware Press, 1993), 249.

racial discrimination existed in America, but did not endorse mass action and other confrontational tactics as effective methods for bringing about significant and lasting social change. By the middle of the 1950s black conservatives, such as George Schuyler, argued that frontal assaults on racial segregation only engendered increased hostility from whites and retarded the natural progress in race relations that would inevitably occur over time. Schuyler, for example, chided the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) for "battling against" whites all the time for racial discrimination. He would have preferred the NAACP demonstrate a greater willingness to educate whites about the evils of racial discrimination.[21] He also argued that blacks needed to fully "acculturate" themselves into American society in order to close the cultural (behavioral) gap between themselves and whites.[22] According to proponents of this view, blacks needed to think of themselves as individuals and continue to work to better themselves.[23] If enough blacks succeeded, they would then begin reaping collective benefits, as whites would be compelled to grant blacks the rights they sought. This had largely been Booker T. Washington's position regarding the most efficacious path for black advancement prior to his death in 1915.

Besides looking at these major strands of black thought during the 1950s and 1960s, I also argue that by examining the movement from an ideological perspective it is possible to better understand why and how Black Power ideology gained more traction throughout the country by the mid-1960s. Indeed, "black power" did not merely spring fully formed into the consciousness of black people in 1966. By the mid-1960s, however, the movement's legislative

[21] "Reminiscences of George S. Schuyler," (1962), 563, in the Oral History Research Office Collection of the Columbia University Libraries (OHRO/CUL).

[22] "Reminiscences of George S. Schuyler," (1962), 622, in the Oral History Research Office Collection of the Columbia University Libraries (OHRO/CUL).

[23] Oscar R. Williams, *George S. Schuyler: Portrait of a Black Conservative* (Knoxville, Tenn.: The University of Tennessee Press, 2007), 69.

successes, the increasing difficulty that liberals were having plotting the future direction of the movement, the continuation of grinding poverty and systematic discrimination in African American ghettoes throughout the country, and the external political challenges to liberalism in the wider society combined to allow for Black Power to gain more adherents in urban areas throughout the country.[24]

Another of this dissertation's aims is to demonstrate that New York City is an important location to be studied in relation to the civil rights movement. New York City has been home to the largest black population in the United States since the 1920s, making it a center of African American cultural, political, and ideological ferment through the 1960s. New York City became home to black publications, educational groups, and rights organizations of every ideological stripe very early in the century, which created the necessary spaces for the development of a political, physical, and intellectual community by World War I.

New York City's importance had not decreased by the 1950s as evidenced by the organizations that were headquartered there and the group of prominent intellectuals who called the city home. In the last fifteen years several scholars have challenged the traditional manner in which the black freedom struggle has been conceived by showing that New York City also had a vibrant civil rights movement of its own during the 1950s and 1960s that dovetailed with the civil rights agitation occurring throughout the country at the same. In *To Stand and Fight: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Postwar New York City* (2004), Martha Biondi argues that in the decade after World War II a Communist-led diverse coalition of blacks emerged to battle for equality in New York and that blacks were attracted to this movement by the tendency toward

[24] Peniel E. Joseph, *The Black Power Movement: Rethinking the Civil Rights—Black Power Era* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 3.

concrete action as opposed to mere rhetoric.[25] She demonstrates that by 1954, when the Supreme Court handed down the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, African Americans had developed a comprehensive movement for racial equality in New York, which could boast of several significant successes. Although activists were not always successful, the collective movements for equality serve as an important "backdrop to the Black Power era in the North."[26]

Clarence Taylor's, *Knocking at Our Own Door: Milton A. Galamison and the Struggle to Integrate New York City Schools* (1997) and "Up South in New York: The 1950s School Desegregation Struggles" by Adina Back (NYU, Ph.D. Dissertation, 1997) also illustrate that important battles in the fight for racial equality were taking place in New York City during the 1950 and 1960s by examining the campaign to desegregate the public schools. Taylor uses the life of militant Presbyterian pastor, Milton A. Galamison, in order to narrate the fight against the racially discriminatory policies of the city's Board of Education. Back's study is not biographical, but also gives a detailed account of the interactions between African American and Puerto Rican parents and the Board. Both works place a great deal of emphasis on the efforts at grassroots organization and the mobilization of poor parents. Taylor and Back demonstrate the agency of parents in their quest to improve the quality of their children's educations, in addition to showing that the civil rights movement was also occurring in New York City as in the South.

Another work worth mentioning here in the growing literature on civil rights in New York is Brian Purnell's study of the Brooklyn branch of the Congress of Racial Equality in the 1960s, "A Movement Grows in Brooklyn: The Brooklyn Chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and the Northern Civil Rights Movement during the early 1960s (NYU, Ph.D. Dissertation, 2006). Purnell shows the importance of local people in the struggle for equality in

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[25] Biondi, *To Stand and Fight*, 6.
[26] Ibid., 2.

New York City. By chronicling the formation and protest campaigns of Brooklyn CORE, Purnell demonstrates the ability of a small group of activists to mobilize a local community around specific issues that were personally relevant and bring about significant change—even if the group was ultimately unable to change the fundamental structures the perpetuated racial equality in the city. Brooklyn CORE used innovative protest strategies in order to dramatize the inequities of city life endured by poor blacks and Puerto Ricans during the early 1960s.[27] Even with these several important works, however, the New York City movement is worthy of continued study.

These works on the African American civil rights movement are, for the most part, concerned about uncovering the agency of ordinary people. Clearly, this is necessary. Historians have made it plain that social change does not occur solely from the top-down. Nonetheless, this search for black agency should not preclude paying serious attention to the role of ideas and ideology in the civil rights movement. New York's black leaders and intellectuals served two important functions in the movement: 1) as developers of the strategies that would propel the successes of the movement and as communicators who would inspire others to action; and 2) as the people who would sit at the bargaining table (figuratively and literally) with the representatives of entrenched white power and express the race's demands for equality.

These intellectuals were not merely engaging in intellectual exercises by writing about the condition of blacks in America and how to bring about racial equality. Rather, black intellectuals were using their intellectual production as a method of social protest against second-class citizenship. As historian William Banks argues about black intellectuals, historically, "the

[27] Purnell, "A Movement Grows in Brooklyn", 1-4.

lives and works of black intellectuals have always been strongly linked to the position of African Americans in the United States."[28] This was absolutely the case for these black New Yorkers.

African American intellectuals during the middle of the twentieth century applied their intellectual talents in efforts to confront real problems. Kenneth Clark wrote and spoke in depth about the effects of segregation on the psyches of black and white children because he believed that segregation was harmful to the functioning of American society. Malcolm X advocated territorial separation and Harold Cruse pushed for cultural autonomy because they believed in the capacity of blacks to build and maintain political, economic, and cultural institutions of their own that were reflective of a collective pride in African and African American history and culture. A. Philip Randolph continued to push for the American Federation of Labor to bar racially discriminatory unions, and partnerships between organized labor and civil rights groups because he recognized that workers—black and white—had more interests in common than separately. A biracial movement for racial and economic equality was the best way to facilitate an egalitarian society. And George Schuyler spoke out against the black leadership of the civil rights movement because he believed that all Americans had to deal with the present society as it was—warts and all—and not operate from the vantage point of how society ought to be.[29] Blacks had to be just as responsible as whites in terms of taking care not to destroy America in the name of improving it. These varied ideological perspectives are often not considered together in the ways that they interacted in studies of the "classical" civil rights period.[30] This is partly because of the continued reliance on the false dichotomy of integrationism versus

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[28] Banks, *Black Intellectuals*, 242.

[29] Peter Eisenstadt, *Black Conservatism: Essays in Intellectual and Political History* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1999), xi.

[30] The term "classical" is used to the describe the movement between 1954 and 1965 in, Jacqueline Dowd Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past," *Journal of American History*, vol. 91, no. 4 (March 2005), 1251.

nationalism, and partly because of the continued desire to want to characterize Black Power as emerging suddenly, as an overreaction to continued ghettoization rather than as an ideology having much deeper historical roots in the black experience.

Therefore, this dissertation takes ideology seriously. Studying how black intellectuals employed various ideologies in the pursuit of black equality is another way of discussing African American agency. Writing about the role of ideology in the civil rights movement continues to move our perceptions of African Americans, and of the movement, away from the idea that the movement was fueled only by emotionalism and only reactive to the brutality of whites. The movement could be dramatic, and black intellectuals did respond to the injustices blacks faced. But these people were also proactive, working to plot a course for African American equality that worked to move the levers of power as much as be moved by them. That dialectical relationship is in need of further study.

Chapter 1 provides an historical overview of how the four major ideological threads that were present during the civil rights era emerged and evolved over the first half of the twentieth century. Beginning with the debates between Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. Du Bois at the opening of the century, this chapter demonstrates how the prescriptions black intellectuals offered for the elevation of the black masses were foundational for the growth of black intellectual thought through the first half of the twentieth century. Subsequent generations of black thinkers and leaders including A. Philip Randolph, Harold Cruse, and George Schuyler agreed with, took issue with, and further developed the ideas of earlier black intellectuals over the course of their activist careers as they adapted them to fit the current social, political, and economic conditions of the African American population. By the mid-1950s, black intellectuals

had a rich intellectual tradition to draw from that helped provide insight into how to address the contemporary problems facing black people.

Chapter 2 demonstrates that over the course of the first half of the twentieth century Harlem grew into a physical, political, cultural, and intellectual community. This process began at the turn of the twentieth century as blacks began to migrate to northern Manhattan and establish organizations to support community growth and protection. The number and diversity of rights organizations, political and cultural groups, newspapers, and magazines that were created in New York during the early twentieth century and remained into the 1950s made it a fount of black cultural and intellectual production. The four ideologies that were prevalent in determining the strategic agenda of the movement in New York and nationally were able to grow deep organizational roots there from early in the century. The plethora of activities occurring in New York also drew tens of thousands of blacks to the city during the 1910s and even more, thereafter. Some of the prominent intellectuals and activists that would call New York City home between 1954 and 1965 included James Baldwin, A. Philip Randolph, Bayard Rustin, Malcolm X, Harold Cruse, Ella Baker, Milton Galamison, Kenneth Clark, and George Schuyler. Many of these figures were migrants to New York. A few arrived as children, but the majority came to New York in their young adulthood and were either attracted to New York by the bright lights in the big city or were captivated them once they got here.[31]

Chapter 3 examines two issues by looking at battles over school desegregation during the 1950s. The first is how figures from different ideological persuasions felt about the goal of racial integration. The second is the willingness or unwillingness of black leaders to push for

[31] In his biography of Bayard Rustin, John D'Emilio discusses Rustin's desire to leave his small hometown in Pennsylvania, in part, to explore his budding homosexuality in a more nurturing environment. Rustin would be able to be much freer in New York City. Ella Baker also described to amazing and intellectually stimulating the city was as soon as she arrived and listened to the street corner orators.

social equality through established governmental institutions. The *Brown v. Board of Education* decision of 1954 sparked important debates among black intellectuals because of the case's implications for eventually producing a racially integrated society and its potential affect on black institutions.

Even among those who supported the Supreme Court ruling, and worked to see it fully implemented in New York City, black leaders employed different strategies in order to compel the Board of Education to make good on its promises. While Kenneth Clark tried to influence the Board of Education from within by participating in the Board-created Commission on Integration, which existed from 1955 to 1960, Reverend Milton A. Galamison refused to work within government-affiliated agencies, choosing instead to remain independent. While he was president of the Education Committee and then president of the Brooklyn NAACP from 1956 to 1960, he and like-minded members led local parents to challenge Board of Education policies in their own, more confrontational ways. By the end of the 1950s, both leaders would become increasingly frustrated by the recalcitrance of the New York City Board of Education for its unwillingness to embrace the far-reaching programs suggested by its own committees or respond to the pressure put on it by outside organizations. On a larger scale, the slow pace of school desegregation around the country as a result of the tactics of bureaucratic delay and massive resistance, led to questioning the efficacy of liberal methods of achieving racial equality. Liberals would need to respond to the challenges of activists of other ideological bents in order to retain their ideological predominance going into the next decade.

Chapter 4 examines the efforts of the nation's oldest and largest liberal civil rights organization, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, to re-brand itself during the early 1960s in order to respond to the challenges posed by newer organizations such

as Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and even local NAACP branches that wanted to take a more confrontational tack toward addressing the concerns of blacks than the national headquarters was comfortable with. In his addresses to the NAACP national conventions between 1960 and 1962, Roy Wilkins espoused more militant rhetoric about the goals of the civil rights movement to achieve equality now, and asserted that the NAACP needed to have the leading role in bringing about this great change to American society. By appealing to the increasing militancy of younger members of the NAACP, particularly the youth chapters, Wilkins and the national NAACP would be successful in maintaining its place at the preeminent civil rights organization in the country.

Chapter 5 looks at 1963 and into the early months of 1964 as a defining year in the civil rights movement. It examines three important episodes that took place that year: the protests in Birmingham, Alabama during the spring, the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom during the summer, and the one-day boycott of New York City's public schools that occurred in February 1964. Intellectuals such as Bayard Rustin and James Baldwin argued the either character of blacks or the character of whites had changed in fundamental ways during 1963. The civil rights movement and the larger American society were also significantly affected as a result. Many who had participated in bringing these protests to fruition viewed each as a success, but the successes of 1963 demonstrated that the movement was at a crossroads. The powers-that-be in each place continued to be resistant to the larger demands of the movement, even as blacks won concessions either from local, state, or the federal government.

The final chapter looks at the question that many black intellectuals and leaders were asking by the end of 1963: where should the movement go next? This was not necessarily a question of location, but what were the most effective ways to capitalize on the recent legislative

successes of the movement, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Different leaders proposed different answers to this question based on their ideological proclivities, articulating different levels of federal government involvement, and varying political proposals. What was evident, however, was racial liberalism was on the decline as the orthodoxy of the civil rights movement as liberalism was being challenged from numerous quarters by the end of 1965. If liberals had been able to withstand a significant challenge to their ideological preeminence at the beginning of the decade, they could no longer by 1966 as the undulations of black intellectual thought lifted the tide of nationalist and Black Power thinking to the forefront of the struggle for black equality for the next decade to come.

# Chapter 1

## "These are the Interconnections of History": Four Ideologies in Historical Perspective

> *We are creatures of history, for every historical epoch has its roots in a preceding epoch. The black militants of today are standing upon the shoulders of the New Negro radicals of my day, the twenties, thirties, and forties. We stood upon the shoulders of the civil rights fighters of the Reconstruction era, and they stood upon the shoulders of the black abolitionists. These are the interconnections of history, and they play their role in the course of development.*
> A. Philip Randolph[1]

Thousands of people attended Frederick Douglass' funeral in Washington, D.C. on February 25, 1895. The old and young, distinguished and common, came from far and wide to get one last glimpse of the "Sage of Anacostia" who had worked so hard to secure the rights of African Americans.[2] He had been the victim of a massive heart attack five days earlier at his estate, Cedar Hill, after having attended a National Council of Women meeting earlier in the afternoon.[3] Douglass' contemporary, Alexander Crummell, a prominent minister, Christian missionary to Africa, and activist for African American rights, gave one of the many eulogies. His death signified the passing of an earlier age of black reform and thought. Douglass was one of the last connections to the antebellum period of African American intellectual thought. Crummell would perhaps be the final link when he passed away on September 10, 1898. Both Douglass and Crummell, in different ways, would act as bridges between the pre- and post-Reconstruction periods of African American thought.

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[1] A. Philip Randolph, in Jervis Anderson, *A. Philip Randolph: A Biographical Portrait* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1972), 21.

[2] Booker T. Washington, *Frederick Douglass* (New York: Haskell House Publishers, Ltd., 1968, 1907), 338, 341-43; Peter C. Myers, *Frederick Douglass: Race and the Rebirth of American Liberalism* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2008), 9-10.

[3] Paula J. Giddings, *Ida, A Sword Among Lions: Ida B. Wells and the Campaign Against Lynching* (New York: Amistad, 2008), 340; Washington, *Frederick Douglass*, 341.

Prior to his death, Douglass collaborated with the journalist and anti-lynching activist, Ida B. Wells, to produce a pamphlet entitled *The Reason Why the Colored American Is Not in the World's Columbian Exposition* in advance of the 1893 World's Fair in Chicago.[4] Douglass and Wells wrote and edited this pamphlet to protest the fact that African Americans were almost entirely excluded from participating in the Fair.[5] Except for one exhibit in the Women's building, blacks were not permitted to frame their own exhibits at the Exposition.[6] Douglass worked with Wells because he admired Wells' anti-lynching activism, having himself delivered scathing rebukes of the practice in the last decade of his life.[7] Though their relationship was tense at times, Wells was "overcome with grief" for months after learning of Douglass' passing.[8] Theirs was a mutual respect; Wells to Douglass for the lifetime of service to the race he had offered, Douglass to Wells for the zeal with which she was serving the interests of the race. Wells was thankful to Douglass for the wisdom that he had imparted to her during their relationship.[9]

Crummell, in the last year of his life, joined with the upcoming generation of black male thinkers when he helped to found—and was elected the first president of—the American Negro Academy (ANA) in 1897. It was the first black institution in the world dedicated to black intellectual production.[10] The ANA, headquartered in Washington, D.C., was, according to its constitution, "an organization of authors, artists, and those distinguished in other walks of life,

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[4] David W. Blight, ed., *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: An American Slave Written By Himself, With Related Documents* (New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2003), 178.

[5] Elliot M. Rudwick and August Meier, "Black Man in the 'White City:" Negroes and Columbian Exposition, 1893," *Phylon*, Vol. 26, No. 4, (Autumn 1965), 356.

[6] Barbara Hochman, "*Uncle Tom's Cabin* at the Columbian Exposition," *Libraries and the Cultural Record*, vol. 41, no. 1 (2006), 101-2; Giddings, *Ida, A Sword Among Lions*, 247-8, 270.

[7] Blight, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*, 178.

[8] Giddings, *Ida, A Sword Among Lions*, 283-310, 340. Giddings mentions that Wells was, in her own words, "overcome with grief" after Douglass' death.

[9] Ibid., 277.

[10] Henry Louis Gates, "Introduction;" W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Bantam Books, 1903, 1989), ix.

men of African descent, for the promotion of Letters, Science, and Art."[11] Comprised of some of the most accomplished black men in the country at the time, the initial membership included author Paul Lawrence Dunbar, philosophy professor Alain Locke, historian Carter G. Woodson, and both Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. Du Bois, among others. Crummell and other members believed that racism could be destroyed through the promotion of "scientific truth."[12]

This belief in the truth of science had flowered by the 1890s and was connected in many ways to the burgeoning American Progressive reform impulse of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Progressive reformers tended to be middle-class, college-educated, and come from devout Protestant backgrounds. They were interested in reforming American society in such ways to ameliorate the problems they associated with large-scale immigration, rapid urbanization, and the excesses of industrial capitalism. Progressive reformers believed they were witnessing the degeneration of American society as religiosity was on the decline, the cities were teeming with newcomers who needed to be assimilated into American society, and the costs of starting a business had become prohibitive for most Americans. Therefore, many reformers were concerned that American would soon no longer be a meritocracy.

Progressive reformers advocated professionalization throughout American society and led to important changes within academia and politics. They also tended to try and use science and empirical research in attempts to solve societal problems. Consequently, Progressive reform efforts had both beneficial and harmful affects on African American life and thought. During the last third of the nineteenth century white scientists in the United States and Western Europe had been providing "scientific" evidence that African Americans were biologically inferior to—if not an entirely different species of being than—Aryans. Men such as Arthur de Gobineau, the

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[11] Reginald Blaxton, "The American Negro Academy: Black Excellence 100 Years Ago," *American Visions* (Feb.-March, 1997), http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m1546/is_n1_v12/ai_19257620/, 1, 11 May 2009.

[12] Blaxton, "The American Negro Academy: Black Excellence 100 Years Ago," 1, 11.

French aristocrat, novelist, and diplomat; and Sir Francis Galton, Charles Darwin's cousin, injected these racist ideas with "proof" from biology during the 1850s and 1860s.

The concept of Aryan racial superiority traveled well across the Atlantic to the United States because it added the credibility of "scientific truth" to already widely accepted beliefs about the "natural" order of the races.[13] Many white intellectuals, rather than argue against racial theory, threw their full support behind it.[14] "Elitists, utopians and so-called 'progressives' fused their smoldering race fears and class bias with their desire to make a better world. They reinvented Galton's eugenics into a repressive and racist ideology."[15] Scientific racism was so damaging to African Americans for several reasons. There were the moral implications of valuing one human life more than another. Scientific racists were also asserting that there were innate and unchangeable inequalities among human beings and this directly contradicted the central idea of the Declaration of Independence. Most importantly, however, these new "scientific truths" were being used to justify an avalanche of legislation that disfranchised African Americans and constructed an entirely separate society for blacks to inhabit.

Crummell, Du Bois, and the other members of the American Negro Academy were struggling against the notion of black inferiority at a moment of increasingly popularity. Members believed that their most effective weapon in combating these racist concepts was, in fact, "scientific truth." As Crummell argued, "'We have got to meet the minds of this country. . . . It is only . . . scientific truth, in every department, that is going to do anything for us.'"[16] Very much in the Progressive mold, the ANA sought to use scholarship in order to diagnose problems

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[13] Patricia Sullivan, *Lift Every Voice: The NAACP and the Making of the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: The New Press, 2009), 8; Gilbert Osofsky, *Harlem: The Making of a Ghetto, Negro New York, 1890-1930* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee Publisher, 1996, Second Edition), 26-7.

[14] Ann Douglas, *Terrible Honesty: Mongrel Manhattan in the 1920s* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1995), 306-7.

[15] Edwin Black, "The Horrifying American Roots of Nazi Eugenics," The History News Network, 24 November 2003, http://hnn.us/articles/1796.html, 15 May 2009.

[16] Blaxton, "The American Negro Academy: Black Excellence 100 Years Ago," 1, 11.

and promote solutions to the social, economic, and political problems affecting African Americans. The Academy also affirmed an abiding belief in the ability of a liberal arts education to elevate the race and was very much concerned with aiding future generations of talented intellects.[17] According to the Academy's constitution, "members were committed to aiding youngsters 'of genius in the attainment of the higher culture, here and abroad.'"[18] The beliefs in the elevating power of a liberal arts education and that there needed to be a small vanguard of elite, highly educated, African Americans charged with the responsibility and duty to lead the race guided the program of the American Negro Academy.[19] Du Bois, in his influential *Souls of Black Folk* in 1903, would include these principles in his program for black racial uplift. He argued that there was, perhaps, a small group of African Americans that would be charged with elevating the race to the sufficient levels to bring about racial equality. The "talented tenth" concept—although the phrase was not used in *Souls*—would help shape racial liberal ideology through the mid-1960s. In fact, it would be during the 1890s and 1900s that four ideologies: racial liberalism, black conservatism, black nationalism, and socialism—threads of which had been present in a nascent form prior to the end of Reconstruction—began to appear in forms that would be recognizable to the intellectuals and leaders that would be evolving them in the 1950s and 1960s.

The deaths of Douglass in 1895 and Crummell three years later meant that there were no more prominent leaders alive who had seen the race through enslavement and into freedom. A

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[17] Kathleen O'Mara Wahle, "Alexander Crummell: Black Evangelist and Pan-Negro Nationalist," *Phylon*, Vol. 29, No. 4, (1968), 394; Rutledge M. Dennis, "Du Bois and the Role of the Educated Elite," *Phylon*, Vol. 46, No. 4, (Autumn, 1977), 390.

[18] Blaxton, "The American Negro Academy: Black Excellence 100 Years Ago," 2, 11 May 2009.

[19] The commitment to promoting liberal arts education, among other factors, would cause Booker T. Washington to leave the American Negro Academy after only one year as a member.

torch would almost be literally passed from earlier generations of black thinkers such as Henry Highland Garnet, Martin Delany, and Sojourner Truth who helped guide the race out of slavery and through Reconstruction, to Booker T. Washington, W. E. B. Du Bois, William Monroe Trotter, Ida B. Wells, and others. In fact, Du Bois would become the second president of the American Negro Academy after Crummell's passing. The 1890s, therefore, was a transitory period for black intellectual thought as a younger generation of African American intellectuals, who—for the most part—had not been born in slavery, was coming of age in a country that was changing dramatically at the same time. But more important than their collective youth was that even though leaders such as Du Bois, Wells, and Trotter drew on earlier thinkers, they were working to devise strategies for achieving racial equality that would combat the new, modern political and economic structures that were emerging at the turn of the twentieth century.

Younger thinkers were establishing themselves as viable agitators for African American rights in this decade. In 1895, Du Bois earned his doctorate in history from Harvard. In 1896, he began his sociological study of blacks in Philadelphia through the University of Pennsylvania. And in 1897 he took over the directorship of the annual Atlanta Conferences where scholars presented research on every facet of black life in America at the time. Booker T. Washington, who was the principal of Tuskegee Institute, a black industrial college in Alabama, was emerging as the most important black leader in the country. Within seven months of Douglass' death, Washington replaced Douglass as the most influential African American in the United States after he delivered his most famous address at the Cotton States Exposition in Atlanta. William Monroe Trotter had just completed his undergraduate degree from Harvard in 1895, graduating magna cum laude, and earned his master's degree in 1896. And by 1895 Ida B. Wells was already a prominent journalist and anti-lynching activist, having published two pamphlets,

*Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All its Phases* and *A Red Record* in 1892 detailing "the deterioration of American race relations by tabulating the rising toll of lynch mobs."[20]

The emergence of the Progressive reform movement, the growth of large-scale industrial capitalism, and the construction of Jim Crow, would shape the institutions that blacks would create and cooperate with for the next sixty-plus years. The black thinkers who were coming of age during the age during the 1890s were working through, within, and against forces and structures that were quite different than earlier generations prior to Reconstruction. The appearance of these new social, economic, and political structures helped mark the 1890s as the beginning of a distinct period of African American intellectual thought and leadership.

While the Progressives were an incredibly varied group of reformers, one uniting principle for many was the belief they could bring about positive social change through their individual actions. Many Progressive reformers, black and white, had connections to the militant abolition movement of the 1830s and 1840s through familial ties; and had been taught since childhood to believe in racial equality. Mary White Ovington, for example, who became a founder of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), was born into a family of abolitionists in New England. Her parents had been involved in the movement and she grew up listening to stories about the activities of William Lloyd Garrison, who was a friend of her grandmother's. Ovington had been enthralled while listening to Frederick Douglass in her youth and Garrison was, in her words, her "childhood's greatest hero."[21] She continued this familial tradition of advocacy for black civil rights as an adult when she became involved

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[20] W. Fitzhugh Brundage, ed. *Up From Slavery, by Booker T. Washington, With Related Documents* (New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2003), 8.

[21] Gilbert Osofsky, "Progressivism and the Negro: New York, 1900-1915," *American Quarterly*, Vol. 16, No. 2, (Summer 1964), 160.

with the Committee for Improving the Industrial Condition of the Negro in New York (CIICN) in 1906.

The principal founder of the CIICN was an African American educator, Dr. William L. Bulkley. Bulkley's organization was established to help broaden employment opportunities for black New Yorkers.[22] The Progressive movement provided African American leaders with ways to connect with liberal whites who might support their efforts to build biracial coalitions in pursuit of racial equality. It would be an interracial committee of sixty New Yorkers, including Bulkley, Ovington, and William Jay Shieffelin, a "philanthropist, urban reformer, [and] heir to the Jay family abolitionist tradition" that ultimately launched the CIICN. Jay became the CIICN's first president.[23]

The emergence of a second industrial revolution and large-scale industrial capitalism after Reconstruction roused the concern of many Progressive reformers who saw themselves as combating the vagaries of industrial capitalism. The economic depression of the mid-1890s vividly illustrated the widening gap between the rich and the poor, and convinced many Americans that industrialism had caused the dire economic crisis.[24] According to historian Paul D. Moreno, though black leaders clung to their "classical liberal principles," which included the "free labor idea," after the depression of the mid-1890s, this principle could no longer prevail unchallenged.[25] Reformers and others began to question whether social mobility was still possible in America.[26]

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[22] Osofsky, "Progressivism and the Negro," 163.
[23] Ibid., 166.
[24] David P. Thelen, "Social Tensions and the Origins of Progressivism," *Journal of American History*, Vol. 56, No. 2, (September 1969), 336-7.
[25] Paul D. Moreno, *Black Americans and Organized Labor: A New History* (Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 2006), 67.
[26] Thelen, "Social Tensions and the Origins of Progressivism," 336-7.

The political landscape that African Americans were forced to operate within had also shifted significantly since Reconstruction. Black leaders during and after the 1890s worked within a political universe in which the federal government had intervened on their behalf to guarantee equality under the law during the 1860s and 1870s, only to see those rights eroded within a generation. State legislatures, with the support of the Supreme Court, virtually rendered the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments to the Constitution moot over the course of the 1880s. They effectively went in for the kill after the mid 1890s. *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), in which the Court mandated that states could maintain racially segregated public accommodations and other facilities as long as they were equal, and the laws disfranchising African Americans in the South between 1898 and 1902, in effect, codified a version of white American nationalism that recreated a country in which blacks were politically and socially invisible.

Black intellectuals and leaders in this period, Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. Du Bois the most prominent among them, articulated two different approaches for achieving black equality. The common term of the time was "racial uplift." According to historian Kevin Gaines, "[f]or many black elites, uplift came to mean an emphasis on self-help, racial solidarity, temperance, thrift, chastity, social purity, patriarchal authority, and the accumulation of wealth."[27] In his book, *Uplifting the Race: Black Leadership, Politics, and Culture in the Twentieth Century,* Gaines characterizes racial uplift ideology as inherently conservative due to the upper-class biases of many of its advocates. As a result of Gaines' focus on the class dynamics of racial uplift ideology, however, he tends to flatten the political and ideological differences between Washington and Du Bois so that they merely become two different sides of the same socially conservative coin. However, the differences between Washington and Du

[27] Kevin K. Gaines, *Uplifting the Race: Black Leadership, Politics, and Culture in the Twentieth Century* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 2.

Bois' ideologies—and by implication, the differences between racial liberalism and black conservatism—though perhaps sharing some common origins and rhetoric, were real and significant, and should not be understated. The essence of Du Bois and Washington's disagreement about how to implement racial uplift came down to different definitions of "civilization" and "progress." Their conflicting perspectives manifested themselves, in more practical terms, in their educational and social philosophies.

Washington espoused a conservative political ideology. Conservative, not because he spoke in terms that were significantly different from Du Bois. Both spoke of their desire to uplift or elevate the race and both also claimed some of the same thinkers as intellectual progenitors, namely Frederick Douglass.[28] Conservative, not because he advocated for blacks to be excluded from the mainstream of American society. Washington did, in his own quiet ways, work against lynching and Jim Crow.[29] Conservative, not because he operated within ideological, political, and economic parameters determined by whites. Most African American leaders did as a result of the stark imbalances in political, economic, and social power that whites wielded as opposed to blacks. Rather, Washington was conservative because he was willing to surrender the timetable for black liberation to whites. And conservative because he put forth the view that blacks not look for federal intervention on their behalf even though he lived in a time when there was a precedent for it; even though the Constitution guaranteed blacks equality under the law.[30]

Many whites believed—and so did Washington—that civilization was a literal, mechanical process that races engaged in. Civilization was used as shorthand to connote both

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[28] Brundage, *Up From Slavery, by Booker T. Washington, With Related Documents*, 15-7; Cary D. Wintz, ed., *African American Political Thought, 1890-1930: Washington, Du Bois, Garvey, and Randolph* (Armonk, N. Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1996), 4-5.

[29] Wintz, *African American Political Thought, 1890-1930*, 2, 3.

[30] Washington blamed the failures of Reconstruction on the propensity of African Americans to seek government assistance to ameliorate their economic hardships, as well as the federal government giving too much political power and responsibility to blacks. Booker T. Washington, *Up From Slavery*, 78-9; Washington, *Frederick Douglass*, 249.

larger contributions to world culture in terms of art, literature, and thought; and was also a commentary on one's fitness of character, deportment, hygiene, and biological development. Most whites believed, and seemingly so did Washington, that African Americans were at the bottom of the ladder when it came to their level of civilization.[31] It is important to note that Washington did not necessarily see blacks' inferior level of civilization as irremediable.[32] Nevertheless, Washington accepted whites' characterization of his race as less civilized and used it to argue against literary education. In light of what Washington observed of African American life in preparation to open Tuskegee Institute, he commented that giving poor black children a "mere book education" would be "almost a waste of time."[33] As a result, Washington was willing to concede that blacks were not yet ready to exercise political responsibility, and that as they achieved higher levels of civilization as a group, whites would be willing to grant African Americans more rights. Washington argued that whites would be keen to reward true merit, regardless of the color of the person's skin: "there is something in human nature which always makes an individual recognize and reward merit, no matter under what color of skin the merit was found. I have found, too, that it is the visible, the tangible, that goes a long way to softening prejudices."[34]

Therefore, Washington, and later black conservatives, such as George S. Schuyler and Zora Neale Hurston, advocated what scholar Deborah Plant has termed an "individualist personal philosophy." [35] Washington emphasized that blacks needed to focus on achieving economic autonomy and that the onus for racial uplift had to be on African Americans alone. Until blacks

[31] Brundage, *Up From Slavery*, 20.
[32] Ibid., 24.
[33] Washington, *Up From Slavery*, 94-5.
[34] Ibid., 111.
[35] Deborah G. Plant, *Every Tub Must Sit on Its Own Bottom: The Philosophy and Politics of Zora Neale Hurston* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 37-40.

reached and then surpassed white benchmarks of civilization, Washington preached that it was "the extremest folly" to agitate for the vote and social equality. Blacks did not need to integrate with whites, but rather to focus their energies internally in order to rise to the standards of civilization imposed by southern whites.[36] He told blacks that "the time [would] come when the Negro in the South will be accorded all the political rights which his ability, character, and material possessions entitle them to. I think, though, that the opportunity to freely exercise such political rights will not come in any large degree through outside or artificial forcing, but will be accorded to the Negro by the Southern white people themselves, and they will protect him in the exercise of those rights."[37] Washington told blacks to accept these standards and, in effect, told blacks that these standards were fair and legitimate. Washington did not appear to acknowledge that virtually all southern whites (and northern whites, too) would never consider a black person to be their equal. Washington, then, was essentially asking African Americans to aspire towards the impossible. This gave whites license to continue oppressing blacks without guilt, and allowed whites to set the timetable for black liberation; a timetable they would not even be pressured to disclose.

Booker T. Washington (and black conservatives more generally) was motivated by a genuine desire to improve the status of blacks in American society. Washington was also motivated by a desire to protect his personal status within the black community and among influential whites. Washington fiercely protected his standing by advocating that others follow his example. According to historian, W. Fitzhugh Brundage, "Washington understood that his

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[36] Washington, *Up From Slavery*, 143-4.
[37] Ibid., 150.

life, if properly presented, provided confirmation of the practicality of the program of racial uplift that he had outlined in his speech at the 1895 Cotton States Exposition in Atlanta."[38]

After he delivered his address at the Atlanta Exposition in 1895, Washington became the most influential black man in America. Washington had been building a coterie of followers over the course of the 1890s to promote the cause of industrial education and his "pull yourself up by your own bootstraps" personal philosophy. Rather than an intellectual, racial liberal group in the vanguard of African American leadership, Washington worked to place himself and a group of black entrepreneurs at the head of the race. In 1900 he established the Negro Business League for that purpose and to help further institutionalize the conservative ideology (Tuskegee being the premier institution, of course).

Particularly after Atlanta, white people in very high places anointed Washington the spokesperson for African Americans. Harvard University awarded Washington an honorary degree in 1896. And in 1901 even president Theodore Roosevelt was willing to open the White House to him; the first black man since Frederick Douglass to have that privilege bestowed. White philanthropists were more willing to open their pocketbooks to support Tuskegee Institute, in particular, and the industrial education movement, more broadly. Washington could count John D. Rockefeller and President Grover Cleveland among the donors to the school, and the president as someone who secured donations for Tuskegee.[39] Ida B. Wells pointedly demonstrated that black liberal-arts colleges lost potential donations as a result.[40] In this conservative time, Washington's accommodationist message appealed to many whites because they interpreted it as unthreatening to the status quo.

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[38] Brundage, *Up From Slavery*, 22.

[39] Washington, *Up From Slavery*, 181, 147; Giddings, *Ida, A Sword Among Lions*, 415.

[40] Giddings, *Ida, A Sword Among Lions*, 448; Mia Bay, *To Tell the Truth Freely: The Life of Ida B. Wells* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2009), 254; Brundage, *Up From Slavery*, 27-8; David W. Blight and Robert Gooding-Williams, eds. *The Souls of Black Folk, by W. E. B. Du Bois* (New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1997), 16-7.

But just as in earlier historical eras, African American leaders never espoused a singular ideology. And even in the mid-1890s when Washington was near the height of his power, not only was there a competing ideology, but African American leaders were his fiercest critics. Racial liberal leaders such as Ida B. Wells, William Monroe Trotter, and W. E. B. Du Bois expressed biting criticisms of Booker T. Washington's program by the first decade of the twentieth century. Wells connected Washington's repeated condemnations of liberal arts education for blacks to the increasing hostility towards blacks being admitted to northern colleges, "a contracting of the number and influence of the schools of higher learning so judiciously scattered through all the southern states . . . for the Negro's benefit," as well as the curtailing of educational opportunities, even at the elementary level, in parts of the South.[41] Wells was not only dismayed by the implications of Washington's conservative message, but also his timidity in refuting some of the more tortured interpretations his message inspired. As Wells put it in a 1904 editorial:

> Mr. Washington's reply to his critics is that he does not oppose the higher education, and offers in proof of his statement his Negro faculty. But the critics observe that nowhere does he speak for it, and they can remember dozens of instances when he has condemned every system of education save that which teaches the Negro how to work. They feel that the educational opportunities of the masses, always limited enough, are being threatened by this retrogression. And it is this feeling which prompts the criticism. They are beginning to feel that if they longer keep silent, Negro educational advantages will be even more restricted in more directions.[42]

Wells' editorial was not just directed at education, however. She was criticizing Washington's entire ideology. Wells argued that his justification for forgoing civil equality—that he understood the political, social, and economic lay of the land in the South—was not a proper one. She contended that blacks knew from "sad experience that industrial education will not stand him in place of political, civil and intellectual liberty, and [they] object to being

[41] Ida B. Wells, Reprinted from *World Today*, 6 (1904), in Brundage, *Up From Slavery*, 219-20.
[42] Ibid., 220.

deprived of fundamental rights of American citizenship. . . ."[43] For her—and many other racial liberals—it was "indeed a bitter pill to feel that much of the unanimity with which the nation today agrees to Negro disfranchisement comes from the general acceptance of Mr. Washington's theories."[44]

One of those other racial liberals was William Monroe Trotter. From his newspaper in Boston, Trotter also voiced dissatisfaction with Washington's ideology of accommodation to an indeterminate length of second-class citizenship. Trotter was a militant integrationist in this period and demanded that African Americans be protected in their right to vote. Trotter's dislike of Washington was ideological. He placed much of the responsibility for the erosion of black rights on Washington's accommodationist views.[45] When Washington visited Boston in 1903 to give a speech, Trotter heckled Washington so relentlessly that the meeting descended into bedlam. Washington was temporarily prevented from delivering his oration.[46] A fight broke out that had to be broken up by police, and Trotter was subsequently arrested and sentenced to thirty days in jail. This was one of the reasons Washington inveighed so heavily against the Niagara Movement after it had been established in 1905.[47]

Trotter and, Washington's most trenchant ideological foe, Du Bois, were among the principle founders of the Niagara Movement. Niagara represented the next attempt after the ANA at institution-building by racial liberals, and was predicated on the belief that African Americans deserved all the rights of American citizens and needed the vote.[48] Du Bois had argued blacks absolutely required the suffrage as the only real way they might be able to defend

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[43] Ibid.
[44] Ibid., 221.
[45] Bay, *To Tell the Truth Freely*, 254.
[46] Ibid., 256.
[47] Giddings, *Ida, A Sword Among Lions*, 450..
[48] Sullivan, *Lift Every Voice*, 3-4.

themselves against the forces that continually sought to subordinate them as second-class citizens.[49] Du Bois also argued that every aspect of American society needed to be racially integrated.

"The Niagara Movement Declaration of Principles" sounded these themes and others as they described the numerous facets of society in which blacks in the United States were discriminated against. Although acknowledging at the outset that African Americans had indeed progressed as a people to a degree since the Civil War, the members of the Niagara Movement went on to resolve that in terms of political participation, the exercise of civil liberties, economic and educational opportunities, legal justice, employment, and in other areas of society. The rights of blacks were severely circumscribed primarily on the basis of racial designation. The members of Niagara thought this unjust. Therefore, they called on the Congress to pass necessary legislation to promote the enforcement of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments to the Constitution and called on African Americans, themselves, to be paragons of civic virtue. Blacks were told that it was their "duty" to vote, work, follow the laws of the United States, be "clean and orderly," send their children to school, and respect themselves as well as others.[50] The Niagara Program was a mixture of liberal militancy and the self-help philosophy of racial uplift that middle-class African Americans frequently expressed. Washington actively worked to discredit the Niagara Movement by mobilizing his ample network of influential and wealthy black and white associates against it.[51]

The Niagara Movement fizzled after only a few years in existence, not only because of Washington's efforts, but its most important legacy is as precursor to the National Association

[49] W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (New York: Bantam Books, 1903, 1989), 38.
[50] "The Niagara Movement Declaration of Principles," in Jonathan Birnbaum and Clarence Taylor, eds., *Civil Rights Since 1787: A Reader on the Black Struggle* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 234-7.
[51] Gaines, *Uplifting the Race*, 63; Brundage, *Up From Slavery*, 28.

for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). The NAACP was founded in 1909 in New York City by black and white reformers. Du Bois would initially be the new organization's lone black officer, but would exert an incredible amount of influence over the group as editor of its monthly journal, *The Crisis*. Du Bois' participation within the NAACP and his advocacy for its growth demonstrated his belief in the efficacy of a biracial movement for social equality; another important tenet of racial liberal ideology. The NAACP's founding would signal the moment when New York City began to assume its place as the center of intellectual and political life for black America.

The founding of the NAACP catalyzed the gathering of prominent black and white leaders in New York City to discuss how to ameliorate the problems facing African Americans. The National Negro Conference at the end of May in 1909 brought together nearly 300 black and white, women and men, from various organizations and fields, including scholars, social reformers, religious leaders, civil rights activists, and public officials.[52] Attendees gave presentations that attacked Social Darwinism, spoke out against African American disfranchisement, lynching, and characterized racial discrimination as a national problem, rather than merely a southern phenomenon. Du Bois, Trotter, and Wells were all there.[53] The fledgling NAACP held another conference a year later in New York, and set up an office from which to operate.[54] The NAACP used Progressive Era techniques including conducting academic studies of issues concerning race and poverty in attempts to influence legislation, as well as fighting Jim Crow through the courts, which would ultimately become the most distinct facet of the

[52] Sullivan, *Lift Every Voice*, 6, 8.
[53] Ibid., 8-10.
[54] Ibid., 15-7.

NAACP's organizational approach.  As the decade wore on, the NAACP began developing its legal strategy for attacking racial discrimination.[55]

Two years after the NAACP was established another organization brought together black and white reformers for the purpose of helping black New Yorkers, particularly those migrating from the South, find the goods and services they needed, and combat discrimination in employment, business, housing, and education.  The organization was the National Urban League (NUL).[56]  The Urban League program was multi-faceted.  Reflecting the Progressive principle that social scientific research should be employed in addressing social ills, leaders designed and implemented field research in cities in order to document the conditions African Americans lived under.  The NUL also made training professional social workers a top priority during its early decades.[57]

In addition to the academic component of its program, the National Urban League also focused on educating poorer southern migrants; providing them with marketable skills to help them obtain gainful employment and schooling in the necessary deportment to acculturate into northern urban society.[58]  The NUL hoped to dispel harmful stereotypes about African Americans and convince whites that blacks were worthy of equal treatment by getting poor blacks to inculcate middle-class behaviors.[59]  League leaders also worked directly with real estate agents and landlords in an effort to get them to make more properties available to blacks and to renovate those that already existed.[60]  Although having slightly different focuses during their early years, both the NAACP and NUL were influenced by the ideas of Progressive reform.

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[55] Ibid., 18-9

[56] Toure F. Reed, *Not Alms But Opportunity: The Urban League and the Politics of Racial Uplift* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 12.

[57] Reed, *Not Alms But Opportunity*, 15.

[58] Ibid., 12, 26.

[59] Seth M. Scheiner, *Negro Mecca: A History of the Negro In New York City, 1865-1920* (New York: New York University Press, 1965), 155-6.

[60] Ibid., 29.

Together, the two organizations institutionalized the racial liberal approach to achieving racial equality for the rest of the twentieth century.

When these groups began they were at the vanguard of the struggle for racial equality. By the second decade of the twentieth century Booker T. Washington's vaunted "Tuskegee machine," which pursued the political and economic agenda of black conservatives, was slowing down. Having whites in the leadership positions and on the Board of Directors gave the NAACP access to white philanthropic organizations that would be willing to support its liberal vision of racial equality. The racial liberal approach to achieving equal rights for African Americans—founded on interracial cooperation, a steadfast faith in the principles of equality and meritocracy, and a willingness to work through established channels of authority—was in the ascendancy throughout the first decade of the century. The NAACP and the NUL, while representing the beginning of institutionalized racial liberalism in the twentieth century, also signified the culmination of a two decades long struggle to unseat Booker T. Washington and the "Tuskegee machine."

Social conservatism, of the Washington mold, did not entirely disappear from the scene after 1911 and, within less than a decade, there would also be substantial challenges to liberal ideological hegemony coming from the left. As has been the case within African American intellectual thought since the early nineteenth century, other viewpoints came to the fore that were at odds in some ways with racial liberalism and black conservatism. Racial liberals had established the NAACP and the NUL to perpetuate their agenda during the 1890s and 1900s and black conservatives had founded Tuskegee Institute, the Negro Business League, and used the

*New York Age* newspaper, edited by T. Thomas Fortune, as a mouthpiece for its messages. During the 1910s black nationalists and leftists would begin to do the same from New York City.

In 1916 a Jamaican immigrant came to New York City looking for counsel on how he could construct industrial schools back in Jamaica similar to Tuskegee. Garvey believed in Washington's philosophy of self-help and working towards economic autonomy. The two men corresponded during 1914 and 1915 about the potential for Garvey to come and view Tuskegee first-hand.[61] Washington's death that year did not dampen Garvey's desire to build his fledgling Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) back in Jamaica or discourage him from traveling to the United States in search of funding. Garvey's arrival in the United States demonstrated that the influence of Booker T. Washington's ideas had leapt beyond this country's borders. His decision to go to Harlem to fundraise is evidence of the community's rapid emergence as the new mecca of black politics and intellect by World War I.

Garvey established a branch of the UNIA in Harlem and shifted the focus of his organization over the next several years from advocating industrial education to working for blacks to have a stronger, more unified, political voice. He was not abandoning Booker Washington's philosophy, however, but rather adapting it for the times—a time of global warfare and rising industrial capitalism.[62] Both Washington and Garvey were strong adherents of capitalism. They believed in the power of economic success to ameliorate racial prejudice. The difference between Washington and Garvey, however, was that Washington's economic philosophy was based on nineteenth century notions of racial uplift. Blacks would be able to achieve economic success by exercising and embodying diligence, industry, and thrift.

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[61] Wintz, *African American Political Thought, 1890-1930*, 11; Colin Grant, *Negro With a Hat: The Rise and Fall of Marcus Garvey* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 68-9.

[62] Robert A. Hill, ed., *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers*, Vol. 1, 1826-August 1919 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), lxvi.

Washington was training his students at Tuskegee—and encouraging southern blacks generally—to become the economic competitors of whites, but in such a way that appeared unassuming and modest.[63] Garvey's program for racial uplift, however, did not embrace the reserved values that characterized the nineteenth century version of racial uplift ideology. Instead, it was characterized by the much more "aggressive virtues . . . of personal dominance" and looked at racial success as a battle against other groups.[64]

Marcus Garvey also differentiated his approach to racial uplift from Washington's by pairing Washington's social philosophy with "a fiery polemical attack on white racism and white colonial rule."[65] For Garvey was not only influenced by the "Wizard of Tuskegee," as Washington was known in some circles, but also by the events of his times. Garvey would incorporate what he saw as the lessons to be learned both from international events and incidents in the US. Both the Irish nationalist struggle of 1916 and the East St. Louis massacre in 1917 radicalized Garvey's approach toward achieving racial equality for blacks in the United States and around the world.[66] The transformation of the Irish resistance movement into a violent contest, as well as the violence inflicted upon African Americans during the war years, made Garvey rearticulate his goals for the UNIA. He modified the objectives of the UNIA, making it a more explicitly nationalist organization. But Garvey's nation was Africa; Africa had to be "for the Africans, and them exclusively" by whatever means were necessary, according to him.[67]

As the UNIA grew in membership, Garvey would attempt to pursue both his economic objectives for his people through the Black Star Line shipping fleet and his ideological objectives

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[63] Brundage, *Up From Slavery*, 24.

[64] Ibid.

[65] Manning Marable, *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention* (New York: Viking, 2011), 17.

[66] Judith Stein, *The World of Marcus Garvey: Race and Class in Modern Society* (Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1986), 41-2. Stein mentions Garvey's editorials to the *New York Times* in which he criticized former president Theodore Roosevelt's investigation of the riot in East St. Louis.

[67] Hill, *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers*, Vol. 1, 1826-August 1919, lxxviii.

by asserting that maintaining racial purity and aspiring toward European markers of cultural and national/racial achievement was the path for blacks to return to greatness. Garvey railed against European colonization in Africa and argued for global racial separation, but paradoxically "held up to blacks the system of European civilization as a mirror of racial success."[68] Garvey wanted blacks to do in Africa what Europeans had done previously, and told UNIA members that re-colonizing Africa would be both possible because of, and also an illustration of, black racial superiority.

Garvey's desire for blacks around the world to emigrate to Africa in order to "civilize" the continent reflected his belief that Africa was the rightful place for black people. His unsuccessful business ventures—most famously the Black Star Line—reflected his belief that blacks needed to aspire to economic autonomy in order to claim their rightful place as a race on the world stage and in the pantheon of world civilizations. Garvey did not find industrial capitalism problematic in the way that black leftists did. He wanted blacks to profit from the system in the same ways that whites did.

