

Query: What role did the black churches play in raising the consciousness about inequality and racism? Focus primarily pre-civil rights movement, around 1950s or earlier.

Databases: Dialog (onesearch, databases 38, 88, and 141); Black Thought and Culture (through King library); Sociological Abstracts (through King library); LexisNexis Academic (first LexisNexis Academic document found through AllTheWeb).

Precision and Recall: Looking at all the searches together, precision was moderately but not exceptionally high. Most of the false drops were documents that dealt with the black churches or the Southern Christian Leadership Conference in the 1970s or later, which is out of the time frame the client requested. I would estimate the recall to be fairly high, mostly based on the amount and type of false drops (since the false drops were on topic but out of the time frame).

Cost: Cost of the search on Dialog was \$3.08. Since the first LexisNexis Academic document was found through a Web search engine, I assumed there was no charge for those documents. The other two databases were free through the library.

Feedback: “Overall, the articles were precisely on topic. Just one was a little too early to be significant for the civil rights of the 50's and 60's.”

Search Strategy:

Initial: A quick and dirty search on Google for “black church civil rights” to look for search terms and phrases. Found the phrase “Southern Christian Leadership Conference.”

Dialog: Another quick and dirty search on DialogWeb for SOUTHERN(W)CHRISTIAN(W)LEADERSHIP(W)CONFERENCE to find likely databases. Chose America: History and Life (38), Gale Group Business A.R.T.S. (88), and Readers' Guide Abstracts (141).

B 38, 88, 141

Set	Items	Description
S1	794	SOUTHERN(W)CHRISTIAN(W)LEADERSHIP(W)CONFERENCE
S2	1666	BLACK(W)CHURCH
S3	77	S1 AND S2

Black Thought and Culture:

Keyword search for “black church” and “civil rights” worked best. The initial search for “Southern Christian Leadership Conference” turned up no hits.

Sociological Abstracts:

Keyword search for: Black church *or* southern Christian leadership conference *and* civil rights.

LexisNexis Scholar:

Initially searched AllTheWeb with “southern Christian leadership conference,” and found an article from LexisNexis Academic.

Searched LexisNexis Academic, Primary Sources in U.S. History.

Search Terms: ((black church) and (civil rights) or (southern christian leadership conference))

Sample Documents:

Dialog:

B 38, 88, 141

Set	Items	Description
S1	794	SOUTHERN(W)CHRISTIAN(W)LEADERSHIP(W)CONFERENCE
S2	1666	BLACK(W)CHURCH
S3	77	S1 AND S2

3/9/1 (Item 1 from file: 38)
DIALOG(R)File 38:America:History & Life
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1473596 37-8060
THE BLACK CHURCH AND BLACK POLITICS: MODELS OF MINISTERIAL ACTIVISM.
Sawyer, Mary R
Journal of Religious Thought 1996 52(2)-53(1): 45-62.
DOCUMENT TYPE: ARTICLE
ABSTRACT: Since the 18th century the black church has been at the forefront of political issues important to members of the African-American community, such as the abolition of slavery and the rights of citizens. In the latter part of the 20th century the church and civil rights organizations with ties to the church, such as the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, must confront issues related to full empowerment for all African Americans.
DESCRIPTORS: Blacks; Churches; Civil Rights Organizations; Southern Christian Leadership Conference; 1750-1999
HISTORICAL PERIOD: 1750D 1760D 1770D 1780D 1790D 1700H 1800H 1900H
HISTORICAL PERIOD (Starting): 1750

HISTORICAL PERIOD (Ending): 1999

3/9/8 (Item 7 from file: 88)
DIALOG(R)File 88:Gale Group Business A.R.T.S.
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Leaders in the court and community: Z. Alexander Looby, Avon N. Williams, Jr., and the legal fight for civil rights in Tennessee, 1940-1970.