The UNIA would quickly come apart at the seams after Garvey was deported from the United States in 1926 after serving jail time for mail fraud. Much of Garvey's version of black nationalism, however, would be carried forward by Elijah Muhammad and the Nation of Islam (NOI), and most articulately by Muhammad's number one minister during the 1950s and early 1960s, Malcolm X. The Nation espoused that African Americans needed to aspire towards both territorial and economic autonomy. Muhammad seemed to agree with Garvey that the United States was a "white man's country," but rather than take that to mean that blacks necessarily needed to leave for Africa, he argued to the NOI membership that they needed to detach

[68] Marcus Garvey, "Advice of the Negro to Peace Conference," *Negro World*, 30 November 1918, in Hill, *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers*, Vol. 1, 1826-August 1919, 302-305; Hill, *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers*, Vol. 1, 1826-August 1919, l-li.

themselves from the American political system as the leadership worked to pressure the federal government into granting black Americans territory in the southern US.[69] The NOI also established its own businesses and schools in order to present its own model for economic and educational progress for African Americans.

Not only did the Nation of Islam perpetuate Garvey's nationalist program in terms of promoting black capitalism and pushing for territorial autonomy, but Muhammad and the Nation also created its own narrative for black racial superiority. Muhammad and Malcolm X taught NOI members that blacks were genetically superior to whites and that whites were inherently evil.[70] As with Garvey, Muhammad and Malcolm were endeavoring to inspire cultural and racial pride among African Americans. But in doing so, Garvey—and later the Nation of Islam—defined African American or black cultural/racial achievement by their particular interpretations of how white Americans and Europeans achieved racial and national predominance over peoples of color.

Over the course of the early 1920s Garvey would be subjected to more and more criticism as racial liberals such as W. E. B. Du Bois, leftists including A. Philip Randolph, co-editor of the *Messenger* magazine Chandler Owen, and even nationalists such as Hubert Harrison, who had established his own nationalist group and newspaper in the Liberty League and *The Voice* during the war, saw both his methods and his principles as highly problematic.[71] As Garvey worked to build his nationalist organization during the First World War, black leftists were building their own organizations.

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[69] Karl Evanzz, *The Messenger: The Rise and Fall of Elijah Muhammad* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1999), 114-9; Marable *Malcolm X*, 109, 133.

[70] A very thorough description and analysis of the principles, cosmology, and historical narrative taught to members of the Nation of Islam is given by Claude Andrew Clegg, III, *An Original Man: The Life and Times of Elijah Muhammad* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 41-73.

[71] Wintz, *African American Political Thought, 1890-1930*, 8-9, 13, 16.

World War I was really a catalyst for black mobilization on several fronts. The war unified black leftists and created a sense of urgency among black leaders and intellectuals to discuss what should be the role of African Americans in making the world "safe for democracy." The disputes amongst black leaders revealed both generational and ideological divides. This latest generation of young thinkers, including Randolph, Owen, Harrison, and, communist and leader of the radical African Blood Brotherhood (ABB), Cyril Briggs, voiced trenchant critiques of both Du Bois and the late-Washington's acolytes.

They worked to distinguish themselves from their more senior counterparts in several ways. First, they characterized Du Bois and followers of Washington, such as Tuskegee principal R. Russa Moton and *New York Age* editor T. Thomas Fortune, as sharing the same ideological ground. Neither side was forward-thinking enough, according to Randolph and his ilk, because they voiced support for the war effort and endorsed industrial capitalism (whether more or less aggressively). These younger activist-intellectuals took vocal stands against the war on the grounds that it had been engineered for the sake of serving industrial capitalism.[72] Second, Randolph, Harrison, and Briggs, in particular, began to call themselves "New Crowd Negroes" as a proactive step in distancing themselves from their older counterparts.[73] And third, they began building their own institutions in order to disseminate their views about how to achieve racial equality and create social movements.

Randolph and Owen, who had met during the brief stint they each spent as college students in New York—Randolph at the City College of New York (CCNY) and Owen at Columbia University—, joined the Socialist Party in 1916. In 1917 they established the socialist magazine, *Messenger*, in order to press African Americans to organize as workers and bring

[72] A. Philip Randolph, "New Leadership for the Negro," *The Messenger* (May-June 1919), 9; Jervis Anderson, *This Was Harlem: A Cultural Portrait, 1900-1950* (New York: Farrar Strauss Giroux, 1981), 106.

[73] Anderson, *This Was Harlem*, 187.

about a new economic system in the United States. Randolph had been introduced to Marx while at CCNY by one of his history professors, J. Salwyn Shapiro, and his discovery of Marx and other socialist literature was revelatory.[74] Randolph read these works both for his courses and on his own, spending many hours at the New York Public Library. He was also heavily influenced by socialist orators in New York City, including Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, "Big Bill" Haywood, Eugene Debs, and Hubert Harrison.[75]

Reading Marx and other socialist writers, as well as listening to the arguments put forth by Debs and Harrison convinced Randolph that many of the problems associated with racial injustice were inextricably tied to the capitalist economic system. Racial equality would not be achievable without a corresponding democratization of economic life as well. He argued that capitalism only served to pit white and black workers against one another in a competition for resources made unnecessarily scarce. This competition exacerbated racial conflict by causing whites to believe that they needed to preserve white supremacy in order to maintain economic security. As Randolph was becoming increasingly knowledgeable about socialism, he was coming to believe that substantive change in the status of African Americans would only be possible if they united with whites as workers to change the nation's economic system.[76]

After riots in East St. Louis, Illinois in 1917 resulted in the deaths of 40 African Americans and the forced removal of nearly 6,000 more, Randolph and Owen cited the capitalist economic system, which forced blacks into the role of strikebreaker in order to obtain any employment as the fundamental cause for the racial violence. Economic racism vitiated any possibility for blacks and whites to unite around their common cause as workers. As they put it in 1919:

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[74] Anderson, *A. Philip Randolph*, 62.

[75] Anderson, *A. Philip Randolph*, 76; Wintz, *African American Political Thought, 1890-1930*, 14.

[76] Anderson, *A. Philip Randolph*, 62-3.

> Of more recent date we have the East St. Louis massacre, the cause of which is fundamentally economic. Negro laborers were imported into the above named place to work. They were either imported to take the jobs of white workers or to increase the supply of labor, and thereby force down wages. This was the real cause of the conflict."
>
> We might as well meet the big, bald fact that Self-Interest is the supreme ruler of the actions of men. The reason does not lie in race prejudice, but in the class struggle. Blame your capitalist system. Of course, this does not justify or expiate the crime; it simply explains it. Certainly the culprits should be brought to justice.[77]

For Randolph and Owen, the great truth of socialism was its seeming understanding of the seeming "Self-Interest" of human nature. African Americans had to be able to participate fully in the nation's economic life in order to break down other barriers to racial equality. In order for blacks to become economically liberated they had to convince white workers of their common interests as an oppressed class and unite against the industrial class. Blacks also had to leave the traditional political parties that were not serving their interests and vote with the Socialist Party. Randolph and Owen argued in the pages of the *Messenger* that, "[i]t is now up to the Negro to choose wisely whether he will support the fusion combination which has buried the hatchet so far as the Negro's interests are concerned, or whether he will support the Socialist Party which has helped the Negro in many fights throughout every country, notwithstanding the fact that there was not a handful of Negro Socialists in the world."[78] To Randolph and Owen, this would represent a new level of political maturity.

Randolph put a great level of faith in the need for African Americans to create and join, work through and work with labor unions throughout his career as an activist, starting in the 1910s.[79] Most black leaders, whether liberal or conservative, were reticent about cooperating

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[77] A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owen, "The Cause of and Remedy for Race Riots," *Messenger*, Vol. 2, No. 9 (September 1919), 17.

[78] A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owen, "The Political Crisis Among Negroes," *Messenger*, Vol. II, No. 1 (January 1918), 12.

[79] "Reminiscences of Bayard Rustin," (1988), 49, in the Oral History Research Office Collection of the Columbia University Libraries (OHRO/CUL), Columbia University, New York.

with organized labor because of the widespread racial discrimination in most unions, although the old guard of Du Bois and Washington were becoming more amenable to alliances with organized labor by this time.[80] Unions affiliated with the American Federation of Labor (AFL) rarely allowed blacks to become members, and often actively worked to keep blacks from being hired in their companies and industries. As a result, Randolph could understand this hesitance, but he had been quite impressed with the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) for its efforts to bring unskilled industrial workers and agricultural workers, as well as workers of all races, together under a single umbrella.[81] The IWW provided a model for radical unionism and demonstrated to him that organized labor did not have to be the enemy of racial justice. And later, as the president of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP) during the late 1920s, he would push hard to have the BSCP recognized by the AFL despite criticisms from black leaders on the political left and the mainstream.[82]

Even though "black communists and black middle-class intellectuals" criticized Randolph for fighting so hard to bring the BSCP into the AFL and for trying to forge substantive connections with organized labor, by the end of the 1920s Randolph was moving more towards them in terms of his willingness to engage with those who had positions of power within establishment bureaucracies and racial liberal organizations.[83] In 1935 Randolph participated in a conference on the "economic status of the Negro" sponsored by Howard University in Washington, D.C., that included Lester Granger of the National Urban League, Professor Alain Locke, M. O. Bousfield of the Rosenwald Fund, and black ministers, among others whom he would have critiqued pointedly less than two decades before. Out of this conference emerged the

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[80] Moreno, *Black Americans and Organized Labor*, 117-118.
[81] Wintz, *African American Political Thought, 1890-1930*, 14; Anderson, *A. Philip Randolph*, 90-2.
[82] Anderson, *A. Philip Randolph*, 209.
[83] Ibid.

idea for the National Negro Congress (NNC), a national umbrella organization for black political, fraternal, and religious organizations, which Randolph strongly supported at its inception.[84]

By the start of the Second World War, however, Randolph broke with the National Negro Congress because communists, whom he believed were more beholden to the dictates of Moscow than the needs and interests of African Americans, now dominated the organization. His public denunciation of communist-domination and resignation from the NNC further estranged him from the communist left, but made him more popular with racial liberals such as Mary McLeod Bethune and many ordinary blacks.[85]

Randolph's movement toward the mainstream did not discount his socialism— which he still believed in fervently. Randolph had grown up with other intellectual influences that remained with him throughout his life, however, including the teachings of his father, an African Methodist Episcopal minister, and the abolitionist speeches of Frederick Douglass and Wendell Phillips.[86] From these sources would spring Randolph's sense of Christian morality and faith in the nation's founding principles. Randolph's Judeo-Christian moral compass[87] and his belief in the values expressed within the Declaration of Independence and the US Constitution would make it possible for him to cultivate good working relationships with racial liberal leaders, such as Walter White and Roy Wilkins of the national NAACP and Lester Granger of the NUL. And his willingness to collaborate with racial liberals and challenge the government by working within it allowed Randolph to build a large mass movement that also raised his leadership profile.

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[84] Ibid., 229-30.
[85] Ibid., 239-40.
[86] Ibid., 11.
[87] A. Philip Randolph, "State of the Race," 24 April 1956, 8, Box 39, Folder 15, Speeches and Writings File, Speeches, 1956, A. Philip Randolph Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

His attempts to build a mass movement for racial equality began in earnest when he announced the formation of the March on Washington Movement (MOWM) in 1941. Randolph supported the nation's war effort against Nazism and Fascism, yet decried the widespread, government-sanctioned racial discrimination in industrial employment and the armed services, even at this critical moment when the entire country needed to be mobilized. After talks between the White House, White and Randolph were unsuccessful in getting president Franklin Roosevelt to support anti-discrimination in employment legislation, Randolph "upped the ante" for the federal government to remain steadfast to its discriminatory policies. Randolph, who believed in grassroots organization and had gained experience building organizations from the ground up as president of the BSCP and the NNC, determined that African Americans needed to put direct pressure on the federal government in order to break down racial discrimination in employment at the federal level. Randolph declared that 10,000 African Americans would march on the nation's capital in July to 1941 to show their discontent with continued job discrimination even as their government expected them to lay down their lives for the country.[88]

The NAACP and NUL eventually, but only reluctantly, supported the MOWM. The NAACP and NUL did not generally support mass action techniques because they preferred to work behind the scenes negotiating with those in established positions of authority, where they considered real power to lie. Mass actions were considered too difficult to control logistically, and racial liberal leaders believed that the potential costs to the civil rights movement in terms of bad publicity and public hostility outweighed the potential benefits to the movement. Walter

[88] Sullivan, *Lift Every Voice*, 254; Anderson, *A. Philip Randolph*, 247-9.

White and Lester Granger respected Randolph very much, however, and as a result the NAACP and NUL did end up lending financial assistance to the MOWM.[89]

While the NAACP and NUL grudgingly supported the MOWM, there were other black organizations, such as the *Pittsburgh Courier* newspaper, that did not support the march or the continued existence of the MOWM after the initial march was eventually cancelled. From the summer of 1942 and through 1943, there were several articles and editorials criticizing the tactics of the MOWM and the leadership style of A. Philip Randolph. P. L. Prattis, in a June 1942 article titled "The Horizon," asked what was unique about the March on Washington Movement in comparison to all of the other black protest organizations on the scene throughout the country? Prattis did not believe that there was anything novel about the MOWM as he sarcastically wondered how the organization was going to follow the previous year's "victory by default," as he characterized Executive Order 8802.[90] Another editorial in the same month in 1942, after the MOWM staged an 18,000 person rally at Madison Square Garden in New York City, quipped that "it is one thing to get a mass of people together and steam them up to go places, but it is quite another thing to organize them effectively to execute a prescribed program." The author dismissed the rally as a series of "ear-splitting generalities and blowsy platitudes" and the MOWM as having no program, nor the organizational capacity to carry out an effective agenda.[91] George McCray, in July of 1942, described the tactics of the MOWM as "a menace to the interests of Negro labor" and Randolph's rhetoric as "reckless" for focusing too

[89] Anderson, *A. Philip Randolph*, 249-50; John D'Emilio, *Lost Prophet: The Life and Times of Bayard Rustin* (New York: Free Press, 2003), 57-8.
[90] P. L. Prattis, "The Horizon," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, 6 June 1942, 13.
[91] "What Now?" *The Pittsburgh Courier*, 27 June 1942, 6.

much on the domestic travails of African Americans instead of what he saw as the more important problem of "Hitlerism."[92]

Some of the most pointed criticism in the *Courier* would be penned by George Schuyler. Schuyler, who had been Randolph's employee and a fellow socialist during the 1920s, now attacked the MOWM as a failure because there was still a need for agitation a year after Executive Order 8802 had been signed. Schuyler characterized the MOWM as being nothing more than A. Philip Randolph, and assailed Randolph as a leader with a "messianic complex," but no leadership ability.[93] Schuyler apparently received a good deal of criticism from readers regarding his editorial, for he was prompted to respond to his critics a few weeks later, but he did not back away from his opinions. Instead, he disparaged what he considered to be Randolph's attempts to use "force" to win rights for African Americans. Schuyler argued that "tests of strength" such as marches on Washington or any other mass action protests were not only doomed to fail because of blacks' minority standing and relatively low economic and political strength, but would be harmful to blacks' cause because they were "divisive." Schuyler advocated a program of educating whites about the dangers to all citizens as a result of racial discrimination, which he was convinced would "gain . . . ground slowly but solidly."[94] Just as his ideological mentor, Booker T. Washington, a generation earlier, Schuyler was willing to concede the timetable for black liberation to whites without being willing to put any palpable pressure on them to grant African Americans their birthright as American citizens.

Racial liberals may not have been enthusiastic supporters of mass actions but, nevertheless, they acknowledged the value of those tactics under certain circumstances and could be moved by public opinion to support them at times. Liberal leaders were also advocates of

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[92] George F. McCray, "Says 'March on Washington' Program is Bad," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, 18 July 1942.
[93] George Schuyler, "View and Reviews," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, 1 August 1942, 6.
[94] George Schuyler, "Views and Reviews," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, 22 August 1942, 6.

pushing for institutional changes in American society. Schuyler sought a solution to the problem of racial inequality that did not involve racial conflict, harkening back in some ways to the efforts at moral suasion by nineteenth century white abolitionists. In order for the absence of racial conflict to be possible, however, blacks would not be able to press for their rights in any frontally confrontational way. Therefore, Schuyler not only criticized Randolph and the MOWN in this instance, but Schuyler became an arch conservative by the end of his life, arguing against the entire premise of the liberal civil rights movement.

Schuyler began his public career as a socialist radical during the 1920s and 1930s, but had begun his intellectual transformation into a conservative black thinker and activist by the Second World War. From the late 1930s forward he would resuscitate the philosophy of Booker T. Washington in terms of his views on how blacks should approach achieving racial equality. Schuyler's commitment to non-confrontational tactics for achieving racial equality would only grow stronger as the civil rights movement picked up momentum. After World War II Schuyler would become more actively involved in the growing conservative intellectual movement that included many former liberals and leftists.[95] In 1960 he reiterated his argument from 1942 that, "a disservice is often done, to the Negro or any other weaker group in society, by trying to rush changes upon the country as a whole, because what you do often is set up a reaction."[96] Schuyler believed that black leaders needed to consider the feelings of racist whites much more seriously and think about how dismantling Jim Crow and implementing desegregation would upset their sense of the ordering of the world.

[95] Oscar R. Williams, *George S. Schuyler: Portrait of a Black Conservative* (Knoxville, Tenn.: The University of Tennessee Press, 2007), 118.

[96] "Reminiscences of George S. Schuyler," (1962), 352, in the Oral History Research Office Collection of the Columbia University Libraries (OHRO/CUL).

Randolph continued to meet with Roosevelt and his advisers through the first half of 1941 in his efforts to compel the administration to issue a ban on racial discrimination in federal employment and the military, but they were largely unsuccessful until Randolph took an even bigger risk by announcing that rather than 10,000, there would be 100,000 African Americans marching on Washington, D.C. As the proposed date of the march drew closer and Randolph remained committed to both having the march and 100,000 participants, Roosevelt felt more pressure to avert it, if possible. Just one week before the scheduled July 1 march, Roosevelt signed Executive Order 8802, which mandated that "there shall be no discrimination in the employment of workers in defense industries or government because of race, creed, color, or national origin" and created the Fair Employment Practices Commission.[97]

Randolph's decision to focus on working to eliminate job discrimination reflected his socialist outlook that the key to overall and lasting progress for African Americans was inextricably tied to economic advancement. His socialist orientation also influenced his decision to use mass action techniques. Mass action required African Americans' direct participation in service of their own liberation. His willingness to engage in negotiations with the White House, however, reflected Randolph's sense of practicality, which made it possible for him to work cooperatively with racial liberal leaders at various times for much of his career.

After EO 8802 became law, Randolph agreed to suspend the march on Washington, to the dismay of many, including his youth organizer for the march Bayard Rustin. Rustin was a militant young leftist who shared Randolph's views on economic and other matters, and was dividing his time between the pacifist organization, Fellowship of Reconciliation, and the March on Washington Movement. Rustin had recently left the Young Communist League as a result of the Soviet Union entering into an alliance with Nazi Germany in 1939. Rustin and others

[97] Executive Order 8802, 25 June 1941.

implored Randolph to reschedule the march. In a series of critiques reminiscent of those Randolph and his fellow young radicals leveled against W. E. B. Du Bois and Robert R. Moton during World War I, Rustin and other younger activists accused Randolph of selling out to Roosevelt.[98]

Randolph did not reschedule the march and Randolph's and Rustin's fledgling relationship was strained for a time, but their personal and professional bond would not only survive, but endure for the rest of Randolph's life. Randolph and Rustin shared a great deal in common in addition to their commitment to economic egalitarianism. Both men believed that blacks would need to organize with whites as workers in order to achieve racial equality in American society.[99] And they also had other intellectual influences that made it possible for them to work with racial liberals. Rustin grew up as a Quaker and imbibed a particular ethos of racial egalitarianism rooted in Christian principles from his parents and exposure to the Society of Friends. Among Rustin's other intellectual influences were Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, and W. E. B. Du Bois.[100]

In the two decades after World War II, Rustin would carry forth Randolph's philosophy advocating working-class interracialism and total integration, combined with a Christian moral compass, and faith in the existence of the American meritocracy. As with Randolph, the fact that Rustin had denounced communism (even though he was a socialist) and evinced an abiding faith the American democracy and democratic institutions, made it possible for him to collaborate with racial liberals (although his homosexuality complicated those relationships) in the struggle for black equality.

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[98] Anderson, *A. Philip Randolph*, 259.

[99] Jerald Podair, *Bayard Rustin: American Dreamer* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2009), 18.

[100] Podair, *Bayard Rustin*, 2-4.

Rustin not only worked with Randolph in the MOWM, but Rustin was one of the initial leaders of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), an interracial nonviolent protest organization founded in 1942, and would continue his civil rights and peace activism for the remainder of his life. CORE marked the arrival of an organization "for whom active nonviolent resistance was not, in Rustin's words, 'just a policy,' but instead 'a way of life.' Consciously dressing themselves in the garb of Gandhian philosophy, the young crusaders at the center of CORE made nonviolence a spiritual road to follow."[101] It is possible to imagine that the pacifism of the Friend's doctrine helped make the Gandhian philosophy of passive resistance resonate more strongly, as Rustin would promote the principles of nonviolence to everyone he worked with, including Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. CORE added to the growing list of racial liberal organizations protesting for racial equality during the 1950s and 1960s, which would also later include Martin Luther King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC).

By 1954, racial liberals, black conservatives, black nationalists, and black leftists were not only drawing upon a historical tradition of diversity within African American thought but, just as importantly, had built institutions in an effort to try and bring their various visions to fruition. African American leaders built upon the ideas and organizations that had preceded them in order to advance the cause of racial equality. Each generation of black thinkers was connected to the leaders that had come before. Therefore, these different ideologies had some common well-springs. But from the 1890s until 1954 liberalism, conservatism, nationalism, and the left also became increasingly distinct through their institutionalization. As the civil rights movement gained momentum after 1954, these various ideologies and their proponents would at

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[101] D'Emilio, *Lost Prophet*, 53-4.

times come into conflict and at others exhibit cooperation, as they battled for the hearts and minds of blacks, and the soul of America.

## Chapter 2

## Formations: Community, Consciousness, and Creed

> *Follow Negroes of the South, leave there. Go North, East, and West—**anywhere**—to get out of that hell hole. There are better schools here for your children, higher wages for yourselves, votes if you are twenty-one, better housing and more liberty. **All is not rosy here**, by any means, but it is Paradise compared with Georgia, Arkansas, Texas, Mississippi and Alabama. Besides, you make it better for those you leave behind.*
>
> *Stop buying property in the South, to be burned down and run away from over night. Sell out your stuff quietly, saying nothing to the lackeys, and leave! Come to the land of at least incipient civilization!* [Emphasis in original]
>
> A. Philip Randolph[1]

New York City has been unique in terms of its relationship to black intellectuals during the first half of the twentieth century. Not only were there intellectuals of every ideological stripe, but each group was able to make inroads in the city, both organizationally and in terms of cultivating awareness of their principles among a broad segment of blacks. Intellectual, political, and cultural activities developed very early in the century despite de facto segregation. The relative lack of legalized segregation in New York City, the increasing density of the black population—particularly, in Harlem—, and the variety of institutions dedicated to civil rights activity helped blacks create the spaces to produce a movement for civil rights and racial equality.

Between 1909 and 1920 African American and Afro-Caribbean activists managed to transform New York City, and particularly Harlem, into the most important black community in the country. By the time the United States entered the Great War, Harlem was a font of black cultural, political, and intellectual activity. The black press became increasingly militant, as titles of papers established in this period—*Challenge*, *Crusader*, *Emancipator*, and *Messenger*—

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[1] A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owen, “Negroes, Leave the South,” *The Messenger*, vol. 2, no. 3 (March 1920), 2.

suggest. Younger black leftists were admonishing their intellectual elders for telling blacks to support the war effort and ordinary blacks staged protests against racial violence taking place in other communities.[2]

Black activists and intellectuals who held different views worked to create the institutions as well as the necessary physical and cultural spaces to grow and sustain a national movement for social, political, and economic justice. They used their intellectual capital in attempts to chart the course of the movement locally and nationally. As a result, by the second decade of the twentieth century, the growing number of blacks being drawn to Harlem had a plethora of organizations to choose from to nourish their political and cultural appetites.

Black and white liberals established the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the National Urban League (NUL). Blacks who had developed a nationalist orientation could join Hubert Harrison's Liberty League and Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). The One Hundred Thirty-Fifth Street branch of the New York Public Library (NYPL) developed into a significant space for the dissemination of information on black history and culture, as did the Harlem branches of the Young Men's and Young Women's Christian Associations (YMCA and YWCA). There were also several publications of various political viewpoints that Harlem residents would read, such as the *New York Age*, the *New York Amsterdam News*, the *Messenger*, the *Crisis*, and the *Negro World*, among others that would challenge or confirm their currently held beliefs. To the extent that these activists and intellectuals were successful in creating the various spaces for intellectual development, much of the credit obviously lies with them and the tens of thousands that comprised their membership rolls. New York City and State provided fertile soil in which an organized black civil rights movement took hold and grew.

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[2] Roi Ottley, *"New World A-Coming": Inside Black America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1943), 272.

Between 1873 and 1900 the New York State legislature passed several laws securing equal rights for blacks. The state's Civil Rights Act of 1873 granted suffrage without restriction to black males. Two other civil rights acts guaranteed access to public transportation facilities and accommodations. The state legislature also repealed the ban on interracial marriage during this period. And New York City outlawed racial segregation in its public schools in 1900.[3] The passage of legislation did not mean that these laws were always enforced or that African Americans faced no racial discrimination but, as a result of this legislation being on the books, New York City was a place where the legal spaces for organization and protest were wider than in many other northern cities and more so than anywhere in the South.

The absence of overt legal segregation would certainly have made New York City a more appealing place to live than southern cities, as A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owen argued in the *Messenger* in 1920. Blacks who were born in New York City, and the many hundreds of thousands who ultimately migrated there between 1900 and 1954, sought to breathe life into New York State's more egalitarian legislation by working to see it enforced for all citizens, regardless of color. In order to do this, black activists and intellectuals, operating from numerous ideological viewpoints, worked to change the city and the nation in fundamental ways.

## Early Institutional Development in Harlem

Between 1910 and 1920 New York City's black population grew significantly from 91,709 to 152,467. The majority of the growth occurred in Manhattan, where the black

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[3] Gilbert Osofsky, *Harlem: The Making of a Ghetto, Negro New York, 1890-1930* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, Publisher, 1966), 36-7.

population increased from 60,534 to 109,133.[4] In this decade, African Americans and Afro-Caribbeans came north by the tens of thousands hoping to find greater economic opportunities. And most of the nearly 50,000 blacks who settled in Manhattan found themselves in Harlem. African Americans had begun moving to Harlem in small numbers during the 1880s as the neighborhood quickly developed. There was a great deal of speculative building in anticipation of expanding transportation infrastructure to northern Manhattan. Elevated train lines were extended to Harlem up Lenox and Eighth Avenues, making the neighborhood very desirable. But the northward migration really accelerated after 1900 as continued structural development—eventually over-building—in Harlem, intensified overcrowding of the Tenderloin section of west-Midtown Manhattan, and a bloody race riot in that year pushed and pulled African Americans uptown.

By 1910, African American churches, mutual aid and benevolent societies, retail businesses and welfare agencies had been following their congregants, cadres, clients, and customers northward for several years. The black community in Harlem quickly became the "largest colony of colored people, in similar limits, in the world" even before World War I; and the population growth showed no signs of dissipating. According to historian Gilbert Osofsky, two-thirds of Manhattan's black population lived in Harlem by 1920. This represented about 73,000 people.[5]

The rapid growth of Harlem—both in terms of population and space—as well as the increasing numbers of black residents in other parts of the city created friction among blacks and between blacks and whites. The major wave of black migration northward from all areas of the

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[4] Campbell Gibson and Kay Jung, "Historical Census Totals on Population Totals By Race, 1790 to 1990, and By Hispanic Origin, 1790 to 1990, For Large Cities and Other Urban Places in the United States," Table 33: New York—Race and Hispanic Origin for Selected Large Cities and Other Places: Earliest Census to 1990, Working Paper 76, Population Division, U.S. Census Bureau (February 2005).

[5] Osofsky, *Harlem*, 122-3.

South and the Caribbean, beginning in about 1910 and lasting for the next two decades, is known as the First Great Migration. This demographic shift coincided with both the First World War and a period of increased political reform known as the Progressive Era. Progressive reform during this period was characterized by academic studies of social ills; advocacy for and implementation of legislation for the protection of female and child laborers; struggles to dismantle corrupt urban political machines; more democratic voting practices; and a specific set of middle-class values that emphasized assimilation into a homogenous, WASP-as-normative, "American" culture.

Middle-class and native New York blacks did not look favorably on black migrants before World War One. The migrants were here looking for better jobs than were open to blacks in the South, but they were depicted as naïve, lazy and accused of spreading vice. At the same time, as their numbers rose, African American leaders recognized the need to help migrants adjust to life in New York City, and that they needed to mobilize as many black New Yorkers as possible in efforts to obtain social equality. Most black New Yorkers, migrants or not, endured brutality at the hands of the police force and discrimination in the housing and job markets. "The harassment that Negroes experienced caused the *New York Age* to remark in 1910 that New York should not be preoccupied with Jim Crow life in the South, but should devote their attention to discrimination in New York."[6]

To combat these realities of living in New York City, middle-class blacks formed organizations—some of them interracial—in the Progressive mold. The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the National Urban League have been the two most effective and enduring. These organizations were founded in New York City because the city

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[6] Seth M. Scheiner, *Negro Mecca: A History of the Negro In New York City, 1865-1920* (New York: New York University Press, 1965), 203.

had "long sponsored most white-financed Negro philanthropy"—at least since the late-eighteenth century.[7] At its inception, the Urban League focused primarily on improving the day-to-day material living conditions of New York City's black inhabitants. The NAACP, however, concerned itself more with fighting for African American civil rights at the state and federal levels.

Black inequality—both in New York City and nationally—, racial violence in New York City, as well as the lynching of a black man in Springfield, Illinois, in the midst of a 1908 race riot were, however, the direct motivations for the group of progressive-minded whites and blacks who came together to create what became the NAACP.[8] Anti-lynching activism had been the central fight for most black leaders since the 1880s, but this incident—having taken place in the "land of Abraham Lincoln," the "Great Emancipator" and beacon of freedom—brought the ugliness of lynching home for white reformers and threw into question once again, perhaps for the first time in some while, the North's image of itself as more "civilized" than the South.[9]

Northerners had been constructing their identities, at least partly, in contrast to Southerners for at least a century. Northerners in the late-nineteenth century often claimed that lynching was a barbaric southern phenomenon, a crime that did not happen in northern locales because they were more "civilized." The problem with the way that northern "civility" was often framed was that fewer instances of reported racial violence were believed to confirm the absence of racism and the existence of harmonious race relations. The notion of civility absolved most

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[7] Ann Douglass, *Terrible Honesty: Mongrel Manhattan in the 1920s* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1995), 324.

[8] Ottley, *"New World A-Coming,"* 35-7; Scheiner, *Negro Mecca*, 201; Patricia Sullivan, *Lift Every Voice: The NAACP and the Making of the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: The New Press, 2009), 6, 8-10.

[9] Donald Grant, *The Anti-Lynching Movement: 1883-1932* (San Francisco, CA: R and E Research Associates, 1975), introduction; Kristopher Burrell, "Bob Lewis' Encounter with the "Great Death:" Port Jervis' Entrance into the "United States of Lyncherdom," (Minisink Valley Historical Society, 2002), 37-8. There was a lynching in Port Jervis, New York in 1892. Much of the coverage in the local and New York City white press that was critical of the lynchers and the judicial process referenced the notion of "civility" and called it a "blight" on New York State and/or the North as a region.

northerners of critically examining the ways in which the institutions and ideas they characterized as "southern" were actually national in nature.[10]

But African American activists and intellectuals of the day, including William Monroe Trotter, the Bostonian businessman, scholar, newspaper editor, and activist, and W. E. B. Du Bois refused to absolve northerners or anyone else from recognizing that racial discrimination existed throughout the United States and must end. Trotter and Du Bois were militant integrationists, believing that every aspect of American society needed to be racially integrated immediately; and up through the First World War Du Bois could be considered a racial liberal. Not only did Du Bois believe that integration was a positive social goal to be attained, but he also believed in the potential success of a biracial movement for social equality.

The establishment of the NAACP and the NUL would signal both the culmination of a decade-long effort to institutionalize agitation for civil rights, and the organizational perpetuation in the twentieth century of the tradition of racial liberalism that extends back to the abolitionists of the nineteenth.

## World War I, Racial Protest, and "New Crowd Negroes"

By the time America entered into World War I in 1917, however, the racial liberalism of leaders such as W. E. B. Du Bois was being vigorously challenged by younger African Americans espousing other ideologies, including socialism, communism, and black nationalism.

[10] During the 1920s, George Schuyler satirized the notion of northern white civility in an essay in *American Mercury* titled "Our White Folks." He wrote, "The attitude of the Northern white folks, in particular, puzzles and incenses [blacks]. Very often [blacks] feel that they are more dangerous to him than the Southerners. Here are folks who yawp continuously about liberty, justice, equality and democracy, and whoop with indignation every time a Senegambian is incinerated below the Potomac . . . but toward the Negro in their midst they are quite as cruel as the Southern crackers." George S. Schuyler, "Our White Folks," *American Mercury*, vol. XII, no. 48 (December 1927), 388.

The question of how supportive blacks should be of the United States' decision to enter the global conflagration divided black leaders. President Woodrow Wilson framed the war as the ultimate battle between good and evil; a war necessary "to make the world safe for democracy." Lofty ideals, to be sure, but African Americans had never been the full beneficiaries of America's democratic institutions and, consequently, Wilson's rhetoric rang hollow in the ears of many blacks.[11]

But W. E. B. Du Bois worked to spur blacks to get behind the nation's war effort by urging African Americans to "Close Ranks" with their fellow Americans during the current crisis. Du Bois argued in *Crisis* magazine, the official organ of the NAACP, which he edited, that the German threat to democracy was dire. Du Bois characterized World War I as the "crisis of the world" and 1918 as the "great Day of Decision." Therefore, blacks should "forget" any "special grievances" they had against the government and commit to the ideals being fought for overseas.[12] "Closing Ranks" now would give African Americans even more moral leverage in agitating for equal rights after the war ended, according to more moderate, racial liberals such as Du Bois and James Weldon Johnson.[13]

Through the end of the First World War, Du Bois was the preeminent racial liberal in many ways. Through this editorial Du Bois was evincing an implicit belief in the American creed of meritocracy and trying to convince his fellow blacks to use moral suasion, at this critical moment, to demonstrate their loyalty to the country and suitability for first-class citizenship. This approach in pursuit of a more egalitarian society harkened back to the abolitionist movement of antebellum America. The war also had to be won by blacks and whites, in his

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[11] Jervis Anderson, *This Was Harlem: A Cultural Portrait, 1900-1950* (New York: Farrar Strauss Giroux, 1981), 103.

[12] W. E. B. Du Bois, "Closing Ranks," *Crisis*, 16 (July 1918), 111.

[13] Anderson, *This Was Harlem*, 106. James Weldon Johnson was a poet, composer of "Lift Every Voice and Sing" (the Black National Anthem), and general secretary of the NAACP during the 1920s.

view, not only for African Americans to once again show their patriotism, but also because Du Bois believed in the necessity of a successful biracial movement for civil rights. African Americans playing a significant role in a victorious war effort could potentially go a long way toward creating the racially integrated society he was fighting for.

Du Bois' two-paragraph editorial and similar arguments from other black leaders led to a firestorm of criticism from younger more militant black leaders such as A. Philip Randolph, Chandler Owen, Hubert Harrison, and others toward their senior, more moderate counterparts. Communist Party member Cyril V. Briggs and socialist W. A. Domingo, both leaders of the African Blood Brotherhood (ABB), a radical black organization that advocated organizing the black working class in order to combat racial and economic discrimination, also criticized Du Bois and those of his ilk vigorously. Randolph, Owen, and Harrison—migrants to New York City from Florida, North Carolina, and the Virgin Islands, respectively—wanted no part of what they characterized as weak rhetoric and faulty logic. Randolph and Owen, who had come to Harlem in 1911 and 1916, respectively, pointedly asked racial liberals and conservatives (whom they regarded as two sides of the same rusty coin) within the pages of the socialist magazine they edited, the *Messenger*, "Since when has the subject race come out of a war with its rights and privileges accorded for such a participation? . . . Did not the Negro fight in the Revolutionary War, with Crispus Attucks dying first . . . and come out to be a miserable chattel slave in this country for nearly 100 years?"[14] In his nationalist magazine, *The Voice*, Hubert Harrison, who had arrived in Harlem in 1900, chided Du Bois, writing that "America cannot use Negroes to any good effect unless they have life, liberty, and manhood assured and guaranteed to them . . . the so-called leaders . . . have already established an unsavory reputation by advocating this same

[14] Chandler Owen, "The Failure of the Negro Leaders," *The Messenger*, vol. 2, no. 1 (January 1918), 23.

surrender of life, liberty, and manhood, masking their cowardice behind the pillars of wartime sacrifice."[15]

These various black newspapers and magazines, including the *Crisis*, the *Messenger*, *The Voice*, the *New York Amsterdam News*, the *New York Age*, Briggs' *Crusader*, Domingo's *Emancipator* revealed the ideological differences among the many black intellectuals in New York when considering the path to social equality. The expansion and increasing militancy of the black press was a national phenomenon that was centered in New York City. Of the 500 black newspapers and periodicals throughout the country by 1921, New York led the way with seventeen, double the number of black newspapers than had existed in the city just one decade earlier. It is not surprising that the Associated Negro Press, when founded in 1919, had its headquarters in Harlem.[16]

Young black radicals not only published and wrote for leftist magazines, they took those messages—whether in opposition to African American participation in a "capitalist," "imperialist" war, or in support of an egalitarian, racially pluralist society—directly to the black masses in Harlem, sometimes speaking from soapboxes on the corner of One Hundred Thirty-Fifth Street and Lenox Avenue.[17] Historian Jeffrey Perry has argued that, "[Hubert] Harrison's outdoor lectures pioneered the tradition of militant street-corner oratory in Harlem. . . . [H]e paved the way for those who followed—including A. Philip Randolph, Marcus Garvey, and, much later, Malcolm X."[18]

Two other extremely important intersections in Harlem were One Hundred Thirty-Fifth Street and Seventh Avenue and One Hundred Twenty-Fifth Street and Lenox Avenue. At times

[15] Anderson, *This Was Harlem*, 106.
[16] Douglass, *Terrible Honesty*, 325.
[17] Anderson, *This Was Harlem*, 106.
[18] Jeffrey B. Perry, ed., *A Hubert Harrison Reader* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 2001), 5.

these also became platforms for Harlem radicals to lecture or engage in political debate on any number of topics "from the French Revolution, the history of slavery, to the rise of the working class. It was one of the great intellectual forums of America."[19] In this way, Harrison and other black radicals created public spaces comparable to the printed spaces they created in their publications. And there were many to listen to their speeches, as two-thirds of Manhattan's 109,133 blacks resided in Harlem by 1920.

The debate over African American involvement in World War I was a clash of generations and ideologies. This episode marked the first major battle between racial liberals and black leftists in the twentieth century, but not the last. Although the majority of New York City's African Americans did not join leftist political organizations following the First World War, debate over the war catalyzed a shift within Harlem's black community—and black communities all over the country—toward more militant protests and the expression of more radical ideas. Calls for national unity and the deferment of social equality came under even more fire as racial violence exploded throughout the country between 1917 and 1920.

During these years major riots occurred in East St. Louis, Illinois in 1917, Washington, D. C. in 1919, and in twenty-five other cities in that single year. Recorded lynchings of African Americans, which had generally been declining each year between 1909 and 1917, began rising thereafter peaking at 76 in 1919 and remained above 50 between 1918 and 1922.[20] In response to the massacre in East St. Louis in which 40 blacks and eight whites were killed, and 6,000 more blacks were driven from their homes, as well as Congress' continued unwillingness to pass anti-lynching legislation, nearly 8,000 African Americans staged a silent parade down Fifth

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[19] A. Philip Randolph, quoted in Jervis Anderson, *A. Philip Randolph: A Biographical Portrait* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1972), 77.

[20] University of Missouri-Kansas City Law School, "Famous American Trials: The Trial of Sheriff Joseph Shipp, et. al.," <http://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/shipp/lynchingyear.html>, 8 May 2007.

Avenue on 28 July 1917. According to the *New York Times*, "Without a shout or a cheer they made their cause known through many banners which they carried, calling attention to 'Jim Crowism,' segregation, disfranchisement, and the riots of Waco, Memphis, and East St. Louis."[21] Protests such as this took place in New York because African Americans had created the legal, printed, public, and private spaces by the First World War to voice their dissent against injustice in public ways. Not only had liberal blacks and whites established the NAACP and NUL, more recently younger black nationalists and leftists had begun expressing their opposition to blacks' inferior status in American society with even bolder strokes, and without apology. Outraged by the "reign of mob law," the lack of federal protection, and the calls for appeasement from established black leaders, Harlem, according to historian Jervis Anderson, had become the "most militant community in the black world" by 1920.[22] That reputation would continue to be bolstered throughout the rest of the decade, and was also part of a general trend in black communities throughout the country.

In the midst of this spate of race riots A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owen refused to contain their anger at both the incidents of racial violence occurring across the country and what they perceived to be the failures of liberal and conservative black leaders. In one of their many *Messenger* editorials criticizing W. E. B. Du Bois' stance urging blacks to support the war, Randolph and Owen expressed the belief that the American government had betrayed blacks, just as they predicted would happen. They offered an alternative method for blacks to gain their "just rights" in the United States: "*The Negro will never gain his just rights until the great masses, 12 million strong, become thoroughly permeated, saturated and shot through with treason to the institutions of Jim-Crowism, lynching, race discrimination, segregation, disfranchisement, and to*

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[21] "Negroes in Protest March in Fifth Av.," *New York Times*, 29 July 1917, 12.
[22] Anderson, *This Was Harlem*, 187.

*every instrument which maintains, perpetuates and fosters these pernicious institutions* [italics in the original].”[23] Randolph and Owen argued that Du Bois’ plea to blacks to put their special grievances aside had not benefited them at all. Therefore, why should blacks remain loyal to a system that only continued to disadvantage them? Randolph and Owen used the term “treason” in the editorial, but it is important to recognize that the treason they advocated was not against the United States, but rather those corrupted structures that allowed racial and economic inequality to continue.

Nevertheless, as black leaders voiced stronger opposition to their race’s mistreatment throughout the United States in the pages of their publications, the Department of Justice became alarmed by the “increasingly emphasized feeling of race consciousness, in many of these publications always antagonistic to the white race, and openly, defiantly assertive of its own equality and even superiority.”[24]

> At the same time, Major J. E. Cutler of the Military Intelligence Division of the War Department reported “a growing influence of radical publications and of a new type of radical race leader,” which he said “constitute[d] a critical juncture in the history of the colored race in this country.” After studying the conditions that gave rise to the “race consciousness among the colored people today which is of recent origin,” Cutler concluded: “Beyond a doubt, there is a new negro to be reckoned with in our political and social life.”[25]

Randolph not only affirmed that a “new Negro” existed, but asserted in the *Messenger* the “[t]he New Negro demands political equality.” And “[t]he social aims of the New Negro are decidedly different from those of the Old Negro. Here he stands for absolute and unequivocal ‘*social*

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[23] A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owen, “The Crisis of the Crisis,” *Messenger*, vol. 2, no. 7 (July 1919), 10.

[24] United States Department of Justice, “Radicalism and Sedition Among the Negroes, As Reflected in Their Publications,” *New York Times*, 23 November 1919.

[25] Robert A. Hill, ed., *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers, Volume 1, 1826-August 1919* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), lxvii-lxviii.

*equality.*' He realizes that there cannot be a qualified equality. He insists that a society that is based on justice can only be a society composed of *social equals*."[26]

Everything became "new" as a "cultural rebellion of the first order erupted from beneath the complacency and conservatism that were dominant characteristics of American society and politics [during the 1920s]."[27] Whether it was "the New Woman" or the "New Art," the modifier "new" "signified a manifestation that blurred the boundaries between aesthetics, politics, and lifestyle . . ."[28]

African American artists, writers, scholars, and intellectuals also spoke in this language. Randolph, Owen, and Harrison, for example, referred to themselves as "New Crowd Negroes"[29] to distinguish themselves from what they considered the "Old Negro political and intellectual establishment—whether this establishment held the accommodationist views of Booker T. Washington or the protest ones of Du Bois."[30] In the spring of 1919 Randolph published an article in the *Messenger* castigating the "old Leadership" for "fail[ing] miserably." As Randolph named names he characterized the older leaders—Du Bois most pointedly—as men who "have simply held jobs, produced schoolboy rhetoric and lulled Negroes into a false sense of security" or "have preached a gospel of satisfaction and content."[31] In Randolph's final analysis African Americans needed new leadership, not only because he believed the old leadership to be ineffective but also because black people were, themselves, becoming imbued with a more militant consciousness.

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[26] A. Philip Randolph, "The New Negro—What Is He?" *The Messenger*, vol. 2 (August 1920), 73-4.
[27] Osofsky, *Harlem*, 180.
[28] Steven Watson, *The Harlem Renaissance: Hub of African-American Culture, 1920-1930* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1995), 8.
[29] The term is first used in the *Messenger* in the May-June 1919 issue on page 26.
[30] Anderson, *This Was Harlem*, 187.
[31] A. Philip Randolph, "New Leadership for the Negro," *The Messenger* (May-June 1919), 9.

Hubert Harrison established the first organization and newspaper of the “new Negro” movement in 1917 with the Liberty League and *The Voice*. Both were responses to the need for a more “radical policy” in obtaining social justice than was being pursued by the NAACP at the time.[32] But it was Dr. Alain Locke, one of the foremost leaders of the Harlem Renaissance, who edited the manifesto of the “New Negro” movement in 1925. This was a term that was meant to proclaim a more prideful mentality among blacks. It encompassed a movement included that not only literature, but also “race-building and image-building, jazz poetics, progressive or socialist politics, racial integration, the musical and sexual freedom of Harlem nightlife, and the pursuit of hedonism.”[33]

In addition to the socialist orators and the writers of the Harlem Renaissance who proactively dubbed themselves “new,” Marcus Garvey had arrived in Harlem in 1916 after founding the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA) in Jamaica two years earlier. Garvey was initially an admirer of Booker T. Washington, soliciting advice from him about how to raise funds for an industrial school in Jamaica along the lines of Tuskegee Institute. After Washington’s death in 1915, and before establishing a UNIA branch in Harlem, Garvey modified his ideas somewhat. The focus of the UNIA shifted from building industrial schools to building businesses and improving the economic standing of the race. “[H]e decided that the wealth, business experience, leadership skills of African Americans, if properly organized and directed, could stimulate the liberation and economic development of African peoples everywhere.”[34]

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[32] Perry, *A Hubert Harrison Reader*, 5.

[33] Watson, *The Harlem Renaissance*, 9.

[34] Cary D. Wintz, ed., *African American Political Thought, 1890-1930: Washington, Du Bois, Garvey, and Randolph* (Armonk, N. Y.: M. E. Sharpe, 1996), 11.

By the early 1920s Garvey had built a mass movement and revived a strain of black nationalist ideology that emphasized racial separation from whites, economic independence, and a sense of pride in "African" culture and heritage that crossed over, at times, into racial chauvinism.[35] While the threads of black nationalist thought go back to David Walker in the 1820s, and thus Garvey's nationalist ideology was not entirely "new," it was new to the many Harlemites (and other blacks worldwide) who joined the UNIA, as it came wrapped in a fully-epauletted general's uniform and all the pomp and circumstance one man could muster.

Randolph, Owen, Du Bois, Harrison, and most other black leaders at the time eventually became intensely critical of Garvey and the UNIA. While no one could deny the popularity of Garvey's claims to black racial superiority and calls for economic and political autonomy, they worked to discredit him and the UNIA. Initially, for example, Hubert Harrison believed that Garvey was a brother-in-arms. The inefficiency and dishonesty Harrison witnessed as editor of *The Negro World*, however, soured him on both Garvey's ability to lead and the UNIA's ability to sustain a movement for black empowerment. Harrison, who briefly edited the UNIA newspaper, *The Negro World*, during the first eight months of 1920 and helped transform it into a formidable nationalist publication, criticized both Garvey's character and intellect.[36] Harrison wrote in May of 1920 that, "the first big defect . . . in Garvey's make-up is a defect in the size of his soul. He is spiritually and intellectually a little man."[37] Harrison indicted Garvey for lying to his followers and capitalizing financially on their lack of knowledge as to his actions,

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[35] Marcus Garvey, "Advice of the Negro to Peace Conference," *Negro World*, 30 Nov. 1918 in Robert A. Hill, ed., *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers, Volume 1, 1826-August 1919* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 302-305; Marcus Garvey, "Declaration of the Rights of the Negro Peoples of the World," *Negro World*, 11 Sept. 1920, in Robert A. Hill, ed., *The Marcus Garvey and Universal Negro Improvement Association Papers, Volume 2* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 571-80.

[36] Perry, ed., *A Hubert Harrison Reader*, 183, 189.

[37] Hubert Harrison, "On Garvey's Character and Abilities," 24 May 1920, in Perry, *A Hubert Harrison Reader*, 190.

particularly as it related to the business ventures of the UNIA.[38] Harrison, however, was even more upset by what he interpreted as Garvey's lack of originality and genuine commitment to the principles of black nationalism. Harrison argued that Garvey corrupted the principles of an otherwise potentially constructive program for liberation and made it into a vehicle for self-aggrandizement. While Harrison was willing to acknowledge that there were some positive elements in the UNIA, he was not really complimenting Garvey, for he accused Garvey of taking those ideas from the Liberty League, including the tri-color flag concept, outdoor lectures, and an organizational newspaper. Harrison was only willing to credit Garvey with "add[ing] an intensive propaganda more shrewdly adapted to the cruder psychology of the less intelligent masses, the sensationalism, self-glorification, and African liberation—although he knew next to nothing about Africa." Even the idea for the Black Star Line, Harrison attributed to another founding member of the Liberty League.[39] By the end of the 1920s, Harrison did not give credit to Garvey for his program.

Harrison was deeply committed to building a mass movement for black liberation. But apparently, it needed to be done without at all appealing to sensationalism and frivolity. Ideologically, Harrison was opposed to the programs of the NAACP and Du Bois. Though Harrison chided Garvey for appealing to the "cruder psychology of the less intelligent masses," he disagreed with Du Bois' notion that the wealthiest and best-educated ten percent of the African American population had the obligation to lead and would pull the rest of the race forward toward full social equality. Harrison was also opposed to what he argued was the

[38] Ibid.

[39] Hubert Harrison, "Marcus Garvey at the Bar of United States Justice," *Associated Negro Press*, c. July 1923, in Perry, *A Hubert Harrison Reader*, 196-197.

NAACP's "dependence" on whites; African Americans had to carry out their own movement whether or not they could change the minds, or get the support, of whites.[40]

A. Philip Randolph and Chandler Owen were committed to organizing a mass movement for black liberation similar to Harrison, and like him they initially believed that Garvey had a worthwhile program. Randolph and Owen had taken opportunities to introduce Garvey to Harlem crowds when he first arrived, as had Harrison. But eventually, Randolph and Owen were turned off by Garvey, criticizing his methods and ideas. They attempted to undercut his influence on black Americans. By 1922 the attacks were explicitly personal as Randolph was upset by Garvey's claim that America was a "white man's country," and that blacks had not really played a significant role in building the nation's wealth and infrastructure.[41] He called Garvey's claims "fool talk" and appealed for Garvey to be driven from the country.[42] Randolph and Owen even formed an anti-Garvey group, the Friends of Negro Freedom (FNF), in order to undermine the work of the UNIA.

The Friends of Negro Freedom did not start out explicitly as an anti-Garvey group. Created in May of 1920, the FNF was one of several organizations that Randolph and Owen had created between 1917 and 1923, and its original purpose was to sponsor political and labor forums to educate the mass of blacks about unionization and socialist politics.[43] Occasionally, the group invited speakers to give lectures at the Harlem YMCA and YWCA on One Hundred Thirty-Fifth and One Hundred Thrity-Seventh Streets, respectively. Some included Norman Thomas, then director of the League of Industrial Democracy, Algernon Lee of the Rand School or Social Science, and Walter White of the NAACP. Randolph and Owen hoped the FNF would

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[40] Perry, *A Hubert Harrison Reader*, 5, 14.

[41] Colin Grant, *Negro With a Hat: The Rise and Fall of Marcus Garvey* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 336.

[42] A. Philip Randolph, "Marcus Garvey!" *The Messenger*, vol. 4 (July 1922), 437.

[43] Randolph and Owen, "The Friends of Negro Freedom," *The Messenger*, vol. 2, no. 4-5 (April-May 1920), 3-5.

become national in scope, but the organization did not catch on nationally and did not accomplish much in its first couple of years in existence. Aversion to Marcus Garvey's business operations and his racial-separatist brand of black nationalism, however, gave the members a cause around which to unify.

After Garvey was convicted of mail fraud in 1925 and subsequently deported to Jamaica in 1927, the Friends of Negro Freedom became more of an intellectual forum that met either at the *Messenger*'s office or at Randolph's home. Randolph held regular Sunday morning meetings of the Friends in his home on West One Hundred Forty-Second Street between Lenox and Seventh Avenues. Breakfast would be followed by political discussion. Some of the regulars at Randolph's home were Frank Crosswaith, a graduate of the Rand School who wrote for the *Messenger*, and who would join the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, and later become an organizer for the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union; William Pickens, Field Secretary for the NAACP; Joel A. Rogers, a Jamaican-born historian and Africanist; Theophilus Lewis, the drama critic for the *Messenger*; and George Schuyler, the office manager and a contributor to the *Messenger*, who would become one of the country's most important social critics.[44]

When Schuyler first arrived in Harlem in 1919 after a seven year stint in the Army he soaked up as much knowledge as possible from everywhere, for there were so many newspapers and magazines available in the city, compared to Syracuse where he grew up; "even the Socialists and Communists had dailies," he later commented in his autobiography.[45] Although after the Second World War Schuyler would become an arch-conservative for the remainder of his life, he had obviously been moved in some fashion by the socialist rhetoric he encountered

[44] Anderson, *A. Philip Randolph*, 139-40.
[45] George S. Schuyler, *Black and Conservative: The Autobiography of George S. Schuyler* (New Rochelle, N.Y.: Arlington House Publishers, 1966), 101.

because he joined the Socialist Party of America in November 1921 while he was briefly back to Syracuse. Once he returned to Harlem at the end of 1922, he stayed for good.[46]

In its function as an intellectual forum, the FNF serves as an example of the kinds of private spaces that black activists and intellectuals created in order to debate pressing issues concerning black people and different theoretical and practical strategies for addressing those problems. These were people who were well read in political and economic theory, and had personal experience with racial discrimination. They worked to translate their knowledge into plausible strategies for affecting large-scale change to improve the status of blacks in New York and the United States. George Schuyler in the 1930s and Kenneth Clark in the 1950s, among others, would continue this tradition of private ongoing forums. Such private gatherings would serve as important vehicles to connect black activists and intellectuals.

Between the young radicals, the Renaissance writers and artists, the NAACP, the NUL, and the UNIA, Harlem was an incredibly rich, diverse, and contentious political and intellectual landscape during the 1920s.[47] And this was the political and intellectual milieu into which tens of thousands of migrants to Harlem entered. African Americans could be exposed to ideas that they might never have encountered before, coming from the mouths of other blacks. And, there were no physical reprisals for hearing—or speaking—opinions critical of whites or the government. Ella Baker, who arrived in Harlem in 1927 and would become one of the most important activist and thinkers of the civil rights movement, was intoxicated by political activity in the Harlem of the late-1920s. Baker recalled that during this ear, Harlem was a "'hotbed of

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[46] Schuyler, *Black and Conservative*, 113, 133-5.

[47] Barbara Ransby, *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement: A Radical Democratic Vision* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 66.

radical thinking.'[48] She went wherever there was discussion as she soaked up the radical political ideas that flourished in Harlem.[49]

Baker would contribute to the intellectual ferment in Harlem by establishing a Negro History Club at the Harlem branch of the New York Public library at One Hundred Thirty-Fifth Street and Lenox Avenue with the branch's white librarian Ernestine Rose. Rose oversaw the expansion of the library's collection and encouraged other intellectual activities during the 1920s. " . . . Rose's teas, readings, and literary gatherings made the 135th Street branch a center of Harlem's cultural life."[50] The discussions of the Negro History Club were often so interesting they would spill out onto the street and continue informally right on the corner of One Hundred Thirty-Fifth Street, the already established public lyceum in the middle of Harlem.[51]

On these speakers' corners Harlem's residents could hear black intellectuals from a range of political and ideological persuasions speaking of the injustices they faced as a group throughout the 1920s. They could read an equally broad range of opinion in the magazines and newspapers serving their community. According to historian Barbara Ransby:

> The streets of Harlem provided a cultural and political immersion like no other. At no other time in twentieth-century African American history was there a more vibrant black public sphere in Harlem than in the 1920s and '30s, infused as it was with the exciting intellectual rhythms of the black diaspora. The serious exchange of ideas, cultural performances and political debates flowed out of classrooms, private homes, meeting halls and bars onto the neighborhood thoroughfare of Lenox Avenue.
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> As historian Irma Watkins-Owens writes: "From World War I through the 1930s, the unclaimed terrain of the Harlem streetcorner became the testing ground for many political ideologies and a forum for intellectual query and debate."[52]

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[48] Ransby, *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement*, 66.

[49] Charles M. Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995, 2007), 82.

[50] Douglass, *Terrible Honesty*, 331.

[51] Ransby, *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement*, 69. Ella Baker even became an employee of the library in 1934.

[52] Ibid., 73.

The claims of the various orators rang true to many African Americans because of their personal experiences with discrimination and life in impoverished conditions.[53]

**Community Solidification and Deterioration**

As tens of thousands more African Americans continued to move up to Harlem through World War One and into the 1920s, older white residents continued to vacate their homes and move away from the business districts of Manhattan going farther north into Washington Heights and other suburban communities in the outer boroughs.[54] Whites left Harlem, in part so that they would not be forced to live in such close proximity to blacks, in part because those who owned properties could profit from renting to blacks, and in part because subway expansion and bridge building had made it possible to commute to the central city relatively quickly from longer distances.

African Americans, seeking both a material improvement in their quality of life and the psychic benefit of a Harlem address, quickly snapped up the hastily abandoned dwellings. As Roi Ottley observed, by the 1920s

> National attention soon was focused on Harlem, and, to Negroes everywhere, the community became the symbol of opportunity. Wave after wave of migrants teemed into Harlem. The Black Metropolis was indeed coming of age. It had its own schools, newspapers and magazines, labor unions, hotels, hospitals, restaurants, churches, and a multitude of organizations and societies like the Elks and the Masons. At first glace, Harlem gave the impression of being self-sufficient, a community unto itself.[55]

Having an address north of One Hundred Tenth Street, however, did not solve the problems associated with urban poverty or being black and poor. While observers of Harlem during the

[53] Osofsky, *Harlem*, 140.
[54] Ibid., 128-31.
[55] Ottley, *"New World A-Coming,"* 67.

1920s may have gotten the impression that it was a fully autonomous community, Ottley confessed that "[a]ctually, it was no more self-sufficient than it [would be by the 1940s]. Its people were dependent on the financial, commercial, and industrial arteries of the dominant white group for its very life's blood. It was this dependence, as well as economic and social restrictions, that helped to give Negro life its distinct character."[56]

As far as housing went, just as in earlier black communities, many white landlords did not sufficiently maintain their properties, allowing the buildings to fall apart. An article by Winthrop D. Lane in the March 1925 issue of *Survey Graphic*, a social work magazine, described the exploitation African Americans endured in the housing market as "extortion." He went on, "[t]he Negro is gouged. Because he is a Negro, because he can be taken advantage of, because his racial position makes it possible to gouge him, he is gouged."[57] This situation was exacerbated by the practice among many black families of taking in additional boarders. Most did this to meet their exorbitant rents, but the result was that many residences were filled beyond their intended capacities.[58] By the end of the 1920s population density in Harlem was soaring as over 164,000 blacks lived there, and as the numbers of people rose without the requisite sanitation, hospital, and other essential services to serve the population, the quality of life for most Harlemites declined precipitously relative to previous generations of residents, and was quite difficult for most.[59]

Besides occupying dwellings that would not be properly maintained, African Americans did not control a significant proportion of the retail establishments in Harlem as late as the

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[56] Ibid.

[57] Winthrop D. Lane, "Ambushed in the City," *Survey Graphic* Vol. 6, no. 6 (March 1925), 693.

[58] Cheryl Lynn Greenberg, *"Or Does It Explode?" Black Harlem in the Great Depression* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 30-1; Osofsky, *Harlem*, 135-138.

[59] Osofsky, *Harlem*, 130. This figure is more than double the 73,000 blacks he cites resided in Harlem in 1920. In both years, these figures represent between two-thirds and three-fourths of all blacks living in Manhattan, and nearly half of all African Americans in New York City.

1930s.[60] Lack of access to job opportunities in Harlem's retail stores was an important political issue, particularly once the Great Depression hit. An economic calamity of global proportions, the Depression negatively affected Americans of every racial and ethnic group, and social class. Many millions of Americans experienced shocking poverty as they lost jobs, homes, and some, hope for the future. But for African Americans, who were already at the bottom of the economic ladder, the prospect and reality of losing their livelihoods was omnipresent. A *New York Herald Tribune* article from 1930 underscored this point:

> . . . the October stock slump produced five times as much unemployment in Harlem as in other parts of the city. People who lost money fired their chauffeurs and maids. Men who employed both races tended to fire the Negro worker first.
>
> No one can get an exact estimate of unemployment in Harlem. Four churches and social agencies give 30,000, 36,000, 25,000, and 28,000. These figures cannot be vouched for. Social agencies usually put these things a little high. But there is no question, from personal observation, that Harlem today faces a bitter unemployment situation.[61]

For the next few years the country continued to descend into the grips of economic depression. President Herbert Hoover's administration had placed the burden for national economic recovery on the states, municipalities, and private businesses. This strategy had not worked anywhere in America by 1932, and New York City was no exception. Even with the change in the direction of the federal government after the election of Franklin D. Roosevelt, New Deal policies were piecemeal and flawed, and often tolerated racial discrimination in their application.

Therefore, access to jobs—particularly in Harlem's retail shops—was a bitter subject for black New Yorkers during the first half of the decade. Blacks in Harlem and in other cities around the nation began organizing grass-roots campaigns to protest the dearth of jobs for

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[60] Greenberg, *"Or Does It Explode?"*, 61.

[61] Beverly Smith, "Harlem's Distress Intensified as Growing Property Values Threaten Impoverished Tenants," *New York Herald Tribune*, 10 February 1930, 5.

African Americans in the stores they patronized most. Harlem's campaign, launched in 1933, was "the largest and most influential," and organized by Abyssinian Baptist Church assistant pastor Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., Reverend John H. Johnson of St. Martin's Protestant Episcopal Church, and Fred R. Moore, editor of the *New York Age*. Protest leaders negotiated with white business leaders in order to get them to hire black workers and also initiated boycotts of stores that did not employ African Americans. The "Don't Buy Where You Can't Work!" campaigns, however, were only successful in securing temporary employment for black workers. Oftentimes, blacks were terminated once the boycotts ended.[62]

Black New Yorkers were not getting the economic relief they needed from the federal government, the state or city governments; and earlier attempts at boycotts and negotiations had not produced permanent results. In March 1935, Black New Yorkers took more dramatic measures to express their discontent and try to get the assistance they needed. In part as a reaction to the alleged beating and subsequent death of a 15 year-old Puerto Rican boy, Lino Rivera, at the hands of a white storeowner who saw him try to steal a pocket knife, and in part as an inchoate reaction against the police brutality and lack of job opportunities so prevalent in Harlem, black residents turned to vandalizing white-owned businesses along One Hundred Twenty-Fifth Street, one of Harlem's major thoroughfares. It turned out that Lino Rivera had not been beaten and was certainly not dead, but over the coming weeks and months it became clear that there were much more fundamental issues at the heart of the disturbances of March 19 and 20 than what had or had not been done to Lino Rivera.[63]

In the week after the riot Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. did not focus on Lino Rivera in trying to explain why conditions had grown so ripe for the type of violence that had occurred. Rather,

[62] Roi Ottley, *"New World A-Coming,"* 113-116; Greenberg, *"Or Does It Explode?"*, 137.
[63] Greenberg, *"Or Does It Explode?"*, 5-6.

he emphasized the particular havoc that Harlemites were enduring due to the Depression combined with the base alloy of racial discrimination. He reported in the *New York Post* that, "[a]n increasingly impenetrable wall has sprung up around Harlem, especially during the last five years. It is a wall of subtle prejudices, veiled discrimination and faintly concealed antagonism . . ." He went on to say that, "[e]ach winter since 1930, the Negro at the bottom of the pile felt that his burden was getting heavier. This past year Harlem was snowed under. One out of every twenty residents of New York City is a Negro. There are around 300,000 black, brown and yellow folk. One-half are not working, the other half is existing on the crumbs from the table."[64]

In response to the riot, Mayor Fiorello H. LaGuardia appointed a biracial commission to study and issue a report on the incident. The twelve-member committee included E. Franklin Frazier, Countee Cullen, Hubert Delany, and A. Philip Randolph. LaGuardia charged this Commission on the Harlem Riot of March 19, 1935 with discerning the actual facts of the incident, assessing the damage to Harlem properties, and ascertaining the underlying causes of the riot. The Commission also provided suggestions for preventing a similar disturbance in Harlem in the future.

The Commission's findings confirmed the widespread poverty in Harlem and pointed to inadequate services in the neighborhood as well as discrimination in terms of job access and treatment by the police. The subcommittee investigating the events of 19 March discovered, in the process of its fact-finding expedition, the depth of the antipathy on the part of Harlem residents toward the police department.[65] Their report demonstrated that those feelings were not without cause, as the subcommittee detailed several instances of apparent excessive force against

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[64] Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., "Harlem Negroes' View on Problems," *New York Post*, 27 March 1935, 1.

[65] "Harlem Riot Report (Unpublished Report of the Harlem Riot Commission)," "Report of the Subcomittee Which Investigated the Disturbances of March 19th," 29 May 1935, 7-8, Box 3259, Folder 10, Harlem, Mayor's Commission on Conditions, Municipal Archives, New York, New York.

African Americans. One such incidence involved Thomas Aiken, a black man who had been waiting in line for over an hour outside the 369th Regiment Armory to receive food from the relief bureau located there. When a couple of other men jumped into the line against the rules, Officer David Egan and another patrolman told all three men to move to the rear of the line. Aiken tried to explain that he was merely trying to reclaim his original place. Not wishing to hear an explanation, Egan beat Aiken so savagely that Aiken ultimately lost an eye. To add insult to injury, not only was Officer Egan not disciplined, but Aiken was charged with felonious assault.[66] Clearly, there was much to find fault with regarding the NYPD's treatment of African Americans.

The final Commission report pulled no punches as far as the depth of poverty Harlem's blacks were in, the placing of blame for those conditions, and the solutions they offered. Therefore, the report was considered politically controversial and Mayor LaGuardia attempted to suppress the report. The *Amsterdam News* printed the report in its pages in 1936, however, and attempted to hold the mayor accountable for both trying to keep the report from public scrutiny and the endemic discrimination and poverty facing New York's black population.[67]

The Commission made numerous recommendations about what the city could do in order to improve conditions in Harlem with regard to job discrimination, unemployment relief, housing, education, health care, and relations with the police. All of the recommendations were intended the remedy the structural inequalities that were rife in Harlem compared to other neighborhoods and among other racial groups in New York City.[68] The commission was concerned with trying to ameliorate the most fundamental problems that they found were at the

[66] Ibid., 13-4.

[67] *The Complete Report of Mayor LaGuardia's Commission on the Harlem Riot of March 19, 1935* (New York: Arno Press & The New York Times, 1969), Foreword.

[68] Ibid., 128-35.

cause of the disturbance. Therefore, they proposed comprehensive solutions. The Commission concluded by saying that if their recommendations were heeded and conditions in Harlem were improved, then another similar disturbance could be avoided in the future. But as long as the quality of life for Harlem residents lagged far below all other New Yorkers, the city remained vulnerable to other racial violence. Black leaders would continue to prod the LaGuardia administration and even President Roosevelt for racially egalitarian legislation and to enforce the statutes that already existed equally.

**The "Dilemma" of a "Moral" War and Intellectuals After the Second World War**

By the late 1930s, northern blacks were becoming an important constituency in the national Democratic New Deal coalition that also included white ethnics and labor groups. And as both the Democratic Party leadership and African American leaders recognized the growing significance of the black vote, African American leaders began placing more demands on the federal government to meet their needs as a group. African American leaders had been trying to hold President Roosevelt accountable for his promises to the nation ever since he had taken office in 1933. While blacks recognized that Roosevelt's more activist economic policies were an improvement over former President Herbert Hoover's non-interventionist approach, they also soon realized that although much was changing, too many things were remaining the same. Federal policies tolerated racial discrimination and, in some cases, codified it.[69]

Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. and A. Philip Randolph voiced the dissatisfaction of blacks in Harlem and around the country, as they endured unequal treatment under New Deal programs.

[69] Nikhil Pal Singh, *Black Is a Country: Race and the Unfinished Struggle for Democracy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004), 87-8; Anderson, *A. Philip Randolph*, 242.

Powell did so first as pastor of Harlem's largest congregation, then as New York City Councilmember in 1941, and later as a New York State Representative to Congress from 1945 until 1967. Randolph spoke on behalf of African Americans as president of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and Maids, the labor union that he led starting in 1925, and during the war years as chairman of the March on Washington Movement (MOWM). In 1935, Powell commented on the discrimination that was rife within New Deal programs, "What about the federal relief jobs? That, my friends, is what Harlem wants to know. . . . the Civil Works Administration refuses to hire Negroes. . . . The CWA has a professional division. How many of Harlem's 135 doctors and 100 dentists are working in that division? The answer is very simple—not one!"[70] Powell went on to criticize the discriminatory practices that also occurred in other New Deal agencies and blamed mayor LaGuardia's administration for being insensitive to the needs of the city's black residents. Although that relief was often insufficient and discrimination did persist, historian Cheryl Lynn Greenberg demonstrates that administrators of New Deal agencies in New York City were somewhat more even-handed in dispensing relief to African Americans than in many other places.[71]

Nationally, black leaders continued to try and compel the federal government to remedy the inequities African Americans faced at its hands; customary bias from New Deal agencies, in federal employment, and segregation in the Armed Forces.[72] After the Second World War started in 1939 and Roosevelt began trying to prime Americans for possible military intervention after 1940, African American leaders, if not as ambivalent as at the outset of the First World

[70] Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., "Harlem Negroes' Views on Problems," *New York Post*, 27 March 1935, 4.
[71] Greenberg, *"Or Does It Explode?"*, 174.
[72] Harvard Sitkoff argues that, as a result of the formation of the "Black Cabinet" and the enlistment of Eleanor Roosevelt as an advocate for civil rights inside the White House, the Second New Deal was more beneficial for African Americans than the First New Deal. The foundations for the full flowering of the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s were being laid in the 1930s. *A New Deal for Blacks: The Emergence of Civil Rights as a National Issue* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978).

War, were still quite cautious about lending blind support to the war effort. Many still harbored feelings of betrayal; the calls to "close ranks" during World War One seemed to backfire as racial violence tarnished the nation's battle for democracy. The extent to which African Americans should support the war effort precipitated a debate among black leaders similar in many ways to the debates during World War I. The *New York Age* reported in January of 1942 that:

> Negroes in America are not one hundred per cent sold on the war effort of the nation and will not be until they are given some of the rights of democracy which have been denied them in the past.
>
> This was the consensus of opinion which came to light Saturday afternoon at a session of the National Coordinating Committee at the Harlem Branch Y.M.C.A. . . . [Judge William H.] Hastie asked the opinion of the group on their theories about Negro thought on the war. This question produced an embattled controversy among some of the race's most prominent leaders.[73]

The debate among black leaders produced both calls to close ranks with the president again and arguments that African Americans had no obligation to fight on behalf of a nation that denied them full citizenship rights, just as during World War I. The major difference, however, between African American responses during World War II and World War I was not in terms of actual African American involvement. After the bombing at Pearl Harbor, blacks were among the first to join the war effort in any way they could. Most who signed up for duty believed, as fully as any other group of Americans, in the message that this was a morally just war for democracy all over the world.

Rather, the major difference had to do with the demands African Americans placed directly at the door of President Roosevelt in order to secure federal intervention on behalf of their own community. In 1940, A. Philip Randolph and Walter White, head of the NAACP, met with Roosevelt in order to discuss the demands of black workers. Among the issues that they

[73] "Council of Negro Leaders Finds Negroes Not Backing War Effort Fully," *New York Age*, 17 January 1942, 1.

wanted Roosevelt to address were the integration of the military forces and ending racial discrimination in defense contracting.

When Randolph saw that Roosevelt was not particularly responsive to his and White's demands, he upped the ante by threatening to launch a march on Washington with as many as 10,000 protesters if Roosevelt did not commit to dealing with these issues. Randolph began to coordinate the "March on Washington Movement" in an effort to force Roosevelt's hand to propose legislation to deal with racial discrimination in government defense industries. As he continued to plan the march, which was slated for July 1, 1941, he informed Roosevelt that he planned to have more than 100,000 African American protesters descend on Washington, rather than his initial 10,000-person estimate.[74]

As Roosevelt prepared the United States for the prospect of war, the last thing he wanted to deal with was a mass protest by African Americans who he realized had a legitimate gripe with the government. Franklin even enlisted the assistance of his wife, Eleanor, because of her popularity among black leaders and Mayor La Guardia in order to try and convince Randolph to cancel the march.[75] This and all of the other attempts on the president's part to discourage the march were unsuccessful. So, in exchange for Randolph's willingness to call off the march, Roosevelt worked with him to create legislation that committed the government to address the black leader's issues. President Roosevelt showed Randolph several drafts of what ultimately became Executive Order 8802. The order established the Fair Employment Practices Commission and prohibited racial discrimination in defense industries and government.[76]

With EO 8802 Randolph called off the march, but did not dismantle the March on Washington Movement. He was criticized in some circles—even within the MOWM—for

[74] Anderson, *A. Philip Randolph*, 249-50.
[75] Ibid., 252.
[76] Ibid., 258-9.

canceling the march, as some were dissatisfied that the executive order did not desegregate the armed forces or go far enough in other areas. Many ordinary blacks were confused, and others were disappointed that the march was brought to a halt so quickly and neatly.[77] Black leaders, however, could still look at Executive Order 8802 as a concrete victory. It was the first time since the Reconstruction Era that the federal government had intervened directly on behalf of blacks.[78] Acknowledging that this singular executive order was not enough, by itself, to remedy the discrimination that existed within the federal government, Randolph still opined optimistically about the virtues of the order. "'I know that this order is certain to stir the hopes and aspirations on Negroes throughout the nation, who only seek opportunities to work according to their qualifications. It is the hope of the Negro March-on-Washington Committee that this executive order will represent thousands of jobs and hundreds of millions in increased wages in Negro communities, which will reflect themselves in higher standards of living, more education and recreation for the children, a greater security and assurance of more abundant life.'"[79] Randolph also offered that the negotiations that produced Executive Order 8802 had taught black leaders a very valuable lesson. He told a Harlem audience a few months after the order had been issued that, "'the March on Washington Movement has learned that the Federal Government itself has become the carrier of the germ of race discrimination and segregation; and that 'the Government and the President will respond to pressure and the organization of the Negro masses can exercise pressure.'"[80]

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[77] Ottley, *"New World A-Coming,"* 292; Anderson, *A. Philip Randolph*, 259.

[78] "Randolph's Speech Explains Why He Called Off March," *New York Amsterdam Star-News*, 19 July 1941, 15.

[79] "Randolph Says Fight to End Bias Will Continue," *New York Age*, 5 July 1941, 1; "Randolph's Speech Explains Why He Called Off March," *New York Amsterdam Star-News*, 19 July 1941, 15.

[80] "March Threat By Randolph," *New York Age*, 19 September 1942, 1.

That Randolph and White were able to compel Roosevelt to issue an executive order was the result of several factors emergent since the 1930s that would continue into the 1950s and 1960s. Among the most important of those factors was the population shift that brought hundreds of thousands of African Americans out of the rural South to the urban South, North, and West. During the First Great Migration about 300,000 African Americans left the South. The Second Great Migration, which is generally purported to have lasted from 1940 to 1970, was much larger. Between 1941 and 1945 alone, 700,000 blacks migrated from the rural South, with 400,000 of them finding their way to the North and West to work in war industries. With such large numbers swelling the populations of urban centers, blacks changed the composition of political districts and were in better position to influence the outcome of political contests.[81]

Just as important, if not more so, was the growth of the American economy during the war years, and over the next two decades. Right as the New Deal programs were running out of steam by the end of the 1930s, governmental spending for war production injected a much-needed boost into the national economy. The government assumed a larger role in managing the economy than it had even during the New Deal. The most the federal government had spent in any given year on New Deal programs was $8.5 billion; by 1945 government expenditures had reached $100 billion. The Gross National Product also grew by leaps and bounds as it increased from $206 billion in 1940 to $500 billion in 1960, and soared to $800 billion by 1970. Many Americans saw their salaries double during the war years while inflation was kept low.[82]

African Americans shared in the wartime and postwar economic growth as they gained access to better jobs and membership in labor unions, and as restrictions on promotions began to

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[81] Harvard Sitkoff, "The Preconditions for Racial Change," in William Chafe and Harvard Sitkoff, eds., *A History of Our Time: Readings on Postwar America*, Second Edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 154.

[82] Sitkoff, "The Preconditions for Racial Change," in Chafe and Sitkoff, *A History of Our Time*, 152.

slacken. Wartime jobs and rising wages led to growth in the black middle-class and a higher standard of living for many. The combination of greater political leverage and buying power raised blacks' expectations of their elected officials to unprecedented heights.[83]

By the time the United States officially entered the war and began to send troops into combat in 1942, most all black intellectuals had come around to supporting the war effort. But not by soft-pedaling the pervasiveness of racial discrimination throughout American society, and not as a result of uncritical patriotism. Rather, the war raised the importance of demonstrating that African Americans were truly part of the nation.[84]

On the intellectual front, there had also been significant developments since the 1920s that helped to de-legitimize the notion of black racial inferiority. In 1923 the famed Columbia University anthropologist, Franz Boas, gave a lecture at the One Hundred Thirty-Fifth Street Branch of New York Public Library in Harlem in which he argued that "there is no evidence whatever to prove that the white man is inherently superior to any other, or that the Negro would not have accomplished all the white race has if he had been placed in the same environment or had the same opportunities." Boas went on to argue that race is a social construct with very little basis in biology. As he put it in his address, "'Race . . . is a very elusive term to define, since there are no hard and fast lines between them. Similar characteristics are to be found in races that are supposed to be widely apart, and there are certain characteristics that are common to all humanity."[85]

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[83] Ibid., 152-4.

[84] Nikhil Pal Singh, *Black Is a Country: Race and the Unfinished Struggle for Democracy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004), 123.

[85] "Race Superiority Bunk, Says Boas," *New York Amsterdam News*, 31 January 1923.

African American intellectuals also weighed in on the subject of racial theory. They made much the same arguments as Boas, in some cases even earlier. A. Philip Randolph stated simply and unequivocally back in 1919 that, "Races are equal. They are equal in mind. They are equal in body. They are equal in moral and ethical standards. There is probably no bogey more pernicious or more false than the claim of racial inferiority."[86] Randolph cited contemporary textbooks, *Dynamic Sociology* and *Applied Sociology*, written by Brown University professor Lester F. Ward to back up his claim. He used them to argue that the positive and negative characteristics found in human beings were distributed across races equally.

James Weldon Johnson advocated racial pluralism and argued against "Anglo-Saxon" superiority, as embodied by "Anglo-Saxon Clubs" of the era. Johnson argued that the "Anglo-Saxon" and his culture were both myths and that it would be "better to encourage people to bring here their cultural heritages, to give us in America the benefit of their songs and dances and literatures and customs, than to try and force them to conform to some Anglo-Saxon idea of what is American."[87]

Discussions about the biological equality of all human beings and arguments for an inclusive definition of who was an American were not merely intellectual exercises. By the 1880s and 1890s, one of the uglier consequences of Progressivism's valuation of scientific data and the professionalization of the academy was that theories about a global hierarchy of races, with Anglo-Saxons or Aryans as the superior races and Africans as the most primitive, began to be couched in the language of biology. Not only were pseudo-scientific theories taught in universities throughout the country, but these theories also affected legislation regarding

[86] A. Philip Randolph, "Racial Equality," *The Messenger*, vol. 2, no. 10 (October 1919), 4.
[87] "James Weldon Johnson on Anglo-Saxon Superiority," *New York World*, 3 February 1924.

immigration and the segregation of blacks and whites. Congress passed Chinese Exclusion Acts in 1882, 1892, and again in 1902 that prohibited Chinese immigration to the United States. And as was stated above, Jim Crow legislation throughout the South became more entrenched during the 1890s and 1900s. A Congressional committee, the Dillingham Commission, even published an encyclopedia of races in 1906, in which every "race" was catalogued. Virtually every harmful stereotype of any ethnic group in American society was now supposedly "proven" by this commission. The apogee of racial theory's impact on legislation occurred with the Immigration Act of 1924 which set quotas on the number of persons entering the country from outside the western hemisphere "in order to select those best suited for American society."[88]

As the 1920s became the 1930s and the Depression throttled world economies, immigration to the United States dropped considerably, so it was not as important a priority for congressional legislation, but many people still held strong beliefs in white racial, cultural, and intellectual superiority. Boas and his students continued to publish scholarly studies that worked to debunk the idea of white racial superiority. In 1941, Melville J. Herskovitz, a student of Boas' at Columbia, published another important book working from the premise of human biological, cultural, and intellectual equality titled *The Myth of the Negro Past*. In it, Herskovitz argued that African American culture continued to retain many African influences into the present day. This was a very controversial argument at the time. *The Myth of the Negro Past* was, however, an important contribution to the growing body of scholarship produced in the previous twenty years that argued both that African Americans possessed a heritage that had positively contributed to America's development, and that blacks were indeed Americans and deserving of equal rights.

[88] Americans.net, "Immigration Act of 1924," <http://www.historicaldocuments.com/ImmigrationActof1924.htm>, 15 May 2007.

The most important single work as far as articulating the racial liberal ideology was Gunnar Myrdal's, *An American Dilemma*, in 1944. The 'dilemma' was that the United States was founded on the principles of human equality, democratic political and civil institutions, and the belief that people could advance as far as their hard work and natural intellect could take them, yet African Americans had never been fully included in that covenant.[89] Myrdal and his interracial team of researchers and consultants—Alain Locke, E. Franklin Frazier, Kenneth Clark, and co-founder of the National Negro Congress and future diplomat Ralph Bunche amongst them—believed, however, that ultimately the American creed would triumph in its struggle over racial exclusionism; and that a pluralistic society could be created if whites came to grips with their consciences. *An American Dilemma* helped cement racial liberal ideology as the orthodoxy of the civil rights movement until the mid-1960s.

*An American Dilemma*, coming as it did during World War II with the war's moral justifications to save the world from totalitarianism and preserve freedom, helped bolster African American campaigns for social justice.[90] The country may have been on the right side in a morally just war overseas, but African Americans reminded public officials that they were absolutely on the wrong side in the domestic war for equality and civil rights. "Black Americans commented upon 'this strange and curious picture, this spectacle of America at war to preserve the ideal of government by free men, yet clinging to the social vestiges of the slave system.'"[91] Harlem's African American activists including George Schuyler, Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., A. Phillip Randolph, and others exposed the hypocrisy of the American claim to moral supremacy

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[89] Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy, Volume 1* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers, Inc. 1996, 1944), lxxix.

[90] This was the case even though the framework for explaining the racial condition of the United States that Myrdal worked within—one that was paternalistic and regarded blacks as having no capacity for producing a coherent perspective on race relations in the United States—was limiting and insulting to African Americans. Singh, *Black Is a Country*, 145-7.

[91] Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent: Europe's Twentieth Century* (New York: Vintage, 1998), 195.

by constantly making the injustices of American society toward blacks subject to scrutiny in both the national and international courts of public opinion. Ralph Bunche stated dryly "the fight now [in Europe] is not to save democracy [in the United States], for that which does not exist cannot be saved."[92] African Americans, with the "Double V for Victory at Home and Abroad" campaign, initiated by the *Pittsburgh Courier* back in 1942, clearly articulated in various ways that an Allied victory—particularly an American victory—would mean little unless it included both an end to European colonialism and American racial injustice.[93]

After the war ended, the spirit of cooperation that characterized the relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union quickly soured as both countries vied for global economic, political, and cultural supremacy. The cold war that developed not only shaped a hostile foreign policy towards the Soviets, but also resulted in repressive domestic policies that attempted to curb any and all voices of dissent against the status quo. The cold war had a chilling effect on the movement for civil rights and the intellectual left between 1945 and 1954. Communists, socialists, and other left-wing activists were compelled to either modify, or completely deny, their earlier beliefs in order to remain active in progressive social activism. Many Americans lost their jobs or were forced to sign loyalty oaths to keep them. The Federal Bureau of Investigation began surveilling Americans involved in civil rights organizations in attempts to discredit their leaders and undermine the work of these groups. And numerous people were dragged in front of the House Un-American Activities Committee in order to preserve their reputations, implicate others of being communists, and demonstrate their patriotism.

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[92] Ralph Bunche; in Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent*, 195.

[93] John Fousek, *To Lead the Free World: American Nationalism & the Cultural Roots of the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 29.

The Second World War went a long way to de-legitimize racial theory in academic circles, as the world now knew the destruction these theories could cause if carried to their extreme. And African Americans worked to capitalize on the moral leverage they had as a result of their patriotic participation in the war effort, given the moralistic justifications for the US entering the war. Civil rights agitation, both in New York City and nationally, by no means ceased. But the social, political, and material pressures to conform to a conservative version of patriotism intensified in the decade after the war and succeeded in decimating much of the prewar Left. As historian Robert Griffith argues, "[t]he aggressive actions of right-wing interest groups were not . . . met by countervailing pressures from the left. Instead, the same broad forces that lent strength and legitimacy to the postwar right served to undermine and destroy the postwar left."[94]

The deterioration of the postwar left applied to the nation and to New York City. The effectiveness of communist, socialist, nationalist, and other left-wing activists in New York was subverted to a great degree not only by governmental efforts to crush popular social action, but also by the ideological divisions amongst black leaders who disagreed with one another about the most effective ways to achieve full racial equality.[95]

As a result, if during the 1920s and 1930s, younger black radicals were the ones pushing the envelope in devising the tactics for civil rights struggle, by the early 1950s the pendulum had swung back in the direction of the more moderate racial liberals who had been at the forefront of the civil rights struggle during the 1910s. Between 1945 and 1954 the NAACP and National Urban League, particularly the NAACP, reestablished itself as the foremost national civil rights

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[94] Robert Griffith, "American Politics and the Origins of McCarythism," in Chafe and Sitkoff, eds., *A History of Our Time: Readings on Postwar America*, 59.

[95] Eric Arnesen, "Passion and Politics: Race and the Writing of Working-Class History," *The Journal of the Historical Society*, vol. 6, no. 3 (September 2006), 346.

group working through the courts to dismantle legalized racial segregation. Still headquartered in New York City, the membership rolls of the NAACP increased more than nine times rising from 50,000 to 450,000. The NUL also continued to operate in the midst of the repressive social and political climate. And black intellectuals, either working through these organizations or independently, continued to make Harlem the intellectual center of the civil rights movement.

# Chapter 3

## Brightening and Dimming Optimism: Racial Liberalism Ascendant and in Crisis

By the middle of the 1950s, racial liberalism had reemerged as the predominant ideology guiding the civil rights movement. During the early 1930s, the growing influence of the Communist left on African American intellectuals and more educated blacks was based on the communists' rhetorical commitment to achieving racial justice by destroying the capitalist economic and political institutions that fostered inequality. The Communists supported rent strikes for better living conditions, protested the eviction of black families from their homes, and—most famously—provided legal representation for the Scottsboro Boys in 1931—nine black youths from Alabama who were unjustly charged with raping two white women. The American Communist Party (CPUSA) also gained standing among the masses due to its willingness to directly intervene on behalf of African Americans.[1] By the second half of the decade the American Communist Party (CPUSA) decided to emphasize its revolutionary rhetoric less, and commit to working with non-communist reform groups in what is known at the Popular Front period.[2] The position of the Party shifted even more by the final years of the war as the CPUSA tried to push the idea that communism was the definition of Americanism. Through the years of the Second World War leftist ideologies gained more influence among African Americans in New York City. After the Second World War, however, the influence of leftists in

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[1] Eric Arnesen, "No 'Graver Danger': Black Anticommunism, the Communist Party, and the Race Question," *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas*, vol. 3, no. 4 (Winter 2006), 31.

[2] Martha Biondi, *To Stand and Fight: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Postwar New York City* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003), 5-6.

the black freedom struggle—particularly Communists—receded under the pall of virulent anti-communism that grabbed hold of American society.[3]

The final Allied victory over Japan in August of 1945 ushered in a new epoch in world history. The United States and the Soviet Union emerged as the two global superpowers, both hoping to reconstruct the entire world in their own images. The resulting militaristic competition between the two nations turned the globe into a bi-polar world. Moreover, both nations sought to win the support of the emerging nations of Africa, Asia, and Latin America, using economic incentives, military forces, and propaganda in order to further very different ideological agendas.

The United States espoused a liberal democratic ethos that included: individual rights that the government could not take away, a commitment to human freedom, self-determination, and market economy. At the same time, the US painted the Soviet Union as the national embodiment of atheistic evil. According to American political officials, the Soviet Union's existence was a threat to American national security and even American civilization.[4]

The governments were not only antithetical to the other, but they were also antagonistic toward each other. The Cold War helped shape American foreign policy—particularly with regard to the emerging nations in Africa and Asia—and it also affected how the nation dealt with dissent within its own borders.[5]

In this new geopolitical context, President Harry Truman made it clear that the United States could "no longer afford the luxury of a leisurely attack upon prejudice and

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[3] Manfred Berg, "Black Civil Rights and Liberal Anticommunism: The NAACP in the Early Cold War," *Journal of American History* (June 2007), 76; Patricia Sullivan, *Lift Every Voice: The NAACP and the Making of the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: The New Press, 2009), 348.

[4] Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2001), 2; X, "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 25, No. 4 (July 1947), 568.

[5] Mary Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000); Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line*, 2; Berg, "Black Civil Rights and Liberal Anticommunism," 75.

discrimination."[6] In order for the US to give substance to its claim as the moral leader of the world, the country had to get its own "racial house" in order. After World War II it was more apparent than ever before that the United States could no longer act as if it were physically or ideologically isolated from the rest of the world. No matter how much American leaders may have wished differently, every discriminatory action taken by the federal government with regard to domestic race relations and foreign policy toward Africa, Latin America, and Asia was subjected to international criticism and used as propaganda to embarrass the United States on the world stage.[7]

Cold War politics made it politically advantageous for the United States to make it easier for civil rights activists to push for civil rights. Domestic incidents of racial discrimination were being broadcast to the world at every opportunity. American injustices became world news as foreign news organizations reported to their countries; foreign diplomats and emissaries reported back to their home governments; foreign students and visitors from African and Asia returned home to describe their encounters with discrimination; and black American leaders publicized the plight of African Americans and their government's unwillingness to ameliorate their suffering.[8] In a rapidly changing world in which African and Asian nations were casting off European domination, the unapologetic defense of white supremacy was now a political liability in foreign affairs. Domestic racial politics became very important when the United States attempted to increase its influence in these parts of the world.[9]

During the 1950s the Cold War was omnipresent in American economic, political, social, and intellectual life. Black intellectuals of all stripes had to decide how they were going to

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[6] Sullivan, *Lift Every Voice*, 346.

[7] Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line*, 103-4; Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*, 38; Berg, "Black Civil Rights and Liberal Anticommunism," 75-96.

[8] Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line*, 40-1; Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*, 11-2.

[9] Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*, 6-7.

operate within the constrictions and exploit the opportunities that having competing "superpowers" presented. On the one hand, segregationists pilloried all attempts to challenge the racial status quo as "un-American" and "communist-inspired;" particularly powerful epithets to contend with in the mid-1950s. Southern politicians argued that African Americans were actually quite contented with the conditions in the South and that it was "outside agitators" and not "their blacks" that were concerned with social equality. To abandon racial segregation would potentially precipitate the unraveling of American society. A large segment of southern whites accepted this point of view and used it as a justification for the maintenance of white supremacy.[10]

On the other hand, there were ways in which blacks could exert pressure on the political establishment in order to bring about change because of the country's thirst for increased political influence.[11] Black intellectuals could affect positive change for African Americans when they: exposed the injustices perpetrated against blacks—either by the federal government or without adequate federal response—to a wide enough national and international audience; framed the actions of segregationists as un-American; and/or successfully portrayed the protests for racial equality as the purest expression of those fundamentally American ideals of freedom, liberty, and human equality.[12]

Thus, the Cold War hindered the civil rights movement in some ways as the federal government and southern state governments sought to repress civil rights agitation and dissent against the status quo more broadly. But there were also opportunities to use American global political ambitions for the benefit of the domestic civil rights agenda, and black intellectuals

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[10] Ibid., 28.
[11] Sullivan, *Lift Every Voice*, 286.
[12] Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*, 29.

sought to do this to the fullest extent possible, while minimizing the negative consequences of the ensuing blowback.

The Cold War was not the only factor that determined how black intellectuals were going to operate in the post-war era. It did, however, fundamentally alter the relationships between certain individuals and groups. Historical circumstances present from the 1930s up through the end of the Second World War made it imperative for intellectuals and organizations of different ideological perspectives to submerge many of their conflicting principles in an effort to build a broadly based movement for civil rights and maintain individual relevance. Black organizations often came together under umbrella organizations, such as the National Negro Congress (NNC) in 1936, in order to coordinate information, resources, and activities with other groups. A "popular front" of communist and liberal organizations developed in an attempt to deal with the issues of economic inequality and job discrimination.[13] After the war, however, the political landscape shifted rightward and brought ideological differences back to the fore and impeded the possibilities for future alliances.[14] Therefore, the examples of grudging cooperation between racial liberals organizations such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and black communists that existed during the heyday of the black left in the 1930s and early 1940s were no more by the early 1950s.[15]

As significant a factor as governmental efforts at undermining leftist agitation was in causing cleavages among communist groups and other organizations, it was not the only factor. The Popular Front began to unravel even before the end of the war, as exemplified by A. Philip Randolph's break from the National Negro Congress in April of 1940. Randolph had been one

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[13] Biondi, *To Stand and Fight*, 9-10, 20.

[14] Eric Arnesen, "No 'Graver Danger': Black Anticommunism, the Communist Party, and the Race Question," *Labor: Studies in Working-Class History of the Americas*, vol. 3, no. 4 (Winter 2006), 15.

[15] Sullivan, *Lift Every Voice*, 348-9.

of the principle founders of the NNC back in 1936. Randolph's prestige convinced the NAACP to join the group initially, even though there was also a growing communist presence in the organization. But after the Second World War began in 1939, according to scholar, Nikhil Singh, the NNC began to fracture. As Singh explains,

> [The NNC] collapsed in 1940 around the issue of its affiliation with the Labor Non-Partisan League. While the contention has been understood as revolving around the issue of communist domination of the Congress and the political fissures that opened after the Nazi-Soviet pact, these controversies were themselves the manifestation of the Congress's inability to decide whether race-organization or interracial class-solidarity would be its primary principle. Randolph . . . quit the Congress in 1940 after it endorsed affiliation with the Labor Non-Partisan League because he believed it meant that the NNC was "no longer truly a Negro Congress" with a "leadership which is uncontrolled and responsible to no one but the Negro people."[16]

Therefore, the causes for the demise of the Popular Front were not only international events, as has previously been claimed, but also conflicts over the best course of the domestic movement.

Historians, Eric Arnesen and Manfred Berg emphasize the growing Communist control over the NNC as the primary reason for Randolph's decision to leave the NNC and the disintegration of the Popular Front. In their view, once the Soviet Union and Germany entered into the Hitler-Stalin Pact of 1939, the American Communist Party and NNC were rocked internally. Over the next couple of years the CPUSA switched its position from opposing World War II to supporting the war effort, pushing the struggle for black equality further down of the Party's agenda. After the Germans broke the Hitler-Stalin Pact and the CPUSA was forced to support American involvement in the war, the Party expressed the belief that protests for racial equality were unwanted distractions and should be stopped. The de-emphasis of black civil rights by the Communists convinced Randolph and many other African Americans that the

[16] Nikhil Pal Singh, *Black Is a Country: Race and the Unfinished Struggle for Democracy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004), 98.

CPUSA had no genuine interest in civil rights, but were only trying to exploit the plight of African Americans for the benefit of the CPUSA and Moscow. As the communists had taken control of the NNC by late-1939, Randolph chose to resign rather than remain president of the organization.[17]

Nationalist intellectual, Harold Cruse, argued that a big part of the problem was the communist strategy of "attempting to capture every group" the way it had the NNC. He argued that the Communists really had no program to offer that was relevant to black New Yorkers in the postwar era. Rather, "[t]he Communists lived in a dream world of the recall of past glories of a foreign revolution that had no meaning in the United States."[18] There were reasons, other than governmental pressure, why some African American leaders became disaffected with communism during the 1940s.

In the postwar period, black leaders of all ideological persuasions continued to agitate for civil rights. In many ways, the reasons for the war strengthened the arguments of many activists as to why African Americans deserved full political, social, and economic equality with whites; particularly racial liberals who relied on the ideas of the Constitution and Declaration of Independence as their touchstones. Racial liberals sought to make civil rights a moral issue, as often as possible. Following the ideological blueprint articulated by Gunnar Myrdal, racial liberals challenged the country to live up to its professed creed by citing its own foundational texts.

Because many Americans framed attempts at challenging the racial status quo as "un-American" or "communist-inspired," some black activists—particularly racial liberals and their organizations—sought to insulate themselves from suspicion and reframe their goal of achieving

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[17] Berg, "Black Civil Rights and Liberal Anticommunism," 80; Arnesen, "No 'Graver Danger,'" 13, 24, 29.

[18] Harold Cruse, "Education of a Rebel," n.d., 21, Box 4, Folder 8, The Education of a Rebel (Part One), Harold Cruse Papers, Archives of the Tamiment Library, Robert F. Wagner Archives, New York University, New York.

racial equality as quintessentially American.[19] NAACP executive director Roy Wilkins argued that, "the survival of the American democratic system in the present global conflict of ideologies depends upon the strength it can muster for the minds, hearts and spiritual convictions of all its people." He further maintained that 'the Negro wants change in order that he may be brought in line with the *American* standard . . . which must be done not only to preserve and strengthen that standard here at home, but to guarantee its potency in the world struggle against dictatorship."[20] Racial liberal intellectuals, more than nationalists and leftists, worked to have their actions in support of racial equality be interpreted as affirming American ideals—democracy, freedom, human equality, and now anti-communism. As a result, to the extent that issues of racial equality were able to gain a hearing on the national level, racial liberals were once again at the forefront of pushing them forward.

Black nationalist intellectuals, with their call for economic and territorial autonomy, were not willing to work within liberal-democratic institutions in order to achieve their goals. Socialist and communist intellectuals—although coming from different ideological perspectives themselves—were often lumped together by political leaders and ordinary Americans who simply regarded them as enemies of the state, and would have liked to see them expunged from American life. Leftists were also sometimes hostile towards working through liberal-democratic institutions to achieve racial equality. Therefore, although agitation for racial equality by any group was not encouraged during the 1950s, racial liberals were perhaps best able to adapt their rhetoric to fit within the constraints presented by the increasingly conservative intellectual, political, and social milieu. These different positions on the efficacy of working within

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[19] Manfred Berg, "Black Civil Rights and Liberal Anticommunism: The NAACP in the Early Cold War," *Journal of American History* (June 2007), 76; Patricia Sullivan, *Lift Every Voice: The NAACP and the Making of the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: The New Press, 2009), 370.