Sarvis, Will

The Journal of African American History, 88, 1, 42(17)

Wntr, 2003

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TEXT:

Z. Alexander Looby (1899-1972) and Avon N. Williams, Jr. (1921-1994) were the most prominent civil rights attorneys working in Tennessee during the post-World War II period. They filed dozens of lawsuits pertaining to school desegregation, racial discrimination in employment and public accommodations, and other areas. Looby and Williams's work in school desegregation cases alone encompassed every major case in the state (with the exception of *Northcross v. Board of Education*), and entered the highest realms of legal activity. Federal judges at the circuit, appeals, and U.S. Supreme Court levels cited and considered many of their cases as the post-*Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) litigation world unfolded. Looby and Williams also followed their civil rights work into the political world--Looby as Nashville city councilman and Williams as state senator--where they became part of the first major resurgence of black lawmakers in Tennessee since Reconstruction. As Professor Bobby L. Lovett argued, electoral politics became the next arena in the fight for equal rights, despite suggestions in the mass media from the early 1970s that the Civil Rights Movement ended when sit-ins, mass marches, and freedom rides were no longer the dominant strategy. (1) In this sense, Looby and Williams set important examples by extending their legal skills beyond the courtroom and into legislative bodies. But more fundamentally, Looby and Williams's civil rights work in the legal and political arenas made them among the most important and widely recognized leaders in Nashville's African American community, and beyond. In addition to legal and political activities, they served their community in numerous other ways that included the churches, schools, and civic organizations. (2) Looby and Williams countered a deeply imbedded tradition in this regard, for prior to their work, many (perhaps most) whites and African Americans alike held little respect for black attorneys in general. For Looby and Williams to emerge as prominent community leaders presented an impressive example to the contrary, to say the least.

AFRICAN AMERICAN ATTORNEYS AND LEGAL ASPECTS OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

Many historians have tended to neglect the legal aspects of the Civil Rights Movement, in fact, litigation and other matters related to the law were often crucial determinants of success or failure. For example, the legendary Montgomery, Alabama, Bus Boycott (1955-56) involved absolutely indispensable legal work that fundamentally influenced the final outcome of that historic and symbolic event. (3) In contrast, an absence of legal help often proved disastrous for civil rights activists, particularly when local and state authorities passed discriminatory laws, issued injunctions against activists, sanctioned massive arrests, and otherwise attempted to enforce segregation or disrupt organized protests. (4) As legal scholars Donald Barnett King and Charles W. Quick observed in 1965, "Both positively and negatively, (law) has been instrumental in defining the rights of the Negro in almost every realm of life. (5) Many scholars have almost completely ignored the leadership role of African American attorneys within their immediate communities.

The scholarship has also tended to remain rooted in an earlier, disparaging view of black lawyers, who were unfairly caught in a vicious cycle during the Jim Crow era. Before the mid-1940s, these attorneys struggled for respect against the odds of discriminatory legal education, lack of esteem in the black community, inadmissibility to bar associations, shortage of honorable clients, and mistreatment at the hands of racist judges and court officials. African Americans also suffered discrimination in law school admissions. If they managed to earn a law degree, they immediately encountered further discrimination in the legal system. Since a racist and predominantly white society favored white lawyers in the

courtroom, many African Americans were disinclined to hire lawyers of their own race. White clients were even less likely to hire black attorneys. Not eligible to join bar associations organized by white attorneys, black lawyers did not enjoy professional relationships and the exchange of important information with their white counterparts--and thus experienced an additional hindrance to executing their duties effectively. All of these circumstances tended to keep black lawyers impoverished, deprived of clients, and relegated to handling only the most disagreeable cases arising from habitual criminals and organized crime--which, in turn, hurt their reputations and handicapped them from entering other areas of law. Many black law school graduates quit the profession during the first months or years of practice. (6)

Exacerbating these conditions were critics who accused black lawyers of opportunism and preoccupation with personal or professional ambition. In 1934 Carter C. Woodson pointed out that, "The Negro lawyer is often severely criticized for his lack of interest in social uplift," and for the perception that they tended "to live on the community but (did) not live with it." (7) Even before and during the early 1930s, however, there were exceptions (such as Brown W. Payne of West Virginia) and indications that a younger generation of African American lawyers would follow Charles Hamilton Houston's charge to use law to improve life for blacks. Others, denied the opportunity to use their legal skills in court, served their communities in other ways (often in leadership roles) in the churches, fraternal organizations, and various social organizations, such as the Urban League, Masons, Odd Fellows, NAACP, and YMCA. (8) But given their professional skills, knowledge of the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights, black attorneys were poised to spearhead the legal challenge to legal segregation. "Though laboring under a cloud of doubt, black lawyers' efforts to dismantle the apartheid system in America became their special obligation," wrote J. Clay Smith, Jr. "They were eager to assume the lead in civil rights litigation, even without significant financial support." (9) Finally, as Judith Kilpatrick observed of pre-1950 black attorneys practicing in Arkansas,