[20] Roy Wilkins quoted in Mary Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2000), 29.

established government institutions in order to achieve civil rights can be seen in the different approaches of Kenneth Clark and Milton A. Galamison on the issue of school desegregation in New York City.

Racial liberalism was the predominant ideology guiding the civil rights movement during the 1950s. By the end of the decade, however, frustrations among all classes of African Americans with the lack of progress toward racial integration in public schools and the wider society provided an opening for more radical ideologies and direct action tactics to gain adherents. Black liberal intellectuals and organizations would have to decide whether or not they would work to incorporate the different ideas of leftists, nationalists, and conservatives into their repertoire or risk facing irrelevance as the movement continued. And this was true of both the northern and southern streams of the civil rights movement.

The ideological shifts that the civil rights movement underwent were much more national than regional in nature, even with the differences in culture, political economy, demographics, and the nature of white supremacy. This is especially true since many of the most significant intellectuals and tacticians of the local and national movements were based in New York City. Through the middle of the 1960s, racial liberals proved sufficiently flexible to absorb external challenges from other black leaders and maintain their preeminence among the black masses. After the middle of the decade, especially among younger urban blacks, racial liberalism was less palatable, black nationalism gained more adherents, and the rhetoric and goals of the black freedom struggle shifted.

### Responses to *Brown*

The fundamentally American idea that all human beings are created equal from birth and entitled to the opportunity to rise as high as their hard work and intellect would allow epitomized both the nation's greatest promise and contribution to mankind, yet it also made all the more disheartening the state of domestic race relations following World War II. All Americans were far from treated equally. Black leaders of all ideological persuasions recognized that there was a disconnect between the values expressed in the nation's foundational texts and the reality of blacks' status within American society. Racial liberal leaders, however, were more committed than conservatives, black nationalists, and leftists to articulating how wide this gap remained at mid-twentieth-century using the words of the "founding fathers" to make their arguments. Liberals did more than merely invoke the Declaration of Independence or US Constitution; they evinced a commitment to working within liberal-democratic institutions to achieve their ends; total equality with whites as signified by the complete integration of American society (and social and legal equivalence).

Because integration was a central goal for racial liberal intellectuals, they worked to attack segregation wherever and however they could. One of the arenas in which racial liberals sought to destroy segregation was in education. A reason for this was that these middle and upper class blacks placed an extremely high value on formal education as the surest way to ascend the American social ladder.[21] Another reason was that racial liberals believed that integrated classrooms were the place where the most progress regarding race relations could be made. According to racial liberals, education was key to dismantling prejudice.[22] Also, public

[21] Kenneth Clark, *Dark Ghetto: Dilemmas of Social Power* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1965), 60.
[22] Kenneth Clark, "Desegregation of the American Public School," National Conference on Human Relations Education, Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, April 29, 1955, 22, Box 158, Folder 5, Professional File, Speeches & Writings, Speeches, Kenneth Bancroft Clark Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. Will be referred to subsequently as KBC Papers.

schools were a striking example of the inequalities that existed between blacks and whites in American society.

There were wide disparities in funding between white public schools and black public schools in both the North and particularly in the South. Although the gap in education spending between northern and southern states was narrowing by the 1950s, southern state legislatures, historically, appropriated relatively little money to public education. The proportion of educational funding to African American schools might be anywhere from one-third to one-eighth of the amount set aside for the education of white children.[23] In the five cases that were combined into *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, of which the school board of Clarendon, South Carolina, was one of the defendants, unequal allocation of public funds was one of the primary legal issues. According to historian Richard Kluger, "[i]n Clarendon County for the school year 1949-1950, they spent $179 per white child in the public schools; for each black child, they spent $43."[24]

Schools for black youth throughout much of the South—particularly the rural South—could barely qualify as such. Often these "schools" were little more than one room shacks in which one or two teachers might be asked to instruct up to eight grade levels of children simultaneously. In Clarendon County there were five times fewer schools for whites than for blacks, yet the white schools had three times the monetary value.[25] African American elementary schools were never on par with schools for white children—even though *Plessy* was national law—nor did they contain adequate classroom space, heating or plumbing. Many schools did not have cafeterias to provide meals for students.

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[23] Sullivan, *Lift Every Voice*, 334.

[24] Richard Kluger, *Simple Justice: The History of* Brown v. Board of Education *and Black America's Struggle for Equality* (New York: Vintage Books, 1975; reprint 2004), 7.

[25] Kluger, *Simple Justice*, 7-8.

If the condition of southern schools for blacks was appalling, northern schools, were also quite uneven in terms of the quality of facilities in predominantly black schools and majority white schools. In New York, where de jure segregation had not existed since the first decade of the twentieth century, African American and Puerto Rican parents in Brooklyn organized the Bedford-Stuyvesant-Williamsburg Schools Council in 1943 to protest the inferior education their children were receiving. They saw that the public schools their children attended were older than majority white schools on average and in disrepair, less equipped in terms of supplies and books, did not offer hot lunches or have health care facilities in some cases, and were lacking in instructional and recreational spaces in comparison to predominantly white schools. The goal of the Schools Council was to ameliorate these inequities for the sake of their children's educations.[26] North and South, blacks challenged their status as second-class citizens and began demanding that the government—local, state, and federal—start protecting the Constitutional rights guaranteed them and their children. These calls would only become more insistent over the course of the next two decades.

In the context of New York City, where de jure segregation did not exist in the public schools and mass organization would not be subject to violent repression or economic intimidation, ordinary citizens formed groups and tried to negotiate directly with the powers-that-be in order to enact change through influencing policy changes or local legislation. In the South, where African Americans had virtually no access to political power on any level, "blacks were in a better position to seek redress through the courts."[27] Both of these strategies—negotiation with city agencies and litigation—reflect the predominance of the liberal ideology

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[26] Clarence Taylor, *Knocking at Our Own Door: Milton A. Galamison and the Struggle to Integrate New York City Schools* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 62.

[27] Quote by Genna Rae McNeil; in Waldo E. Martin, Jr., ed., *Brown v. Board of Education: A Brief History with Documents* (New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1998), 10.

guiding the civil rights movement, with its desire to work within established democratic institutions.

One of the most important of these institutions was the courts. While local groups or even citywide organizations operated in New York City and in other northern locales, groups such as the NAACP worked primarily through the legal system. By the early 1950s, the NAACP had been engaged in the legal battle for equalization in educational opportunity for nearly two decades. Working from a strategy to chip away at southern Jim Crow school systems, first in graduate and professional schools, the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund (LDEF) garnered Supreme Court victories during the 1930s and 1940s that mandated the admission of qualified black applicants to previously-all-white state universities because the schools for African Americans were either non-existent or woefully unequal to the schools available to whites. The strategy of whittling away at Jim Crow by working within the limits set by the doctrine of "separate but equal" obtained victories for the NAACP, but they had only limited applicability and the process was incredibly slow. Thurgood Marshall, lead counsel for the NAACP LDEF and future Supreme Court justice, who advocated the "incremental" strategy during the during the 1930s and 1940s, realized by 1950 that "[u]nless the Court could be forced to confront the legality of segregation itself, NAACP lawyers might have to spend the next half-century arguing cases of unequal educational facilities one by one. Meanwhile, segregation would go on."[28]

The NAACP lawyers and many of the social scientists who supplied their expertise to the organization, particularly City College of New York clinical psychologist Dr. Kenneth Clark, thought of themselves as social engineers who were attempting to use the legal system to help

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[28] Kluger, *Simple Justice*, 283.

precipitate the full flowering of democracy for all Americans.[29] In their minds, *Brown v. Board of Education* and the cases that preceded it were about attaining the highest ideals of the American creed through the manipulation of democratic legal institutions. As *Brown* worked its way through the federal court system, the lawyers counseled their clients to expect many setbacks during the process, but also believed that their ultimate victory was both possible and foreseeable.

These racial liberals had enough faith in the legal system to trust that their belief in the efficacy and necessity of racially integrated schools would be vindicated. According to Alfred Kelly, "[t]here was a very conservative element in these men in the sense that they really believed in the American dream and that it could be made to work for black men, too. . . . [Thurgood Marshall] truly believed in the United States and the Constitution, but [thought] that the whole system was tragically flawed by the segregation laws. Wipe away those laws and the whole picture would change. Marshall and his colleagues were no rebels. They felt the social order was fundamentally good. What they wanted was the chance to share in it like men.'"[30] As far as racial liberals were concerned, the true American creed had never been implemented, and to facilitate its application for all would be revolutionary. The revolution they sought to initiate, however, was a reformist one. This may sound oxymoronic, but racial liberals believed in democratic political institutions and a capitalist economic order. Racial liberals, in general, and the NAACP, in particular, were not seeking to destroy capitalism or the structure of the American government. They simply wanted to be equally served by both.

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[29] Waldo E. Martin, Jr., ed., *Brown v. Board of Education: A Brief History with Documents* (New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1998), 12; Kenneth Clark, "Desegregation of the American Public School," National Conference on Human Relations Education, Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, April 29, 1955, Box 158, Folder 5, Professional File, Speeches & Writings, Speeches, KBC Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

[30] Kluger, *Simple Justice*, 642.

Finally, after two years and two rounds of argumentation in front of the Supreme Court on these five cases, the near-twenty-year legal fight to strike down legal segregation in public education and near-sixty-year fight to overturn *Plessy* ended on 17 May 1954. The decision was an important milestone for the country. It would be difficult to imagine the extent to which the country would be affected. Black and white, North and South, city and town, almost every citizen would be affected by the decision and the responses from blacks and whites to the new mandate varied significantly.

Among whites across the South, responses ranged from pledges of defiance to calls for compliance. In Mississippi, rabid segregationist Senator James Eastland snarled that "the South will not abide by nor obey this legislative decision of a political court. . . . We will take whatever steps are necessary to retain segregation in education." Senator John Stennis, no less virulent a racist, was more cautious when he initially observed that "there is plenty of time, and I believe there are even years to seek a solution." In Cleveland, Mississippi, a young Episcopal priest named Duncan Gray even urged his fellow Mississippians to comply with the *Brown* decision. Not only did this clergyman take a public stand in favor of desegregation, he did so without reprisal from local whites.[31]

In Greensboro, North Carolina, the school board met on 18 May 1954 and voted six to one to endorse a proposal by Chairman D. Edward Hudgins "committing Greensboro to implement the Supreme Court desegregation edict." Greensboro school superintendent Benjamin Smith agreed with Hudgins. "'It is unthinkable,' he said, 'that we will try to abrogate the laws of the United States of America.' Any effort to evade the decision, Smith declared,

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[31] John Dittmer, *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 37.

would be a disaster to the country and signify the end of democracy."[32] On 19 May the city's largest paper applauded the school board's decision to come to terms with the Supreme Court mandate. Sensing how the world had, indeed, been irrevocably altered, the *Daily News* editorialized, '"how one felt or what one did about segregation before Monday . . . has become relatively academic now. Segregation has been ruled out and the responsibility now is to readjust to the reality with a minimum of friction, disruption, and setback to the school system.'"[33] These examples are significant in underscoring the fact that public opinion among southern whites had not completely hardened against the *Brown* decision in the middle of 1954 the way that it eventually would by 1957.

African Americans' reactions to *Brown* were just as varied as among whites, but along a slightly different track. Most African American newspapers were jubilant about the decision as were men and women on the street, believing that it did nothing less than signal a new era in American race relations. Kenneth Clark wrote that *Brown* confirmed the continued existence of "the American Dream." For Clark—and other racial liberals—*Brown* validated their desire to continue working through "the system" in order to reform it. Responding to the decision, Clark declared that "[t]he Court in these decisions proclaimed to a sceptical [sic] world that the American dream could be a reality and that in America human beings were not required to fight for justice by self-defeating force, hatred, and bloodshed."[34]

In some corners of black America, however, commentators expressed concerns about the implications of *Brown*. Black intellectuals were posing tough and important questions—and in

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[32] William H. Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina, and the Black Struggle for Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 13.

[33] Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights*, 42.

[34] Kenneth Clark, "Prospects for Desegregation in the Southern States," n.p., 1956, Box 171, Folder 5, Professional File, Speeches & Writings, Writings by Clark, KBC Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

some cases, offering answers—about larger issues such as the continued necessity of African American-run institutions and whether or not racial integration was a laudable social goal. The fact is that there were several different perspectives on these issues, reflecting ideological viewpoints that had existed historically among African Americans.

Conservative anthropologist and writer, Zora Neale Hurston, bristled at what she interpreted as an insult hurled at black schoolteachers and administrators who, she argued, were pouring their heart and soul into their students, were succeeding at improving the quality of education for black youth, and were creating a more healthful environment for their students than would be common at white schools. "Negro schools in [Florida were] in very good shape and on the improve," according to her.[35] Blacks did not need to force their way into places where they were not wanted, and simply sitting in classrooms with white children would do nothing to improve the educational experience for black youths. "If there [were] not adequate schools in Florida, and there is . . . some inherent and unchanging quality in white schools, impossible to duplicate anywhere else, then I am the first to insist Negro children of Florida be allowed to share this boon. But if there are adequate Negro schools and prepared instructors and instructions, then there is nothing different except the presence of white people."[36] To believe that African Americans needed to attend school with whites to receive a quality education was to reify white intellectual superiority and work from a model of black deficit as far as Hurston was concerned. "Both Hurston and W. E. B. Du Bois saw the negative views of black culture in the

[35] Zora Neale Hurston, "Court Order Can't Make the Races Mix," *Orlando Sentinel, The Public Thought*, 11 August 1955; in Waldo E. Martin, Jr., ed., *Brown v. Board of Education: A Brief History with Documents* (New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1998), 211.

[36] Hurston, "Court Order Can't Make the Races Mix," in Waldo E. Martin, Jr., ed., *Brown v. Board of Education: A Brief History with Documents* (New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 1998), 210.

liberal assimilationism driving the NAACP legal assault against Jim Crow as wrong-headed and dangerous."[37]

George Schuyler, a friend of Hurston's, fellow member of the conservative American Writers Association after the war, and journalist for the *Pittsburgh Courier* newspaper, initially praised the *Brown* decision in the *Courier*. Within a year, however, he was already calling desegregation a failure in much of the South and criticizing the tactics of most civil rights leaders.[38] This was evidence of Schuyler's hardening conservatism after the Second World War and his increasing hostility toward the liberal-led civil rights movement. Schuyler agreed with Hurston that it made no difference whether schools were comprised of all white students or all black students as long as it had a good curriculum.[39] In Hurston's and Schuyler's emphasis on what one might call "the fallacy of proximity" argument, however, they did not adequately address the current, and continued, disparity between black and white schools.

Hurston's and Schuyler's contention misrepresented the claims of racial liberals like Kenneth Clark—and leftists such as Brooklyn Presbyterian minister Milton A. Galamison—who argued that racially segregated schools were inherently inferior on two other grounds. Clark repeatedly argued that segregated schools placed a stigma on black children that distorted the personality development of both black and white children. Black children, according to Clark, learned to internalize messages of inferiority, while white children developed an over inflated sense of self-importance and skewed conception of fairness.[40] Galamison argued that black

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[37] Martin, Jr., *Brown v. Board of Education*, 36.

[38] Oscar R. Williams, *George S. Schuyler: Portrait of a Black Conservative* (Knoxville, Tenn.: The University of Tennessee Press, 2007), 136-7.

[39] "Reminiscences of George S. Schuyler," (1962), 626, in the Oral History Research Office Collection of the Columbia University Libraries (OHRO/CUL).

[40] Kenneth Clark, "Race Prejudice and Children," *The Child*, v. 17, no. 7 (March 1953), 113-4, Box 170, Folder 5, Professional File, Speeches & Writings, Writings by Clark, KBC Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C; Kenneth Clark, "Psychology of Your Child in a Changing Community," Talk at Public School 87, New York City, February 1954, 2, Box 158, Folder 4, Professional File, Speeches & Writings, Speeches,

children needed to be in classes with white children because those schools were better funded and equipped, staffed with more experienced teachers, and prepared to offer more challenging and diverse curricula.[41] Clark invoked an important racial liberal principle by asserting that the destinies of blacks and whites were inseparably linked. Galamison combined his belief that public schools in New York needed to be integrated because to deny integrated education was anti-democratic with more pragmatic concerns that responded to conditions as they were, not as he believed they should be.[42] Galamison's argument directly responded to the conservative position that integrated schools were not essential because black and white schools were rapidly being equalized, and the argument that civil rights leaders were only concerned with the physical proximity of black and white children to the exclusion of other educational factors.

The questions that the *Brown* decision raised for black intellectuals were larger than that of the physical proximity of black and white children. Everyone understood that the implications of the decision reflected shifts in the balance of power between the federal government and the states, the course of the wider black freedom struggle, and the efficacy of racial integration as a social goal. Black activists and intellectuals, whether liberal, conservative, nationalist, or leftist viewed *Brown* and the broader civil rights struggle through their particular ideological prism. This caused them to devise different strategies in order to achieve black equality. As a result, black intellectual thought existed along a spectrum as brilliantly complex as the colors of a rainbow. There was no singular way of viewing the issues raised by *Brown*.

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KBC Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; Kenneth Clark, "Segregated Schools in New York City," Address for 'Children Apart' Conference, Intergroup Committee on New York's Public Schools, 24 April 1956, 2-4, Box 158, Folder 4, Professional File, Speeches & Writings, Speeches, KBC Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

[41] Taylor, *Knocking at Our Own Door*, 66.

[42] Ibid., 60.

Zora Neale Hurston, for example, did not only consider the issue of whether or not it mattered if public schools were racially segregated. Hurston's argument against the *Brown* decision was also couched within a larger conservative argument about the encroachment of the federal government into the daily lives of Americans. While liberals such as Kenneth Clark and socialists such as A. Philip Randolph and Bayard Rustin were lobbying for greater federal involvement on behalf of civil rights, Hurston believed that the effort to force southern schools to desegregate was not just about schools or desegregation. Rather, it was "to keep [the South] busy while more ominous things were brought to pass;" that being government by decree.[43] By 1960, George Schuyler did not believe that the *Brown* cases should have been argued in front of the Supreme Court at all.[44]

Schuyler went even further to argue that *Brown* was in many ways a step backward, because indirect approaches to the "Negro problem" had been more successful up until that point. He favored continuing to pursue the more gradual approach of working within the bounds supplied by *Plessy* because he believed that the South was making genuine efforts to equalize educational facilities after the 1952 Supreme Court decision requiring the state of Kansas to appear before the Court and defend its statute to permit segregation at the elementary level. Schuyler argued that the region needed to be given sufficient time to actually provide equal educational facilities.[45]

Rather than view the issues presented in the *Brown* case—addressing nearly a century of inadequate educational opportunities and unequal educational facilities—from the perspective of

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[43] Hurston, "Court Order Can't Make the Races Mix," in Martin, Jr., *Brown v. Board of Education*, 211.

[44] "Reminiscences of George S. Schuyler," (1962), 624, in the Oral History Research Office Collection of the Columbia University Libraries (OHRO/CUL).

[45] US Supreme Court, *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas,* 344, US 141 (1952); "Reminiscences of George S. Schuyler," (1962), 621-622, 626, in the Oral History Research Office Collection of the Columbia University Libraries (OHRO/CUL).

those who had been consistently denied their Constitutional rights for too long, Schuyler empathized with southern whites whose way of life would be radically altered once black and white children attended the same schools. Schuyler maintained that progress would be determined by what people would accept, and the *Brown* decision only served to put people on the defensive and alarm them. Schuyler argued that African Americans needed to take a "longer view" on these issues and accept that there were legitimate reasons why whites were resistant to integrated education. He was an advocate of the segregationist argument that blacks were still not adequately prepared to interact with whites as equals. As he put it, "In my opinion, considering the role of the Negro in the United States, I think the first prerequisite is education and acculturation, so that whatever gap there is between Negro and white population will be reduced."[46]

Schuyler's argument about the cultural gap between blacks and whites reflected both his bias against southern blacks, which had been learned at an early age from his mother and grandmother and remained with him his entire life, and his "characteristic lifetime ambivalence about African Americans."[47] As biographer Oscar R. Williams explained, "[a]lthough [Schuyler] would speak out against racial prejudice and praise individual African Americans, he harbored a longtime disdain for the majority, many of whom were poor, southern, and had suffered under Jim Crow laws."[48]

Schuyler's position on school integration is also reminiscent of Booker T. Washington's justification of withholding political rights from African Americans by white southerners during the 1890s. Washington, like Schuyler, argued that blacks would not gain their political rights

[46] "Reminiscences of George S. Schuyler," (1962), 622, in the Oral History Research Office Collection of the Columbia University Libraries (OHRO/CUL).
[47] Williams, *George S. Schuyler*, 6-7, 16.
[48] Ibid., 17.

"through outside or artificial forcing, but will be accorded to the Negro by the Southern white people themselves, and that they will protect him in the exercise of those rights."[49] Black rights were to be granted by whites when they deemed African Americans worthy of exercising them. Like Schuyler, Washington looked at the problems of interracial relations as a function of a literal difference in the levels of cultural and intellectual evolution. Until this gap was significantly closed—and Washington did not venture a timetable for how long this process would take—whites were justified in permitting blacks only a nominal citizenship.

Washington, at the dawn of the twentieth century, and Schuyler now at the midpoint of the twentieth century were both challenging the racial liberal assumption that racial integration was a laudable social goal to be pursued. Not all black intellectuals believed this to be the case, and definitely not on the same terms or timetables that racial liberals proposed.

While black conservative intellectuals were opposed to the *Brown* decision, they were not necessarily against racial integration in principle. Rather, they wanted the process to occur without social disruption. Schuyler was deeply concerned with white reaction to African American demands for equality. He believed that non-confrontational tactics which focused on educating whites about racial prejudice at the grassroots were more effective than the methods of the NAACP. According to him, these were only about "battling against what the whites have done all the time . . ."[50] Washington had expressed the same sentiment: "I early learned that it is a hard matter to convert an individual by abusing him, and that this is more often accomplished by giving credit for all the praiseworthy actions performed than by calling attention alone to all

[49] Booker T. Washington, *Up From Slavery*, W. Fitzhugh Brundage, ed. (New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2003), 150.

[50] "Reminiscences of George S. Schuyler," (1962), 563, in the Oral History Research Office Collection of the Columbia University Libraries (OHRO/CUL).

the evil done."[51] To Schuyler, the NAACP's narrow definition of "advancement"—advocating federal legislation and prosecuting white misdeeds—did more harm for the movement than good.

Conservatives, therefore, disagreed with racial liberals about the goal of integration in some instances, such as public school integration, and at other times disagreed about the desired pace as well as the methods to be used to achieve integration. These different views were the result of ideological differences about the nature of difference between blacks and whites. Racial liberals saw blacks and whites as essentially the same; sharing the same "American" values and philosophical values as articulated in the Declaration of Independence and the US Constitution. A common humanity and American birthright entitled African Americans to the same citizenship rights as white Americans immediately. Conservatives, by contrast, placed more emphasis on differences in behavioral patterns or familial structures between blacks and whites to argue that the "gaps" between the races could not yet be bridged; it would take longer and blacks simply needed to be patient.

These two positions on integration and reactions to the *Brown* decision were not the only ones among African Americans. The Nation of Islam (NOI), the black nationalist religious organization that Malcolm X became the national spokesman for, also opposed the Supreme Court's decision in *Brown*. The reason for their opposition, however, was not that they believed blacks were unprepared for the responsibilities of American citizenship. Malcolm and the Nation were hostile to racial integration in both theory and practice. Elijah Muhammad preached that whites were pushing for integration in order to keep blacks from finding true salvation in Allah.[52] To Elijah Muhammad, leader of the NOI, the *Brown* decision was merely another example of white "tricknology" to keep blacks willing to operate within societal structures that

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[51] Washington, *Up From Slavery*, Brundage, ed., 150.
[52] Elijah Muhammad, "Mr. Muhammad Speaks," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 9 June 1956, B3.

continued to oppress them.[53] Muhammad, and his chief disciple, Malcolm X, taught followers that whites were "devils" who had no intention of genuinely integrating with African Americans.[54]

The Nation of Islam's and Malcolm X's hostility to racial integration reflected both the disaffection of northern urban blacks who had been forced to endure the slings and arrows of racial discrimination far too often and a belief that the current political and economic system could never be transformed to benefit blacks. Since the 1930s the NOI had encouraged its members to disavow formal politics because the American economy and government were doomed to destroy themselves. Muhammad referred to America as the "modern Babylon," a reference to the ancient kingdom that collapsed as a result of its sinful decadence. He declared that "America is falling; she is a habitation of devils and every uncleanness and hateful people of the righteous." He urged that blacks "[f]orsake her and fly to your own before it is too late."[55] The Nation of Islam advocated racial, economic, and political separatism for black Americans.[56]

Founded in its initial form in the fall of 1932, the Nation of Islam incorporated many of the tenets of black nationalism into its version of Islam.[57] The Nation's social, political, and economic objectives hearken back to the Garvey movement of the 1920s.[58] Both Garvey, and later the Nation of Islam, advanced the notion that blacks need not assimilate into the larger

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[53] Karl Evanzz, *The Messenger: The Rise and Fall of Elijah Muhammad* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1999), 167-8.

[54] Elijah Muhammad, "Mr. Muhammad Speaks," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 9 June 1956, B3; Elijah Muhammad, "Mr. Muhammad Speaks," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 18 August 1956, B2; Elijah Muhammad, "Mr. Muhammad Speaks," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 6 September 1958, A10; Malcolm X, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1964), 186, 217; Karl Evanzz, *The Messenger: The Rise and Fall of Elijah Muhammad* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1999), 167; Manning Marable, *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention* (New York: Viking, 2011), 86.

[55] Elijah Muhammad, "Mr. Muhammad Speaks," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 13 April 1957, B2.

[56] Karl Evanzz, *The Messenger: The Rise and Fall of Elijah Muhammad* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1999), 114-9; Elijah Muhammad, "Mr. Muhammad Speaks," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 6 September 1958, A10; Marable, *Malcolm X*, 136.

[57] Karl Evanzz, *The Messenger: The Rise and Fall of Elijah Muhammad* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1999), 78.

[58] Claude Andrew Clegg, III, *An Original Man: The Life and Times of Elijah Muhammad* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 70-1.

American society or integrate with whites. Much as white bigots would argue, for blacks to integrate with whites in any way would lead to the degeneration of the black race and ultimately work to keep blacks in an oppressed status in American society. Blacks and whites attending school together would lead to other types of social interaction that they feared would lead to interracial sexual relations.

The *Brown v. Board* decision produced various responses from African American leaders in the days, weeks, months, and years after it was handed down. Rather than being monolithic, African American intellectuals' reaction to the Court's mandate differed and their thought also differed substantively about the larger social and ideological implications of the ruling. While racial liberals and socialists generally supported the decision, and racial integration generally, nationalists and conservatives opposed the ruling, although for different reasons. Conservatives were not necessarily against the principle of integration, but were definitely critical of the methods by which liberal leaders were agitating for it. But now that *Brown* was law, those who favored the ruling were determined to see it implemented across the country. The ideological differences between liberals and leftists helped to determine that they would pursue different approaches toward achieving this end.

**Desegregating and Integrating New York City's Public Schools**

Segregation in public education on the basis of race had been illegal in New York City since the turn of the twentieth century. Therefore, in New York City, just as in most other northern urban areas, eradicating legalized racial segregation of public schools was not the focus of agitation among African American activists and intellectuals. Yet, in New York City, as in

other comparable northern cities, racial segregation existed in the schools and so *Brown* did affect northern school boards and city officials. Parents and intellectuals pressured the Board of Education and the mayor to work affirmatively toward integrating New York City's public schools.

Dr. Kenneth Clark had been complaining to the Board of Education before May 1954 that by maintaining a segregated school system they were failing to fulfill their obligation of providing equal educational opportunities to all of the children of New York City. His desire to destroy segregation extended back to his time at Howard University, a historically black college in the District of Columbia. Clark, who had grown up in New York City since age six and attended public schools, decided to go to Howard because blacks were in control administratively, in the classrooms, and within the student body.

Clark became editor of the school newspaper, the *Hilltop*, and engaged in protest activities against segregation in Washington. Clark organized a group of twenty students to go into the area of Capitol building and protest the racially segregated eating establishments. The "Capitol Hill Twenty," as they became known, were arrested and taken to jail, prepared to stay the night or longer for their cause. University president Modecai Johnson, however, had their names removed from the police record and they were released on bail into his custody only hours later. Clark and his fellow students risked expulsion, but expressing their displeasure was more important to them. Clark and the other protesters were spared suspensions, but this was due only to the efforts of supportive radical professors such as Ralph Bunche, who taught political science there during the 1920s and 1930s.[59]

[59] Reminiscences of Kenneth B. Clark (1976), pp. 74-78, in the Oral History Research Office Collection of the Columbia University Libraries (OHRO/CUL); Kluger, *Simple Justice*, 129-130.

Clark learned a great deal outside the classroom while at Howard from his protests and arrest, but also inside the classroom from militant professors like Bunche. In the 1930s, Bunche was a leftist scholar who advocated a complete overhaul of American capitalism. He had no confidence in the NAACP's liberal approach of seeking redress through the courts and its focus on achieving political and social equality. As far as Bunche was concerned, realizing true equality by working within governmental institutions was impossible. "The inherent fallacy of this belief rests in the failure to appreciate the fact that the instruments of the state are merely reflections of the political and economic ideology of the dominant group, that the political arm of the state cannot be divorced from its prevailing economic structure, whose servant it must inevitably be."[60]

Clark undoubtedly thought about Bunche's words very deeply as he worked to develop his own worldview in college and as an adult. As he established his own academic career, earning his Ph.D. in psychology from Columbia University and then becoming the first African American professor to receive tenure at the City College of New York after joining the faculty in 1942, Clark came to a different conclusion about the efficacy of working within liberal-democratic institutions. He participated in organizations that were autonomous of government agencies in his quest to destroy segregated educational institutions, but he also believed that he could be highly effective at destroying segregation from the inside. Clark and other racial liberals—like the NAACP lawyers—went a step further than believing that the legal system or the basic structures of government could be used for good. Rather, these structures were inherently good and had been corrupted by people who did not believe in the real American creed. Hence, when Clark had the opportunity to work within governmental bodies or pursue justice through legislative channels, he did so willingly. Other intellectuals would not be so keen

[60] Ralph Bunche in Kluger, *Simple Justice*, 129-130.

on becoming enmeshed in officially sponsored activities or organizations, believing that to do so would lessen their ability to be a voice for substantive change.

In the months before the Supreme Court decision Clark spoke at an Urban League symposium and at the "Children Apart" conference sponsored by the Intergroup Committee on New York's Public Schools (IC). The Intergroup Committee had been founded during the first half of 1953. It was an umbrella organization representing groups that worked for the welfare of New York City's children. The IC had three main objectives: to educate the public about the conditions and standards of the public schools, to get the Board of Education to commit to an "objective and systematic study of the effects of de facto segregated schools in New York City upon the development and educational achievement of children," and to get the Board to both issue a policy statement and initiate affirmative action to demonstrate that segregated education would not continue in the city.[61]

Both in front of the Urban League of Greater New York and at the IC conference Clark accused the New York City Board of Education of operating a racially segregated school system that provided inferior educations to its African American and Puerto Rican charges. Although Clark's statements spurred fierce defenses of Board actions from Board of Education members, he did not relent in his attacks on New York City's policies after the *Brown* decision. Clark made his allegations and presented his evidence publicly over the city's radio waves and in the newspapers. In the months after May 17 he uncovered evidence that the Board was allowing white parents to circumvent its own neighborhood school policy by busing white children a mile

[61] Kenneth Clark, "Segregated Schools in New York City," 24 April 1954, 12, Box 56, Folder 5, Professional File, Subject File, Intergroup Committee on New York's Public Schools, KBC Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; Kenneth Clark, "Education in N.Y.C.," 17 June 1954, 2-3, Box 158, Folder 4, Professional File, Speeches & Writings, Speeches, KBC Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; Kenneth Clark, "Segregation and Desegregation in our Schools," *Ethical Frontiers: The City's Children and the Challenge of Racial Discrimination* (New York: Society for Ethical Culture, 1958), 15, Box 172, Folder 1, Professional File, Speeches & Writings, Writings by Clark, KBC Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

away from their homes so that they would not have to attend the predominantly black elementary schools that were within walking distance.[62] The neighborhood school policy operated from the assumption that it was desirable to have children attend the schools closest to their homes, especially in the lower grades, because they would be in surroundings and around people they were familiar with.[63] The Board of Education would use this argument at different times in order to shoot down proposals that would increase racial integration in New York City's schools. So to find out that the Board was facilitating the evasion of its own beloved policy in order to foster segregation was a particularly damning discovery.

In light of Clark's bombshell, the Board of Education said it would address the situation the following year. To demonstrate that it believed in integrated schools, the Board contracted the Public Education Association (PEA) to perform its own independent study of the school system in June of 1954 and submit its findings and recommendations to the Board the following year. In December 1954 the Board also established its own Commission on Integration (CI) with a policy statement firmly placing the New York City Board on the side of the Supreme Court decision and committing the Board to actively promoting racially integrated schools.

> We interpret the May 17th decision of the United States Supreme Court as a legal and moral reaffirmation of our fundamental educational principles. We recognize it . . . as a challenge to Boards throughout the nation, in Northern as well as Southern communities, to re-examine the racial composition of the schools within their respective systems in order to determine whether they conform to the standards stated clearly by that Court.
>
> The Supreme Court . . . reminds us that modern psychological knowledge indicates clearly that segregated, racially homogeneous schools damage the personality of minority group children. These schools decrease their motivation and thus impair their ability to learn. White children are damaged too.

[62] "Clark Cites Several Examples of School Segregation Here," *New York Herald-Tribune*, 21 October 1954. In the same article Clark also brought up the case of Forest Hills High School in Queens, in which he argued black students were being deliberately rejected on the basis of race. In his response to Clark, Jansen refuted Clark's claim that only African American children were being rejected at Forest Hills High School. Jansen maintained that both white and black youngsters were being turned away from the school, not due to any racial factors, but because the school was overcrowded.

[63] Clarence Taylor, *Knocking at Our Own Door*, 57.

> Public education in a racially homogeneous setting is socially unrealistic and blocks the attainment of the goals of democratic education, whether this segregation occurs by law or by fact. In seeking to provide effective democratic education for all the children of this city, the members of the Board of Education . . . are faced with many real obstacles in the form of complex social and community problems. . . . [T]he board is determined to accept the challenge implicit in the language and spirit of the decision. We will seek a solution to these problems and take action with dispatch, implementing the recommendations resulting from a systematic and objective study of the problem here presented.[64]

It is perhaps ironic that the Board was accepting the argument of one of its toughest critics, Kenneth Clark, as the basis for its moral compulsion to achieve integrated schools. When asked, Clark agreed to serve on the CI, which included leaders of various parental, civil rights, civic, and educational organizations around the city. The thirty-seven members of the CI were charged with examining all aspects of the New York City school system and to provide recommendations to improve the schools. Ella Baker, the leftist activist of the New York City NAACP would also be a member of the diverse coalition. Once the Commission officially began its work in April 1955, it divided itself into seven sub-commissions; each one taking a specific aspect of the school system, studying it in depth and then coming back to the Board with its recommendations.

Participating on the Commission on Integration fit within Clark's racial liberal framework because he believed that working through the Board of Education would be the most effective way to achieve the goal of integrated schools. Racial liberals believed in working from within established democratic organizations and systems. For Clark, this was an imperative. He argued, "[p]ast gains have indicated that that it is possible for a stigmatized minority group to improve its status significantly within the flexibility of the American system of government. One of the important realities which must be taken into account, in appraising the chances of success of Negroes in his struggles against racial segregation, is the power of American

[64] "Preliminary Statement of Board of Education Resolution for Action," 23 December 1954.

democratic ideals and traditions."[65] Clark not only pointed to his belief in the "flexibility" of American institutions and the endurance of the American creed as arguments for working within governmental agencies. In the same article he argued that whatever improvements African Americans saw in their status since the end of the Second World War "ha[d] come about as a consequence of legislation, litigation, or executive decree."[66] Clark believed he would have the opportunity to directly shape Board policy by serving on the CI, so he was initially optimistic about the prospect of remedying the state of segregated education in New York. He trusted the Board's stated commitment to the success of the CI and its own policy statement.

Clark chaired the sub-commission on Educational Standards and Curriculum. When it issued its report to the Board of Education in the summer of 1956, the sub-commission concluded that there were disparities in the achievement levels between predominantly minority and predominantly white schools; and that the gap in achievement levels between black, Puerto Rican and white students actually widened the longer black and Puerto Rican children remained in the system. To Clark and the other members of the sub-commission, this pointed to another fundamental problem in the school system: inequalities in educational standards and philosophies toward teaching students of color that were, at their core, racist. Clark's sub-commission called for the Board to make "intellectually gifted" classes available throughout the city, do more to standardize the curriculum citywide, and equalize the number of certified,

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[65] Kenneth Clark, "The Northern Variety: Problems of Racial Prejudice," *American Unity* (May-June, 1957), 16, Box 171, Folder 7, Professional File, Speeches & Writings, Writings by Clark, KBC Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

[66] Kenneth Clark, "The Northern Variety: Problems of Racial Prejudice," *American Unity* (May-June, 1957), 16, Box 171, Folder 7, Professional File, Speeches & Writings, Writings by Clark, KBC Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

experienced teachers in all schools.[67] The Board approved the report of the Educational Standards and Curriculum sub-commission, as it did with all of the sub-commission reports.

The various sub-commissions, in most cases, affirmed what the Public Education Association concluded when it released its report in the late fall of 1955. Besides determining that over seventy percent of the city's public schools were segregated—meaning that they were comprised of populations that were either ninety percent or more white or ninety percent or more black and Puerto Rican—the PEA study produced five other significant findings. When compared to mostly white schools the schools that were predominantly black and Puerto Rican tended to: 1) be located in older buildings with less than satisfactory floor and playground spaces; 2) have fewer tenured faculty members, a higher proportion of probationary teachers, and higher teacher turnover rates; 3) offer more "classes for retarded children" and "fewer classes for bright children;" 4) have lower standardized test scores; and 5) have larger average class sizes for their mainstreamed students.[68] All signs indicated that African American and Puerto Rican youth were being deprived of adequate educations by the New York City school system. Clark continued to prod the Board of Education to work toward racial integration as a part of the Commission on Integration until it was dissolved in 1960. He would be disappointed by the Board's unwillingness to implement the CI's proposals on more than one occasion during the Commission's six-year existence.

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[67] Lynn Farnol to Commission on Integration, n.d., Box 5, Folder 49, Series 261, "Commission on Integration Papers," Board of Education Papers, Special Collections, Milbank Memorial Library, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York.

[68] Board of Education of the City of New York, *Toward Greater Opportunity: A Progress Report from the Superintendent of Schools to the Board of Education dealing with Implementation of Recommendations of the Commission on Integration* (June 1960), 3, Box 5, Folder 41, Series 261, "Commission on Integration Papers," Board of Education Papers, Special Collections, Milbank Memorial Library, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York.

Another of the most prominent leaders in the struggle to integrate New York City's public schools, Milton A. Galamison, preferred to be independent of the Board of Education and governmental institutions entirely, in his attempts to influence school policies. Unlike Clark, the model racial liberal who believed it possible to effect change from within, Galamison, a leftist, did not trust the Board of Education or politicians generally. Therefore, he did not want to be censored in terms of his rhetoric or tactics for achieving racially integrated schools.

Galamison was the pastor at Siloam Presbyterian Church in Brooklyn's Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood; the borough's largest African American Presbyterian church in the borough's largest African American community. Bedford-Stuyvesant's black population had been growing for several decades by the 1950s, but had really increased rapidly during World War II as blacks continued to migrate to New York from the rural South and found extreme overcrowding in Harlem. Between 1940 and 1960 Brooklyn's African American population more than tripled from 107,263 to 371,405.[69] Galamison had become Siloam's pastor in 1948 and quickly made it clear to his largely middle-class congregation that he was a socially-conscious minister, unafraid to get involved in civil rights causes. He taught his congregants that acting humanely toward all people and fighting against injustice were obligations of true Christians and, therefore, he expected his flock to feel and act in a similar manner.[70]

Soon after being installed at Siloam, Galamison used the television and radio airwaves to spread his messages of Christian kindness and social justice to a broader audience than just his congregation. During the late 1940s Galamison made several appearances on a local church program *Dumont Morning Chapel*, and by the early 1950s he was appearing on another local

[69] Gibson and Jung, "Historical Census Totals on Population Totals By Race, 1790 to 1990, and By Hispanic Origin, 1790 to 1990, For Large Cities and Other Urban Places in the United States," Working Paper 76, Table 33: New York—Race and Hispanic Origin for Selected Large Cities and Other Places: Earliest Census to 1990, Population Division, U.S. Census Bureau, February 2005.

[70] Taylor, *Knocking at Our Own Door*, 34.

radio program *Radio Chapel*. Galamison was also contributing to the *New York Amsterdam News* by the early 1950s. It is significant that Galamison, a black minister, had the opportunity to frequently appear on radio programs and in newspapers to reach wider audiences. His messages in this period were not overtly political, but they provided much more exposure for him and his church.[71]

Galamison always demonstrated through his working relationships that he was willing to collaborate with anyone whom he believed was on the right side of a cause he supported. Even in an era of anti-communist hysteria, Galamison was willing to work with people who had been accused of, or who had actually been members of the Communist Party. He refused to be cowed by the tactics of red-baiters who sought to isolate activists and vet social protest movements by hanging the tags of communism or subversion on them. Galamison could work with communists without being a member of the Communist Party himself.[72] He combined beliefs in social justice and economic equalitarianism, with the principles of Christian brotherhood and an all-inclusive human family.[73]

While Galamison's willingness to work with all parties fighting for justice was admirable, it would eventually make it difficult for Galamison to function within the liberal NAACP. Galamison became a member of the Brooklyn NAACP in the mid-1950s and was elected chair of the NAACP Schools Workshop in December of 1955. Galamison, along with fellow branch members Annie Stein, Claire Cumberbatch, and Winston Craig organized the NAACP Schools Workshop, a group that worked through existing parent and teacher organizations to educate parents about the issues concerning Brooklyn schools. As director,

[71] Ibid., 33-4.
[72] Lisa Yvette Waller, "Holding Back the Dawn: Milton A. Galamison and the Fight for School Integration in New York City, A Northern Civil Rights Struggle, 1948-1968 (Ph.D. Dissertation, Duke University, 1998), 59-60.
[73] Taylor, *Knocking at Our Own Door*, 35-7.

Galamison would take a more confrontational and grassroots tack toward pursuing school integration than many within the branch and the national NAACP were comfortable with.

Galamison's approach of challenging the policies and leadership of the New York City Board of Education through dramatic public statements and attempts at mass action would strain his relationship with the NAACP. The national NAACP had built its reputation as a result of its legal victories for civil rights and was no fan of mass action techniques for several reasons. For one thing, mass actions were more difficult to control than legal fights. For the national leadership of the NAACP, the masses were thought of as a very sharp double-edged sword. On the one hand, it was important for the organization to increase its membership so that it could fund its initiatives and lay claim to representing the interests of as large a segment of the African American population as possible. On the other hand, the NAACP sought to negotiate with white leaders and was willing to accept more moderate gains in exchange for continued access to the halls of power, rather than lose its authority as the spokes-organization for black America.

Racial liberal leaders and their organizations did not evince a significant active role for the masses. In part, this is a reflection of one of the ideas that heavily influenced the direction of racial liberalism in the twentieth century: W. E. B. Du Bois' notion of The Talented Tenth. Du Bois argued that there was perhaps ten percent of the African American population that was well enough educated and materially able to lead the masses. These people were obligated to form the vanguard that would lift the remaining ninety percent out of the ditch of ignorance and poverty into the blue sky of intelligence and equality. The notion of the Talented Tenth both illustrates the belief that those with status are somehow inherently more fit to lead and that people of lower status—whether educationally or materially—cannot adequately comprehend the depth of their own oppression or mobilize themselves to fight it. The underlying principles of

the Talented Tenth guided the strategies of the NAACP since its inception and racial liberal ideology more generally.

Kenneth Clark articulated some of the critiques and concerns about the long-term viability of mass action techniques in 1958 when discussing Martin Luther King Jr.'s rise to prominence after the Montgomery Bus Boycott of 1955 and 1956. As he put it, "[a]n objective appraisal of the effectiveness of King's ideology would have to recognize the fact that in spite of the successful boycott the actual desegregation of the buses of Montgomery was determined by a decision of the US Supreme Court. Furthermore the philosophy of 'love for the oppressor' has not resulted in the desegregation of the public schools in Montgomery, Alabama."[74] Clark contended that while mass action had some limited use, it had to be conceded that the important actions—the "real" power—still resided in the formal institutions of political authority.

Clark also expressed concerned about whether the masses could carry out a nonviolent philosophy of loving one's oppressor over a long period of time. He maintained that "[t]here are further serious questions concerning the psychological implications and consequences of a strategy based upon the capacity of an oppressed group to love—in the literal meaning of the term—their oppressors. This might be possible of a few highly developed and philosophically sophisticated individuals, but it is questionable whether it is realistic for large masses of individuals."[75] Clark pointed up a class divide based on educational attainment that, to him, made mass action not only of limited effectiveness in changing public policy, but also potentially harmful to the participants themselves.

Racial liberals preferred strategies in which they could express grievances through established institutions, build and maintain political and economic alliances with the wealthy and

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[74] Kenneth Clark, "The Future of Race Relations in America," 1958, 7; Box 172, Folder 1, Professional File, Speeches & Writings, Writings by Clark, KBC Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

[75] Ibid.

powerful, and retain favor in the court of public opinion. As a result, racial liberal organizations such as the NAACP and the National Urban League (NUL) and preeminent racial liberals such as Kenneth Clark employed tactics that would not alienate those with substantial formal political and economic power. Rarely during the 1950s, did the NAACP or NUL participate in, much less initiate, mass action protests.[76] More often, they might contribute financially but not in a more public way.

The national NAACP's hesitance or unwillingness to engage in more direct action or mass action protest sometimes caused friction between the national office and local branches that in certain cases wanted a more militant tack on civil rights. The Brooklyn branch of the NAACP provides an example of the increasing conflict between locals and the national office during the second half of the 1950s. It shows why, in the case of Milton A. Galamison and other leftists, it became extremely difficult for them to remain within the NAACP.

Galamison and the other militant members of the Brooklyn branch began the NAACP Schools Workshop in 1955 as a vehicle for black, Latino, and white parents in Bedford-Stuyvesant and other parts of Brooklyn to express their unhappiness with the policies of the Board of Education. The membership of the Schools Workshop exercised power by writing letters to school officials criticizing the Board's actions, but also by selecting the people who would negotiate with city officials.[77] Galamison was also willing to mobilize the members to hit the streets in order to protest the continued segregation and unequal learning conditions in predominantly black and Latino schools.

In the three years after *Brown*, Milton Galamison and the parents of the NAACP Schools Workshop became increasingly frustrated with what they considered to be the bad faith dealing

[76] Taylor, *Knocking at Our Own Door*, 49.
[77] Ibid., 63-4.

of the Superintendent of Schools, William Jansen, and the New York City Board of Education. Since it had begun its investigations in April of 1955, the Commission on Integration had submitted several reports about different aspects of the public school system to the Board of Education throughout 1956. The Board had approved of all of the reports brought to them—more or less enthusiastically—, had implemented a couple of policies, and issued press releases stating their commitment to desegregation. Yet, when Galamison and the NAACP Schools Workshop challenged the Board to actively work to integrate Junior High School 258 (JHS 258) in Bedford-Stuyvesant, the Board balked.

Galamison and the parents of the Schools Workshop saw the integration of JHS 258 as essential to demonstrating the Board of Education's commitment to racial integration. The Board had pledged to make JHS 258 an integrated school when it opened in 1955, but as of November 1956 only between 12 and 15 out of nearly 1,100 students were white.[78] When pressed on the issue, Jansen maintained that some progress had been made toward integration, but massive racial integration would be virtually impossible because JHS 258 was located in the heart of Bedford-Stuyvesant, an overwhelmingly black neighborhood.[79] It was only in the "fringe" areas where there were racially mixed residential patterns or where the communities of varied ethnic groups merged, that Board leaders believed the most substantive integration could take place. Galamison issued a statement saying he did not believe that JHS 258 was in the heart of Bedford-Stuyvesant and that any statements Jansen or the Board made about progress toward integrating JHS 258 were "inadequate and misleading."[80]

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[78] Ibid., 63.

[79] "NAACP Rebukes City Board for All-Negro Brooklyn School," *New York Times*, 2 November 1956. Box 1, Folder 7, "Superintendent of Schools, William Jansen, Subject Files: Racial Discrimination," Series 456, Board of Education Papers, Special Collections, Milbank Memorial Library, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York. Will be referred to subsequently as the "Jansen Files on Racial Discrimination."

[80] Ibid.

It turned out that the Board had made different promises to various constituencies. While Superintendent Jansen told civil rights groups that the Board would actively work to integrate JHS 258,[81] he also worked to assuage white parents' fears by assuring them no "radical' changes would occur within the system. Ultimately, rather than actively work to integrate JHS 258, Jansen pledged to provide the school with additional services.[82]

This apparent evasion of the Board's initial pledge fueled Galamison's already-existent distrust of political figures and governmental agencies. In November of 1956 he took a very bold step voicing the displeasure of the Schools Workshop parents and other more militant members of the Brooklyn NAACP by going to Mayor Robert Wagner and demanding that he ask for Jansen's resignation. Galamison threatened that unless something was done to "clean up" the situation at JHS 258, he had 25,000 African Americans ready to vote Republican in the next election.[83]

Sparks flew in several directions once the press picked up Galamison's petition. Galamison's urging that Superintendent Jansen be asked to resign began a war of words in the New York press. Galamison pointed to an apparent unwillingness to implement many of the Commission of Integration's recommendations. Jansen, however, continued to deny that he was a segregationist and stood by the Board of Education's policy of sending children to the schools in closest proximity even if it hindered racial integration.

Besides the row in the press between Galamison and Jansen, Galamison's November letter ignited controversy within the Brooklyn NAACP and revealed significant differences between the desired approaches to obtaining social equality of some of the local branches as

[81] "Board of Ed. Integration Report is Challenged," *New York Age Defender*, 10 November 1956. Box 5, Folder 53, Series 261, "Commission on Integration Papers," Board of Education Papers, Special Collections, Milbank Memorial Library, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York.

[82] Taylor, *Knocking at Our Own Door*, 66.

[83] Ibid., 67.

opposed to the national headquarters. Galamison was elected president of the Brooklyn NAACP in December of 1956. He believed, nevertheless, that major obstacles to launching a direct grassroots assault on segregation in New York City's schools came from his own branch. Those within the Brooklyn NAACP who opposed Galamison contended that he had overstepped his authority with his letter to the mayor and that he was too much a cowboy who made public statements without going through the established channels. He ruffled the feathers of more moderate members of the branch who preferred less combative modes of protest.[84] Complaints about Galamison would only grow louder over the three years of his tenure.

Galamison's letter upset Roy Wilkins and the national NAACP. The national organization did not want to burn bridges with the Board of Education in New York, which it contended was much more committed to NAACP goals than most school boards throughout the South. By lumping the New York City Board in with southern boards, Wilkins argued that Galamison's action jeopardized the future of the school desegregation movement in New York and nationwide. Wilkins strongly urged the Brooklyn branch to "adopt a less provocative endeavor" going forward.[85]

The discord between Wilkins and Galamison over the means to achieve desegregation underscored ideological differences between racial liberals and many leftists that often made for tense working relationships, if they could work together at all. In the case of communists, affiliations with the American Communist Party often precluded any working relationship. In 1958 the New York branch of the NAACP denied membership to former Manhattan borough

[84] Ibid., 68.
[85] Ibid.

president, Ben Davis, because of his Communist Party affiliation.[86] For those who were democratic socialists such as A. Philip Randolph, Bayard Rustin, or Galamison, they too approached the struggle for black equality from a different vantage point, which could complicate alliances with racial liberals.

The concept of the Talented Tenth justified the idea that a small group of leading men and women (mostly men) should make the decisions by which "the race" would progress. One consequence was hierarchical organizational structures in racial liberal organizations. By contrast, Galamison organized mass actions with the NAACP Schools Workshop and was willing to work with ordinary people who were committed to desegregating the city's public schools, even if they did not have the "credentials" desired by the national leadership.[87] This difference in the conception of who could be a leader and means of the desired end of school desegregation would make it extremely difficult for Galamison to remain a leading force within the NAACP by the end of the decade. Ultimately, frustrated with the unwillingness of the NAACP—both local and national—to take a more militant approach toward achieving school desegregation, Galamison split with the NAACP in 1960 and formed an independent grassroots organization along the same lines of the Schools Workshop. His group would be free to pursue the mass action strategies and public confrontations that Galamison believed would force the Board to take more affirmative actions to desegregate the public schools.

**Dimming Optimism: The First Crisis of Racial Liberalism in this Era**

[86] New York State Conference of the NAACP, "Bulletin," 1 May 1958, 2, Folder 18, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (Brooklyn Branch), Correspondence and Reports-1958, Milton A. Galamison Papers, Division of Archives and Manuscripts, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin.

[87] Taylor, *Knocking at Our Own Door*, 70.

As stated previously, neither black nor white public opinion was monolithic in the immediate days and months after the *Brown* decision in 1954. Many African Americans regarded the decision as a signal that a progressive, racially integrated American future was just offstage ready to assume its starring role in American life. There were also blacks who had reservations and anxieties about the implications of the decision on black-owned institutions, especially schools.

White Americans were also in no way a monolith in terms of their opinions and actions regarding *Brown*. There were those few who hailed the courage of the Supreme Court justices and hoped that the decision would usher in a more egalitarian racial order. A larger percentage of whites were anxious about the repercussions of the ruling. They did not know exactly in what ways their lives would change or how quickly, but they were willing—or were resigned—to accept the Court's decree and make the best of the new situation. And there was also a smaller, but very vocal, percentage of hard-core racists who were willing to defy the Supreme Court in order to maintain segregation.

The rabid segregationists were on the defensive by 1954. A. Philip Randolph stated that black Americans were "steadily and substantially winning the fight for integration and a first-class citizenship status in the vital, varied stages of life . . ." as he addressed a group of United Nations delegates in 1954.[88] The intensity of African American agitation for civil rights had increased since the end of World War II, even though black leaders found it more and more difficult to operate in the cold war milieu.

Racial liberals and other African Americans who supported *Brown* wanted the implementation of the decision to be swift and sweeping. Kenneth Clark, for example, posited

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[88] A. Philip Randolph, "Statement Made at Reception for United Nations Delegates," 4 November 1954, 2, Box 39, Folder 14, Speeches & Writings File, Speeches, 1954, A. Philip Randolph Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

wherever possible over the next two years that the desegregation of public schools needed to be immediate, rather than gradual.[89] He argued, in fact, "there was no evidence that merely because a longer time was taken to desegregate a given institution that this necessarily meant that it would be more successful than desegregation which took a shorter time." Clark continued, "it was found that when the desegregation process was unnecessarily prolonged, that this not only did not insure any greater effectiveness but was found to be associated with either prejudice, conflict, indecision or some degree of hostility against desegregating."[90] According to Clark, gradualist proposals would only allow the forces of opposition towards desegregation time to reconstitute themselves and delay change more effectively.

Clark's argument about gradual desegregation was being proven correct in the three years after *Brown*. In New York City, despite the Board of Education's statement aligning itself with the Supreme Court and the formation of the Commission on Integration, school integration was proceeding at a snail's pace, at best, and many argued the Board was failing to integrate the schools at all.[91] The patience of black and Latino parents, as well as civil rights leaders was all but gone, as the atmosphere of cautious optimism that still existed at the end of 1956 was evaporating.

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[89] Kenneth Clark, "Some Principles Related to the Problem Desegregation," *Journal of Negro Education* (Summer 1954), 342-4, Box 171, Folder 1, Professional File, Speeches & Writings, Writings by Clark, KBC Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; Kenneth Clark, "How desegregation has Worked Out on the Community and State Levels," 1954, 3, Box 178, Folder 4, Professional File, Speeches & Writings, Writings by Clark, Articles, Undated, KBC Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; Kenneth Clark, "Desegregation of the American Public Schools," *Current Problems and Issues in Human Relations Education* (Anti-Defamation League, 1954), 3, Box 158, Folder 5, Professional File, Speeches & Writings, Speeches, KBC Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; Kenneth Clark, "The Crisis of American Democracy and the Negro," (National Committee for Rural Schools, n.d.), 13, Box 158, Folder 5, Professional File, Speeches & Writings, Speeches, KBC Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

[90] Kenneth Clark, "How desegregation has Worked Out on the Community and State Levels," 1954, 3, Box 178, Folder 4, Professional File, Speeches & Writings, Writings by Clark, Articles, Undated, KBC Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

[91] David Lawrence, "An Integration Problem—It's in N.Y. City Schools," *New York Herald-Tribune*, 29 January 1957, Box 1, Folder 5, Series 456, "Jansen Files on Racial Discrimination," Board of Education Papers, Special Collections, Milbank Memorial Library, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York.

By the end of 1956 white opposition to *Brown* had hardened to the point of crystallization in much of the South. In Greensboro, North Carolina, the "ebullient optimism" of the immediate post-*Brown* years "had been shattered" by 1957. The token integration that had taken place came to represent more of a defeat than a victory as the support for compliance that existed three years earlier was unable to triumph.[92] In 1956 the Mississippi state legislature passed a resolution declaring the *Brown* decision '"invalid, unconstitutional, and of not lawful effect'" by a vote of 136 to 0 while singing Dixie . . . literally.[93] And then, of course, there was Little Rock.

On 4 September 1957, Arkansas governor Orval Faubus ordered the Arkansas National Guard to make sure that nine black students did not enroll at all-white Central High School. For days mobs of white adults and students appeared each morning to make sure that the guardsmen did their duty. Television and print media flocked to report on the "Little Rock crisis." The tension reached a frenzied pitch over the next few weeks as Faubus appeared contrite to President Eisenhower one day and brazenly defiant the next. After allowing riotous whites to run wild destroying the school and assaulting reporters by simply removing the Guard on 23 and 24 September, Eisenhower finally reached his breaking point. He treated the city of Little Rock and the state of Arkansas as if it were in a state of insurrection and deployed one thousand riot-trained soldiers of the 101st Airborne Division into Little Rock by nightfall. Finally, school integration resumed the following morning without incident.[94]

The violence in Little Rock, and persisting segregation in New York City and elsewhere, demonstrated just how much more work would have to be done before not only school desegregation was achieved, but also the broader struggle for equality would be won. Resistance

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[92] Chafe, *Civilities and Civil Rights*, 43.
[93] Dittmer, *Local People*, 59.
[94] Taylor Branch, *Parting the Waters: America in the King Years* (New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1988), 222-4.

forces had reorganized themselves in the three years since the *Brown* decision. And some black leaders were much less certain by the end of the decade that the racial liberal approach was the most efficacious.

A. Philip Randolph, for example, was not nearly as optimistic about the current state of the "Civil Rights Revolution" (as he often called the black freedom struggle) or blacks' resolve to see the fight to a victorious end by the middle of 1958. In his address to the National Negro Publishers Summit that May, he wondered aloud if African Americans still possessed "the will to face the future with force and fortitude, without fear." He believed he was witnessing "a corrosive and deadening state of dejection, defeatism and despair; a sort of creeping paralysis of faith in our cause and faith in ourselves" among blacks.[95] Randolph also expressed the view that blacks had relied too heavily on white allies to prosecute the movement up until that point. While white allies were necessary in the fight for social justice, Randolph maintained that blacks needed to realize that they had to be the primary proponents of their own liberation. White liberals could not "save" blacks, Randolph told his audience; black people had to save themselves.[96] Randolph was not opposed to an interracial movement for justice, nor did his faith in American liberal-democratic institutions waver, but it was clear to him that the movement did need to go in a new direction and that new ideas were necessary if the movement was going to make any more positive gains for African Americans. The movement would enter a new phase, deal with new issues, and create new opportunities for advancement in the new decade.

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[95] A. Philip Randolph, "National Negro Publishers Summit," 12 May 1958, 5, Box 40, Folder 1, Speeches & Writings File, Speeches, 1958, A. Philip Randolph Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

[96] Ibid., 7.

## Chapter 4

## Racial Liberals Work to Maintain Relevance

The *Brown v. Board of Education* decision appeared, for many, to mark the dawn of a new day in America with regard to race relations. While there were varied reactions among African Americans throughout the country, most considered the decision to be a high water mark for the movement; a catalyst for the inevitable destruction of segregated public education, and soon the entire Jim Crow social structure. The decision was also the culmination—the apogee—, in many ways, of the NAACP's legal strategy to dismantle segregated public education. After the initial ruling was handed down in May of 1954, the organization immediately went to work on figuring out how to present to the Supreme Court a plan for how to implement this decision on a national scale. At the same time, however, forces that were opposed to the letter and spirit of the *Brown* decision were hard at work trying to find ways to obviate the new law of the land. Over the next several years, the opposition to desegregating public education became more intense and increasingly institutionalized in the form of White Citizens' Councils and the revival of the Ku Klux Klan in the South, and the stubborn resistance of boards of education and local school districts in the North.

While no black leaders expected the nation's schools to be completely integrated over night, they did expect that they would receive the backing of the federal governmental infrastructure in compelling recalcitrant school districts to desegregate their public schools. Actual desegregation, however, proceeded at a snail's pace wherever it was occurring at all, and the region of the country did not necessarily provide a definitive answer as to whether the school system would desegregate voluntarily. Activists in New York City, for example, discovered that although the Board of Education committed itself to desegregating its public schools,

rhetorically, the Board was quite unwilling to implement policies that would produce racial integration on a citywide scale.

Over the course of the remainder of the 1950s frustration mounted among activists who were working to desegregate public schools with less and less tangible success. As a result, the optimism that characterized the reaction to the initial *Brown* decision in 1954, and the moral and ideological power enjoyed by the NAACP and other liberal activists, was fading by the end of the decade. The NAACP, and racial liberals more generally, would search for ways to maintain their sway over the direction of the civil rights movement as more militant and younger activists who advocated more confrontational tactics were beginning to make their way to the forefront of the civil rights struggle.[1] The alternative was to risk fading into irrelevance, a fate the NAACP and other racial liberals believed catastrophic for the ultimate success of the movement.

The fight to maintain relevance manifested itself in several ways; in conflicts between some local branches of the NAACP and the national leadership; in an effort by better established liberal organizations to bring the more youthful independent organizations into their orbit; and in an attempt by the NAACP to reinvent itself and its role within the civil rights movement during the early 1960s in order to align itself more with the youthful, more militant direction the movement appeared to be taking. As a result, by the middle of 1963 racial liberalism was clearly in ascendance once again. In large part because racial liberals were compelled to refashion the ideology in order to incorporate more militant attitudes within in. And the re-ascendance of racial liberalism in 1963, cemented by the triumphs in Birmingham, Washington, D.C., and the

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[1] Jacqueline Dowd Hall framed the generational divide among black civil rights activists this way: "Many young activists of the 1960s saw their efforts as a new departure and themselves as a unique generation, not as actors with much to learn from an earlier, labor-infused civil rights tradition." Jacqueline Dowd Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past," *Journal of American History*, Vol. 5, No. 4 (March 2005), 1253.

proposal of the Civil Rights Bill to Congress, presented new increasingly confounding dilemmas for racial liberals.

In New York City, the local branches of the NAACP were intimately involved in the efforts to desegregate public schools after 1954. Leaders of the local braches, as well as representatives from the national headquarters were in constant dialogue with the city's Board of Education. The Brooklyn branch of the NAACP, with Reverend Milton A. Galamison as the head of its education department after December of 1955, enjoyed a particularly contentious relationship with the Board. The ideological differences between Galamison and the Board combined with mutual personal dislike to create explosive exchanges in the press between Galamison and school Superintendents William Jansen, John Theobald, and Bernard Donovan during the 1950s and 1960s. Galamsion's willingness to mix-it-up with the Board also strained his relationships within the NAACP, however. Even though he was elected president of the Brooklyn NAACP in December of 1956, Galamison faced stiff resistance to his confrontational tactics from more moderate members within the branch as well as from members of the national leadership.[2]

Galamison, along with fellow branch members Annie Stein, Claire Cumberbatch, and Winston Craig organized the NAACP Schools Workshop, a group that worked through existing parent and teacher organizations to educate parents about the issues concerning Brooklyn schools. As director, Galamison would take a more confrontational and grassroots tack towards pursuing school integration than many within the branch and the national NAACP were

[2] Milton A. Galamison, "Promises, Promises," n.d., 8-9, Box 11, Folder 70, Galamison, M. A., Manuscript (Chap. I-IV), n.d., Milton A. Galamison Papers, Manuscripts Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York, New York; Clarence Taylor, *Knocking at Our Own Door: Milton A. Galamison and the Struggle to Integrate New York City Schools* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 69-70.

comfortable with. In October of 1956 Robert L. Carter, who had been a member of the NAACP legal team that argued *Brown*, sent a memo to Gloster Current, the director of branches for the national NAACP, that foreshadowed the potential for conflict between the national headquarters and some of its local branches if the national organization continued to be unresponsive to the requests of its branches.

In the memo, Carter relayed the idea that the Brooklyn NAACP desired to work with the national headquarters in order to develop a citywide strategy for desegregating the public schools. Galamison's education committee suggested that the national headquarters hire a full-time staff member to work with all of the New York branches in order to promote more coordination between the branches and the national headquarters about how to compel the Board of Education to implement its own policy statement. Carter told Current that the national leadership needed to make greater coordination around the issue of school desegregation a higher priority, and that if this could not be done, then the Brooklyn branch should be encouraged in its efforts to deal with this issue on its own.[3] The Brooklyn NAACP was not simply waiting idly for the national organization to make all of the decisions about how they should proceed in battling this issue, however. Galamison and his allies were mobilizing.

His approach of challenging the policies and leadership of the New York City Board of Education through dramatic public statements and attempts at mass action would make it increasingly difficult from Galamison to remain in the NAACP, however. The national NAACP had built its reputation as a result of its legal victories for civil rights and was no fan of mass action techniques for several reasons. For one thing, mass actions were more difficult to control

[3] Robert L. Carter to Gloster Current, October 2, 1956, 1, Box III: A 104, Folder 2, NAACP Administration 1956-65, General Office File, Desegregation, Schools, New York, New York City—General, 1956, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. From here on this collection will be referred to as the NAACP Papers.

than legal fights. For the national leadership of the NAACP, "the masses" were thought of as a very sharp double-edged sword. On the one hand, it was important for the organization to grow its membership so that it could fund its initiatives and lay claim to representing the interests of as large a segment of the African American population as possible. On the other hand, the NAACP sought to negotiate with white leaders and was often willing to accept more moderate gains in exchange for continued access to the halls of power, rather than lose its authority as the spokes-organization for black America.

Racial liberal leaders and their organizations did not evince a significant active role for the masses. In part, this is a reflection of one of the ideas that heavily influenced the direction of racial liberalism in the twentieth century—W. E. B. Du Bois' notion of The Talented Tenth. Du Bois articulated in his *The Souls of Black Folk* in 1903 that perhaps ten percent of the African American population was well enough educated and materially able to lead the masses; and that these people were obligated to form the vanguard of the race that would lift the remaining ninety percent out of the grimy ditch of ignorance and poverty into the clear blue sky of intelligence and equality. The notion of the Talented Tenth both illustrated the belief that those with status were somehow inherently more fit to lead, and implied that people of lower status—whether educationally or materially—could not adequately comprehend the depth of their own oppression or be mobilized to fight against it themselves. The term was not in use anymore by midcentury, but the underlying principles of the Talented Tenth concept guided the strategies of the NAACP since its inception and racial liberals more generally into the 1960s.

Racial liberals preferred strategies in which they could express grievances through established channels of power, build and maintain political and economic alliances with those in powerful governmental positions, and retain favor in the court of public opinion as much as

possible. As a result, racial liberal organizations such as the NAACP and the National Urban League (NUL) and prominent racial liberals such as Kenneth Clark employed tactics that did not threaten the perpetuation of liberal democratic institutions. Clark, although a staunch critic of the New York City Board of Education, did agree to participate on the Board's Commission on Integration (CI) as an attempt to influence the direction of school policy "from the inside." And rarely did the NAACP or NUL participate in, much less initiate, mass action protests.[4]

The national NAACP's hesitance or unwillingness to engage in more direct action or mass action protest sometimes caused friction between the national office and local branches that in certain cases wanted a more militant tack on civil rights. The Brooklyn branch of the NAACP provides an example of the increasing conflict between locals and the national office during the second half of the 1950s. It shows why, in the case of Milton A. Galamison and other leftists, it became extremely difficult for them to remain within the NAACP.

Galamison and several militant members of the Brooklyn branch began the NAACP Schools Workshop as a vehicle for black, Latino, and white parents in Bedford-Stuyvesant and other parts of Brooklyn to express their unhappiness with the policies of the New York City Board of Education. The membership of the Schools Workshop exercised power by writing letters to school officials criticizing the Board's actions, by researching information about the schools their children were attending, and also by selecting the people who would negotiate with city officials.[5] Galamison was also willing to mobilize the membership to hit the streets in order to protest the continued segregation and unequal learning conditions in predominantly black and Latino schools.

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[4] Taylor, *Knocking at Our Own Door*, 49.

[5] Taylor, *Knocking at Our Own Door*, 63-4; Interview of Milton A. Galamison by Clarence Taylor, October 21, 1987, Siloam Presbyterian Church, Brooklyn, New York.

In the three years after *Brown* Milton Galamison and the parents of the NAACP Schools Workshop became increasingly frustrated with what they considered to be the bad faith dealing of the Superintendent of Schools, William Jansen, and the New York City Board of Education. Since April of 1955, the Board's own Commission on Integration had submitted several reports about different aspects of the public school system throughout 1956. The Board had approved of all of the reports; yet when Galamison and the Schools Workshop challenged the Board to implement the Commission's recommendations and actively work to integrate Junior High School 258 (JHS 258) in Bedford-Stuyvesant, the Board balked.

Galamison and the parents of the Schools Workshop saw the integration of JHS 258 as essential to demonstrating the Board of Education's commitment to racial integration. The Board had pledged to make JHS 258 an integrated school when it opened in 1955, but as of November 1956 only between 12 and 15 out of nearly 1,100 students were white.[6] When pressed on the issue, Jansen maintained that some progress had been made toward integration, but massive integration racial integration would be virtually impossible because JHS 258 was located in the heart of Bedford-Stuyvesant, an overwhelmingly black neighborhood.[7]

It turned out that the Board had made different promises to various constituencies. While Superintendent Jansen told civil rights groups that the Board would actively work to integrate

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[6] Taylor, *Knocking at Our Own Door*, 63; "Meeting of the New York Branch Presidents and Chairmen of Education Committees," 21 November 1956, 1-2, Box III: A 103, Folder 7, NAACP Administration 1956-65, General Office File, Desegregation, Schools, New York, Brooklyn, 1956-63, NAACP Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

[7] "NAACP Rebukes City Board for All-Negro Brooklyn School," *New York Times*, 2 November 1956. From the Board of Education Papers, Series 456, "Jansen Files on Racial Discrimination," box 1, folder 7, Special Collections, Milbank Memorial Library, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York; William Jansen to Milton A. Galamison, November 14, 1956, Box III: A 104, Folder 2, NAACP Administration 1956-65, General Office File, Desegregation, Schools, New York, New York City—General, 1956, NAACP Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

JHS 258,[8] he also worked to assuage white parents' fears by assuring them no "radical' changes would occur within the system. Ultimately, rather than actively work to integrate JHS 258, Jansen pledged to provide the school with additional services.[9]

In November of 1956 Galamison took a very bold step voicing the displeasure of the Schools Workshop parents and other more militant members of the Brooklyn NAACP by going to Mayor Robert Wagner and requesting that he ask for Jansen's resignation. Galamison threatened that unless something was done to "clean up" the situation at JHS 258, he had 25,000 African Americans ready to vote Republican in the next election.[10]

Sparks flew in several directions once the press picked up Galamison's petition.[11] Galamison's urging that Superintendent Jansen be asked to resign began a war of words in the New York press. Galamison pointed to an apparent unwillingness to implement many of the Commission of Integration's recommendations to demonstrate Jansen's unsuitability. Jansen, however, continued to deny that he was a segregationist and stand by the Board of Education's policies of sending children to the schools in closest proximity even if it hindered racial integration. In a letter to Galamison in November of 1956 Jansen sarcastically remarked that, "It is important to remember that in calculating distances to a school building we must calculate

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[8] "Board of Ed. Integration Report is Challenged," *New York Age Defender*, 10 November 1956. From the Board of Education Papers, Series 261, "Commission on Integration Papers," box 5, folder 53, Special Collections, Milbank Memorial Library, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York.

[9] Taylor, *Knocking at Our Own Door*, 66; William Jansen to Milton A. Galamison, November 14, 1956, Box III: A 104, Folder 2, NAACP Administration 1956-65, General Office File, Desegregation, Schools, New York, New York City—General, 1956, NAACP Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

[10] Taylor, *Knocking at Our Own Door*, 67.

[11] In the manuscript for his autobiography, which was never published, Galamison claimed that a Brooklyn NAACP staff member, intent on causing dissention within the branch, sent a memo threatening to demand Jansen's resignation to the press without his knowledge. Regardless of the semantics of demanding versus threatening to demand and how the petition reached the press, Galamison did trade barbs with Jansen in the press. Galamison, "Promises, Promises," n.d., 8-9, Box 11, Folder 70, Galamison, M. A., Manuscript (Chap I-V), n.d., Milton A. Galamison Papers, Manuscripts Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York, N.Y.

them by measuring the distance that children have to walk and not distances as the crow flies."[12] Jansen was expressing his belief that zoning to desegregate JHS 258 and the entire school system, more generally, was unrealistic.

Besides the row in the press between Galamison and Jansen, Galamison's November letter ignited controversy within the Brooklyn NAACP and revealed significant differences between the desired approaches to obtaining social equality of some of the local branches as opposed to the national headquarters. Despite having been elected president of the Brooklyn NAACP in December of 1956, he nevertheless believed that major obstacles to launching a direct grassroots assault on segregation in New York City's schools came from his own branch.[13] Those within the Brooklyn NAACP who opposed Galamison contended that he had overstepped his authority with his letter to the mayor and that he was too much of a cowboy who made public statements without going through the established channels. He ruffled the feathers of more moderate members of the branch who preferred less combative modes of protest.[14] Complaints about Galamison would only grow louder over the three years of his tenure.

But he was not the only activist who had attempted to move the national NAACP toward a more militant stance and build a grassroots movement to challenge governmental power. Ella Baker was also committed to this approach of producing societal change.[15] She eventually decided to leave the organization in frustration over the NAACP's hierarchical structure, its lack

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[12] William Jansen to Milton A. Galamison, November 14, 1956, Box III: A 104, Folder 2, NAACP Administration 1956-65, General Office File, Desegregation, Schools, New York, New York City—General, 1956, NAACP Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

[13] Milton A. Galamison, "Promises, Promises," n.d., 8-9, Box 11, Folder 70, Galamison, M. A., Manuscript (Chap I-V), n.d., Milton A. Galamison Papers, Manuscripts Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York, New York; Interview of Milton A. Galamison by Clarence Taylor, October 21, 1987, Siloam Presbyterian Church, Brooklyn, New York. Galamison maintained that members of the Brooklyn NAACP spread rumors about Annie Stein, a white member of the Brooklyn NAACP, that she was a communist and was "running black men" (a thinly veiled attempt to portray Stein as commandeering the movement, and an example of the intersection of racial and sexual politics of the society that were still being affected by slavery).

[14] Taylor, *Knocking at Our Own Door*, 68.

[15] Barbara Ransby, *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement: A Radical Democratic Vision* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 154.

of grassroots mobilization, and its gradualist politics.[16] According to historian John D'Emilio, Baker, along with Bayard Rustin and Stanley Levison, actively sought to dislodge the NAACP as the predominant civil rights organization during the late 1950s. They believed in mass-action strategies for building a social movement, while Wilkins and the NAACP did not.[17]

Galamison's letter about Superintendent Jansen upset Roy Wilkins and the national NAACP. The blowback from Galamison's action put the NAACP on the defensive. The national organization responded with a press release stating that "any further action with regard to Jantzen's [sic] resignation would be a matter of concern of the Branch president, the Executive Committee and National Office" in order to corral Galamison. At the November meeting of New York's local chapter presidents and education committee chairs, however, Winston Craig of the Brooklyn branch placed blamed for the current troubles of the Brooklyn branch squarely on the shoulders of the NAACP, saying that if the national headquarters had taken more decisive and affirmative action nine months ago (presumably, when the national NAACP first got reports about the lack of integration at JHS 258), the local branch would not have felt compelled to take this step.[18] The meeting adjourned with resolutions to put more systematic protocols in place with regard to making public statements and to make investigating public school segregation in the city a higher priority of the NAACP, but the national organization would also make sure that no more calls for the resignation of Board members would come from anyone representing the NAACP.[19]

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[16] Charles M. Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995, 2007), 87-8.

[17] John D'Emilio, *Lost Prophet: The Life and Times of Bayard Rustin* (New York: Free Press, 2003), 265-6.

[18] "Meeting of the New York Branch Presidents and Chairmen of Education Committees," 21 November 1956, 2, Box III: A 103, Folder 7, NAACP Administration 1956-65, General Office File, Desegregation, Schools, New York, Brooklyn, 1956-63, NAACP Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

[19] Ibid., 3.

Wilkins and the national leadership bristled at Galamison's approach because the national organization did not want to burn bridges with the Board of Education, which it contended was much more committed to NAACP goals than most school boards throughout the South. By lumping the New York City Board in the same category of recalcitrance as southern boards, Wilkins argued that Galamison's action jeopardized the future of the school desegregation movement nationwide. Wilkins did not want to do anything in New York that might harm the desegregation movement in the South, where he believed progress was being made, and was (implicitly) more critical.[20] The national organization wanted to protect its prerogatives with the municipal leadership in the city. Wilkins strongly urged the Brooklyn branch to "adopt a less provocative endeavor" going forward.[21]

Wilkins also expressed the same sentiment to Constance Baker Motley, a lawyer for the NAACP, in the spring of 1957 regarding the battle to desegregate the public schools throughout New York State. In his memo to Motley, Wilkins commented that he did not want to see the same mistakes repeated in other parts of the state that had been made in Brooklyn. Wilkins was clearly referring to the media firestorm that Galamison had created with his public statements about William Jansen. Wilkins praised the national NAACP's "calm analysis and suggestion of study and action" in response to the State Commissioner on Education's report on the progress of desegregation in New York. But he lamented that somewhere along the line the NAACP's position had been hijacked as some "engaged in tactics which have tended to alienate potential allies." He pledged not to tolerate the use of methods—like those in Brooklyn—that could be

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[20] Memorandum from Roy Wilkins to June Shagaloff, 3 January 1957, 1-2, Box III: A 103, Folder 7, NAACP Administration 1956-65, General Office File, Desegregation, Schools, New York, Brooklyn, 1956-63, NAACP Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; Roy Wilkins to Constance Baker Motley, April 1, 1957, 1, Box III: A 104, Folder 4, NAACP Administration 1956-65, General Office File, Desegregation, Schools, New York, New York City—General, 1957, April-Nov., NAACP Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

[21] Taylor, *Knocking at Our Own Door*, 68.

potentially injurious to the NAACP in the court of public opinion or fuel resentment in school systems that had not yet complied with the *Brown* decision.[22]

The discord between Wilkins and Galamison over the means to achieve desegregation underscored ideological differences between racial liberals and many leftists that often made for tense working relationships, if they could work together at all. In the case of communists, affiliations with the American Communist Party (CPUSA) often precluded any working relationship. In 1958 the New York branch of the NAACP denied membership to former Manhattan borough president, Ben Davis, because of his Communist Party affiliation.[23]

Galamison organized mass actions with the NAACP Schools Workshop and was willing to work with ordinary people who were committed to desegregating the city's public schools, even if they did not have the "credentials" desired by the national leadership. Galamison found that these parents could be effective leaders in their own right.[24] This difference in the conception of who could be a leader and means to the desired end of school desegregation would make it extremely difficult for Galamison to remain a leading force within the NAACP by the end of the decade. Ultimately, frustrated with the unwillingness of the NAACP—both local and national—to take a more militant approach toward achieving school desegregation, Galamison split with the NAACP in 1960. He reached the conclusion that he and his allies "could do better outside the NAACP than [they] could do inside the NAACP."[25] Galamison formed an independent grassroots organization along the same lines of the Schools Workshop, named the

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[22] Roy Wilkins to Constance Baker Motley, April 1, 1957, 1, Box III: A 104, Folder 4, NAACP Administration 1956-65, General Office File, Desegregation, Schools, New York, New York City—General, 1957, April-Nov., NAACP Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

[23] New York State Conference of the NAACP, "Bulletin," 1 May 1958, 2, Folder 18, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (Brooklyn Branch), Correspondence and Reports-1958, Milton A. Galamison Papers, Division of Archives and Manuscripts, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin.

[24] Taylor, *Knocking at Our Own Door*, 70.

[25] Interview of Milton A. Galamison by Clarence Taylor, October 21, 1987, Siloam Presbyterian Church, Brooklyn, New York.

Parents Workshop for Equality in New York City Schools. His group would be free to pursue the mass action strategies and engage in the public confrontations that Galamison believed would force the Board to take more affirmative action to desegregate the public schools.[26]

The year 1960 was a critical one for determining the continuing relevance of racial liberal ideology. Not only did Galamison leave the NAACP, but also a new civil rights organization emerged onto the civil rights scene in the South that would reflect the growing militancy of younger activists coming of age in the South. Ella Baker played an instrumental role in helping to establish the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) in the wake of college student sit-ins across the South during the winter of 1960. Students-turned-activists wanted to keep the momentum of the sit-in movement going as far into the future as they could take it. And they saw themselves as both part of—and distinct from—from broader mainstream liberal civil rights establishment.[27] Students such as Diane Nash and James Bevel may have admired Martin Luther King, Jr., Roy Wilkins, and Whitney Young, but they saw themselves as the vanguard of the movement and were determined that their organization not be a mere carbon copy of the NAACP, the Urban League, or the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC).[28]

Baker would help to ensure that SNCC would be different from its liberal counterparts. She had worked for both the NAACP and SCLC, but had left both organizations over disagreements about the structures and philosophies of both organizations.[29] As a field organizer

[26] Milton A. Galamison, "Color Me Black," n.d., 24-5, Box 11, Folder 70, Galamison, M. A., Manuscript (Chap I-V), n.d., Milton A. Galamison Papers, Manuscripts Division, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, New York, New York; Taylor, *Knocking at Our Own Door*, 91.

[27] Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the 1960s* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995), 14.

[28] Carson, *In Struggle*, 17-9.

[29] Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom*, 92-4.

for the NAACP from 1940 until 1946 Baker worked to convince the national leadership that it was in the best interests of African Americans, generally, and the organization, in particular, to make the policies and practices of the NAACP more inclusive and egalitarian. She advocated that the organization be willing to take more confrontational stances in local campaigns. And that was how Baker worked as she traveled the country recruiting members and trying to establish new chapters. Baker worked to make sure that the new chapters she helped get up and running would be sustainable once she departed.[30] Baker worked to cultivate local leaders so they carry on their own struggle, rather than be dependent on the dictates from the national headquarters.

Baker helped to imbue SNCC with the same philosophy that ordinary people were capable of prosecuting their own movement for equality; that local residents did not need better educated leaders or spokespeople to inform them of the depth of their oppression. For Baker, as with Galamison and the students of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, the masses were central to their political vision for change.[31] Therefore, the goal of SNCC field workers was to train local residents—regardless of their educational level—in the tactics and philosophy of direct-action protests and voter registration, so that they could carry on their struggle for equality once SNCC organizers were no longer in the community.[32]

Consequently, Baker helped the student organizers create an organizational structure that was less hierarchical and more decentralized than those of the NAACP and SCLC.[33] SNCC was, therefore, a youthful, independent, response to the more established liberal civil rights organizations. SNCC would receive monetary assistance from SCLC and the NAACP, but it

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[30] Ransby, *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement*, 105-6.

[31] Ransby, *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement*, 112; Interview of Milton A. Galamison by Clarence Taylor, October 21, 1987, Siloam Presbyterian Church, Brooklyn, New York.

[32] Carson, *In Struggle*, 74.

[33] Ibid., 50.

would also strive to maintain its independence from the elder organizations. SNCC would grow ideologically distinct from SCLC and the NAACP and it reflected itself tactically, structurally, and in terms of the public face of the organization.

Tactically, SNCC focused primarily on local campaigns throughout the South to bring about desegregation and register African Americans to vote. The NAACP also participated in voter registration and supported local civil rights campaigns, but the NAACP was more focused on cases that they hoped would have national implications. Structurally, although SNCC had a Coordinating Committee that was charged with making organizational policy, SNCC's field workers exerted a great deal of control over the direction of policy in their organization; much more than field workers exercised in either the NAACP or SCLC.[34] While the NAACP and SCLC recruited new members and established new branches, SNCC was much more concerned with cultivating indigenous leadership.

In terms of the public face of the organization, SNCC reflected youth and militancy. The group's leaders were in their twenties. SNCC identified itself as a "revolutionary" organization. As Clayborne Carson argues, this was not to advocate the overthrow of the federal government, but rather meant as a challenge to both segregationists and more moderate civil rights leaders, and to affirm a willingness to enter into cooperation with other student organizations that sought radical social change.[35] The public face of SCLC was Martin Luther King, Jr. and as a result, the organization's success was inextricably tied to King's popularity. King helped the SCLC raise money, but also always verged on being a cult of personality. The public face of the NAACP was one of moderation and negotiation. The NAACP was clearly working for integration, but would be made to look increasingly conservative and, perhaps, timid in comparison to SNCC.

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[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid., 51.

SNCC was not only part of a youth movement within the civil rights movement, but also part of a broader challenge to the predominance of liberal ideology that also included Milton A. Galamison's new organization, the Parents' Workshop for Equality in New York City Public Schools (PWE) at the beginning of the 1960s. For both SNCC and the Parents' Workshop, ordinary people were going to play the decisive role in bringing about lasting social and political change, and in order to retain their predominance in the movement, liberal leaders believed that they would have to incorporate these organizations and some of their tactics into their repertoire of activities. But would liberals go further and begin to reconceptualize racial liberal ideology in order to transform the movement?

Sensing the shift that was occurring among younger participants in the civil rights movement, the NAACP began to reposition itself within the movement, moving somewhat to the left of where it had been previously. As sociologist, Charles Payne argues, "SNCC's entry, along with the expanded visibility of the similarly aggressive CORE, pressured older civil rights organizations into a reconsideration of tactics. It put the NAACP in a position where it was forced to support some direct-action projects, even though that ran counter to the organization's essential style."[36] Roy Wilkins worked hard to counter the criticisms of the NAACP that the organization was stuck in a bygone era. In his speech to the NAACP national convention in 1961, he pointed out a significant increase in the number of delegates between the ages of 25 and 40. He told the convention, "I am sure you will be interested to learn, that a markedly increasing proportion of the delegates were young adults in the age bracked [sic] of 25 to 40 and those who never admit that they are getting old in the age bracket from 40 to 50. It would seem to me that this indicates that the NAACP is replacing its glorious leaders, who are now in the process of

[36] Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom*, 100.

moving off the stage and that contrary to the popular propaganda that this organization is dead or dying on its feet, an old-fashioned and unrepresentative and stifled from the top by old leaders. The registration of these young people . . . would seem to disprove any idea that we have hardening of the arteries or stultification of the brain."[37] It was clear that the growth of groups such as SNCC and CORE, and the increasing prevalence of direct-action tactics were weighing on the NAACP and beginning to furnish a substantive challenge to the NAACP. Interestingly, however, Wilkins worked to frame this surge of youth activism as stemming from within the NAACP as opposed to from without and emphasized the growth of the NAACP youth branches as opposed to the growing popularity of SNCC, CORE, and other grassroots organizations that were independent of the NAACP. Wilkins made it a point that the NAACP was going to spend more money and energy building up its youth branches throughout the country. Indeed, according to Wilkins, it was time for the NAACP to "invest in the future."[38] This is not to say that the NAACP youth branches had not been growing, but Wilkins' renewed focus on the youth branches was spurred in large part by the challenge that SNCC and CORE represented.

Wilkins also hit on the theme of debunking the idea that the NAACP was too old and too timid in its actions when he told the convention that, "[i]t is significant, I think, to repeat that far from being on the tail and catching up, as some inexpert observers have asserted, the NAACP sponsored the vast bulk of the sit-in demonstrations across the South in 1960 and 1961. . . . [T]he backbone of the organized movement was the NAACP, as it should have been."[39] With

[37] Roy Wilkins, "Speech at the 52nd Annual Convention," July 16, 1961, 2, Box III: A 13, Folder 11, NAACP Administration 156-65, Annual Convention, 1961, Speeches, NAACP Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

[38] Roy Wilkins, "Speech at the 52nd Annual Convention," July 16, 1961, 17, Box III: A 13, Folder 11, NAACP Administration 156-65, Annual Convention, 1961, Speeches, NAACP Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

[39] Roy Wilkins, "Speech at the 52nd Annual Convention," July 16, 1961, 4-5, Box III: A 13, Folder 11, NAACP Administration 156-65, Annual Convention, 1961, Speeches, NAACP Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

statements such as this, Wilkins was attempting to do three things simultaneously. He was arguing against the idea that the NAACP was out of touch with the current increasingly militant tenor of the civil rights struggle. He was arguing against the idea that the NAACP only engaged in litigation and was not involved in grassroots protest. And he was attempting to reassert the predominance of the NAACP at the cutting edge of the civil rights movement. Wilkins asserted that the NAACP was "the only true national organization" and its size and means, as well as its history afforded it its place leading the civil rights struggle.[40]

Wilkins also made other overtures, rhetorically and otherwise in 1961, in order to demonstrate that the NAACP was at the forefront of the movement, that it did understand and agree with the more confrontational mood of younger activists, and that it could share the civil rights stage with younger organizations. In Wilkins' address to the NAACP national convention in 1961 a major theme was that the NAACP had taken—and was prepared in the future to take—much tougher stands against segregation. He told the convention delegates that the NAACP was "not now, and never [has] been satisfied with tokenism" in the South, and that northern school districts were "obligated to devise and to use methods to comply with the court's order regardless of geographical, residential segregation."[41] This non-compromising stance surely played very well to the delegates in attendance, even though it was different than how he had dealt with Galamison back in 1957. The NAACP was "impatient" with the slow pace of segregation. This was most aptly displayed by the NAACP's youth activists throughout the

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[40] Roy Wilkins, "Speech at the 52nd Annual Convention," July 16, 1961, 4, Box III: A 13, Folder 11, NAACP Administration 156-65, Annual Convention, 1961, Speeches, NAACP Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

[41] Roy Wilkins, "Speech at the 52nd Annual Convention," July 16, 1961, 7, Box III: A 13, Folder 11, NAACP Administration 156-65, Annual Convention, 1961, Speeches, NAACP Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

South, according to Wilkins.[42] Again, he was responding to the prodding of more militant activists with a different view from the NAACP about how to achieve social change, but again he chose to frame the organization's shifting position in terms of internal demographic change rather than as the result of external challenges to the organization. This would allow Wilkins to frame the liberal position as consistent with direct-action as the organization used these strategies more in the future.

He even invited James Farmer, the national director of CORE, to address the convention delegates in order to illustrate a sense of solidarity with the more militant, left-wing of movement. Farmer referred to CORE and the NAACP as "sister organizations" and praised the historical achievements of the NAACP and acknowledged the primary role the organization played in the struggle for racial equality for the preceding fifty years. He also, however, made the point that this was the time to "unlock the power" of the individual; that at this historical moment, "[n]o longer need the little individual be content with watching the talented pros act for him." Farmer argued that now, in the 1960s, "[e]ven the ingifted [sic], untalented, unskilled individual is finding a new importance and power, and dignity on the picket line, on the lunch counter stool, in the bus."[43] Farmer was endeavoring to demonstrate a unity of purpose between CORE and the NAACP, but also implying that the NAACP needed to change its long-held ideas about mass action and how to mobilize people for the purposes of achieving racial equality.

The NAACP's ideological shift leftward seemed to have slowed somewhat by the national convention in 1962. As Roy Wilkins addressed the convention delegates, the tone of the

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[42] Roy Wilkins, "Speech at the 52nd Annual Convention," July 16, 1961, 5, Box III: A 13, Folder 11, NAACP Administration 156-65, Annual Convention, 1961, Speeches, NAACP Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

[43] James Farmer, Excerpts of Remarks by James Farmer at NAACP 52nd Annual Convention, July 11, 1961, 1-2, Box III: A 13, Folder 11, NAACP Administration 156-65, Annual Convention, 1961, Speeches, NAACP Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

speech was one of mild defiance against the progression toward more confrontational approaches to attain equality. Wilkins worked to dispel the idea that there was a rigid dichotomy between litigation and direct-action, that an organization had to be in one camp or the other, or that one camp was more worthy than the other. As Wilkins put it,

> We of the NAACP have felt some understandable irritation at the contention that we are oriented toward legal activity exclusively, and that the "shift" must be exclusively to those equally time-honored methods which every diagnostician now glibly calls "direct action." I say we have been irritated, but I hasten to add that we have never faltered in the crusade. The exhibit here at this convention reporting activities of out Branches in 48 of the 50 states, and the presence here of local and state NAACP leaders and young people who have been arrested for their vigorous devotion to the program is testimony to the fact that there is a vigorous program in force.[44]

Wilkins was working to both restore value to the legal and financial role that the NAACP had played in the struggle up to this point, providing bail money and legal representation for those who had been arrested and a lobby for civil rights legislation in Washington, D.C., and frame the NAACP as a youthful, equally dedicated organization to direct-action as SNCC or CORE. The "irritation" that the NAACP felt was the result of the substantive ideological challenge that SNCC and other grassroots organizations provided to the NAACP's style of leadership and liberal ideology.

The tone of defiance continued a bit later in the speech as Wilkins referenced recent newspaper reports that touted the revival of litigation replacing direct-action techniques for advancing the movement. "We don't want to yell 'we told you so,'" Wilkins told the audience, "but 'court and legislative action' are old NAACP methods. Two years ago, at the peak of the sit-ins, certain rival spokesmen declared these methods were 'outdated.' The newspapers and

[44] Roy Wilkins, "Before the Closing Session of the 53rd Annual Convention NAACP, July 8 1962, 2, Box III: A 15, Folder 1, NAACP Administration 156-65, Annual Convention File, 1962, Speeches, NAACP Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

magazines, to egg on a split in Negro ranks, echoed the new spokesmen. Now, two years later, these same methods are 'new.'"[45]

While Wilkins acknowledged that there was a role for mass action in helping accomplish the goals of the movement, the tactic Wilkins emphasized in his address that the NAACP should be focused on was voter registration. It was voting, according to Wilkins, that was the best safeguard for the rights of the individual and the preservation of a democratic society.[46] Based on the awards that the NAACP distributed to its local branches in the year preceding his 1961 address, the NAACP voting registration efforts were focused in urban areas throughout the country. Recognition was bestowed upon local chapters in Memphis, New York City, Detroit, Cleveland, Baltimore, and Dallas, among other places.[47] SNCC was also engaged in voter registration, but they were targeting smaller communities in the rural South, where it was often much more difficult to get people registered, and where larger organizations had given up trying.

What is important note about Wilkins' emphasis on voter registration in his 1962 address was that Wilkins considered voter registration to be a "quiet" activity; of vital importance, but "quiet." SNCC would not likely have considered voter registration to be quiet, especially considering the violent retribution volunteers and residents had to endure in order to attempt to register. And Wilkins urged the NAACP's local branches not to engage in any activities that

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[45] Roy Wilkins, "Before the Closing Session of the 53rd Annual Convention NAACP, July 8 1962, 2, Box III: A 15, Folder 1, NAACP Administration 156-65, Annual Convention File, 1962, Speeches, NAACP Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

[46] Roy Wilkins, "Before the Closing Session of the 53rd Annual Convention NAACP, July 8 1962, 1, Box III: A 15, Folder 1, NAACP Administration 156-65, Annual Convention File, 1962, Speeches, NAACP Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

[47] Roy Wilkins, "Speech at the 52nd Annual Convention," July 16, 1961, 12, Box III: A 13, Folder 11, NAACP Administration 156-65, Annual Convention, 1961, Speeches, NAACP Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

might “in any way reduc[e] the forward movement” of voter registration.[48] He was telling the local branches that they needed to be less conspicuous in their local activities, less confrontational, they should not arouse the ire of local residents or those in positions of power that might endanger the ability of the NAACP to have access to the halls of power.

The final half of Wilkins’ address returned to core liberal themes: the interconnectedness of blacks and whites in determining the future of the United States, the contention that African Americans were as much a part of the fabric of the nation as any other group and were “real” Americans, and that blacks believed as fervently as whites in the American creed. Wilkins argued against Booker T. Washington’s idea that blacks and whites could be “as separate as the fingers” in some areas and “as one as the hand” in others. Black and white southerners, Wilkins argued, were inextricably tied together in determining the economic and political destiny of the South. The South would never reach its full economic potential, Wilkins contended, until the region fully incorporated blacks into its economic structure in the same proportions as whites.[49]

Wilkins affirmed the organization’s impenetrability against communism by saying, “We of the NAACP are not communists, of course” and pointing out that southern law enforcement could not substantiate any of their claims of communist infiltration.[50] An important declaration to make during the Cold War and in the face of attacks of this nature in opposition to the NAACP. But the rebuke of Communism also allowed Wilkins to affirm the liberal belief in the US Constitution, the Declaration of Independence, and the American ethos of meritocracy. He

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[48] Roy Wilkins, “Before the Closing Session of the 53rd Annual Convention NAACP, July 8 1962, 1-2, Box III: A 15, Folder 1, NAACP Administration 156-65, Annual Convention File, 1962, Speeches, NAACP Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

[49] Roy Wilkins, “Before the Closing Session of the 53rd Annual Convention NAACP, July 8 1962, 3, Box III: A 15, Folder 1, NAACP Administration 156-65, Annual Convention File, 1962, Speeches, NAACP Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

[50] Roy Wilkins, “Before the Closing Session of the 53rd Annual Convention NAACP, July 8 1962, 3, Box III: A 15, Folder 1, NAACP Administration 156-65, Annual Convention File, 1962, Speeches, NAACP Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

would declare the NAACP's belief in human equality as he quoted the Declaration and referenced Locke's idea of government's social contract with its citizens. Wilkins called on number of historical figures, including Patrick Henry, Paul Revere, Denmark Vesey, and Frederick Douglass,[51] in order to demonstrate the integration of black and white in his thought, the historical circumstances—the American Revolution and the fight to abolish slavery—in which the ideals of human equality have triumphed over those of injustice and discrimination, and to place the civil rights movement and the work of the NAACP within the broad sweep of liberal American history and thinking.

The NAACP may have gotten back to affirming racial liberal ideology by 1962 in defiance of the oppositional ideology of grassroots groups such as SNCC, CORE, and Galamison's Parents' Workshop, but that does not mean that the NAACP or racial liberal ideology was not changed in some ways as a result. By 1962 these organizations were viable organizations (CORE had been for some time by now) and the NAACP—whether on a local or national level—had developed working relationships with all of them. In order to do so, the NAACP broadened its organizational program in order to incorporate some of the tenets and tactics of those groups within it. By doing so, the NAACP helped to maintain its organizational and liberalism's position at the forefront of the civil rights movement as it would enter into its most fruitful period legislatively from 1963 to 1965.

[51] Roy Wilkins, "Before the Closing Session of the 53rd Annual Convention NAACP, July 8 1962, 3-4, Box III: A 15, Folder 1, NAACP Administration 156-65, Annual Convention File, 1962, Speeches, NAACP Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

# Chapter 5

## Crossroads: The Seasons of Our Discontent

January 1, 1963 marked the one hundred year anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation; a fact lost on no leader in the black freedom struggle. The centennial of this most important of American pronouncements was a poignant reminder of the persisting deprivation of black Americans in relation to whites in the United States. A century after Abraham Lincoln had set slavery on the path to extinction and blacks on the path to full citizenship, black Americans were still not accorded the full compliment of rights guaranteed to citizens by the U.S. Constitution.