Although these lawyers personally were ambitious men, many recognized that their future was tied to that of all African-Americans, and they worked to expand political and educational opportunities for the entire group in the midst of difficult times. Not all African-American lawyers were heroes, but in each generation a few stood at the forefront of efforts to improve the lot of all African-American citizens. (10)

As Carter G. Woodson and others noted, the 1930s showed signs that black lawyers holding idealistic, social reform views were beginning to emerge. There was no more stellar example of this new generation of attorneys than Z. Alexander Looby, who worked in Tennessee, where black lawyers were sorely needed and had only practiced irregularly during previous decades. (11)

SOCIOECONOMIC RELATIONS WITHIN AFRICAN AMERICAN COMMUNITIES

Many black attorneys, including Looby and Avon Williams, were active in their churches. Williams was a practicing Presbyterian, and Looby served as a vestryman, senior warden, and lay reader for the Holy Trinity Episcopal Church. (12) During the late 1970s, when Williams pondered the future of race relations in the United States, he asked, "(C)an we apply Christianity? Can we apply the American concept of equal justice under the law?" (13) Williams's own philosophy reflected a Christ-emulating perspective on interracial strife: "You can't keep on smiling at a person and not evoke a smile. You can't keep on loving a person and not evoke love. But hate doesn't have to evoke hate ... if you love you never accept hate. You never let hate evoke a similar response where you're concerned...." (14) African American ministers, in turn, steered many clients with legal problems to black lawyers such as Looby and Williams. Richard H. Dinkins, who joined the Williams law firm in the late 1970s (and became partner in 1981), saw black ministers refer many black victims of police brutality to Looby, Williams, and other black attorneys. These African American ministers often testified in cases involving their parishioners. Also, as Dinkins recalled, "I can say, over the period I have been involved, by and large, there has not been a church effort independent of any effort by the lawyers ... in the school desegregation cases." (15)

Just as the legal and religious worlds intricately overlapped in the black community, so too did socioeconomic status as manifested within and outside of various civil rights organizations. While Marxist scholars of the 1940s emphasized the class differences and antagonisms among African Americans, Swedish scholar Gunnar Myrdal saw comparatively less class differentiation compared to white American society. In gathering information for his famous study *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and*

Modern Democracy, published in 1944, Myrdal observed less upper class arrogance and greater intra-class interaction within the black community. (16) Certainly such an observation would be logically consistent with a segregated society. Black professionals provided services to the black masses, who also patronized black businesses; and all African Americans suffered discrimination in a racist society. This sort of interdependence among the social classes continued into the late twentieth century. Lower- and working-class African Americans remained, to a great degree, the client base for black attorneys. "Trust is what we have in the absence of knowledge," Richard Dinkins observed. "In placing their trust in black lawyers, first and foremost, they placed trust in the legal system as a vehicle of change...then they placed their personal trust in black lawyers." (17) Nashville attorney George E. Barrett, who first became acquainted with Looby and Williams while still in law school, believed "they were appreciated on all levels of the African American community, not just the middle and upper class." (18) Like most civil rights lawyers of the period, Looby and Williams were heavily involved with the NAACP. Thus, despite the common characterization of the NAACP as middle- and upper-class--dominated, it remains central for understanding the work of attorneys and others fighting for black civil rights.