The "dilemma" that Gunnar Myrdal described in 1944 still plagued American society, as far as liberals were concerned. Alexander Allen, associate executive director of the National Urban League, at a ceremony commemorating the Proclamation's centennial remarked that, "[t]he full promise of the Emancipation Proclamation [would] not be realized until the Negro family is freed from the stifling confines of the racial ghetto."[1] Socialists were forecasting the emergence of new battlegrounds in the "civil rights revolution" due to the technical automation that was making tens of thousands of jobs obsolete. Nationalists remained unconvinced that the United States was a society worth integrating into. Malcolm X and the Nation of Islam declared the Emancipation Proclamation a "farce" and held their own "Freedom Fete" in Harlem on Lincoln's birthday in order to issue their own Emancipation Proclamation Day.[2] And conservatives remained convinced that the liberal civil rights organizations were conducting the movement in a self-serving manner.

[1] "Race Ghetto Stymies Emancipation, Urban League Official Says," *Pittsburgh Courier* (*New York Edition*), 6 April 1963, 24.

[2] "Black Muslims Set Own Freedom Fete," *Pittsburgh Courier* (*New York Edition*), 16 February 1963, n.p.

The pace of tangible improvement in the social and economic conditions of African Americans was too slow for many, or appeared to be non-existent. Black leaders all over the country had been mounting campaigns since the *Brown* decision to protest against the numerous inequities that plagued African Americans: school segregation, disfranchisement, unequal public accommodations, employment discrimination, police brutality, and housing discrimination among the many. White political leaders in Birmingham had found ways to suppress the formation of a large-scale mass protest movement since the founding of the Southern Negro Youth Congress in 1937, the movement towards automation in factory work was disproportionately hurting black workers all over the country, and the school desegregation movement was being stymied in New York City by school board officials that stuck to a strategy of delaying any policies to integrate the public schools on a citywide scale. Blacks' frustration with the current state of affairs, which had been mounting for some time, now reached the boiling point by the spring of 1963. It would be a year of reckoning for African Americans and, indeed, the nation. Those seeds of liberation that black intellectuals and activists had sown in the less hospitable soils of decades past were going to bear fruit.

**The Spring of Our Discontent**

African Americans' collective frustrations were crystallized, in large part, as a result of the protests in Birmingham, Alabama. Blacks in that city were sacrificing their bodies and, in some cases, their lives in their struggle for first-class citizenship. The scenes of Birmingham's Commissioner of Public Safety Eugene "Bull" Connor turning snarling German shepherds loose on nonviolent protesters and fire hoses being unleashed on teenagers angered African Americans, and indeed the world, like few other episodes had. This coalescing movement was

fueled by the recalcitrance and insensitivity of Connor and other local officials. As dogs were sicked on demonstrators, Connor was reported as having screamed to the newsmen reporting the story, "Look at that dog go! That's what we train them for—to enforce the law."[3]

Film images of Connor's dogs "enforcing the law" became ubiquitous on television newscasts all over the country as the developing unrest in Birmingham dominated the nightly news for months. Shocking pictures and dramatic descriptions of the scenes in Birmingham also sold newspapers all over the world.[4] The protests in Birmingham illustrated, in the most vivid of colors, that April, May, and June of 1963 was the spring of blacks' discontent.

Publicity of the violent response to civil disobedience being beamed around the nation and globe was significant for several reasons. For Birmingham's black citizenry, it became increasingly difficult to remain unmoved by their fellow citizens' courage and willingness to endure whatever might come in order to desegregate the "oldest" of old southern cities. More and more of Birmingham's blacks, even children as young as seven years old, joined the demonstrations in whatever way they could. For African Americans around the country, desegregating "Bombingham" became a rallying cry in the fight against Jim Crow across the nation. In April of 1963 groups of blacks and whites picketed hundreds of "five and dime" stores in 45 states to protest the segregationist policies of stores in Birmingham. Among the chains picketed were F. W. Woolworth and S. H. Kress. The picketers called for the immediate desegregation of public accommodations in Birmingham.[5] In New York City, blacks picketed City Hall to protest the jailings in Birmingham and push the Kennedy administration to intervene in the city. The Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) also sponsored several demonstrations

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[3] "Blind Singer Arrested, Released in Birmingham in Civil Rights Offensive," *Pittsburgh Courier* (*New York Edition*), 13 April 1963, 6.

[4] Diane McWhorter, *Carry Me Home: Birmingham, Alabama, The Climactic Battle of the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2001), 373-5.

[5] "N.Y. Stores Picketed in Dixie Bias Protest," *Pittsburgh Courier* (*New York Edition*), 27 April 1963, 1.

around New York City.[6] Just as blacks in Birmingham threw down the proverbial gauntlet against continued segregation in their city, African Americans nationwide broadened the scope and significance of those demonstrations well beyond Birmingham.

The turmoil in Birmingham eventually compelled the federal government to intervene in the city for several reasons. There were circumstantial and ideological imperatives for the federal government. For one, what was happening in Birmingham had the potential to negatively affect US foreign policy objectives around the world. The geopolitical configuration of the globe had been changing dramatically since World War II due to the Cold War and anti-colonial independence movements occurring throughout Asia, Africa, and Latin America; movements that were accelerating by the early 1960s. The United States was working to keep as many of these countries as possible within their sphere of influence and out of the clutches of the Soviet Union. Consequently, the federal government could not stand idly by for too long, allowing the naked repression of peaceful African American dissent to persist unchecked.

Connor, for his part, attempted to sway public opinion against the civil rights protests and justify his efforts to suppress the movement in a tried-and-true manner. He asserted, as was common for southern officials to do before the 1960s, that the problems in Birmingham were the result of "outside agitators" and "communists" (often the terms were synonymous) coming into the city to stir up trouble, and did not reflect the thinking of the majority of "good Negroes" in Birmingham. Martin Luther King and Ralph Abernathy, leaders of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and the Birmingham campaign, did encourage "sympathizers anywhere to come to Birmingham and see for themselves what [was] happening."[7] But as more adults continued to march throughout the spring, and even young children willingly offered themselves

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[6] "New York Marchers, Picketers Angrily Denounce Outrages in Birmingham; Urge U.S. Action," *Pittsburgh Courier* (*New York Edition*), 11 May 1963, 1, 4.

[7] Evelyn Cunningham, "Negroes Smell Victory," *Pittsburgh Courier* (*New York Edition*), 25 May 1963, 4.

up to the altar that was the Birmingham city jail, it became obvious to anyone who cared to plainly look that the "good Negroes" of Birmingham were sick and tired of being treated as inferior human beings in the city—and the country—in which they had been born and raised.

Besides, the Kennedy administration believed that supporting African Americans' movement for civil rights was the morally correct choice. As timid as the administration had been in its stance on outwardly supporting the liberal movement, the unrest in Birmingham and the recalcitrance of officials there was demonstrating to the administration that they needed to take a much stronger position on civil rights in the weeks and months to come. The news coming from Birmingham was terrible, Connor was being totally uncooperative, and black votes had been critical to Kennedy's electoral victory in 1960.

Blacks, the country over, prodded the president for his administration's assistance. Gladys Harrington of the New York CORE, for example, declared in early May that "[t]he Negro children and adults of Birmingham, Alabama, are citizens of the United States as well as of Alabama, and are entitled to the full protection of the Federal Constitution. There is no excuse for President Kennedy to stand idly by while American citizens are denied their elementary rights as human beings."[8] As a result, the violence in Birmingham, foreign policy implications, and ethical principles compelled the federal government to act. Kennedy did eventually speak to the nation in order to decry the violence in Birmingham and urge Americans to work towards more equitable race relations in the United States.

His speech to the American people on June 11, 1963, addressed the fact that blacks were being denied their civil rights under the Constitution, as well as systematically being deprived of opportunities for educational, economic, and social advancement simply because of the color of

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[8] "New York Marchers, Picketers Angrily Denounce Outrages in Birmingham; Urge U.S. Action," *Pittsburgh Courier* (*New York Edition*), 11 May 1963, 4.

their skin. That, one hundred years after "President Lincoln freed the slaves . . . their heirs, their grandsons, are not fully free." Kennedy also referenced America's role in the world as a beacon of freedom and that in order to claim that position, blacks could not be less free than other Americans. Kennedy told the American people, "We preach freedom around the world, and we mean it, and we cherish our freedom here at home, but are we to say to the world, and much more importantly, to each other that this is the land of the free except for the Negroes; that we have no second-class citizens except Negroes; that we have no class of caste system, no ghettoes, no master race except to with respect to Negroes?"[9]

Kennedy issued a call to Congress for legislation that could finish the task that Lincoln began a century earlier to make African Americans fully equal under the law and help provide blacks with equality of opportunity to make better lives for themselves. It would eventually become the Civil Rights Act of 1964.[10] But just as much, if not more than emphasizing the need for legislation, President Kennedy, in typical liberal fashion, framed the problems of race relations in the United States as "primarily . . . a moral issue." Legislation, he said, was important, but laws alone would not be enough. Every individual American would need to change their attitudes and behaviors regarding African Americans, so that blacks would not need to demonstrate in the streets in order to obtain basic rights. The president declared to American people that, "Now the time has come for this Nation to fulfill its promise. The events in Birmingham and elsewhere have so increased the cries for equality that no city or State or legislative body can prudently choose to ignore them."[11]

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[9] John F. Kennedy, "Radio and Television Report to the American People on Civil Rights," 11 June 1963, Washington, D.C., John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, http://www.jfklibrary.org/Historical+Resources/Archives/Reference+Desk/Speeches/JFK/003POF03CivilRights06111963.htm, (accessed on February 9, 2010).

[10] McWhorter, *Carry Me Home*, 464.

[11] John F. Kennedy, "Radio and Television Report to the American People on Civil Rights," 11 June 1963.

And as if to punctuate the main arguments of the president's speech, and to illustrate how divided and violent the nation had become, Medgar Evers, Mississippi NAACP field secretary, was assassinated on his doorstep that very same night, practically in the presence of his wife and children. He was the victim of a shot in the back from a high-powered rifle as he returned from addressing a rally for integration. "The bullet ripped through his back, went through his body, smashed a window and hit the refrigerator in the kitchen."[12] For the Evers family, Medgar's death certainly made the spring of 1963, the season of their discontent.

The months of demonstrations in Birmingham affected blacks all over the country. Many prominent black intellectuals were compelled to comment on the brutality of the city's police force, as well as on the strength and courage of the black community there. Bayard Rustin argued in June of 1963 that the campaign in Birmingham had amounted to a declaration of war on the Jim Crow system by blacks. Rustin contended that Birmingham revealed a new militancy among blacks and a more confrontational attitude toward whites.[13] The trope of the "new" African American has been used frequently since the 1910s (perhaps too often) to argue that blacks as a collective had adopted a different way of conceiving their condition in America, or a distinct method of attempting to ameliorate the problems that affect them. Rustin did not mean that African Americans had ever ceased agitating for equality. But he argued that, "what *is* new springs from the white resistance in Birmingham, with its fire hoses, its dogs, its blatant disregard for black men as people, and from the Afro-American's response to such treatment in

[12] "Ambush Murder of Miss Leader Called 'Cowardly'," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 15 June 1963, 1.

[13] Bayard Rustin, "The Meaning of Birmingham," *Liberation*, vol. 8, no. 4, (June 1963), 317; Box 39, Folder 10, Speeches and Writings, Articles, 1957-64, Bayard T. Rustin Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. Will be referred to subsequently as the BTR Papers.

the year of our Lord 1963."[14] How the white resistance in Birmingham was qualitatively different from the night rides and lynchings more prevalent during earlier decades was not delved into, but Rustin maintained that somehow the naked brutality in Birmingham sparked and cemented a new collective mindset and blacks. African Americans were somehow more focused, more determined, more courageous than they had been previously.

In a 1963 television interview with Kenneth Clark as part of a series titled, "The Negro and the American Promise," James Baldwin, the noted novelist and cultural critic, framed the meaning of Birmingham somewhat differently than Bayard Rustin. Baldwin asserted that the protests and upsurge in youth activism in Birmingham proved "that the Negro has never been as docile as white Americans wanted to believe. . . . [T]he Negro has never been happy in his place. . . . [Those students] proved they come from a long line of fighters . . ."[15] For Baldwin, the intensity of the protests and the reactionary responses of Connor's men reflected "not that the Negro had changed but that the country had arrived at a place where he can no longer contain the revolt."[16] America was in a state of crisis and Birmingham blacks were providing the strongest moral challenge for the entire American system to live up to its professed creed—and save American "civilization."[17]

Framing the issue of racial inequality as a moral problem that affected both whites and blacks, and persisting racial discrimination and conflict as the potential knell of American society, was a hallmark of racial liberal ideology. Kenneth Clark and James Baldwin consistently expressed the belief that the destinies of blacks and whites in the United States were inextricably linked, and used this line of reasoning to argue for the desegregation of schools,

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[14] Ibid.

[15] Kenneth Clark, "A Conversation with James Baldwin," *Freedomways*, vol. 3, no. 3, (Summer 1963), 365.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Clark, "A Conversation with James Baldwin," 364; James Baldwin, "The Artist's Search for Integrity," *Liberation*, vol. 8, no. 1 (March 1963), 11.

public accommodations, and all other aspects of American society. For liberals, racial integration was a laudable goal, and the total integration of American society was the most effective way to achieve—and to demonstrate—racial equity and understanding.

So, when other leaders articulated the idea that the fates of blacks and whites in this country were inseparable, they were expressing a liberal principle. Bayard Rustin agreed with the racial liberal viewpoint on many issues, even though he took a different economic tack from most liberal leaders. The belief in the shared destiny of blacks and whites in this country was one of those shared viewpoints.

Also, Reverend Milton A. Galamison, the Brooklyn minister who had been a leader of the Brooklyn NAACP during the late-1950s, left the organization in 1959, and began his own grassroots organization concerned with equalizing public educational opportunities for black and Puerto Rican children in New York City, expressed the belief that blacks needed to pursue integration. Blacks had as much claim to America as any other group. He engaged in a televised debate with Malcolm X of the Nation of Islam on the efficacy of racial integration among other topics during the spring of 1963. Excerpts of Galamison's comments were published soon afterwards in *Freedomways* magazine under the title, "Integration Must Work—Nothing Else Can." Galamison argued that blacks needed to continue to fight for an integrated American society; integrated at every level. As far as Galamison was concerned, he and other blacks had as strong a claim to America as any white person, not only because they were citizens, but also because their ancestors had also fought the nation's wars and had helped build the nation—literally—into what it had become. As a result, Galamison argued, "[blacks] ha[d] been integrated [into the fabric of American history, society, and culture] at every level of the sowing. It [was] in the arena of the reaping that [blacks had] been short changed." The fact that African

Americans were not being treated equitably in American society was not because they were not "American" enough, but rather was an indictment of the nation.[18]

Galamison characterized American society as suffering from the "sickness" of racism but included himself and other blacks within it by calling the United States "our society" and its sickness "our sickness."[19] This rhetorical strategy of employing "our" was not only another way of declaring America as much his as anyone else's, but also demonstrates the influence of liberal ideas on Galamison's approach for achieving racial equality for blacks in the United States. Although I consider Galamison a leftist, the willingness of liberals and other leaders to claim America as "theirs," warts and all, probably signified the biggest ideological difference between liberals and nationalists, such as Malcolm X and Harold Cruse, who did not include themselves or the masses of blacks in their indictments of the country's racial policies.

As the primary spokesperson for the Nation of Islam (NOI) Malcolm espoused the mandates of its leader, the Honorable Elijah Muhammad. The United States was heading on a path towards inevitable destruction and that blacks needed to avoid that fate by actively and completely separating themselves from white America. At the Nation of Islam's annual convention in February of 1963 Malcolm declared that "[blacks and whites] can no longer live together in the same house," meaning the United States.[20] As a *Chicago Daily News* article reported, "He urged that American Negroes be given a divorce and property settlement by the white man."[21] Malcolm X and Elijah Muhammad did not believe that African Americans would ever achieve equality in the United States and that the only ways for blacks to do so were either

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[18] Milton A. Galamison, "Integration Must Work—Nothing Else Can," *Freedomways*, vol. 3, no. 2, (Spring 1963), 215-217.

[19] Ibid., 216.

[20] "Black Muslim Aide Berates Whites," *Chicago Daily News*, 27 February 1963, "Freedom of Information Act, Federal Bureau of Investigation: Malcolm X Little," Part 21, Bufile: 100-399321 Sub A: Sections 1 and 2. Will be referred to subsequently as Malcolm X FBI File, Part 21a.

[21] "Black Muslim Aide Berates Whites," *Chicago Daily News*, 27 February 1963, Malcolm X FBI File, Part 21a.

to return to the African continent or to receive territorial and financial reparations from the United States and be allowed to function as a sovereign nation. As Malcolm put in it during an interview with Dr. Kenneth Clark in the spring of 1963,

> . . . since [the white man's] own history makes him unqualified to be an inhabitant or a citizen in a kingdom of brotherhood, the Honorable Elijah Muhammad teaches us that God is about to eliminate that particular race from this earth.
>
> So, since they are due for elimination, we (meaning the members of the NOI) don't want to be with them. We're not trying to integrate with that which we know has come to the end of its rope. We're trying to separate from it and get with something that's more lasting, and we think that God is more lasting than the white man.[22]

In this interview Malcolm used a pluralistic pronoun as did Galamison, "we" compared to Galamison's "our." Malcolm, however, used "we" to mean Nation of Islam members, in particular, who were all black, and all African Americans, more generally. He was not attempting to claim America, but rather to deny America's claim on his person and his allegiance the same way that he believed America continued to deny its bounty to him.

Malcolm X represented the NOI all over the country and the world by the spring of 1963 and he advocated that black Americans needed to separate themselves from white America as soon and as thoroughly as possible. The NOI and Malcolm X were not advocates of racial integration the way other black leaders were. One reason why not was that the Muslims believed that "integration [was] something which a superior race force[d] on an inferior one" and Malcolm X certainly did not agree that American whites were superior to black Americans.[23] He did not believe that whites would allow blacks to live with them as true equals.[24] Neither did Malcolm place any faith in the idea that the United States would eradicate segregation for moral reasons. Bill Dowell of the *Daily Tarheel* reported in April of 1963 that Malcolm claimed, "The

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[22] Malcolm X, interview by Kenneth Clark, *The Negro and the American Promise*, WGBH, June 1963.

[23] Bill Dowell, "Malcolm Asks For Plague on Whites," *The Daily Tarheel*, 20 April 1963, Malcolm X FBI File, Part 21a.

[24] "Muslim Leader Says His Group Not Anti-Anybody," *Buffalo Evening News*, 25 April 1963, Malcolm X FBI File, Part 21a.

only time the U.S. had ever made a move for integration . . . was when it felt that foreign opinion called for it or there was some other ulterior motive. Whenever integration was argued for, as an honest moral goal . . . it was looked down on. If the motive is bad . . . how can the result help but be bad?"[25]

Malcolm X and Harold Cruse criticized both African American leaders and whites who argued that interracial partnerships were the only way to achieve total equality in the United States. Consistent with the fact that the NOI did not allow white members, Malcolm argued that the black freedom struggle needed to be an all-black movement. African Americans needed to lead their own organizations to advance their own agendas. And any blacks that associated too closely with whites could not be trusted to put the needs of black people first. As Malcolm put it his interview with Kenneth Clark: " . . . whenever you have a group of black people sitting down with the white man, supposed to represent the black masses, you can never get anybody who is involved in any kind of intermarriage, in any kind of situation, who will be qualified to represent themselves as spokesmen for the black masses in this country. . . . [Y]ou can't find masses . . . of black people who will accept any black man who's married to a white man [sic] as a spokesman for black people, or a black woman, who's married to a white man, as a spokesman or a representative of what black people feel and think."[26]

Harold Cruse, although he did not follow the "back-to-Africa" nationalist thread, also decried the "integrationist impulse" among liberal black leaders. He had been saying since the mid-1950s that black leaders needed to stop relying on the theories of white leftists and develop an indigenous African American cultural criticism. Cruse announced to a friend in September of 1956 that he and a few other contemporaries were establishing a cultural group for black writers.

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[25] Dowell, "Malcolm Asks For Plague on Whites," *The Daily Tarheel*, 20 April 1963, Malcolm X FBI File, Part 21a.

[26] Malcolm X, interview by Kenneth Clark, *The Negro and the American Promise*, WGBH, June 1963.

Whites would only be allowed to join this group as "patrons" and would not be allowed to vote or help set policy for the organization-to-be.[27] The reason for not allowing whites to have leadership roles in the group was because Cruse believed that whites who became involved in black organizations and movements tended to subsume them in what he considered "white" political issues and make them inert. Over time, Cruse would toughen his opposition to white participation in black organizations and movements, as he increasingly saw white leftists as largely to blame for the ineffectiveness of the black struggle for equality.[28]

Besides criticizing the actions of whites in the civil rights struggle, Malcolm X and Cruse were also quick to attack black leaders whom they believed were using ineffectual tactics in trying to achieve racial equality. Cruse had been condemning black leaders who he believed embodied the "integrationist impulse" since the 1950s, even going after W. E. B. Du Bois on this score in an editorial sent to the *Amsterdam News*, the New York-based black weekly, in February of 1956. He ended that editorial with this scathing critique:

> These are some matters which Dr. DuBois [sic] and others might do well to ponder over. While they are so pondering they should look into the matter of the American Negroes' domestic life for his house is badly out of order and the white folks can't be held responsible for that. Dr. DuBois [sic] can help to get our house in shape by watching his choice of words and adjectives because the American Negro has got to start a cleanup campaign on his own racial ideology for it is dirty, suffocating and nauseating with a stifling miasma of the implied superiority of the lightness of skin. This pandering to white values pervades the entire structure of Negro social, political and cultural activity all the way from conservative to the Marxist leftwing, including the Communists. In fact, this whole "integration mania" which is sweeping the colored middle classes, and their black supporters, and the "brownskinned [sic] elite" ought to be investigated. It is

[27] Harold Cruse to John, September 24, 1956, Box 2, Folder 6, Correspondence, 1952-1959, Harold Cruse Papers, Archives of the Tamiment Library, Robert F. Wagner Archives, New York University, New York. Will subsequently be referred to as the HC Papers.

[28] Harold Cruse, "The Roots of Black Nationalism: Part Two," *Liberator* (April 1964), 7-8, Box 3, Folder 34, Book Reviews by Cruse (Misc.), N.D., 1950-1951, 1962, 1964, HC Papers, Archives of the Tamiment Library, Robert F. Wagner Archives, New York University, New York.

> extremely doubtful if all of us American Negroes will be able to "whiten up", "brown up" or "lighten up" enough to be free by '63.[29]

Cruse believed that the issue of how to achieve racial equality in America was a cultural question beyond the comprehension of white Marxists in the United States. And Russian communists had nothing significant to say about the racial situation in America because they did not understand its complexities. An even bigger problem that Cruse saw, as a result, and the reason why he was so critical of Du Bois, was that Cruse believed black intellectuals were "so tied up" with whites' version of Marxism that they could not think intelligently about the issue of race in America anymore.[30]

By the mid 1960s Cruse argued that Marxist doctrine was not being adapted to fit the current economic and political conditions facing African Americans in the mid twentieth century. Marx had made his observations about social structures and relations in Europe in the mid-nineteenth century, yet contemporary Marxists refused to contextualize his theory in their historical time and place and retool them to be useful for the United States in the 1960s.[31] Black intellectuals, according to Cruse, were either unwilling or incapable of adapting Marxism to fit the American context in 1963.

While Cruse pointed up the class divisions, color consciousness, and integrationism that was "stifling" the black movement—and believed was only worsening by 1963, Malcolm focused his ire on the philosophy of nonviolence as practiced by Bayard Rustin and Martin Luther King. Malcolm and the NOI, while willing to "join any group or picket line they thought

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[29] Harold Cruse to the Editor of the *Amsterdam News*, February 5, 1956, 4, Box 2, Folder 6, Correspondence, 1952-1959, HC Papers, Archives of the Tamiment Library, Robert F. Wagner Archives, New York University, New York.

[30] Ibid., 3-4.

[31] Harold Cruse, "Marxism and the Negro: Part 1," *Liberator* (May 1964), 11, Box 3, Folder 34, Book Reviews by Cruse (Misc.), N.D., 1950-1951, 1962, 1964, HC Papers, Archives of the Tamiment Library, Robert F. Wagner Archives, New York University, New York.

would help the Negroes," would not react nonviolently if they were attacked.[32] Malcolm said that the Muslims would have pursued quite different tactics in Birmingham than the nonviolent direct action strategy that was being implemented. According to Malcolm,

> The Negroes approach to their Birmingham problems [was] no good . . . 'You draw away from them and they accuse you of hate and you draw to them and they sic their dogs on you . . .'
>
> 'Mr. Muhammad teaches us to separate from the white man since you can't get along with him . . .'
>
> Birmingham Negroes . . . should kill 'the two or four legged dogs which attack them.' If Muslims were involved in the Birmingham protests . . . they would defend themselves against the police dogs and policemen who attack them with nightsticks and fire hoses.[33]

Malcolm's rejection of nonviolence both as a moral philosophy and protest strategy made it next to impossible for substantive relationships to develop between him and most other leaders. As critical as Malcolm was of most other black leaders, they often reserved their harshest rebukes for Malcolm and black nationalists more generally. Milton Galamison maintained that black nationalists were trying to be better racists than white supremacists:

> The new nationalists are saying to the racists, 'I will show you what it is to be the object of race arrogance. I will be just as you are.' The worst harm white supremacy could inflict on me is to mold me in the image of its buffoonery. Yet white supremacy has achieved the supreme stroke of perverted genius in convincing some Negroes that the desire for racial unity is symptomatic of inferiority and pridelessness.[34]

Galamison maintained that blacks could not respond to white supremacist attitudes by simply articulating the reverse. To do so would not only be incorrect factually, but also morally. Galamison characterized black nationalism, of the typed espoused by Malcolm X and the Nation

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[32] Dowell, "Malcolm Asks For Plague on Whites," *The Daily Tarheel*, 20 April 1963, Malcolm X FBI File, Part 21a. Within two months Elijah Muhammad apparently forbade Malcolm X from working with any other civil rights organizations. "Malcolm X: A Research Site," Chronology, 1963, http://www.brothermalcolm.net/mxtimeline.html#sixtythree, (accessed on February 13, 2010).

[33] "20 Million Muslims By '70, Leader Predicts," *The Evening Star*, May 10, 1963, C-16, Malcolm X FBI File, Part 21a.

[34] Galamison, "Integration Must Work—Nothing Else Can," *Freedomways*, 216.

of Islam, as reverse racism and a hollow ideology that was a detriment rather than an aid to black equality.

James Baldwin offered an eloquent analysis and critique of black nationalist ideology in the spring of 1963 as he explained to Kenneth Clark the appeal of Malcolm X, particularly to northern urban blacks. Baldwin told Clark that Malcolm was capturing the spirit of a changing zeitgeist by telling black people that they should indeed be proud of being black. Baldwin absolutely agreed with that and acknowledged how important it was, psychologically, for black people to hear that message when so often they were bombarded with the exact opposite message. The problem with the articulation of pride in blackness the way Malcolm and the NOI did it, as far as Baldwin was concerned, was that "in order to do this, what he does is destroy a truth and invent a history. What [Malcolm] does is say, 'you're better because you're black.' Well, of course that isn't true."[35] Baldwin leveled the same charge against black nationalists as Galamison, that the ideology was based on a false morale; a false sense of superiority. Baldwin warned that ideologies based on theories of racial superiority always "leads to a moral bankruptcy."[36]

One trait of black liberal leaders, as well as black leftists who were influenced by liberal ideology, was indictments of black nationalism. Those leaders who advocated integration criticized black nationalists for their unwillingness to work in interracial coalitions with whites. At best, nationalists were unrealistic. At worst, they were black supremacists and unpatriotic. These leaders would continue their condemnations into 1963 and well beyond, as Birmingham raised the stakes of the black freedom struggle.

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[35] Clark, "A Conversation with James Baldwin," *Freedomways*, 366.
[36] Ibid.

Because many black liberal leaders believed Birmingham was providing an unparalleled opportunity to compel the nation to work on behalf of African Americans on moral and political grounds, and because of the growing impatience with the pace of social change, many black liberal leaders were quite disappointed with the level of support they received from white liberals. They began to voice, in speeches and in print, their dissatisfaction with what they considered the condescension and lukewarm commitment to racial equality from white liberals. James Baldwin wanted white liberals to realize that it was not their job to try and "save" black people. Blacks did not need to be "saved," and for whites to frame the problem of American racism in those terms was to continue to both place themselves in a superior position vis-à-vis African Americans, and to still see racial discrimination as a "Negro problem" when that was not the case. Baldwin put it this way in March of 1963:

> I am tired not only of being told to wait, but of people saying "What should I do?" They mean "What should I do about the Negro problem; what should I do for you?" There is nothing you can do for me. There is nothing you can do for Negroes. . . . One is not attempting to save twenty-two million people. One is attempting to save an entire country, and that means an entire civilization, and the price for that is high. The price for that is to understand one's self.[37]

Baldwin was not only articulating his anger about many white liberals' time-table for achieving racial equality and an integrated society—which was apparently much slower than blacks' own—but he was also shifting the responsibility for eradicating racial discrimination from blacks to all people in order to redeem the entire nation. Baldwin's remark also reiterates another pervasive theme of black liberal leaders; that they believed the destinies and white and black Americans were inextricably tied together and if racial discrimination were not stamped out, the entire nation might cease to exist.

[37] James Baldwin, "The Artist's Search for Integrity," *Liberation*, 11.

Increasingly, many black liberal leaders did not believe that the civil rights movement would follow a truly revolutionary course if it depended on the unwavering support of white liberals. And in the mold of James Baldwin, they let their displeasure be known throughout the rest of 1963, and beyond. The various splits between black liberals and white liberals between 1963 and 1965 would account for some of the most dramatic shifts in the direction of the black freedom struggle in the decade to follow. But during the spring of their discontent, black liberal leaders wanted to continue to "find some way of putting the present administration of the country on the spot. One has got to force, somehow, from Washington, a moral commitment, not to the Negro people, but to the life of this country."[38] That "somehow" materialized in the revival of an older idea . . . a march on Washington. The event would come to define the summer of 1963. And although it was celebrated as an indelible historic moment then—and should still be—it was not (and should not now be) lost on anyone that the conditions that necessitated a march on the capital were not to be celebrated.

**The Summer of Our Discontent**

Among the most distressful of those conditions was the disproportionately high unemployment rate among African American as compared to whites. The disparity was the result of several factors. These included the trend toward automation in factory work that was making for fewer jobs, a dearth of job training opportunities in black communities, seniority rules that adversely affected black workers far more often than whites, as well as racial discrimination on the part of employers. The result was that African Americans comprised more

[38] Kenneth Clark, "A Conversation with James Baldwin," *Freedomways*, 364.

than twenty percent of the jobless in May of 1963 even though they made up only eleven percent of the population.[39]

In thinking about how to best dramatize the continued plight of African Americans trying to play a larger role in America's life, Randolph resurrected a much older idea of his: a march on Washington. Randolph had ultimately aborted the idea in 1941 after Franklin Roosevelt signed Executive Order 8802 into law. Now, twenty-two years later, as the liberal-led movement achieved one of its most significant triumphs in Birmingham by ousting "Bull" Connor from public office and compelling John F. Kennedy to address the nation regarding the need for racial reconciliation, Randolph once again believed this moment was pregnant with possibilities.

Randolph had been concerned with issues related to black employment and economic life ever since he began his career as an activist after migrating from Florida to New York City in 1911. The first incarnation of the March on Washington had also been intended to bring into public view the prevalence of racially discriminatory practices in factories that received government defense contracts, as well as the broader issue of disparate levels of unemployment as opposed to whites. Randolph, even with the gains that had been secured since 1941 as a result of grassroots protest, litigation, and federal mandate, saw that twenty-plus years later the economic situation for the majority of African Americans was becoming more precarious rather than more stable.

According to Randolph, if blacks were ultimately going to obtain all of the rights and privileges of first-class citizens and become truly emancipated in 1963, it would be blacks that would have to "strike the first blow" to free themselves.[40] As national president of the Negro

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[39] A. Philip Randolph, "Why the Emancipation March on Washington for Jobs?" 2, May 15, 1963, Box 31, Folder 9, Subject File, March on Washington, Speeches and Statements, 1963, BTR Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

[40] Ibid.

American Labor Council (NALC), Randolph and the NALC proposed the plan for the "Emancipation March for Jobs." The NALC took the lead in beginning to organize this protest because, as Randolph put it:

> Obviously, if Negroes would be free they must free themselves, for it is the verdict of history that the salvation of a people must come from within. This is a basic reason for the Emancipation March on Washington for Jobs.
>
> Verily, black Americans must bear their own cross of crucifixion!
>
> It is only realistic to expect that Negroes should initiate, organize, conduct and maintain demonstrations such as marches, sit-ins and boycotts against Jim Crow that are certain to be resisted with attacks of police brutality, imprisonment and the danger to life and limb by the Simon Legrees in the Egypt of southern racial bondage.[41]

Black people had to be at the forefront of this struggle for their own "emancipation" and the liberation of the nation, but the march did not need to exclude whites or those of other races. Randolph asserted that blacks should both welcome and expect support from other marginalized groups within American society; namely labor unions, Jews, and Catholics.[42]

Randolph was affirming his beliefs in the partnership between organized labor and civil rights organizations that he saw as critical for the survival and success of each movement, as well as his belief in the efficacy of an interracial, interreligious movement for civil rights. Randolph argued that in order for the most pressing problems confronting the nation to be resolved, problems all inextricably connected to one another, that all of the various constituencies comprising American society needed to struggle against them together. He could not countenance the position of black nationalist leaders who would exclude whites from participation in black civil rights organizations and protests simply because of their race.[43]

Randolph had long believed that for the "civil rights revolution"—as he often referred to the movement—to be successful, blacks and whites would need to prosecute the movement

[41] Ibid.
[42] Ibid.
[43] Ibid., 2.

together. Although he had declared that the original March on Washington Movement (MOWM) was to be an all-black movement, Randolph's reasons in 1941 did not revolve around a belief in the inherent nature of whites to co-opt civil rights groups. As historian Jervis Anderson explains, "[t]he charge of black chauvinism overlooked or exploited Randolph's rather complex attitude toward the nature of the black struggle in American society."[44] Randolph's reasons for excluding whites from the proposed march on Washington were in large part to counteract the belief among racist whites that blacks could not build an organization on their own, and also a way to exclude Communists from the march.[45] Randolph also received a good deal of criticism for deciding to exclude whites from the MOWM. Surely, he did not want to come up against those same criticisms again.

As Randolph commented in May of 1963, restating long-held beliefs of his, "Black supremacy is as objectionable as white supremacy! Black racism is as dangerous as white racism or anti-Semitism!"[46] He often critiqued black nationalism on the same grounds as black liberals; that black nationalism merely inverted white supremacist beliefs and ascribed them to black people. This thread of Randolph's belief system goes back to his attacks on Marcus Garvey in the 1920s.

Randolph's objection to black nationalist ideology was one thing that made him more palatable to liberal leaders. His staunch anticommunism, as well as his unshakable faith in the fundamentally "American" values of freedom and democracy were surely other principles that allowed for such a friendly working relationship between Randolph and liberal organizations.

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[44] Jervis Anderson, *A. Philip Randolph: A Biographical Portrait* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1972), 253.

[45] Anderson, *A. Philip Randolph*, 253-4.

[46] A. Philip Randolph, "Why the Emancipation March on Washington for Jobs?" 2, May 15, 1963, Box 31, Folder 9, Subject File, March on Washington, Speeches and Statements, 1963, BTR Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Randolph also shared the liberal belief that blacks had a responsibility to educate the United States government about the necessity of obtaining racial equality in America.[47] Randolph's faith in, and willingness to work within, the organized labor movement was one of the major ideological differences between he and liberal leaders such as Kenneth Clark and Roy Wilkins. But this ideological difference was not sufficient to preclude individual and organizational cooperation between Randolph's NALC, Wilkins' NAACP, and Whitney Young's NUL in the early 1960s.

Randolph was perhaps the most widely respected of the nationally recognized civil rights leaders in 1963. His long and distinguished record of service to the cause of black economic and social liberation preceded the seventy-four-year-old wherever he went. Randolph's status as elder-statesman of the civil rights movement leadership gave him the singular ability to bring together, not only all of the major national black liberal civil rights groups (the NAACP, NUL, CORE, SNCC, National Council of Negro Women, and his own NALC), but also corral the egos of these organizations' leaders and eventually bring white labor and religious groups into the fold as well.

Randolph had a grand vision for this march to make known to the larger American public the plight of African Americans all over the country who were more than twice as likely as whites to be unemployed. And he knew just the man whom he wanted to execute his vision—Bayard Rustin. Randolph's ideological heir and acolyte, Rustin was a veteran activist in his own right by 1963, having worked for the Fellowship of Reconciliation, the Congress of Racial Equality, Randolph's March on Washington Movement, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and the NAACP among other groups since the early 1940s. But from the early

[47] "Address of A. Philip Randolph and the Chicago Division's Thirty-Third Anniversary," August 24, 1958, 10, Box 40, Folder 1, Speeches & Writings File, Speeches, 1958, APR Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

1950s on, much of Rustin's activities with these organizations were necessarily out of the public spotlight. Rustin was gay at a moment in American history when being gay was a punishable offense; gay at a moment when homosexuality was commonly associated with Communism and deviance as the most significant threats to American civilization; gay at a moment when liberal civil rights leaders were working to avoid the taints of communism and disloyalty to country at all costs; gay at a moment when civil rights leaders were not ready or able to be welcoming of open homosexuals; and Rustin had, in fact, been convicted of a "morals" charge in California in 1952. Randolph still wanted Rustin to organize the march, nevertheless, because of his abilities at coordinating large-scale events, and he ultimately got what he wanted over the objections of Roy Wilkins and others.

Randolph, Rustin, and the NALC immediately got down to the business of planning "The Emancipation March for Jobs." It was already March and the event was scheduled for June 13 and 14, so there was clearly much that needed to be done. The NALC devised committees at the local and national levels to register participants and collect donations for the march. On March 28, Randolph appointed Cleveland Robinson, who was on the executive committee of the NALC to be chairman of the march committee, L. Joseph Overton who was national secretary of the NALC as march director, and Richard Parrish who was treasurer of the NALC to be treasurer for the march.[48]

By April 10, Randolph had made attempts to expand the number of sponsoring organizations for the march as he invited the NAACP, NUL, CORE, SCLC, SNCC, and the NCNW to send representatives to that planning meeting. The NALC, NUL, and CORE did send representatives to the meeting. The NAACP had indicated that a representative would be

[48] Memorandum, Negro American Labor Council, April 1, 1963, 1, Box 27, Folder 10, Subject File, March on Washington, Correspondence, Congress, 1963, BTR Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

present, but none made it to the meeting. At that meeting Randolph made it plain that he hoped all of these organizations could work together as equal partners in order to make the march a success. Randolph proposed that the director of each sponsoring organization be on the national coordinating committee for the march and that they each be permitted to appoint a co-chair if they so chose. He then recommended that, in light of the "tremendous momentum" that planning the march was gaining, June 13 and 14 would not allow enough time to pull off an effective march. Those present at the meeting unanimously agreed to move the march back to October 4 and 5. After finally discussing issues of financing, deciding each organization would pledge at least $10,000 for the march's budget and that the organizations would split any additional monies raised from the march equally, the meeting was adjourned.[49]

As the mobilization effort for the Emancipation March continued throughout April and May correspondences concerning the march listed four sponsoring organizations; the NALC, SCLC, CORE, and SNCC. As Randolph requested permission from the Secretary of the Interior to march down Pennsylvania Avenue to the Lincoln Memorial near the end of May, and as Randolph appealed to black entertainers and public figures for support, the NAACP, NUL, and NCNW were conspicuously absent from the list of sponsoring organizations even though they were exerting influence over the planning of the march.[50]

The NAACP, NUL, and NCNW were assisting the mobilization efforts behind the scenes as the NALC, SCLC, CORE, and SNCC put their names out front. The civil rights struggle was entering a critical moment in the spring of 1963 as events began to accelerate in Birmingham.

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[49] Meeting Minutes, "Meeting of Emancipation March on Washington at 217 West 125th Street," April 10, 1963, 1-3, Box 27, Folder 10, Subject File, March on Washington, Correspondence, General, Mar.-June, 1963, BTR Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

[50] A. Philip Randolph to the Honorable Stewart L. Udall, May 24, 1963; A. Philip Randolph to James Baldwin, Lorraine Hansbury [sic], Ossie Davis, Lena Horne, Harry Belafonte, Dick Gregory, Irving Burgie, Evelyn Cunningham, and Allen Morrison, May 31, 1963, Box 27, Folder 10, Subject File, March on Washington, Correspondence, General, Mar.-June, 1963, BTR Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

As the situation in Birmingham more and more illustrated disorder and laid bare for the world the naked brutality of Jim Crow, President Kennedy was not only compelled to address the nation about the need for racial reconciliation, but also finally propose legislation to Congress to ensure full civil rights for African Americans. And so out of a season of discontent now sprang the possibility of securing another positive outcome: the passage of civil rights legislation; further reaching than any since Reconstruction.

The introduction of a civil rights bill before Congress during the early summer of 1963 not only added another layer of significance to the march, but it also compelled the organizers to move the date up to August 28. L. Joseph Overton explained to the national and local march coordinators that the date had been moved by decision of the executive board—A. Philip Randolph, Roy Wilkins, James Farmer, Martin Luther King, Jr., Whitney Young, and Dorothy Height—due to the "rapid change in the civil rights revolution."[51] This meant that the time available to march organizers was now cut in half. By the time Overton sent his memorandum on July 16, August 28 was only six weeks away. October 4 would have given organizers roughly eleven weeks. Planning the Emancipation March for Jobs now became a virtual twenty-four hour per day operation for the next six weeks.

Soon after the date for the march had been moved up to August 28 the name for the name for the event had also been changed to the "March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom." The name change is significant for a couple of reasons. The addition of "freedom" to the name of the march references the new political developments that were occurring during the summer and demonstrates how the scope of the march was broadening as the summer progressed. The removal of "emancipation" could also be seen as a way to dampen the radical implications of the

[51] Memorandum, L. Joseph Overton to Vice Presidents, Presidents of Local Councils, and Board Members, July 16, 1963, 1, Box 27, Folder 11, Subject File, March on Washington, Correspondence, General, July 1963, BTR Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

march, taking place, as it was, during the centennial year of the Emancipation Proclamation, and soften the criticism of the federal government, as the leaders intended for the march to illustrate support for the pending civil rights legislation.

In preparation for the march the national logistics committee sent two different "Organizing Manuals" to local committee chairs in order to clarify all aspects of how the "March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom," would be executed. Both manuals listed the organizations sponsoring the march, the purposes and demands of the organizers and participants in the march, as well as the responsibilities of the local committees, and the logistics of transporting individuals into and out of Washington, D.C. What is interesting, however, is that the second manual also reflects the considerable broadening in scope of the march, both organizationally and rhetorically. The first manual stated that the objective of the march would be to demonstrate the need for federal intervention "to deal with the national crisis of civil rights and jobs that all of us, black and white are facing."[52] The first manual also indicated there were six sponsoring organizations for the march, all African American civil rights organizations (NALC, CORE, SNCC, SCLC, NAACP, and the NUL).

By the time the second manual was distributed, however, several white organizations had also joined the sponsoring ticket, including the National Catholic Conference for Interracial Justice, the National Council of Churches in Christ in America, the American Jewish Congress, and the Industrial Union Department of the AFL-CIO. And the objectives of the march were broadened to make more explicit the racism that blacks fell victim to. But Randolph also included "Puerto Ricans, Mexicans, and other minorities" as being negatively affected by automation, and inequalities in education and apprenticeship training. Randolph also

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[52] "March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom: Organizing Manual no. 1," 2, Box 30, Folder 1, Subject File, March on Washington, Manuals, 1963, BTR Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

unequivocally connected the fate of the nation to the need of remedying economic inequality for all Americans. And he referenced the proposed civil rights bill working its way through Congress as a reason for marching.[53]

This demonstrates the momentum the march was gathering during the summer of 1963. Randolph had brought more organizations into the fold, which both gave the march a broader appeal to attract participants and brought in more revenue in order to carry it out. The second manual was bold enough to publish the number of participants expected to march at 100,000.

As the march drew nearer, Randolph and the march's other organizers dealt with charges that the march had been infiltrated by communists, an all-too-frequent and hollow refrain from those—particularly in the South—who wanted to maintain segregation and the status quo. Randolph responded to these charges on August 12, 1963, by immediately exposing the real reason for these charges of communist permeation. He pointed out that before every major mass action carried out by African Americans, these same charges were leveled. And in each instance no evidence of communist infiltration was uncovered. He went on to argue that the fact that a viable protest movement existed, that was articulating the demands of the masses, militated against communist infestation, rather than encouraged it. Finally, Randolph argued that such accusations insulted march organizers because they were leading national figures whose reputations were above reproach, and whose ideologies were nothing but consistent with liberal democracy.[54]

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[53] "March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom: Organizing Manual no. 2," 2-3, Box 30, Folder 1, Subject File, March on Washington, Manuals, 1963, BTR Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

[54] A. Philip Randolph, "Communism," August 12, 1963, Box 31, Folder 9, Subject File, March on Washington, Speeches & Statements, 1963, BTR Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; Ned O'Gorman, "The Freedom March," *Jubilee*, (October 1963), 18, Box 26, Folder 4, Subject File, March on Washington, Articles, 1963, BTR Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Charges of communist infiltration and attempts to try and exploit fears of possible violence, aside, the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom moved forward.[55] On August 28, 1963 Americans of every hue from every city and small hamlet descended on the nation's capital in order to express dissatisfaction with the current state of racial inequality in the United States, their support for the pending civil rights bill, and their faith in liberal democracy.[56] Female participants carried signs demanding decent housing, jobs for all, fair pay, and equal rights. These women were speaking as black women, who faced discrimination based on their race, sex, and class status in America. Therefore, they spoke out against inequality on all three fronts.[57]

As buses, trains, planes, and automobiles arrived in Washington throughout the morning, it would turn out that Randolph's estimate of how many people they could bring to the capital was far off. Rather than the 100,000 people that Randolph shot for, more than 250,000 people filled the National Mall, eyes fixed on the rostrum perched on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. Dozens of dignitaries filled the risers behind the podium including Ella Baker, renowned entertainer Josephine Baker, Ralph Bunche, Myrlie Evers, James Forman, the Honorable William H. Hastie, poet Langston Hughes, gospel singer Mahalia Jackson, Thurgood Marshall, and Rosa Parks.

Malcolm X and perhaps hundreds of Nation of Islam members were also in the crowd assembled on the National Mall. Malcolm had spent the previous couple of months criticizing the premise of the march, the black liberal leaders who had orchestrated it particularly Martin

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[55] A. Philip Randolph, "Violence," August 12, 1963, Box 31, Folder 9, Subject File, March on Washington, Speeches & Statements, 1963, BTR Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

[56] Dean M. Gottehrer, "The March on Washington," n.d., 2, Box 26, Folder 4, Subject File, March on Washington, Articles, 1963, BTR Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

[57] Jacqueline Dowd Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past," *Journal of American History*, vol. 91, no. 4 (March 2005), 1252.

Luther King, Jr., and the Kennedy administration for presumably co-opting the march once they realized that the march would not be stopped. Malcolm was a constant thorn in the side of the Kennedy administration during the summer of 1963 reminding listeners of his administration's timidity when it came to supporting civil rights legislation.[58] Malcolm was playing an important, if peripheral role as a spur to the Kennedy administration, hoping to convince them that they would still need to work for African American votes in the next election. He was followed by reporters all over Washington and never backed away from his disapproval of the Kennedy administration and the liberal method of nonviolent mass action.[59]

Malcolm's criticisms of the Kennedy administration spurred militant blacks that wanted the march to lead to more confrontational actions, such as strikes and civil disobedience. Malcolm's criticisms of King and the liberal tenor of the march made certain that this would not be the moment of rapprochement between he and King. But it also made Malcolm question the Nation of Islam's proscription against political involvement even more. Malcolm would leave the march convinced that he would have to find ways to make the NOI more active in its commitment to civil rights protest.[60]

Malcolm listened from a distance to the speeches that simultaneously criticized those politicians and others who obstructed civil rights advances, challenged all Americans to support racial and economic equality for the benefit of the nation, and inspired those in attendance to take the positive spirit of the day with them back home. Malcolm remained skeptical of the march's value but August 28 was an extraordinary day. "It was a very elemental afternoon. The crowd wanted to hear what it knew; it wanted to be certain that everything was clear, that

[58] Manning Marable, *Malcolm X: A Life of Reinvention* (New York: Viking, 2011), 253-4, 258.
[59] Marable, *Malcolm X*, 256-7.
[60] Ibid., 258.

nothing was vague. Ends, means, grievances had to be made alive."[61] John Lewis helped to do that by criticizing the shortcomings of the pending civil rights bill and challenging Congress to do better, imploring them to "wake up."[62] Randolph began to sketch a plan in order to implement the goals of the march, which were to ameliorate the economic disparities between wealthy and poor Americans and get significant civil rights legislation passed.[63] And Martin Luther King, Jr. inspired a nation by sharing his "dream" with them, helping more Americans to make his dream theirs as well. As Ned O'Gorman described King's oration:

> . . . it was Martin Luther King who gave to the march its myth; its memory, its historical power. He brought all the day in; he defined it, so that we should remember it, so that this instant in time would be a source of immense intellectual and moral power to our country. Dr. King spoke of America with prophetic grandeur. There was anger, love, patience, poetry in his vision; his language had a thunderous brilliance that cut through the crowd. He evoked the spirit of America as no one ever had in my generation. I do not think it is possible for anyone who heard him ever to be quite the same again; the spirit of King assaulted our spirits; we came away changed. There could be no question of where our allegiances lay.[64]

The demonstration carried on for longer than scheduled, but no one in attendance was concerned. Everyone understood they were participating in something historic. King's "I Have a Dream" speech headlined national news programs and was reprinted in newspapers the following day. The violence that some feared happening during the march never materialized as 250,000 people entered and left Washington, D.C. without incident.

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[61] Ned O'Gorman, "The Freedom March," *Jubilee*, (October 1963), 20, Box 26, Folder 4, Subject File, March on Washington, Articles, 1963, BTR Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

[62] John Lewis, "Text of Speech to be Delivered at Lincoln Memorial," August 28, 1963, Box 31, Folder 9, Subject File, March on Washington, Speeches & Statements, 1963, BTR Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

[63] A. Philip Randolph, "Address of A. Philip Randolph at the March on Washington," August 28, 1963, Box 41, Folder 2, Speeches & Writing File, Speeches, 1963, APR Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

[64] Ned O'Gorman, "The Freedom March," *Jubilee*, (October 1963), 20, Box 26, Folder 4, Subject File, March on Washington, Articles, 1963, BTR Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

The spirit of unity and nonviolence that defined the demonstration in the capital was marred, however, by violent attacks in the hours, days, and weeks following the march. The most infamous episode of violence occurred at the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in Birmingham where several members of the Ku Klux Klan conspired to blow up the church because of its importance to the black community as a meeting space. On September 15, a bomb hidden in the building by Robert Chambliss detonated during the morning Sunday School class, killing four young girls, ages 11 to 14, and wounding more than twenty others.[65] The attack refocused the world's outrage on Birmingham. It also frustrated African American leaders, and intensified their sense of urgency to step back, assess the march's effectiveness, and articulate what they believed should be the next steps for the civil rights movement in light of the march's achievements and this latest tragedy.

The day after the Birmingham bombing James Baldwin issued a statement from New York City about the catastrophe. He used the incident to frame resistance to racial equality in a larger context. Baldwin characterized the bombing as "one of the American answers to the March on Washington." Baldwin pointedly criticized the Kennedy administration's lack of commitment to issues of civil rights, as well as the record of the FBI under J. Edgar Hoover in solving violent crimes against African Americans, citing the fact that as of September 19, 1963 there were 21 unsolved bombings in Alabama alone under FBI investigation. Baldwin used this as evidence that the FBI was more sympathetic towards southern law officials than towards the families of the African American crime victims.[66]

[65] McWhorter, *Carry Me Home*, 522.

[66] James Baldwin, "Statement by James Baldwin," September 19, 1963, 1, Box 31, Folder 9, Subject File, March on Washington, Speeches & Statements, 1963, BTR Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Baldwin further declared that it would take the actions of liberal and moderate whites in Birmingham and elsewhere in order for bombings not to become the "definitive American answer to the aspirations of the American Negro." Apathy and inaction were the biggest threats to achieving racial equality in America. If moderate whites did nothing, then those who wanted to preserve white supremacy and racial segregation would continue to believe that they could commit atrocities on African Americans with impunity. Baldwin warned that many cities had the potential to explode the way Birmingham had, and that this could have been an incident that precipitated the type of suppression of protest that occurred in Germany under Hitler's rule.[67]

He called for action on the part of all Americans, but not to maintain the status quo. Rather, he urged people to think creatively to bring about more progressive political and social alignments, citing the continuing segregation in New York City public schools as an example of how conventional thinking had been ineffective at achieving integration. Baldwin recognized that the problem in New York was deeper than segregated schools. The root cause of the school segregation was residential segregation, but few were willing to go after the real estate boards and banks that perpetuated segregated education.[68] Americans had to be willing to take a hard look at, and change, the political institutions as well as the caliber of their elected officials in order to effect substantive social change.[69]

Bayard Rustin gave a similar analysis less than two weeks after Baldwin when he delivered an address at Community Church in New York City on September 25 titled, "What Follows the March?" But he framed his talk somewhat differently than Baldwin had. Rustin also commented on the Birmingham bombing, characterizing the bombing and the deaths of the

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[67] Ibid., 1-2.
[68] Ibid., 2.
[69] Ibid., 3.

four girls as “inevitable” and predicting that more people were going to die in this struggle.[70] Rustin used the incident in Birmingham to affirm his belief in nonviolent direct action as an infinitely more effective method of bringing about social change than any kind of violent activity. He wanted to, as he put it, “take the offensive” in defending nonviolence. Rustin defended nonviolence on practical grounds, arguing that advocates of violent protest never articulate an effective plan for implementing genuine change, and that the use of violence by the state will always be in defense of the status quo and never in the interests of social change.[71] He argued that the only way to prevent the types of violent attacks that occurred in Birmingham was for millions of individuals across the country to build an interracial, interreligious, socioeconomically diverse, progressive coalition in order bring about racial integration and social equality for all.[72]

Rustin did comment on the March of Washington itself; its objectives and achievements. He remarked that an important purpose of the march was to divert the attention of African Americans from their poor economic circumstances and allow them to be occupied by planning—and planning to attend—the march.[73] Rustin also argued that the march achieved some important goals. Most important of which being that the march—and the civil rights movement, more generally—began to attack what Rustin considered more fundamental problems facing African Americans, namely, the disproportionate unemployment rate for blacks as compared to whites and the unequal quality of education provided in racially segregated schools. Both of these problems, in Rustin’s estimation, were getting worse rather than better. In the case

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[70] Bayard Rustin, “What Follows the March?” September 25, 1963, Community Church, New York City, 1, Box 31, Folder 9, Subject File, March on Washington, Speeches & Statements, 1963, BTR Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
[71] Ibid., 5-6.
[72] Ibid., 4-7.
[73] Ibid., 2.

of unemployment, Rustin cited the trend toward automation as being the primary factor because higher-paying jobs were simply being eliminated. In the case of education, Rustin cited the situation in New York City, as had Baldwin, in pointing out that schools were becoming more segregated rather than less.[74]

Rustin used these two examples in order to make the argument that the only way to change the racial and economic situation in the United States was to disrupt the normal workings of the society. Millions of Americans of all backgrounds would have to participate in this social movement. The disruptions would need to be nonviolent, however, for the only effective weapons people really possessed were their bodies and the ability to find ways to make the status quo unworkable. If people were will to engage in these types of protest, then they could have some success.[75]

A few days after Rustin's speech at Community Church the *New York Times Magazine* published a follow up piece about the March on Washington. Before the march, the *Times Magazine* asked five prominent black leaders, "What do the marchers really want?"[76] After the march, the magazine asked "what next?" Among the respondents were Kenneth Clark, A. Philip Randolph, and Roy Wilkins.

Clark offered a multi-part strategy for what needed to occur in order to sustain the momentum gained after the march, but he began with some concerns. He did not want the apparent success of the march to obscure the fact that there were fundamental problems that still needed to be dealt with. The march should not assuage anyone's conscience or lead them to believe that anything had been solved by the march alone. This was still the same nation that

[74] Ibid., 7-8.
[75] Ibid., 11-2.
[76] "What the Marchers Really Want," *New York Times Magazine*, August 25, 1963, 7-9, 57, 60-1, Box 172, Folder 7, Professional File, 1897-1995, n.d., 1963, KBC Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

had allowed men who had committed 28 bombings in Birmingham to remain free and unpunished, as well as numerous other perpetrators of violent crimes against African Americans to remain free or be lightly punished.[77]

Nevertheless, Clark saw the march as an opportunity for black civil rights organizations and their white allies to develop "more effective techniques to deal directly with the areas of resistance to racial injustice in America." Among the things that needed to be done were compelling Congress and local governments to be more responsive to the "present mood of urgency," engaging in negotiations with labor unions, only spending money in integrated business establishments, protesting against real estate boards and banks that discriminated against African Americans, curbing police brutality, accelerating the desegregation of schools, and registering more southern blacks to vote.[78] Many of the issues that Clark highlighted were of special interest to northern blacks where the civil rights movement had to be more concerned with eliminating de facto rather than de jure segregation.

A. Philip Randolph emphasized that the objectives of the March on Washington were to both provide support for the passage of the civil rights bill before Congress, and to challenge the conscience of the nation to do what was morally right and support racial equality. Randolph once again articulated his faith in the American creed and his desire for an interracial coalition for civil rights. Randolph advocated the need to deepen the relationship among the diverse coalition for social justice that emerged from the March on Washington. He also pushed the need for more direct action techniques to press for more jobs for African Americans. Randolph wanted the March to help unite black civil rights leaders with community leaders and religious

[77] "What Next? Five Negro Leaders Reply," *New York Times Magazine*, September 29, 1963, 27, Box 172, Folder 7, Professional File, 1897-1995, n.d., 1963, KBC Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

[78] Ibid., 27.

leaders in order to foster a more tightly coordinated movement. And similar to Bayard Rustin, even in the wake of the Birmingham bombing, Randolph maintained that nonviolent protest was the only viable method of securing social change.[79]

The successful execution of the March on Washington and the campaign in Birmingham demonstrated the viability of nonviolent mass action to bring about significant social change. The protesters had been able to prick the nation's conscience in order for more Americans to recognize the immorality of racial segregation. For black leaders, in the centennial of the Emancipation Proclamation, they were going to continue to agitate for racial equality in order to harness blacks' discontent and transform it into a constructive movement for change.

## The Fall and Winter of Our Discontent

It was no coincidence that both James Baldwin and Bayard Rustin both discussed the state of educational segregation in New York City as they analyzed the effects of the March on Washington and the church bombing in Birmingham. Both were making the points that the civil rights movement was not only a southern phenomenon and that segregation was not only a southern problem. Segregation was a seemingly intractable problem in northern cities as well. New York City was very much a part of the civil rights struggle. Among the major issues that plagued New York City was the continued racial segregation in the public schools.

In the months after the *Brown* decision the New York City Board of Education pledged to comply with the spirit and letter of the Supreme Court mandate. But nearly a decade later, Baldwin, Rustin, Clark, and Galamison all pointed out that the schools in New York City had become more segregated rather than less. African American and Puerto Rican children were

[79] Ibid., 29-30.

making up an increasing percentage of the public school population in the city. This was the result of both growing black and Puerto Rican populations in New York City, as well as the decline of white children in the public schools due to white families leaving the city and white children being placed into private and parochial schools. Whereas black and Latino children comprised 37 percent of the nearly one million pupils in public schools in 1960, they made up 43 percent of the student population by 1964.[80]

But according to black leaders, the increasing segregation in New York City schools was also the result of the Board of Education's policies. Although the board had commissioned numerous studies over the previous nine years from various groups, both internal and external; had participated in and convened numerous conferences on how to achieve racially integrated schools; and made sundry promises to African American leaders to devise and implement plans for integration, little had been accomplished. The Board did not do much to implement the recommendations of its own commission as far as rezoning its school districts or building schools in racially mixed areas, and the plans that it did put into place were only done on a small scale, so they did not affect enough students to bring about significant integration.[81]

Milton Galamison had had numerous personal confrontations with the New York City Board of Education, going back to his days as president of the Brooklyn NAACP in the late 1950s. He frequently expressed his dissatisfaction with the direction and pace of Board policies regarding desegregation, as well as his distrust of school leaders.[82] As a result, by the beginning

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[80] Clarence Taylor, *Knocking at Our Own Door: Milton A. Galamison and the Struggle to Integrate New York City Schools* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 116.

[81] Taylor, *Knocking at Our Own Door*, 116-7.

[82] Milton Galamison to Board of Education, Budget Hearing," January 19, 1959; Galamison to Superintendent John Theobald, June 12, 1959; Galamison to Assistant Superintendent Francis A. Turner, July 11, 1962, Folder 2, Board of Education (N.Y.C.), 1959-1963, Milton A. Galamison Papers, Division of Archives and Manuscripts, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin.

of 1963 he was beyond fed up with the inaction of the Board of Education and he openly questioned the sincerity of the Board's willingness to actually bring about racial integration.[83]

Two occurrences that would have likely added to Galamison's frustration during the spring were an invitation to yet another conference to take place in May about how to bring about integration in New York City's schools, for he had said in no uncertain terms that the time for conferences was passed.[84] The other, the release of a report by the City Commission on Human Rights (CCHR) in April that further substantiated many of his criticisms of Board policies. The report declared that racial segregation in New York City's schools had indeed increased in recent years and blamed the lack of a "firm and clearly defined commitment on the part of policy makers and top administrators of the school system, to the vital necessity of providing an integrated educational experience" for the regression.[85] The CCHR also emphasized the need to rezone the city's school districts and select school sites with integration as the top priority, something that the Board had not done on a consistent basis and something Galamison had also advocated for several years by 1963.

In addition to the report by the City Commission, only a couple of months later the commissioner of the New York State Department of Education, James Allen, issued a directive that all school boards throughout the state would have to develop and implement plans in order to achieve racial balance in schools. All schools with more than 50 percent nonwhite students

[83] Taylor, *Knocking at Our Own Door*, 117.

[84] Gordon J. Klopf and Israel Laster to Milton Galamison, March 13, 1963, Folder 27, Parents' Workshop for Equality Correspondence, 1960-1963, Milton A. Galamison Papers, Division of Archives and Manuscripts, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin. The conference was titled, "Conference on Integration in New York City Public Schools, and was to be attended to representatives from virtually every major university, educational institute, religious organization, parent and teacher group, and civil rights organization in New York City. According to organizers, the purpose of the conference, scheduled for May 1 and 2, was to devise recommendations for integrating New York City's schools that would be presented to the Board in the fall. I am uncertain whether Galamison participated.

[85] "CCHR Scores School Heads for Increase in New York Segregation," *Pittsburgh Courier (New York Edition)*, 11 May 1963, 2.

would be considered unbalanced and need to be brought into compliance. The mandate was "drastic," in the word of the *Pittsburgh Courier*, but also probably necessary to prod the city's Board of Education to act affirmatively to achieve racial integration.[86]

Galamison and his grassroots organization, the Parents' Workshop for Equality in New York City Schools (PWE), as well as other civil rights organizations in the city were all frustrated by the pattern of study, report, recommendation, and inaction exhibited by the Board of Education over the last decade. In this year of growing militancy and mass actions, as exhibited by the campaign in Birmingham and the March on Washington, and a rising tide of discontent over the current state of education for black and Puerto Rican youth in New York, organizations in the city were disposed to take a stronger stance against the Board. As a result of the collective belief that more direct pressure needed to be put on school leaders in order to compel action, numerous groups joined together to form the New York Citywide Committee for Integrated Schools in the summer of 1963. The Citywide Committee consisted of the Parents' Workshop; the Harlem Parents Committee (HPC), another grassroots group only recently established that desired a more militant approach to attacking school segregation; six New York chapters of the NAACP; several local chapters of CORE; and the Urban League of Greater New York, which only participated in the decision-making of the committee, but not the protests.[87]

Galamison was chosen to lead the new coalition and with the inclusion of groups such as Brooklyn CORE—who threatened sit-ins against the Board of Education if city high schools were not de-zoned and the proportions of black children in academic high schools were not raised (among other demands)—and the HPC—who had broken from the local NAACP because

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[86] "Drastic New York Move," *Pittsburgh Courier (New York Edition)*, 29 June 1963, 12; Taylor, *Knocking at Our Own Door*, 119-20.

[87] Taylor, *Knocking at Our Own Door*, 120.

of what they considered to be timidity—Galamison knew that he would enjoy support for mass action tactics and a more confrontational attitude toward the Board.[88]

Galamison's loyalties were with the rank and file black and Puerto Rican parents who were struggling against long odds to get the Board of Education to provide their children with the same quality of education enjoyed by wealthier white children in other parts of the city. He was willing to grind the entire school system to a halt, if necessary, in order to achieve the goal of high quality education for all New York City children in an integrated setting. So, Galamison issued an ultimatum to the Board of Education that it had until September 9 to come with a plan and a timetable for integrating the schools, although he did not mention the consequences if the deadline was not met.[89]

As historian Clarence Taylor points out, however, Galamison must have been considering launching a boycott against the Board of Education as early as June of 1963 as he urged the members of the Parents' Workshop to attend the group's meetings in order to prepare for a "big struggle" that was about to be waged. Galamison also was deflated by Commissioner Allen's reversal of his own characterization that 50 percent or more nonwhite students in a school made it segregated. Allen's about face was just the latest in a litany of examples of bad faith dealings between school leaders and civil rights groups.[90]

Meetings during the summer between the New York City Board of Education and the Citywide Committee were not fruitful and the intransigence of the Board helped to unite the organizations of the Committee in favor of a school boycott in September.[91] After deciding on a

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[88] Alfredo Graham, "Brooklyn CORE Threatens Sit-In in School Fight," *Pittsburgh Courier (New York Edition)*, 1 June 1963, 1, 4; Taylor, *Knocking at Our Own Door*, 120.

[89] Taylor, *Knocking at Our Own Door*, 121.

[90] Ibid., 122.

[91] Robert H. Terte, "Boycott of Schools In City Threatened by N.A.A.C.P.," *New York Times*, 31 July 1963, 1. Leolive Tucker, president of the Metropolitan Council of NAACP, issued the ultimatum to the Board of Education at a press conference, that if the Board had not submitted an acceptable plan for desegregation by September 1 the

one-day action, Galamison worked to broaden the coalition of supporters by calling on his ministerial network.[92] He also brought Bayard Rustin in to organize the boycott, knowing of his success in organizing the March on Washington.

Realizing the seriousness of the Citywide Committee's threat to boycott, the Board of Education came to the negotiating table once again. The result of a more than four hour meeting, a press release from the Citywide Committee on September 6 stated that in return for calling off the planned boycott, the Board agreed to furnish a desegregation plan by February of 1964, to include in its final plan a date for the completion of desegregation throughout the school system, to include provisions for each school district in its final plan, and to continue to work with civil rights groups on the final plan.[93]

The more militant groups of the committee did not want the boycott to be called off because they did not believe the Board's was sincere in its promises. Brooklyn CORE and the HPC thought the Board was merely stalling for additional time. More moderate elements within the coalition, however, preferred to call off the boycott and the give the Board a chance to remain true to its word. While the boycott was called off, Galamison also made it plain that if the Board did not fulfill its end of the bargain by December 1, then the Committee would issue a new date for the boycott.[94]

As December 1 came and went, no plan came from the Board of Education. Later in the month School Superintendent Calvin Gross issued a progress report stating that the Board should continue the Open Enrollment program. The program, launched in 1960, allowed black parents

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NAACP would launch a boycott, perhaps for September 9. This is virtually the same challenge issued by the Citywide Committee.

[92] "Churches to Act in School Boycott," *New York Times*, 6 September 1963, 1.

[93] Press Release, Citywide Committee for Integrated Schools, September 6, 1963, Folder 3, Civil Rights, 1961-1964, Milton A. Galamison Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Division of Archives and Manuscripts, Madison, Wisconsin; Homer Bigart, "School Boycott Called Off Here," *New York Times*, 6 September 1963, 1; Taylor, *Knocking at Our Own Door*, 122-5.

[94] Taylor, *Knocking at Our Own Door*, 125.

whose children were in schools of 85 percent or more black and Puerto Rican to transfer their children into predominantly white schools.[95] Galamison considered this a "breach of faith" and was the proverbial straw that broke the camel's back in the always-tense relationship between the Board of Education and the Citywide Committee. The boycott would be back on for February 3, 1964.[96]

As the Citywide Committee prepared for its boycott, black leaders in other cities were initiating their own actions to bring pressure to bear on their school boards. Leaders from civil rights groups in Chicago, Boston, Cleveland, and Chester, Pennsylvania, met in New York City in January of 1964 in attempt to try and coordinate their actions for racially integrated schools. All of the delegates in attendance gave similar accounts of the patterns of school segregation in their cities and states. Galamison hoped that the result of the meeting would be a multi-city school boycott, and he was optimistic that one would occur. He even released a statement to the press to this effect on January 14.[97] The accounts of the representatives from these cities illustrated that school segregation was by no means just a southern problem, however. A multi-city boycott might have been able to draw attention to the schooling inequities that persisted outside of the South, as well. No concrete plans had been made for a multi-city boycott, however, and none would be.[98]

The preparations for a boycott in New York City continued unabated throughout the month of January. The Citywide Committee was becoming increasingly cohesive as a result of the Board of Education's unwillingness to release a substantive program and timetable for

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[95] Ibid., 102.

[96] Taylor, *Knocking at Our Own Door*, 125, 127-8; Leonard Buder, "School Boycott Proposed Again," *New York Times*, 10 December 1963, 1.

[97] Press Release, New York Citywide Committee for Integrated Schools, January 14, 1964, Folder 29, Parents' Workshop for Equality, School Boycott, Jan-Feb 1964, Milton A. Galamison Papers, Division of Archives and Manuscripts, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin.

[98] Taylor, *Knocking at Our Own Door*, 129-31.

integration, and Galamison went on the offensive to get publicity for the boycott. On Sunday, January 19, Galamison appeared on the CBS program *Newsmakers*. On the program he situated the impending boycott as part of the national civil rights struggle and justified the boycott as necessary to bring to the public's attention the "'Negro's resentment to segregation and inferior schools.'"[99]

While Galamison was increasingly confident about the chances for a successful boycott in the coming weeks due to the unified stance of the organizations the were part of the Citywide Committee, the *Newsmakers* appearance revealed that there were divisions between Galamison and other liberal black leaders. Roy Wilkins and Whitney Young, leaders of the national NAACP and Urban League, reiterated that they did not support the New York City boycott. Roy Wilkins criticized the Committee's tactic, saying that the NAACP was not committing itself to the spread of boycotts nor should children be kept out of school.[100] Whitney Young's critique was more personally directed at Galamison, implying that he was using the issue of school desegregation in New York in order to make himself a leader of national importance and that he had not earned the notoriety he was receiving.[101] The stances of these national leaders perhaps also pointed up continuing differences in the preferred approaches of many NAACP and Urban League local branches—of which several had joined the Citywide Committee—and the national headquarters. The nature of Young's attack on Galamison and the history of conflict between Galamison and Wilkins going back to the late 1950s made the personal dimension of their criticisms of the boycott obvious. Soon afterwards Kenneth Clark would also come out against the boycott. Despite also being an outspoken critic of the Board of Education, Clark rejected Galamison's tactic and instead called for school improvement as the best way to bring about

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[99] Ibid., 132.
[100] Robert H. Terte, "5 Cities May Join Schools Boycott," *New York Times*, 7 January 1964, 22.
[101] Taylor, *Knocking at Our Own Door*, 132.

integration.[102] In addition to whatever personal antagonisms existed among Wilkins, Young and Clark towards Galamison, there were also ideological differences between the men that helped create the tensions between them.

Galamison was someone who embraced grassroots mobilization. He looked to get ordinary people as involved as possible in bringing about their own liberation. He had begun the Schools Workshop as president of the NAACP in the late 1950s and the resistance to his tactics from within the Brooklyn branch and the national headquarters led him to leave the organization and establish the Parents' Workshop as an independent group. As president of the Parents' Workshop, and as the boycott was being organized, ordinary parents rose to leadership positions.

Racial liberal leaders such as Wilkins, Young, and Clark were not advocates of mass action tactics, even though the NAACP and NUL did support or engage in them on occasion. Generally speaking, they, and racial liberals more broadly, preferred for a leadership class to try and orchestrate the direction of the civil rights movement. Liberal leaders preferred to engage in negotiations with their adversaries in order to try and control the course of the movement. They saw little role for the masses of ordinary citizens, who were extremely difficult (if not impossible) to control in a demonstration situation, and whom they always feared would damage the movement. Racial liberal leaders, typically, did not believe that people less educated than they were capable of articulating their own demands for civil rights or being trained to lead their own movement for emancipation.[103] Therefore, it was not surprising that Wilkins and Young, especially, would disparage the actions of the Citywide Committee.

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[102] Ibid., 140.

[103] The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee might be considered the exception, as this was precisely their objective when they were founded in 1960; to train ordinary people to articulate and eventually lead their own movement for civil rights once SNCC organizers were gone. But not only were the students that founded SNCC assisted by Ella Baker, who was no typical racial liberal, but by the middle of the 1960s SNCC consciously disavowed its previous connection to the liberal civil rights establishment and embraced the term "black power" as they began to adhere to a more explicitly black nationalist ethos.

Not only racial liberal leaders opposed the tactics and premises of the Galamison and the Citywide Committee, however. Throughout the summer and fall of 1963, George Schuyler editorialized that the strategy of the “professional weepers” was totally misguided.[104] Similar to Kenneth Clark, Schuyler argued that black activists should be concerning themselves with trying to improve predominantly black schools throughout the city. Schuyler misrepresented the position of Galamison and the Citywide Committee, however, by asserting that they believed black children merely needed to be sitting in the same classrooms as white children in order to obtain a high quality education. Schuyler painted with quite a broad brush as he argued that black leaders who advocated for racially integrated schools believed in the inherent superiority of white children (He would have likely included Kenneth Clark in that group). He then spun that straw argument to declare that the decision to pursue integration through boycotts and other confrontational means sent the harmful message to black children that they were inferior to white children.[105]

Rather than continue engage in “warfare against white folks,” as he would term the school boycott after the fact, Schuyler continued to press the ideas blacks would have to recognize that they would only achieve integration at the pace that whites were comfortable with, and that they needed to engage in “voluntary segregation.” Arguing that full racial integration would not even be beneficial for African Americans at this historical moment because of their educational and economic deficiencies, blacks needed to engage in economic “communalism” for their mutual benefit. They needed to pool their money together and form all-black institutions in order to circumvent the discrimination that they continue to endure from white

[104] George S. Schuyler, “Views and Reviews,” *Pittsburgh Courier (New York Edition)*, 5 October 1963, 11.
[105] George S. Schuyler, “Views and Reviews,” *Pittsburgh Courier (New York Edition)*, 20 July 1963, 11; George S. Schuyler, “Views and Reviews,” *Pittsburgh Courier (New York Edition)*, 31 August 1963, 11.

institutions.[106] Schuyler had been advocating that blacks could not compel whites to embrace integration and for communalism as the path to economic advancement since the mid-1930s. These are examples of the influence of Booker T. Washington's self-help philosophy on his thinking.

Despite the criticisms from black liberals, conservatives, and the Board of Education, the planning for the boycott would continue and as February 3 neared the logistics for the various demonstrations around the city, as well as the operation of "Freedom Schools" to be staffed by college professors, ministers, college students, and parents fell into place. A few days before the boycott, on January 29, 1964, the Board of Education released its integration plan for city schools. The plan offered nothing substantively different than what it had already done. The Board also released a statement that implied that the supporters of the boycott were creating harmful divisions among city residents and that there was only so much that the Board of Education could do, as one institution, to remedy the problem of school segregation. The Board continued to blame residential segregation for the monolithic school populations across the city.[107]

The next day Galamison and the Citywide Committee rejected the Board's latest proposal to integrate public schools by September of 1966.[108] Members called the plan "inadequate and deceptive." In a last ditch effort to try and avoid the boycott, school leaders invited delegates from the Citywide Committee to meet on January 31 to discuss proposals for school integration, but it was pretty clear from the point of view of Galamison and the Citywide Committee that they would not be persuaded to call off the boycott. Although Galamison stated that he would

[106] George S. Schuyler, "Views and Reviews," *Pittsburgh Courier (New York Edition)*, 8 February 1964, 10.
[107] Taylor, *Knocking at Our Own Door*, 136.
[108] Fred Powledge, "Monday School Boycott Stands; Rights Groups Reject City Plan," *New York Times*, 30 January 1964, 17.

meet with Board of Education members "in good faith," he emphasized that the Board could have met with members of the Citywide Committee at any time during the fall but had chosen not to.  He called the meeting what it was, "an 11th hour marathon session" in order to try and forestall the boycott, and saw dim prospects for any breakthroughs.[109]

Predictably, the meeting on January 31 was unproductive.  The two sides could not even agree on the purpose of the meeting.  Both sides were speaking past one another and nothing substantive was accomplished.  The Board was not prepared to issue a new integration plan and the Citywide Committee had no intention of calling off the boycott set for three days time.  At the end of the meeting Deputy School Superintendent Bernard Donovan declared that the Board would no longer stand in the way of the boycott.[110]  Nothing more could be done to stop it.  The only questions that remained was whether or not it would be successful at keeping children out of school, getting parents and others to picket, and garnering the necessary publicity to compel the Board to reconsider its proposals.

The answers would be delivered on February 3.  The Board of Education estimated that nearly 45 percent of school children did not attend classes that day, and neither did nearly 8 percent of teachers.  The normal rate of absence among teachers was around 3 percent.  There was peaceful picketing at 300 schools across the city and about 3,500 demonstrators braved frigid temperatures as they marched to the Board of Education for a noon rally.  Nearly 100,000 children attended the various Freedom Schools that had been set up throughout the city,

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[109] Junius Griffin, "Night Lead School Boycott," *Associated Press*, 30 January 1964, 1, Folder 29, Parents' Workshop for Equality, School Boycott, Jan-Feb 1964, Milton A. Galamison Papers, Division of Archives and Manuscripts, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin.

[110] Taylor, *Knocking at Our Own Door*, 138.

according to boycott leaders. That figure represented more than twenty percent of the children who remained out of the public schools that day.[111]

After learning of these figures, Bayard Rustin deemed the march a tremendous success, declaring it to have been the largest civil rights demonstration in the nation's history.[112] It demonstrated that the Citywide Committee had the ability to coordinate a large-scale demonstration that could unite African American and Puerto Rican residents, and that they might potentially wield the type of power necessary to compel the Board to act in ways they favored. Rustin told the press that "we are on the threshold of a new political movement" and the "the winds of discontent are about to sweep over the city." Rustin also warned reporters that "the civil rights revolution has reached out of the South and is now knocking at our own door."[113] Of course, the "civil rights revolution" had been occurring simultaneously in the North and South over the last decade, but Rustin was sensing the extent to which 1963 was a year of convergence. Throughout the year, the discontent felt by African Americans across the country was manifesting itself in larger and larger mass demonstrations and an unwillingness to countenance any tactics that tried to delay the conferring of full equality. Blacks had wanted 1963 to be the year in which their emancipation was finally completed. And they had decided that they had to be the ones to accelerate that process.

The Board of Education, for their part, tried to downplay to impact of the boycott. Board of Education president, James Donovan, called the boycott "lawless" and swore that he would not "react one inch" to the demands of the protesters, asserting that boycott leaders had

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[111] Ibid., 141-2.

[112] Leonard Buder, "Boycott Cripples City Schools; Absences 360,00 Above Normal; Negroes and Puerto Ricans Unite," *New York Times*, 4 February 1964, 1.

[113] Fred Powledge, "Leaders of Protest Foresee a New Era of Militancy Here," *New York Times*, 4 February 1964, 1; Taylor, *Knocking at Our Own Door*, 142.

intimidated parents into keeping their children home by referring to the possibility of violence. Donovan ultimately declared the boycott a "fizzle."[114]

But the numbers of children and teachers absent from the schools that day told a different story. The Citywide Committee had pulled off this very large demonstration that had brought together a broad coalition of supporters. And after hearing the continued resistance of the school leadership, Galamison wanted to strike again while the iron was hot. Riding high after the success of February 3, Galamison declared there would be another boycott on February 25 before he even spoke to the other members of the Citywide Committee. He was certain they would back the idea. He would be incorrect as divisions among the various groups within the coalition began to emerge within days after the boycott.[115]

The Citywide Committee, as was the movement nationally, was at a crossroads. Committee leaders were divided as to the future course the movement should take; whether another boycott was wise and whether Galamison should remain president. The local chapters of CORE and the NAACP would pull out of the Citywide Committee within weeks after the boycott, and the withdrawal of other groups that followed tore the Citywide Committee apart at the seams. Nationally, black leaders also considered the movement at a critical moment of decision. How should the movement proceed in order to take fullest advantage of these seasons of discontent would be the question to be debated throughout 1964 and 1965.

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[114] Taylor, *Knocking at Our Own Door*, 142.
[115] Ibid., 146-8.

# Chapter 6

## Crossroads: Where Do We Go From Here?

> All civil rights organizations are committed to full inclusion of the Negro in the economic and political life of America without restrictions based on race or color. But each differs from the other as to how this commitment can best be fulfilled.
> Kenneth Clark[1]

As early as the summer of 1963, African American leaders were growing more concerned about the current state—and future direction—of the civil rights movement. For the next several years black leaders and activists from across the ideological spectrum would engage in evaluating the present condition of the civil rights movement. Many concluded that the movement, particularly the liberal-led movement as epitomized by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., was reaching a "crisis" point. Perhaps ironically, it was the increasing momentum of the liberal movement that caused some leaders to conclude that the movement was entering a state of crisis. For the problems facing African Americans across the nation did not appear to be abating rapidly enough—if at all—even after integrating Birmingham, carrying off the March on Washington, and subsequently effectively bringing enough pressure to bear on the federal government to help push the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 through Congress.

The growing collective frustration among African Americans about the lack of qualitative change in their economic, political, and social conditions by the end of 1965, and the resulting ideological debates among black leaders fractured the civil rights movement in ways, and to a degree, that could not be reconciled—or co-opted by racial liberals—as had been done earlier in

[1] Kenneth Clark, "The Civil Rights Movement, Organizations and Leaders," *Daedalus* Conference on "The Negro American," May 14-15, 1965, 34, Box 173, Folder 1, Professional File, Speeches & Writings, 1965-1966, Kenneth Bancroft Clark Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC. Will be referred to subsequently as the KBC Papers.

the 1960s. After Birmingham and the March on Washington, and even more so after the passage of the Civil Rights Act, black leaders were asking, "where do we go from here?" After assessing the current strengths and perceived weaknesses of the civil rights movement, these leaders offered different analyses of the direction in which the movement needed to go, and the programs for achieving their objective: ameliorating the myriad problems that continued to plague African Americans as a group.

**Is This a Good or Bad Place?**

There were measurable achievements between 1963 and 1965, indicating that the civil rights movement was operating from a position of strength. The battle to desegregate Birmingham had been a pivotal episode in the continuing struggle for equality. The confluence of forces in that place in the spring of 1963 revitalized the liberal-led civil rights movement. The courage of the black population, especially the youth, in enduring beatings and jailings for their cause brought the cruelty of Eugene "Bull" Connor's police department into even sharper relief for the world to see on film and in print. Black and white Americans, and eventually the federal government, were galvanized to stop the abuses.

The psychological, moral, physical, and tactical momentum derived from opening up "the most segregated city in the South" carried over to the March on Washington. Only a few months later Bayard Rustin orchestrated the largest public demonstration up until that time as 250,000 Americans, across races, converged on the nation's capital on August 28 to express their dissatisfaction and disappointment with their country, as well as their hope and love for it, and their desire for first-class citizenship for all Americans regardless of race, color, creed, or gender.

The belief in the democratic creed of America was the message that resounded loudest in the press after the march ended and the participants headed home. African American leaders gained more leverage with political leaders as media coverage of the march was widely favorable. The barbarity of Birmingham, the civility in the capital, and Lyndon Johnson's political bargaining with reluctant Senators helped to propel the passage of the Civil Right Act of 1964.

These positive events did not convince African American leaders that the fight for equality was won, however. Not all were even convinced that the civil rights movement was operating from a position of strength. George Schuyler, for example, had no tolerance for mass action protests or civil disobedience techniques to gain civil rights. During the 1950s, Schuyler wrote more for conservative publications including *The Freeman*, *American Opinion*, and *National Review*. By the early 1960s, Schuyler was also becoming more involved in organizations that "tried to bring attention to the Communist participation in anticolonial movements."[2]

Throughout the 1960s he consistently derided civil rights leaders as "career agitators" who manipulated a less intelligent black public and used them as "pawns" in order to advance their own selfish, egomaniacal ambitions.[3] Schuyler's views became increasingly strident over the course of the decade. By the end of 1966 he was referring to the tactics of the liberal movement since 1954 as "the more extreme campaign."[4] In 1967, Schuyler even became a member of the ultra-conservative John Birch Society, which vehemently opposed the civil rights

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[2] Peter Eisenstadt, *Black Conservatism: Essays in Intellectual and Political History* (New York: Garland Publishing Company, 1999), xvii.

[3] George Schuyler, "Racial Agitators Hit—Many Innocent Bystanders By Few," *Dallas Morning News,* 19 August 1965; in the *Congressional Record—Appendix* (September 3, 1965), A5007, Box 9, Folder: Writings, Periodicals, Miscellaneous, with Articles by George S. Schuyler, 1952, 1953, 1965, 1968, 1969, n.d., George S. Schuyler Papers, Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University Library, Syracuse, New York. Will be referred to subsequently as the GSS Papers.

[4] George Schuyler, "Requiem for the 'Revolution,'" Sent to *American Opinion* on December 26, 1966, 6, Box 9, Folder: Writings, Typescripts, American Opinion, 1965-1967, GSS Papers, Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University Library, Syracuse, New York.

movement. Until 1964, however, Schuyler's commentary continued to be featured in the *Pittsburgh Courier* even though his support base among African Americans declined during the 1950s and 1960s.[5]

Schuyler was the most dismissive of the liberal civil rights movement of black intellectuals at the time, but he was not alone in being very critical of liberal intellectuals. Harold Cruse, for example, also penned biting criticisms of liberal intellectuals. Cruse argued in his 1967 work, *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual*, that "integrationist" black leadership—and by "integrationist" he meant assimilationist—was ideologically bankrupt. As he put it, "They have taken on a radical veneer without radical substance, yet have no comprehensive radical philosophy to replace either the liberalism they denounce or the radicalism of the past that bred them."[6] For Cruse, the big problem was that African American intellectuals were not willing or able to liberate themselves from the theoretical and aesthetic constructs derived by whites, whether those whites were Marxists, communists, or liberals. As a result, as black thinkers continued to apply these alien constructs to the African American condition in the United States in the mid-twentieth century, they were continually frustrated by their inadequacy.[7] But Cruse indicted black intellectuals for being complicit in their own subjugation and the relative failure of the civil rights movement to be truly transformative of American society.[8] This was not a viewpoint Cruse arrived at in 1967. He had expressed the idea that assimilationism was defective back in the mid-1950s, speaking specifically in a cultural vein, due to his less than

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[5] Eisenstadt, *Black Conservatism*, xviii.

[6] Harold Cruse, *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual* (New York: William Morrow & Company, Inc, 1967), 202.

[7] Cruse, *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual*, 452-456; Harold Cruse, "Marxism and the Negro, Part 1," *Liberator*, (May 1964), 11, Box 3, Folder 34, Book Reviews by Cruse (Misc), n.d., 1950-1951, 1962, 1964, HC Papers, Archives of the Tamiment Library, Robert F. Wagner Archives, New York University, New York. In "Marxism and the Negro, Part 1" Cruse argued that Marxism was ineffective at adequately comprehending the racial, economic, and social problems of mid-twentieth century America because contemporary Marxists refused to properly contextualize Marx's premises historically and adapt Marxist doctrine to the current American situation of the 1960s.

[8] Cruse, *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual*, 458.

savory experience as a member of the Committee for Negroes in the Arts (CNA), an interracial group of left-wing and liberal artists, playwrights, novelists, and actors founded in Harlem in 1947.[9]

Criticisms of their ideological beliefs aside, black leaders were concerned about the future of the movement.[10] All things were being reevaluated in 1964 and 1965: the goals of the civil rights movement, the character of the movement, and its tactics. The movement's ostensible successes were changing many leaders' perceptions of what the primary focus of the movement should be. As a result, the ideological ground of the civil rights movement was shifting under everyone's proverbial feet. What had been the effect of the civil rights movement on African Americans? On the larger society? What was the nature of the civil rights movement? Had it changed? Did it now need to change? What were the roles of violence and nonviolence in the movement? These were all very important and difficult questions that appeared to plague leaders.

## A Civil Rights Revolution?

Between 1954 and 1964 A. Philip Randolph consistently spoke of the civil rights movement as a "revolution."[11] There were two things that marked the civil rights movement as a

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[9] Harold Cruse, "A List of Particulars on Committee for the Negro in the Arts," n.d., Box 2, Folder 6, Correspondence, 1952-1959, Harold Cruse Papers, Archives of the Tamiment Library, Robert F. Wagner Archives, New York University, New York. Will be referred to subsequently as the HC Papers; Cruse also discusses the CNA in some depth in *Crisis*, 207-12, 214-20.

[10] Kenneth Clark, for example, wrote in 1964 that, "There are many indications that the civil rights struggle can be lost by negroes and by America." Kenneth Clark, "Undercurrents of Negro Thought Today," 1964, 8, Box 159, Folder 4, Professional File, Speeches & Writings, Feb. 1962-Sept. 1965, KBC Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

[11] A. Philip Randolph, "State of the Race Conference," April 24, 1956, 1, Box 39, Folder 15, Speeches & Writing File, Speeches, 1956, A. Philip Randolph Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; A. Philip Randolph, "Statement to the National Negro Publishers Summit Meeting, May 12-13, 1958, 1, Box

revolution in Randolph's estimation. One was that the movement was beyond the control of sitting authorities, unabashed and unapologetic as it pushed for the privileges of first-class citizenship for all Americans.[12] This theme was prevalent in the speeches Randolph gave during the 1950s. The *Brown* decision and the resultant protests for school integration or access (including Montgomery) reflected this quality of the struggle for equality. The second was the effect the movement had on the consciousness of African Americans as a group. As he put it, "the complete orientation of the Negro from an old slave psychology to that of a free man, and that his status of the under-class or social, economic and political substratum of the American society is not an inherent end and inevitable part of his human condition . . . and further, that it is his responsibility to change it."[13] The second theme becomes more fully developed in Randolph's speeches during the 1960s. This might have been a result of the campaign in Birmingham and the March on Washington. Randolph's assertion about a new psychology on the part of African Americans also fit with Rustin's assertions about the significance of Birmingham, discussed in chapter 5. Additionally, the purpose of the movement was to complete what had been left undone since the "Civil War Revolution" had been turned back in 1876. Over the course of the decade Randolph had at different times expressed doubt about the ultimate outcome of the civil rights movement. He was uncertain if African Americans had the

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40, Folder 1, Speeches & Writings File, Speeches, 1958, A. Philip Randolph Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; A. Philip Randolph, "Address of A. Philip Randolph at the Chicago Division's Thirty-Third Anniversary," August 24, 1958, 5-6, Box 40, Folder 1, Speeches & Writings File, Speeches, 1958, A. Philip Randolph Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. Will be referred to subsequently as the APR Papers.

[12] A. Phillip Randolph, "The Civil Rights Revolution: Origins and Mission," April 4, 1964, 1, Box 36, Folder 5, Speeches & Writings File, APR Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

[13] Ibid., 7-8.

intestinal fortitude to see the movement through to the end. Yet he never appeared to doubt the revolutionary character of the movement itself.[14]

By the mid-1960s, however, the character of the civil rights movement was definitely being debated. In his influential 1965 essay, "From Protest to Politics," Bayard Rustin also argued that the African American struggle for equality was "essentially revolutionary." Rustin argued that what made the movement revolutionary was its objective of qualitatively transforming American economic and social institutions.[15] In fact, Rustin maintained that the revolutionary character of the civil rights struggle was evidenced in what the movement had done to democratize American life for whites, perhaps even more than for blacks. It had done so by banishing the last vestiges of McCarthyism with the 1960 sit-ins; by attacking de facto school segregation in cities; and by sparking the "resurgence of social conscience" that initiated Lyndon Johnson's call for a "war on poverty."[16] Rustin saw the civil rights revolution occurring in class terms as much as racial terms. And he continually argued that the ultimate success of the revolution required the including of benefits to be both blacks and whites.

Kenneth Clark asked near the end of 1965, if the term "revolution obscure[d] more than it clarifie[d]" about the "nature of the Negro protest movement."[17] He argued that the civil rights movement was only revolutionary in terms of the complete change in the psychology of African Americans and the urgent demand for immediate changes to their racial status within American society. But Clark would go no further. Neither Clark nor Rustin argued that the movement was

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[14] A. Philip Randolph, "Statement to the National Negro Publishers Summit Meeting, May 12-13, 1958, 5, Box 40, Folder 1, Speeches & Writings File, Speeches, 1958, APR Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

[15] Bayard Rustin, "From Protest to Politics: The Future of the Civil Rights Movement," *Commentary* (February 1965), 5, Box 39, Folder 10, Speeches & Writings, Articles, 1957-64, Bayard T. Rustin Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC. Will be referred to subsequently as the BTR Papers.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Kenneth Clark, "Violence: Its Role in the Civil Rights Struggle," Brandeis University, October 19, 1965, 2, Box 160, Folder 1, Professional File, Speeches & Writings, Oct. 1965-Nov. 1967, KBC Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

revolutionary in the sense that leaders were calling for the violent overthrow of the government. This type of strategy would have been doomed to fail due to blacks' statistical minority in the American population, according to Clark.[18] In fact, he remarked that the "Negro protest movement, on the contrary, has been marked by an extreme form of self-discipline on the part of the masses of Negroes and has accurately been described as 'nonviolent.'"[19]

In terms of how Rustin's and Clark's perspectives on the essential nature of the civil rights movement affected their views on what should be the movement's future direction, Rustin advocated the reconstruction of American institutions so as to change the institutional structure of American society, Clark wrote that, "the Negro protest movement extends—and does not deny—the implications of the original American Revolution."[20]

This statement may sound somewhat vague, but it gets at the ideological differences between Rustin and Clark, and thereby between liberals and socialists. Rustin and Clark both believed that what African Americans ultimately wanted was to be fully integrated into American society. They wanted to enjoy the rights and privileges of citizenship afforded to white Americans under the Constitution. Rustin, however, believed that not all whites currently enjoyed first-class citizenship. Therefore, American society needed to be altered at a structural level in order to even out the playing field for all Americans, regardless of race and class. Although though he surely knew that class was an important factor in determining a person's quality of life, and knew that not all whites lived the same way, privileged racial identification

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[18] Kenneth Clark, "The Civil Rights Movement, Organizations and Leaders," *Daedalus* Conference on "The Negro American," May 14-15, 1965, 17, Box 173, Folder 1, Professional File, Speeches & Writings, 1965-1966, KBC Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; Kenneth Clark, "Violence: Its Role in the Civil Rights Struggle," Brandeis University, October 19, 1965, 2, Box 160, Folder 1, Professional File, Speeches & Writings, Oct. 1965-Nov. 1967, KBC Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

[19] Kenneth Clark, "Violence: Its Role in the Civil Rights Struggle," Brandeis University, October 19, 1965, 2, Box 160, Folder 1, Professional File, Speeches & Writings, Oct. 1965-Nov. 1967, KBC Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

[20] Ibid.

over class affiliation in his analysis of the problems plaguing American society and the civil rights movement. Consequently, he flattened notions of socioeconomic class among both blacks and whites and did not advocate altering the economic structure of the country in the same ways as Rustin.

Rustin and Clark were not the only leaders evaluating the character of the civil rights movement. Harold Cruse asserted that whatever revolutionary potential existed within the liberal civil rights movement was being "compromised not only by the hard barriers thrown up by the [white] establishment but by a [black] leadership whose views about American realities are extremely a-historical, limited and oversimplified."[21] Never one to mince words, Cruse believed the liberal movement lacked a revolutionary ideology and therefore could not be revolutionary.[22] In his view, the liberal movement amounted to much sound and fury, signifying little. For him, the question was even broader than the inadequacies of the liberal movement, for Cruse saw a vacuum within "revolutionary politics," which neither the civil rights movement nor the "Marxist movement" was able to fill in the mid-1960s.[23]

Malcolm X agreed with Cruse that the civil rights movement was not revolutionary. He argued that true revolutionaries did not attempt to work within the structures that they deemed oppressive. Rather, true revolutions were like "forest fires," razing everything in their paths. Malcolm, who, like Cruse, continually sought to internationalize the black freedom struggle,

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[21] Harold Cruse, "The Roots of Black Nationalism, Part 1," *Liberator*, (March 1964), 4, Box 3, Folder 34, Book Reviews by Cruse (Misc), n.d., 1950-1951, 1962, 1964, HC Papers, Archives of the Tamiment Library, Robert F. Wagner Archives, New York University, New York.

[22] Cruse, *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual*, 201.

[23] Harold Cruse, "Marxism and the Negro, Part 1," *Liberator*, (May 1964), 8, Box 3, Folder 34, Book Reviews by Cruse (Misc), n.d., 1950-1951, 1962, 1964, HC Papers, Archives of the Tamiment Library, Robert F. Wagner Archives, New York University, New York.

believed that whites had co-opted the civil rights movement in order to disconnect from the global anti-colonial movements occurring throughout Asia and Africa.[24]

George Schuyler also did not regard the civil rights movement as revolutionary. However, Schuyler's reason was that he found the current tactics employed by the liberal movement to be too radical. He viewed the civil rights movement as unnecessarily combative and disruptive. Worse than much sound and fury, signifying nothing, the movement definitely signified something: everything that was corrupt about African American leadership and devoid of a "responsible," viable, ideological grounding. Schuyler characteristically lumped all groups to the left of himself (which was virtually everyone) into the same category and made no attempt to acknowledge any ideological or programmatic differences among them. At the end of 1966, he enthusiastically declared a "requiem" for the "revolution."

> So the so-called revolution is dead, as even dolts and morons could predict; and the "educated" blacks and whites who promoted it with demonstrations and dollars are as discredited as Benedict Arnold. After a half century of agitating the racial question, the Socialists, Communists, Fabians and assorted Liberals now characteristically blame their failure on "hatred", "reaction" and the capitalist system which must, of course, be overthrown to provide a vacuum for the welfare state.[25]

He argued that the whole concept of a Negro Revolution was "fraudulent" because blacks did not at the time—or ever before—want a revolution. As evidence, he derisively cited the fact that the event put forth as the greatest demonstration of African Americans' desire for democracy, the 1963 March of Washington, brought out only 200,000 people—half of them white—out of a black population of more than five million within a 300-mile radius of the capital.[26] To Schuyler, this illustrated not only that the majority of blacks were unsympathetic to the

[24] Malcolm X, "Interview by A. B. Spellman," *Monthly Review* (May 1964); in George Breitman, *By Any Means Necessary: Speeches, Interviews and a Letter by Malcolm X* (New York: Pathfinder Press, Inc., 1970), 12.

[25] George Schuyler, "Requiem for the 'Revolution,'" Sent to *American Opinion* on December 26, 1966, 2, Box 9, Folder: Writings, Typescripts, American Opinion, 1965-1967, GSS Papers, Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University Library, Syracuse, New York.

[26] Ibid., 7.

movement, but also that the March on Washington and the entire "extreme" civil rights campaign was the work of professional agitators.

## The Role of Nonviolence and Violence in the Civil Rights Movement

As demonstrated here, there were various stances among black leaders about the character of the civil rights movement. Their different interpretations of the term "revolution" led them to different conclusions about whether or not they saw the movement as "revolutionary." Their discussions also revealed important ideological differences among black leaders. But the character of the civil rights struggle became an important issue in the mid 1960s precisely because all of them were concerned with trying to plot the future direction of the movement. Now, in 1964 and 1965, just as during the previous decade, various ideologies were competing with one another for the soul of the movement. The African American struggle for equality was at a crossroads and needed novel ideas to address the changing nature of the problems facing African Americans. The problems included de jure segregation, poverty, rising unemployment, and housing discrimination. All of these leaders were sensing (or asserting) that using nonviolent direct action, as exemplified and implemented by Martin Luther King, to combat brutality of all types was losing steam (or perhaps had run its course) by 1964.