THE NAACP AND LEGAL DEFENSE FUND

In 1909 the NAACP developed as a biracial organization out of the Niagara Movement, which began some years before when W. E. B. Du Bois, William Monroe Trotter, and several other younger black leaders grew disenchanted with Booker T. Washington's accommodationist approach to interracial relations. The NAACP sponsored litigation to challenge racially discriminatory laws and practices in the courts and soon developed a formal, bureaucratic structure with a national headquarters based in New York City and fledgling local branches in various cities. In 1934 Charles Hamilton Houston--the great legal scholar, law professor, and Dean at Howard Law School--became director of the NAACP's Legal Defense Fund (LDF). Houston thereafter shaped the organization's legal strategies in accordance with his philosophy of using law for purposes of "social engineering." (19) Houston's approach built upon the original thrust of black lawyers' activities from the 1840s--that of emancipating African Americans first from slavery, then from the virtual slavery of Jim Crow and legal segregation. (20) Houston's philosophy was to have far-reaching consequences for other black lawyers waging the legal fight for civil rights. As Houston's biographer Genna Rae McNeil pointed out, Houston believed that "the law could be used to promote fundamental social change and that it was an instrument available to a minority even when that minority was without access to the ordinary weapons of democracy...." Charles Houston held a respected position of leadership among blacks during the 1930s and 1940s. His ability to educate and inspire lawyers and lay people, respectively, to work as social engineers and to pool their resources to seek enforcement of rights through the courts was of particular historical significance. (21)

Houston strongly influenced Thurgood Marshall when the latter attended Howard Law School, and by October 1936 Marshall had joined the NAACP's legal staff. (22) From the 1930s to 1950s, Houston, Marshall, and an increasing number of black and white lawyers cooperating with the NAACP/LDF in a wide variety of locales plotted a careful strategy to defeat legal segregation. In general, the LDF focused on destroying the legal basis for the "separate but equal" doctrine put forward in the U.S. Supreme Court's Plessy v. Ferguson decision (1896). These LDF lawyers challenged salary discrepancies between black and white public school teachers, racial discrimination in higher education, the exclusion of African Americans from jury duty, and black disfranchisement in the southern states. (23) The LDF achieved a victorious climax in 1954 with the U.S. Supreme Court's Brown v. Board of Education decision, declaring legal segregation in public education unconstitutional. Unfortunately, the Supreme Court did not order the immediate desegregation of public schools in Brown II (1955), and this allowed obstructionist local school boards and cooperating circuit courts to delay integration seemingly (to many at the time) indefinitely. Out of this impatience grew other approaches to pursue equal rights; and these tactics, campaigns, and activities became the modern Civil Rights Movement. While many of these activities were not covered by the mainstream media, black civil rights attorneys and their legal campaigns attracted wide and favorable coverage in African American newspapers.

ROLE OF THE AFRICAN AMERICAN PRESS

The power of the black press greatly contributed to the growing influence of the NAACP. Black newspapers were vital organs for disseminating information and news about the NAACP's activities to a

community that segregation and racism had helped to make all the more cohesive. (24) As one scholar of the black press in the South declared, "Traditionally, black newspapers were passed from family to family and read aloud in barber shops, pool halls, and informal civic and religious gatherings." (25) Gunnar Myrdal observed that during the 1940s,

The Negro press, which is reaching ever deeper down into the Negro masses, has, as one of its chief aims, to give a national account of the injustices against Negroes and of the accomplishments and aspirations of Negroes. Its existence, its popular spread, and its content are a testimony of Negro unrest. Its (cumulative) effect in spurring race consciousness must be tremendous. (26)

Between 1910 and 1930, among the various black newspapers published in Tennessee, the Nashville Globe enjoyed the widest circulation. The Chattanooga Observer, Knoxville's East Tennessee News, and (by the 1960s) the Memphis Tri-State Defender also had significant numbers of subscribers and addressed issues such as needed school improvements, voter enfranchisement, and voter registration. (27) The Nashville Globe, in particular, promoted black collective interests. "The Globe recognized the inferior socioeconomic status of black Americans, but rejected the ideas of racial inferiority and dependence upon white paternalism," wrote Lester C. Lamon. "Their tone was aggressive, and they stressed the potential strength of the black population rather than the moral and economic weakness (and) placed its emphasis on economic growth and black business development." (28) Anyone reading the Globe or other black newspapers was aware of the important work that NAACP lawyers (black and white) were doing for black civil rights. (29) African Americans had been following Thurgood Marshall's progress in the courts for nearly twenty years by the time he made the cover of Time magazine in 1955.