Kenneth Clark had two major criticisms of the philosophy and tactic of nonviolent resistance. One was that implementing the technique was incredibly demanding on the participants, both physically and psychologically, and that the "deep commitment and power of the human personality" required in order to sustain this mode of resistance was far from an

inexhaustible resource.[27] Clark also thought that the effectiveness of nonviolent resistance was too directly dependent upon "the ferocity of the resistance it meets."[28] If whites restrained their violent attacks—as in Albany, Georgia in 1962—, or demonstrated indifference to blacks' protests, then nonviolent resistance lost the moral high ground it sought to claim in the public's consciousness and the force of the technique was blunted.[29]

By the end of 1965 Clark acknowledged that many African Americans had lost patience with nonviolent resistance. In a speech at Brandeis University in Massachusetts, Clark said: "[i]ndeed, the masses of Negroes seemed more responsive to a Malcolm X type of verbal defiance than to the Martin Luther King philosophy of love of the oppressor. As a matter of fact, rage is a more prevalent feeling than love among oppressed Negroes. And psychologically, it is the appropriate, even healthy response to racial hatred and injustice."[30] This observation reflected Clark's loss of patience with King's approach to activism. Although Clark was no supporter of black nationalism, neither was he lamenting the shift away from the "love thy oppressor" philosophy of Martin Luther King.

Kenneth Clark even sought to redefine the concept of violence in order to make it more relevant to what he saw as the emerging battlegrounds for agitation. Clark urged those who heard him speak during 1964 and 1965 to broaden their conception of violence beyond the naked brutality as practiced in places like Birmingham. He challenged his listeners to look at urban ghettoes, locales perhaps outside of the South and non-rural, as "chronic concentration camps"

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[27] Kenneth Clark, "Undercurrents of Negro Thought Today," 1964, 12-13, Box 159, Folder 4, Professional File, Speeches & Writings, Feb. 1962-Sept. 1965, KBC Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

[28] Kenneth Clark, "The Civil Rights Movement, Organizations and Leaders," *Daedalus* Conference on "The Negro American," May 14-15, 1965, 27, Box 173, Folder 1, Professional File, Speeches & Writings, 1965-1966, KBC Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

[29] Ibid., 29.

[30] Kenneth Clark, "Violence: Its Role in the Civil Rights Struggle," Brandeis University, October 19, 1965, 14, Box 160, Folder 1, Professional File, Speeches & Writings, Oct. 1965-Nov. 1967, KBC Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

that "destroy" human beings. Clark called urban ghettoes "prisons" that were "inherent[ly] dehumanizing and destructive," and argued that forcing a particular racial group to reside in these conditions was a form of violence.[31]

Bayard Rustin also spoke of a "crisis of nonviolence" in the summer of 1964 and made the argument that blacks were moving away from the "love white people" philosophy of King.[32] In an article titled "Nonviolence on Trial," which appeared in *Fellowship* magazine in July of 1964, Rustin wrote,

> [i]n the case for nonviolence, now I happen to believe . . . that the Negro community is no longer taking Martin Luther King's brand of nonviolence. . . . [N]o Negro leader if he wants to be listened to is going to tell any Negroes that they should love white people. Furthermore, I won't do it because I won't encourage that kind of psychological dishonesty. They don't love them, they have no need to love them, no basis on which they can love them. Who can love people who do these things to people?[33]

Rustin did not object to nonviolence as a philosophy. In fact, he had taught King much of what he knew about Gandhian nonviolent resistance. Rustin was, of course, a lifelong pacifist and was of the view that violent action succeeded in doing nothing but "degrading" the participants and inciting overreaction.[34]

Later that summer after the Harlem Riot of 1964, in which looting and outbreaks of violent clashes between black residents and police lasted for several days, Rustin wrote about his experience walking Harlem's streets during the days of the riot and used the piece to argue for the continued relevance and necessity of nonviolence. Rustin felt the vandalism and attendant

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[31] Kenneth Clark, "The Ghetto and Housing and You," (December 1, 1965), 1-3, Box 160, Folder 1, Professional File, Speeches & Writings, Oct. 1965-Nov. 1967, KBC Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

[32] Bayard Rustin, "Nonviolence on Trial," *Fellowship* (July 1964), 5, 7, Box 39, Folder 10, Speeches & Writings, Articles, 1957-64, BTR Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

[33] Ibid., 7.

[34] Bayard Rustin, "The Harlem Riot & Nonviolence," n.d., 1, Box 40, Folder 10, Speeches & Writings, Articles, n.d., BTR Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

violence in Harlem was indicative of the "utter despair" that characterized the lives of Harlem's poorest residents, particularly the young adults.[35] He chose to see the 1964 Harlem Riot as a microcosm of the collective frustrations that blacks in urban ghettoes were feeling throughout the country. The riot was a desperate, inchoate attempt at getting the larger society to recognize their humanity. An issue that Rustin did not deal with, however, was what the riot may have signified about the relative satisfaction or dissatisfaction of civil rights efforts in New York City. Granted, his point in the short article was to advocate nonviolence, but the riot could also be interpreted as a response to local civil rights activity. The article can also be interpreted as Rustin's attempt to resuscitate the concept of nonviolence before too many urban black were "lost" in efforts to violently retaliate against whites for their living conditions, as alluded to in the rhetoric of Malcolm X.

There was much to be upset about in New York City during the summer of 1964. And for many poor blacks in New York City, Malcolm had been the leader explaining their condition most accurately. After the successful schools boycott in February, an attempt to stage a second boycott on 16 March 1964, resulted in the fracturing of the citywide coalition of civil rights organizations that had coordinated the first boycott. The participation of the second boycott was estimated at 267,459 students, only half the number of the first boycott. As Clarence Taylor notes, however, even though a significant number of children stayed away from school that day, neither boycott resulted in significant policy changes on the part of the Board of Education.[36] Racial inequality in public education persisted.

Black New Yorkers also continued to live in substandard conditions throughout the city. Harlem activist, Jesse Gray, and later the Brooklyn chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality

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[35] Ibid.

[36] Clarence Taylor, *Knocking at Our Own Door: Milton A. Galamison and the Struggle to Integrate New York City Schools* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 161.

(CORE), publicized their plight as they worked to enlist African American residents in Harlem and Bedford-Stuyvesant to refuse paying rent until conditions in their buildings were improved. The rent-strike movement gained momentum during the early months of 1964 as Brooklyn CORE worked to mobilize residents to stand up to those criminally negligent landlords who continued to charge exorbitant rents for apartments infested with rats and bugs, that were firetraps due to faulty electrical wiring, and otherwise dangerous and unclean conditions due to rotting floors, and maggot-filled bathtubs.[37]

Rustin understood that the economic conditions of urban blacks contributed greatly to their feelings of alienation from America. This feeling was not new to African Americans. Rustin felt that the civil rights movement now had to go in a different direction away from relying on protest tactics and toward more concerted political action.[38] He would not, however, support the Nation of Islam's and Malcolm X's separatist rhetoric and their belief that American civilization was to be brought to a fiery, violent end. Rustin did not miss an opportunity to inveigh against Malcolm X and the NOI. Nevertheless, something was indeed missing from the liberal approach to civil rights.

By asserting that the philosophy and tactic of nonviolence was "on trial" by 1964, Rustin was alluding to an even larger debate that was occurring in the civil rights movement—and was soon to be occurring within the nation. Liberal primacy in the civil rights movement was "on trial" by 1964. It might be fair to say that liberalism, itself, was on trial. The ideological fissures

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[37] Brian Purnell, "A Movement Grows in Brooklyn: The Brooklyn Chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and the Northern Civil Rights Movement During the Early 1960s" (Ph.D. Dissertation, New York University, 2006), 397-401.

[38] Bayard Rustin, "From Protest to Politics: The Future of the Civil Rights Movement," *Commentary* (February 1965), 5, Box 39, Folder 10, Speeches & Writings, Articles, 1957-64, BTR Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.; Bayard Rustin, "Nonviolence on Trial," *Fellowship* (July 1964), 5, Box 39, Folder 10, Speeches & Writings, Articles, 1957-64, BTR Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.; Bayard Rustin, "Social Dislocation and the Civil Rights Revolution," n.d., 15, Box 44, Folder 9, Speeches & Writings, Speeches, 1981-1987, n.d., BTR Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

among black leaders—always present and shifting—were growing rapidly during 1964 and 1965. As new and difficult questions arose for leaders as to how to continue to maintain the relevance and effectiveness of the civil rights movement, racial liberals found themselves losing ideological ground to socialists like Bayard Rustin and black nationalists such as Malcolm X and Harold Cruse.

Malcolm X and the Nation of Islam (NOI) had been arguing that the philosophy of loving one's oppressor was not viable for many years by 1964. The Nation and Malcolm X, in his capacity as national minister, consistently decried the integrationist impulse of the liberal-led civil rights movement. And even after Malcolm split from the NOI in the spring of 1964 he continued to disparage nonviolent direct action as "passé" and unintelligent because those who participated were attempting to work within an immoral and corrupt system.[39]

In a question and answer session after a speech in Paris, France, Malcolm even attributed the conferral of the Nobel Peace Prize to King in November of 1964 as a "ploy by white capitalists to keep African Americans from defending themselves against brutality." He contended that the recent Nobel Peace Prizes given to an African leader who advocated nonviolence and to Martin Luther King, Jr. were given in order to slow down the realization among blacks around the world that nonviolence does not work. He also put forth this theory in order to make the point that despite the machinations of powerful whites, both in America and in Europe, King's philosophy—and by extension the liberal ideology—was losing its "grip" on African Americans.[40] The struggle for self-determination, rights, and equality had extended to Africa, Asia, and Latin America by the mid-1960s. Malcolm consistently discussed the black

[39] Malcolm X, "Statement of Basic Aims and Objectives of the Organization of Afro-American Unity," June 28, 1964; in George Breitman, *By Any Means Necessary: Speeches, Interviews and a Letter by Malcolm X* (New York: Pathfinder Press, Inc., 1970), 41-2.
[40] Malcolm X, "The Black Struggle in the United States," November 23, 1964; in George Breitman, *By Any Means Necessary: Speeches, Interviews and a Letter by Malcolm X* (New York: Pathfinder Press, Inc., 1970), 114.

freedom struggle in global terms by 1964 and he argued that it could no longer be contained by geographical boundaries or by attempts on the part of white liberals around the world to slow down the tide of anticolonial movements initiated after World War II.

By 1964, cultural nationalist Harold Cruse also expressed that "the Negro movement [was] also in a crisis despite its late achievements" and was trying to figure out how to enter its next phase of development.[41] These leaders, having identified a problem—a rather serious one in their estimations—were all asking how the civil rights movement needed to change in order to continue to be constructive and remain relevant.

As leaders of local and national organizations, or as public intellectuals, black New York intellectuals were helping to shape the contours of the civil rights movement, as it was to be implemented by the memberships of their groups and be characterized by the larger society. Many of these black intellectuals were speaking for organizations and for constituencies. The questions that they struggled with affected organizational positions on various issues and potential partnerships between organizations in the future.

**Where Do We Go From Here?**

The fact that African American leaders with such varied ways of looking at the problems facing black people all declared that the movement was potentially at an impasse is significant. But that does not mean that they shared the same ideas about how the movement should proceed. Kenneth Clark, Bayard Rustin, Malcolm X, Harold Cruse, and George Schuyler all had different

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[41] Harold Cruse, "Marxism and the Negro, Part 1," *Liberator*, (May 1964), 9, Box 3, Folder 34, Book Reviews by Cruse (Misc), n.d., 1950-1951, 1962, 1964, HC Papers, Archives of the Tamiment Library, Robert F. Wagner Archives, New York University, New York.

answers to that question. Their ideological proclivities should be considered one major factor in shaping their differences.

The liberal-led movement had been successful in breaking down many of the legal barriers to access. This had been the primary strategy of the NAACP since the 1930s and legal segregation was an easier target to hit with regard to focusing the resources and commitment of a community for demonstrations. The NAACP won decisions prohibiting segregation in interstate travel in 1947 and a series of cases pertaining to equality of educational opportunity and access beginning in the late 1930s and culminating with *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954. In addition, the direct-action campaigns of the 1950s and 1960s galvanized many Americans and prodded Congress to take substantive measures to ensure the civil rights of African Americans.

As the mid-1960s approached, however, even Roy Wilkins, executive director of the NAACP, who struck a somewhat more optimistic tone than some of his counterparts in his writings, felt that perhaps the focus of the movement needed to shift from the task of obtaining legal equality toward trying to remedy the economic problems facing African Americans, namely poverty and job discrimination.[42] These were issues that socialists such as Bayard Rustin and A. Phillip Randolph, and black nationalists such as Malcolm X had been urging the liberal movement to pay more attention to for some time. There were several ideological obstacles, however, that prevented liberals, socialists, and black nationalists from seeing eye-to-eye on how to best remedy economic inequality.

For one thing, economic inequality had never really been the top priority for liberal leaders. This is partially a reflection of the middle-class socioeconomic standing of liberal reformers during the Progressive Era when the first modern civil rights organizations were

[42] Roy Wilkins, "Discrimination in Education," *Yale Political Review*, vol. 3, no. 4 (August 1963), 26, Box 36, Folder 2, Speeches & Writings File, Articles, *Yale Political Review*, Roy Wilkins Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC. Will be referred to subsequently as the RW Papers.

established. The lower priority given to economic matters was also reflected in the ideological debate between Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. Du Bois at the turn of the twentieth century. In critiquing Washington's program for racial uplift, Du Bois focused more on pursuing political and civic equality than economic parity because African Americans were facing disfranchisement and the construction of the Jim Crow system throughout the South, while there was little occupational diversity among African Americans. Therefore, for Du Bois and most other liberals who were creating and expanding modern racial liberal ideology, protecting black voting power and trying to dismantle legal segregation became their main focus. They believed that being able to exercise the franchise would ultimately help the cause of increasing economic opportunity.

When it came to economic issues, early liberal leaders were typically capitalist-oriented and primarily concerned with job placement, in the vein of the National Urban League. The Urban League focused on securing jobs for individual blacks by approaching particular businesses, and also by trying to shape labor policy and the local, state, and national levels.[43] During the 1930s economic issues came to the fore due to the Great Depression, but the primacy of group economic progress was temporary and receded after the Second World War.

Unlike liberals, socialists such as Randolph and Rustin were consistently trying to integrate blacks into the broader labor movement and forge partnerships between organized labor and civil rights organizations.[44] Randolph and Rustin wanted African Americans to unionize because of the workplace protections that unions provided for their members, the increased

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[43] Seth M. Scheiner, *Negro Mecca: A History of the Negro in New York City, 1865-1920* (New York: New York University Press, 1965), 156; Toure F. Reed, *Not Alms But Opportunity: The Urban League and the Politics of Racial Uplift* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 108-13.

[44] Jervis Anderson, *A. Phillip Randolph: A Biographical Portrait* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1972), 62-3, 168-9, 294-5, 309-11; Jerald Podair, *Bayard Rustin: American Dreamer* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2009), 4, 18.

wages they could bargain for, and because they believed that participation in the organized labor movement could form the basis for a biracial working-class civil rights movement.[45]

During the first half of the twentieth century, however, liberal leaders were generally ambivalent, if not hostile, to the idea of encouraging blacks to unionize because of the long history of racial discrimination that existed and continued to be perpetuated among most unions. Roy Wilkins, for example, pointed to "an astonishing number of methods of discriminating against Negro workers" still being "in vogue in the organized labor movement" in 1963. He argued that unions, despite "spotty improvement," still engaged in many tactics either to isolate and under serve blacks within unions, or to exclude them from union membership entirely.[46] Kenneth Clark criticized labor unions for "reflecting, for the most part, a racial rigidity" that he considered detrimental both to the nation and the future of organized labor.[47]

Rustin and Randolph both acknowledged that the organized labor movement did have a long history of racial exclusion and that there were still unions that discriminated against African Americans. Yet they wanted it to be known that there had been significant progress made in bringing organized labor into the civil rights struggle. Randolph had personally been responsible for much of it. Rustin wrote in 1965: "The labor movement, despite its obvious faults, has been the largest single organized force in this country pushing for progressive legislation."[48]

Beyond continuing to advocate a reciprocal relationship between the civil rights movement and organized labor, Bayard Rustin began sketching a broader plan for the future

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[45] Podair, *Bayard Rustin*, 18.

[46] Roy Wilkins, "Emancipation and Militant Leadership," (1963), 38, Box 36, Folder 21, Speeches & Writings File, Articles, *100 Years of Emancipation*, by Robert A. Goldwyn, 1963, RW Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

[47] Kenneth Clark, "The Crisis in the Civil Rights Crisis," *Negro Digest*, vol. 13, no. 9, (July 1964), 25, Box 172, Folder 8, Speeches & Writings, Writings, Articles, 1958-1964, KBC Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

[48] Bayard Rustin, "From Protest to Politics: The Future of the Civil Rights Movement," *Commentary* (February 1965),6, Box 39, Folder 10, Speeches & Writings, Articles, 1957-64, BTR Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

direction of the civil rights movement in his February 1964 essay "From Protest to Politics." In it, Rustin argued that the movement needed to enter a new phase. The "protest" phase of the struggle had reached the limits of its usefulness and effectiveness in terms of breaking down the legal foundations of racial discrimination, but racism and the deleterious effects of racism were far from being destroyed.[49] The movement needed to change its focus and tactics in order to adapt to the problems that still plagued African Americans. Those problems were primarily economic, and required economic and political action. This meant African Americans becoming more involved in formal electoral processes and the federal government "refashioning" the nation's political economy.[50]

Rustin continued to espouse the need for a "planned" economy throughout 1964 and 1965 as the most effective way to prepare American workers, black and white, for the changes occurring due to automation and other technological advancements. He contended that "nobody can tell you what to train people for unless it is done within a planned economy, in which you know where automation is to take place, at what rate, and what industries it is going to touch."[51] The changing nature of the American economy was perhaps the most important factor shaping his vision for the future of the civil rights movement. Educational programs and job training needed to be transformed and increased in light of these changes. As a Socialist, Rustin supported changes in the structure of the American economy in order eradicate poverty. He

[49] Ibid., 2.
[50] Ibid., 5.
[51] The quote is in Bayard Rustin, "Nonviolence on Trial," *Fellowship* (July 1964), 7, Box 39, Folder 10, Speeches & Writings, Articles, 1957-64, BTR Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC. But Rustin makes the same arguments into 1965. Bayard Rustin, "Demographic Changes and Social Justice," 1965 (?), Box 44, Folder 7, Speeches & Writings, Speeches, n.d., BTR Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.; Bayard Rustin, "Can Megalopolis Areas Achieve Genuine Racial Integration?," November 9, 1965, 10-12, Box 41, Folder 5, Speeches & Writings, Interviews, 1964-1976, n.d., BTR Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

articulated a primary role for the federal government in planning the economy in order to achieve that goal.

Kenneth Clark also believed that the movement needed to develop a comprehensive plan and strategy in order to achieve its goals "actually rather than merely symbolically." Yet in line with the capitalist orientation of most liberals, Clark argued that the solutions would come from the increased cooperation of black civil rights organizations and the private sector.[52] The federal government was not given much of a role in forwarding the next stage of activism, much less promotion of a planned economy. This was particularly interesting considering that racial liberals, from the 1930s up through the mid 1960s, had looked to the federal government for assistance and protection against discrimination of all types. Clark continued the theme of the need for greater action and cooperation among civil rights and social service organizations in order to eradicate poverty in 1965. In an article on American race relations, Clark made the claim that agencies had to move into impoverished areas if the ghettoes that blacks were imprisoned in were ever to be eliminated.[53]

Black leaders across the ideological spectrum agreed that the problems contributing to the racial gap in opportunities to ascend the social ladder were among the most significant problems facing African Americans by 1964 and 1965. They did not, however, propose the same solutions to those issues. Rustin argued for an extensive federal outlay of resources in the billions of dollars and a reorganization of educational and economic institutions in order to prepare poor, black and white youth for a technologically advancing world. Clark, while agreeing with Rustin

[52] Kenneth Clark, "The Crisis in the Civil Rights Crisis," *Negro Digest*, vol. 13, no. 9, (July 1964), 23-4, Box 172, Folder 8, Speeches & Writings, Writings, Articles, 1958-1964, KBC Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

[53] Kenneth Clark, "American Race Relations Today: A Role for Group Service Agencies," (November 30, 1965), 5, Box 160, Folder 1, Professional File, Speeches & Writings, Oct. 1965-Nov. 1967, KBC Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

about the necessity of utilizing all of our human resources in an age of technological advancement, did not propose of governmental solution to these problems. Rather, the private sector needed to be convinced that they had a stake in helping to destroy African American ghettoes by elevating this state of affairs to the level of jeopardizing national security.[54] As a result, as typical of liberals, Clark's proposals included appeals to moral conscience, both of private interests and whites as a group.

Harold Cruse's proposals included no such appeals to conscience. He did not place much importance on moral suasion. Rather, he advocated a political solution for blacks. But instead of mobilizing blacks for the existing political parties, as Rustin did for the Democrats, or imploring Lyndon Johnson's administration to pour money into urban centers, Cruse helped establish an independent political party based in Harlem called the Freedom Now Party (FNP). According to Cruse, the objective FNP was to achieve "independent black political power in the U.S. through economic, cultural, and administrative approaches" and to align African Americans with the global movements against colonialism.[55]

Cruse wanted to internationalize the black freedom struggle in the United States. Cruse saw the "Negro movement" as necessarily connected to the struggles of non-white people all around the world. He argued that the non-whites of the world had become the "world-proletarians" and that, consequently, in order for any sense of global unity to ever be achieved, a

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[54] Kenneth Clark, "The Ghetto and Housing and You," (December 1, 1965), 9, Box 160, Folder 1, Professional File, Speeches & Writings, Oct. 1965-Nov. 1967, KBC Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

[55] Harold Cruse, "Marxism and the Negro, Part 2," *Liberator*, (June 1964), 19, Box 3, Folder 34, Book Reviews by Cruse (Misc), n.d., 1950-1951, 1962, 1964, HC Papers, Archives of the Tamiment Library, Robert F. Wagner Archives, New York University, New York; "Why We Need a Freedom Now Party," September 1963, HC Papers, Archives of the Tamiment Library, Robert F. Wagner Archives, New York University, New York.

"social consciousness" would need to be cultivated.[56] By social consciousness, Cruse meant that a connection based on class, status, and color—across societies—would need to be established with the intent of dismantling the global status quo that subordinated non-whites the world over.

Malcolm X also believed that the American black freedom struggle needed to be broadened. Malcolm, particularly after separating from the Nation of Islam, argued that the civil rights struggle needed to be thought of—and approached—as a fight for human rights. As a result, African Americans would be able to compile and present a case to the United Nations that the United States had violated, and continued to deny, the human rights of African Americans.[57] The organization Malcolm founded after splitting with the NOI, the Organization of Afro-American Unity (OAAU) was dedicated to internationalizing the black freedom struggle and forging links between blacks in the United States and other non-white freedom movements around the world.

As a leading minister of the NOI, and later, after his estrangement from the organization, Malcolm argued that African Americans needed to concentrate on pooling their economic resources in order to create communal institutions that they controlled, independent of the larger white society.[58] This is a common theme among black nationalist leaders. Malcolm did not assign any role at all for government assistance in attaining this goal, for he saw the federal government only as obstructionist.

This philosophy of self-help was reminiscent of Booker T. Washington's economic ideology in many ways, although the religious component of Malcolm's philosophy makes it

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[56] Harold Cruse, "Marxism and the Negro, Part 2," *Liberator*, (June 1964), 19, Box 3, Folder 34, Book Reviews by Cruse (Misc), n.d., 1950-1951, 1962, 1964, HC Papers, Archives of the Tamiment Library, Robert F. Wagner Archives, New York University, New York.

[57] Malcolm X, "Interview by A. B. Spellman," *Monthly Review* (May 1964); in George Breitman, *By Any Means Necessary: Speeches, Interviews and a Letter by Malcolm X* (New York: Pathfinder Press, Inc., 1970), 7.

[58] Malcolm X, "Answers to Questions at the Militant Labor Forum," April 8, 1964; in George Breitman, *By Any Means Necessary: Speeches, Interviews and a Letter by Malcolm X* (New York: Pathfinder Press, Inc., 1970), 26.

distinctive. George Schuyler, for his part, argued that African Americans were starting to recognize the virtues of the "much-maligned" Booker T. Washington's philosophy by the middle of the 1960s.[59] Schuyler saw the answer in the self-help philosophy of Washington that stressed the actions of individuals to improve their condition over and instead of the actions of the state. It is important to note, however, that Schuyler was no fan of Malcolm X, and that feeling would likely have been mutual. The difference in their ideological perspective comes from the nationalist emphasis on collective struggle for collective gain, as opposed to the conservative emphasis on individual responsibility for individual gain. Though the distinctions were more important, there were similarities in the nationalist and conservative approaches to achieving black equality in America. Harold Cruse even makes the connection between black conservatism and black nationalism in *Crisis of the Negro Intellectual* when he makes the claim that Malcolm X broke away from Elijah Muhammad's type of nationalism because of its conservatism, which could be traced back to Booker T. Washington "by way of Marcus Garvey who had 'radicalized' Washington's economic philosophy."[60] Cruse was highlighting the interconnectedness of African American intellectual thought, both over time and across ideological viewpoints.

**How Do We Get There?**

The ideas laid out by black leaders brought various issues to the forefront of the discussion over the future direction of the civil rights movement; most of which were recurring,

[59] George Schuyler, "Requiem for the 'Revolution,'" Sent to *American Opinion* on December 26, 1966, 1, Box 9, Folder: Writings, Typescripts, American Opinion, 1965-1967, GSS Papers, Special Collections Research Center, Syracuse University Library, Syracuse, New York.

[60] Cruse, *Crisis of the Negro Intellectual*, 563.

such as what should be the role of whites within the movement, and others that seemed to be bubbling up in critical ways by 1964, such as what was the future fate of liberal ideology, both in the civil rights movement and in the nation. Both of these issues very much interconnected.

As discussed in Chapter 3 in the wake of the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in 1954, African American leaders were not of one mind regarding the integration of public schools. The same diversity of opinion was evident on the question of what role whites should play within the civil rights movement. By 1964 this issue was perhaps even more fraught as the liberal movement struggled to find renewed focus and faced substantive ideological challenges from the left and the right.

Kenneth Clark argued that the civil rights movement would need whites in order to be successful as it moved forward. He wrote in the middle of 1965 that, "the next stage of the protest movement, if it is to be any real progress for the Negro and for our nation, cannot be a stage for Negroes; it must be one in which various types of whites are involved."[61] In Clark's view whites of all classes would have to be convinced that they had a stake in improving the living conditions of African Americans, particularly those he considered to the imprisoned in urban ghettoes. This would need to be done through traditional liberal modes, such as calls to conscience and educating the public, but also by appealing to the self-interest of whites. It had to be put to white Americans that nothing short of American civilization, itself, hung in the balance of the success of the civil rights movement.[62]

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[61] Kenneth Clark, "Beyond Demonstrations: A New Phase in Civil Rights," *The Register-Leader of the Unitarian Universalist Association*, (Midsummer 1965), 5, Box 159, Folder 5, Professional File, Speeches & Writings, Speeches, Feb. 1962-Sept. 1965, KBC Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

[62] Kenneth Clark, "American Race Relations Today: A Role for Group Service Agencies," (November 30, 1965), 5, Box 160, Folder 1, Professional File, Speeches & Writings, Oct. 1965-Nov. 1967, KBC Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Even though Clark expressed the view that whites needed to be involved in the civil rights movement going forward, he also reflected the growing frustration of many black liberals with the actions of "moderate" or "liberal" whites within the movement to date. He argued that moderate whites were the "major threat of the present civil rights thrust" and that whites needed to deal with their own racial prejudice before they could be of help to the movement.[63] Clark diagnosed that there existed an internal conflict within white liberals between their desire to keep up their liberal self-image and their desire to remain accepted within their "in-group" (family, friends, and social cliques), which may not have shared their liberal attitudes. Clark then determined that, "in some [white liberals] this conflict is resolved by a self-protective rejection of the Negro as 'too impatient' and by the conviction that the good of the total society requires a more measured, gradual approach."[64] The problem with this war within individual whites was two-fold. Firstly, it was retarding the progress of the civil rights movement as it fed into the "white backlash" that was growing in intensity by mid-decade. Secondly, this white ambivalence, as Clark described it, was also damaging the reputation of liberalism among African Americans. He argued that blacks were rejecting "the liberal label," and thereby liberalism as an ideology, because "'liberal' has come to mean white."[65]

Clark was writing vigorously in order to convince African Americans, and more specifically black liberals, including James Baldwin, that the destiny of African Americans was

[63] Kenneth Clark, "Undercurrents of Negro Thought Today," 1964, 10, Box 159, Folder 4, Professional File, Speeches & Writings, Feb. 1962-Sept. 1965, KBC Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

[64] Kenneth Clark, "Black and White: The Ghetto Inside," *Boston*, vol. 57, no. 10, (October 1965), 25, Box 173, Folder 2, Professional File, Speeches & Writings, Writings, Articles, 1965-1966, KBC Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

[65] Ibid.

inextricably tied to that of the United States.[66] African Americans could not afford to be ambivalent about the success or failure of the civil rights movement, or about whether or not s/he is an American, or about whether or not he wants to be integrated into American society, or about liberalism. The movement had to succeed, they were Americans, they were a part of American society and would need to agitate to be further integrated, and liberalism was the ideology that would continue to serve them best. There was no viable alternative in Africa. There was no other viable ideology that would bring about racial equality in the United States.

Remarking that "there's no hiding place in Africa" was a swipe at black nationalists, specifically the NOI and Malcolm X, who continued to advocate an independent black state, either within the United States or Africa, in order to build a new civilization apart from white America. For Clark, the NOI was not a viable movement for it propagated "the delusion of violence, the myth that it was a force for violence. This belief, which many whites and Negroes held about the Black Muslims, was almost as useful in arousing fear and awe among others as the reality would have been and paradoxically accounted for much of its appeal and attractiveness."[67] Clark believed that the NOI had regressed into a cult, especially after Malcolm X's assassination, and had devastated whatever revolutionary potential had existed—although he did not believe there had been much to begin with.

Kenneth Clark was not the only leader who questioned the revolutionary potential of the NOI. Bayard Rustin argued that rather than being a radical, Malcolm X had been a "conservative force in the Negro community" in many respects. In assessing the legacy of

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[66] Kenneth Clark, "Undercurrents of Negro Thought Today," 1964, 14, Box 159, Folder 4, Professional File, Speeches & Writings, Feb. 1962-Sept. 1965, KBC Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

[67] Kenneth Clark, "Violence: Its Role in the Civil Rights Struggle," Brandeis University, October 19, 1965, 13, Box 160, Folder 1, Professional File, Speeches & Writings, Oct. 1965-Nov. 1967, KBC Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Malcolm X soon after his death, Rustin argued against the association of nonviolence with cowardice and retaliatory violence with manhood and dignity, which he contended Malcolm perpetuated. Malcolm's commitment to violence was "purely verbal" and not at all radical, in Rustin's view.[68] It was, rather, a manifestation of what he called, the "no-win policy" creeping into the civil rights movement. This approach was to try and induce white liberal support for the civil rights movement by "shocking" them with examples of white liberal hypocrisy. For Rustin this was empty militancy.[69]

Sound and fury without substance did nothing to advance the movement. Only creating an interracial, class-conscious, social movement to "reconstruct" America's social, political, and economic institutions would succeed at forming "a new psychology" in this country.[70] That movement would necessarily include whites, for as Clark argued, African Americans were struggling for the soul of America as well as fighting to improve their own condition. Also speaking against the growing frustration of some liberals, Rustin directly attacked James Baldwin's assertion that the majority of blacks felt alienated in the United States. Rustin wrote, "that is not true. Baldwin and a few others are alienated." Rustin contended that the majority of blacks wanted to be part of American society, warts and all, because they believed in the American creed.[71] Basically, that in fact most African Americans believed in a version of liberalism. Although Rustin believed in socialism in economic matters, Rustin had always believed in a version of American liberalism as well. He argued in "Protest to Politics:"

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[68] Tom Kahn and Bayard Rustin, "The Ambiguous Legacy of Malcolm X," ca. 1965, 190, Box 40, Folder 17, Speeches & Writings, Articles, n.d., BTR Papers, Manuscripts Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

[69] Bayard Rustin, "From Protest to Politics: The Future of the Civil Rights Movement," *Commentary* (February 1964), 5, Box 39, Folder 10, Speeches & Writings, Articles, 1957-64, BTR Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

[70] Ibid.

[71] Bayard Rustin, "Nonviolence on Trial," *Fellowship* (July 1964), 6, Box 39, Folder 10, Speeches & Writings, Articles, 1957-64, BTR Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.

> Neither that movement nor the country's twenty million black people can win political power alone. We need allies. The future of the Negro struggle depends on whether the contradictions of this society can be resolved by a coalition of progressive forces which becomes the *effective* political majority in the United States. I speak of the coalition which staged the March on Washington, passed the Civil Rights Act, and laid the basis for the Johnson landslide—Negroes, trade unionists, liberals, and religious groups.[72]

Essentially, Rustin described the political coalition that was forged out of the Great Depression of the 1930s and came together, particularly in the North, to pass the legislation of the New Deal. The 1930s was the period in which occurred the most dramatic changes to the definition of American liberalism since the nation's founding. Beginning with Franklin Roosevelt, it became the government's responsibility and even obligation to protect citizens from the harshest vagaries of the economy. In the decades that followed the purview of the federal government only increased and more groups were included among the list of those to be protected by the government. Among them were African Americans by the 1950s and 1960s. Rustin wanted this coalition to endure amidst signs that this three-decades-old coalition was fragmenting and becoming increasingly unwieldy. It had to remain steadfast.

Rustin made clear his belief that white liberals were not the biggest threat to the black freedom struggle. Rather, it was racist politicians like James Eastland from Mississippi and Barry Goldwater from Arizona, and others who opposed civil rights legislation, Lyndon Johnson's war on poverty programs, and the social welfare state that deserved the ire of black leaders.[73] Johnson's Great Society programs were providing federal funding to inner city communities and was having a positive affect on black poverty. To continue to criticize white liberals for their lack of commitment to civil rights was to divert much-needed attention and

[72] Bayard Rustin, "From Protest to Politics: The Future of the Civil Rights Movement," *Commentary* (February 1965), 6, Box 39, Folder 10, Speeches & Writings, Articles, 1957-64, BTR Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, DC.
[73] Ibid.

resources from the more important political fight that had to be won. Rustin was sensing—perhaps ahead of many—the massive political reorganization in the major political parties that was about to come to full fruition within another generation. And he recognized the catalytic role of the civil rights movement in fostering these changes. Rustin wanted this restructuring of political life to have progressive rather than regressive consequences for the poor, for blacks, and for the larger collective.

Both Rustin and Kenneth Clark expressed concerns about the role of white liberals within the civil rights movement, but both also made clear that whites needed to be included within the movement going forward if it was to be successful in its next incarnation. Harold Cruse, however, expressed the view of many nationalists in identifying white liberals as a major hindrance to true black liberation, not only freedom from discriminatory laws and customs but also from White Anglo-Saxon Protestant standards of behavior, beauty, and civilization. But in assigning blame to white liberals, Cruse also criticized black intellectuals more harshly for allowing whites to control them. As Cruse put it in *Crisis of the Negro Intellectual*:

> The Negro intellectual has been bereft of the means of solving his own problems because his class has traditionally been maneuvered into the position where his problems are solved by others. Instead of being able to essay his own solutions, the Negro intellectual has been transformed into a problem by the white liberal, who prefers to keep him in that position. The white liberal problem-solver has been institutionalized as an organic part of the entire civil rights movement, and is the emasculator of the creative and intellectual potential of the Negro intelligentsia.[74]

From Cruse's vantage point, the integrationist impulse of black leaders since the NAACP's founding has ultimately resulted in the inability of African Americans to create cultural, economic, and political institutions of their own to win the rights they deserve. "The

[74] Harold Cruse, *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual* (New York: William Morrow & Company, Inc, 1967), 260.

Negro intellectuals of today are the victims of the intellectual default of yesterday."[75] Therefore, Cruse believed that in the mid 1960s, blacks needed to build their own institutions and develop their own aesthetic first before integrating into the larger society. Blacks had to be able to interact with white Americans on their own terms, from a position of institutional and intellectual strength, rather than what he considered to be the current situation, assimilation and the denial of an authentic African American cultural aesthetic.

This led Cruse to disagree with liberals like Clark, and even socialists like Rustin on issues such as ghettoization. Clark and Rustin viewed ghettoes as places of deprivation, pathology, the result of restricted mobility, and, ultimately, a manifestation of the total denial of one's individual liberties guaranteed under the Constitution solely on the basis of color. Cruse viewed "ghettoes," like Harlem, much differently. He saw in Harlem, for example, the potential flowering of black culture and political power. He felt that needed fostering, not destroying so that blacks could be assimilated into white society. In Cruse's view, liberals were afraid of just that, the attainment and responsibility for exercising substantial group power emanating from lower-class people.[76] This was why Cruse based the Freedom Now Party in Harlem. He hoped that the party was radiate outward across the nation from there; a black community that would produce and foster black leaders, and an authentic black ideology.

These divergent views of ghettoes points up an important ideological difference between liberals and nationalists, as well as between Kenneth Clark and Harold Cruse. Liberals tended to look at the civil rights movement as collective protest in order to obtain individual rights. They wanted for African Americans to be included in the covenant that was the US Constitution, and being able to live where one pleased, with whomever they wanted, as long as they could afford

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[75] Ibid.
[76] Ibid., 11.

to, was an important part of their conception of being an American. Also, if you ascribe to Cruse's point of view, liberals were motivated by materialistic ends and, therefore, were only capable of thinking about ghettoes in terms of material deprivation. Nationalists, by contrast, tended to look at the civil rights movement as collective protest for "ethnic solvency." They wanted for African Americans to be able to extricate themselves from the larger society if they chose, or to be able to engage with white America on their own terms. For Cruse, the need for autonomy was most tangible at the level of culture. The other things necessary for building a viable African American community—economic and political institution-building—would follow the development of an independent black artistic, literary, and social criticism.

Malcolm X definitely subscribed to the nationalist credo that made ethnic solvency the top priority of the black freedom struggle. This is one of the tenets that bind nationalists. But to that Malcolm also added the desire for territorial independence that went back to the mid-nineteenth century, and more recently the Garvey-led Universal Negro Improvement Association in the 1920s. And Cruse did not believe this was a viable option for African Americans. To him, this idea, as well as some other strains of nationalist thought, were pessimistic. These views were "based on the conviction that the Afro-American is doomed to genocide and destruction if he remains in this country, therefore nothing matters but making plans to get out."[77] Also, that there was nothing worth fighting for here in the United States because America was "not worth saving," therefore, it was best to leave as soon as possible. But as far as Cruse was concerned, these positions unnecessarily dichotomized the nationalist program and "indicate[d] something deeply wrong with the Afro-American nationalist orientation."[78] The crux of these differences

[77] Harold Cruse, "The Afro-American Youth Cultural Conference," April 1965, 1, Box 3, Folder 16, Afro-American Youth Cultural Conference, 1965, HC Papers, Archives of the Tamiment Library, Robert F. Wagner Archives, New York University, New York.

[78] Ibid., 2-3.

among nationalists appeared to be economic orientation. While Malcolm X and the NOI were thoroughly capitalistic, having been influenced by Garveyism and Booker T. Washington's philosophy of self-help, Cruse was essentially a Marxist (although one disgruntled about the state of implementation of Marxism during the mid-1960s).

Conservatives, such as George Schuyler, imbibed the self-help philosophy of Washington without any of the concern for ethnic solvency that captivated nationalists. Like liberals, they looked at civil rights as a struggle for individual liberty, but they countenanced no role for the federal government in "forcing" people to behave in a particular way. Racism, as far as they were concerned, was an individual problem; to be eradicated, if ever, in the due time of those who practiced it. And no sooner.

Events occurring in the streets of America's urban centers during 1964 and 1965, as well as the ideological debates amongst black leaders, indicated that the liberal ideology that had guided the modern black civil rights movement in the main since the publication of *An American Dilemma* was in the midst of its most significant ideological challenge since the 1930s. Riots, grinding black poverty, job and housing discrimination, among numerous other problems, in spite of sweeping congressional legislation, disillusioned many. They lost patience not only with the nonviolent, mass action tactics advocated by liberals, but also with the entire liberal ideology, which emphasized the eventual perfectibility of America through dogged perseverance because of the moral righteousness of the country's founding principles.

The crisis that black leaders had come to diagnose by the end of 1963 reflected, or perhaps presaged, a much larger crisis within American liberalism. The search for answers to the question of "where to go from here" fractured the movement in ways, and to a degree, that

could not be reconciled or co-opted as had been done in 1960. In part, this was due, ironically, to the success of the liberal movement in awakening the nation's collective conscience and pressuring the federal government to enact substantial legislation that would protect African American's constitutional rights. In part, this was because the problems that African Americans faced were now moving targets as opposed to being fixed. De jure segregation was a fixed target. Unjust laws could be struck down or rewritten, and by the end of 1965 many of the most important ones were. De facto segregation, the type that was systemic and pervasive in the culture, was adaptable, flexible, moving; it was not eradicable by legislation alone. As Bayard Rustin pointed out, it would demand nothing less than the reconstruction of American politics and society. And different leaders had conflicting ideas about how extensive that reconstruction needed to be, as well as the best methods for accomplishing it.

The confluence of urban black frustrations about their condition as second-class citizens and the trenchant analyses of the state of the civil rights movement coming from different ideological perspectives resulted in the decline of the liberal orthodoxy in the civil rights movement. Within a few short years, the New Deal liberalism that African Americans had pushed to broaden would also be on its deathbed as Lyndon Johnson's Great Society agenda was swallowed up by the escalating costs and death tolls exacted by American involvement in the jungles of Southeast Asia, and a stagnating economy.

# Conclusion

So, what was the role of ideology in the civil rights movement? Racial liberalism, conservatism, nationalism, and socialism/communism provided New York's black intellectuals with organizing principles for attempting to make sense of their current conditions and a basis for developing strategies in order to improve it. These ideologies were in conversation, cooperation, and conflict with one another during the 1950s and 1960s. Black intellectuals were by no means merely engaged in intellectual exercises; rather, they were working to develop effective strategies in order to help transform America into a just, egalitarian society.

Between 1954 and 1965 New York's black intellectuals got involved in battles for civil rights in New York City and around the country. In numerous ways, these activists and thinkers tried to help ameliorate the problems African Americans faced. New York's black intellectuals called on a rich tradition of intellectual thought that provided useful templates for how to go about building and sustaining a movement for freedom. Yet black intellectuals did not merely copy what had been done by earlier generations of thinkers. Rather, they adapted and, therefore, evolved these ideologies in order to deal with the circumstances that African Americans were then facing more effectively. New York black intellectuals participated in boycotts, marches, and even formed independent political parties between 1954 and 1965.

They did not approach the struggle for equality from a singular vantage point, however. Black leaders applied multiple ideological approaches to the problem of how to obtain first-class citizenship for African Americans. These ideologies have deep roots in African American intellectual thought and developed in their twentieth century incarnations from the debates between Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. Du Bois at the turn of twentieth century.

Washington and Du Bois laid the foundations for the modern conservative and liberal ideologies, adapting them to the conditions created by modern industrial capitalism, the construction of Jim Crow America, and the Progressive reform impulses between 1890 and 1917. Succeeding generations of black activists and intellectuals, such as Marcus Garvey, A. Philip Randolph, and Harold Cruse drew from, built on, and critiqued the doctrines of Du Bois and Washington, drawing on a nationalist ideology that is nearly as old as the racial liberal tradition, and adding a leftist framework to the discussions that were being used in order to facilitate African American equality.

Much of this intellectual ferment that contributed to the evolution of the four major ideologies occurred in New York City, and this was not accidental. Due to the rapidly growing number of African Americans in Harlem, the relative absence of legal segregation, the formation of civil rights groups, and the growth of the black press, African Americans were able to fashion the legal, public, and private spaces necessary to create a significant movement for racial equality over the course of the first half of the twentieth century.

New York City was also a place where diverse intellectual, cultural, and political perspectives were able to flourish. From the NAACP and the Urban League, to the Liberty League, African Blood Brotherhood, the UNIA, and the CPUSA, the variety of ideas that were able to sink roots into the ideological landscape of New York City made it the cultural and intellectual center of black America by 1920. This attracted many politically-inclined migrants to the city. The number of intellectual activities available in the city enthralled and stimulated new arrivals such as Bayard Rustin, Ella Baker, George Schuyler, and Harold Cruse. Many of these figures also contributed to the perpetuation of intellectual inquiry and consciousness-raising during their time in New York City. Therefore New York's black intellectuals grew up

around diverse personal, political and intellectual traditions and these shaped how they would approach the question of how best to bring equality in the United States.

The exposure to numerous ideologies helped New York's black intellectuals conceive of the problems facing African Americans in broader terms than just their personal experiences or what was happening in their city. Even when these leaders focused on struggles in New York City, they were quick to make connections to the movements for equality in other parts of the country. New York's black intellectuals understood that the civil right movement was never confined to one region of the country or another. The movement was always truly national—if not international—in scope. And the influence of many of New York's black intellectuals went far beyond the city. Kenneth Clark's research for the *Brown* case, Ella Baker's work establishing the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, and Malcolm X's invitations to speak on college campuses and the growth of the Nation of Islam throughout the country during his time in the organization are a few examples.

The *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in 1954 marked an important turning point in the national civil rights movement and also in New York's black intellectual community. The decision overturned the doctrine of "separate but equal" as legal national policy with regard to schools, but it was impossible to know exactly how things would be different in the wake of the Supreme Court's mandate. The ruling brought the issue of racial integration to the forefront of American life in a more direct way than it had been since the Civil War ended. African Americans did not react to the decision with a single voice. *Brown* elicited a range of responses based on ideological proclivities. Racial liberals tended to hail the decision the loudest. For the lawyers of the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, for example, the *Brown* decision represented the culmination of twenty years of legal battles to strike down racial segregation in public education.

The decision, for many, also represented the dawning of a new era in race relations, the moment when America became modern. Liberals saw the *Brown* decision as the first step toward a truly integrated society and blacks achieving first-class citizenship.

Blacks who subscribed to different ideologies, such as nationalism or conservatism, were more critical of *Brown*'s implications. Malcolm X and the Nation of Islam were critical of *Brown* because of what it could potentially mean for further intermingling of the races. The Nation of Islam taught its members that whites would never treat African Americans equally in the United States, that American civilization was doomed to be wiped off the earth, and that blacks needed to save themselves by disengaging from American society as completely and quickly as possible. Integration into a racist, corrupt society was both futile and denigrating to blacks who deserved to have a sovereign nation in their own right. On the other hand, black conservatives criticized *Brown* because they believed the decision did little other than antagonize the white South. For conservatives, harmonious race relations could only happen gradually and were only facilitated by the absence of conflict. African Americans, according to conservatives, need to be more concerned with improving their own behavior and closing the "cultural gap" between themselves and whites rather than trying to force whites to accept them in places and situations where they were not wanted. Once blacks demonstrated their individual fitness for integration, conservatives believed that white society would accept them.

Over the course of the 1950s, however, the enthusiasm that the *Brown* decision generated in many quarters of the black community began to fade as local school boards engaged in the tactics of interminable delay and whites formed groups to resist racial integration. As the efforts to desegregate schools produced fewer tangible results, black leaders became doubtful about the efficacy of liberalism as the guiding ideology of the movement.

By the turn of the decade, militant activists were criticizing their older, more moderate counterparts for not being forceful enough in their calls for racial equality. New organizations such as SNCC and the Parents' Workshop for Equality in Brooklyn not only critiqued less confrontational approaches for achieving equality, they also brought different conceptions of how to build a social movement with them that emphasized developing and maximizing the leadership potential of ordinary people and local communities. The commitment that these organizations demonstrated to the strategies of grassroots organization and direct-action protests compelled the more established organizations like the NAACP to re-brand itself as an organization that was in-touch with the new youthful militancy of the civil rights struggle and to adapt racial liberalism to better encompass that militancy.

As racial liberals steadied themselves by 1963, the centennial of the Emancipation Proclamation became the crucible of the civil rights movement. Critical campaigns in Birmingham, Washington, D.C., and New York City illustrated that African Americans were voicing their demands for equality even more forcefully than in years past. These campaigns were all largely considered to be victories for the movement, but whatever successes they facilitated, they also forced black intellectuals to ask very tough questions as the outcomes of these campaigns posed new dilemmas for the movement. Resistance to civil rights efforts on the part of ordinary citizens, bureaucrats, and political leaders continued into 1964, and even the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 did not eradicate the problems of housing discrimination, employment discrimination, and grinding poverty in urban cities.

How were these problems to be dealt with, and could the answers still be found within a liberal framework? New York's black intellectuals agreed that the civil rights movement had

indeed reached a crossroads, but disagreed on the path toward a more just future. Some continued to look to the federal government for assistance, even as they called for a complete reorganization of that government's spending priorities. Others looked to increased partnerships between civil rights organizations and the private sector. Still others saw the answers in autonomous political organization committed to addressing the needs of poor, urban blacks. And finally, some called for increased personal responsibility for ameliorating the obstacles to individual advancement. From this perspective, blacks, as a collective would only advance as far as the moral fortitude and personal work ethic of each individual African American. All of these ideas had merits and drawbacks, but as the recent legislative gains made the problems facing blacks seem even more intractable, this conundrum opened sufficient space for Black Power ideology to more to the fore of the black freedom struggle and for liberalism to recede.

So, what is the importance of looking at this period in terms of ideology? Besides continuing to recover the early history of civil rights struggles beyond the South, this study helps to give greater context for the rise of Black Power ideology during the mid-1960s and beyond. Black Power did not spring from nowhere in 1966, nor did it represent the unmitigated decline of the civil rights movement. Rather, Black Power had its roots in all of the ideologies of the previous decade. It came to the fore when it did because of the new circumstances, new questions, and the lack of effective answers to the question of how to achieve black freedom in America. The shift toward Black Power after 1965 really should be viewed less as a distinctive break with the movement of the previous decade and more as a shift within a continually evolving intellectual and activist tradition in African American history.

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