Certainly African Americans all over the nation, reading black newspapers that subscribed to the National Negro Press Association wire service, kept up with Marshall's work. But as this case study of Tennessee illustrates, they also followed the local attorneys in their local communities with, if anything, even closer attention. As a local Nashville journalist observed in 1961, "So far as local people are concerned he (Looby) is far more important than people like Thurgood Marshall and Reverend Martin Luther King because 'Looby stays here.'" (30) A Fisk University professor told this same reporter, "It's seldom you see Mr. Looby walking anywhere in the neighborhood that there aren't at least two or three children tagging after him," and "You know how kids are, they mimic their heroes." (31)

THE NASHVILLE TRADITION OF CIVIL RIGHTS ACTIVISM

Beyond their own native ability, superior education, hard work, courage, and idealistic vision for equal rights, several important factors contributed to the rise of Looby and Williams as community leaders. Their home base of Nashville had a strong and substantial black middle class and several institutions of higher learning, including the elite Fisk University, Meharry Medical College, the American Baptist Theological Seminary, and Tennessee State University (formerly Tennessee Agricultural and Industrial State Normal School). (32) Most middle-class blacks in Nashville understood the importance of legal work in the fight for civil rights, recognized Looby and Williams as among the local champions in this struggle, and responded with financial and moral support. Black Nashville's social atmosphere, economic circumstances, and educational facilities also fostered the development of important, nationally recognized civil rights leaders, including James Bevel, John Lewis, James Lawson, and Diane Nash Bevel. The ir civil rights organizing culminated in the formation of the Nashville Student Movement, lunch counter sit-ins, and the rescuing and perpetuating of the Freedom Rides begun in May 1961 by the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE). (33) Moreover, the Tennessee chapters of the NAACP were particularly strong in the period from 1940 to 1970. Indeed, CORE organizers experienced markedly little success in Tennessee mainly because of the prevailing strength of the local NAACP branches. (34) These circumstances provided a propitious arena for attorney Z. Alexander Looby to begin his work.

LOOBY AND THE FOUNDATIONS FOR THE FIGHT

Zephaniah Alexander Looby had a very remarkable life, even aside from his amazing civil rights accomplishments in Tennessee. Looby was born on the island of Antigua, in the British West Indies in 1899. Looby's mother died when he was a young boy, and his father died when he was a teenager. Thus began many years of struggle to survive on his own. At fifteen, Looby joined the crew of a whaling vessel headed for the United States, but quickly jumped ship at New Bedford, Massachusetts. In the U.S. over the next few years he worked at a number of odd jobs: in a yam mill, a

restaurant, a bakery--but he also educated himself in his spare time through continuous reading. Even as a boy in Antigua, he loved attending the local magistrate court and listening to the lawyers and judges. Very early on he fixed his ambitions on becoming an attorney himself. (35)

Somehow Looby managed to enroll at Howard University in Washington, DC, and earned his A.B. there in 1922. In 1925 he earned his law degree from Columbia University, and then went on to New York University, where he earned his doctorate of law in 1926, an uncommon level of achievement for any lawyer, particularly for an African American, at that time. Looby accepted an offer to become an associate professor of economics at Fisk University, and arrived in Nashville in 1926. In July 1928 he passed the Tennessee bar exam, and proceeded to establish his law practice. He tried living in Memphis for three years, but could not tolerate Edward Hull "Boss" Crump's dictatorial rule and control over that city. Crump used patronage power, election manipulation, and sometimes violent intimidation to dominate Memphis politics, and eventually political affairs throughout the state. Crump's influence did not decline until after the 1948 election, when Estes Kefauver and others successfully challenged his power. (36) In any case, Memphis was unattractive to Looby as a place to conduct his law practice, so he moved back to Nashville. In the early 1930s there were only a few dozen black lawyers practicing in the South, and Looby soon became one of those attorneys associated with the NAACP and focusing on civil rights litigation. (37)

Obviously, many whites in the South did not welcome black lawyers, whose very presence challenged racist stereotypes. Looby's ability to quote Shakespeare and other modern and classical authors particularly rankled some whites. (38) As mentioned above, this was at a time when black lawyers held, at best, ambivalent roles in their own communities. But just as Looby had pressed himself to earn an outstanding education, he now showed the same dynamism in his legal work for his black clients. In 1932 he also founded the ABA-accredited Kent College of Law in Nashville, a night school for African American men and women. The Nashville World suggested at the time that it was the first of its kind south of Washington, DC (alluding to Howard University Law School). However, Kent College of Law followed Central Tennessee College of Law, established in Nashville in 1879; and Lane College of Law, opened in Jackson, Tennessee, in 1900. Kent College of Law operated with American Bar Association sanction until 1941, when it closed for unknown reasons. (39) But, Looby was soon thrust away from academic law and legal education into the vortex of real world litigation.

Few civil rights cases in the immediate postwar period loom more importantly than the successful defense of African American residents of Columbia, Tennessee, following the first outbreak of postwar racial violence. The trouble began in February 1946 when two World War II veterans, one black and one white, got into a fist fight. The trouble soon spread, however, and a white mob gathered to ransack Columbia's black residential section and business district. African Americans armed themselves for the confrontation and warned whites to stay out of their neighborhood. During the night of February 25th the area was especially dark, for residents had extinguished all their lights and shot out the street lights in an effort to retain the defensive advantage. It was this shooting out of the street lights that attracted the attention of the police, and four white policemen, ignoring black residents' warnings, entered the neighborhood. Residents opened fire and wounded all four, and one quite seriously. A general melee followed, and Governor Jim Nance McCord called out state national guard units to restore order. (40) Eventually, the police arrested and charged twenty-five blacks with various crimes related to the violence.

Looby and other attorneys successfully argued the cases for twenty-three of the defendants before all-white juries, and won acquittals in each case. Looby even helped protect Thurgood Marshall during a life-threatening episode after the trial's end, when white racists attempted to ambush Marshall.⁴¹ In the latter stages of the trial, Looby expressed his view of the role of black lawyers: "This nation cannot survive half slave and half free, and the Negro lawyers of the country must dedicate themselves to the task of eliminating such a condition." (42)

The Columbia cases probably gained the most media attention of any that Looby handled, and certainly many prominent people deeply appreciated his efforts. In December 1946 the nationally respected black newspaper the Chicago Defender selected Looby for its "Honor Roll of Democracy." (43) Charles Hamilton Houston, one of the most esteemed African American attorneys in American history, nominated Looby as his preferred choice for the NAACP's prestigious Spingarn Award. "Z. A. Looby gets my preference because he lives and practices in Tennessee," declared Houston. And because

Looby "was the first on the scene of the massacre, had the responsibility of living with the case as local counsel and is the man constantly exposed to any local reprisals." (44) In 1947 in *The Crisis*, the NAACP's official publication, J. Randolph Fisher commended Looby. "Here certainly is a leader of uncommon distinction, a genuinely praiseworthy personality. He is innately kind, genial, considerate of everyone's right to be heard; broadminded, devoid of 'side.'" Fisher concluded that Looby was a "scholar, gentleman, advocate" who had "become one of the truly distinguished leaders of these postwar United States." (45) Certainly Nashville's African American community recognized Looby's key role in the defense of the black residents, and praised him as a local hero. In December 1946, more than 300 citizens gathered to hear Nashville's Rev. Calvin Lockridge lecture about the NAACP's ongoing civil rights activities, and at Rev. Lockridge's side sat his guest of honor, Z. Alexander Looby. (46)

Black church members had a varying degree of understanding and appreciation for the legal technicalities of Looby's work, and yet beyond such specialized knowledge there was likely a near-universal recognition that Looby was fighting for the collective advancement of African Americans. In 1949 an anonymous writer for the *Church Service Directory and News Journal*, published in Nashville, commented,

In our midst we are fortunate to have one whose civil interest and marked ability rates him among the Nation's leading citizens. He has no peers as a race man and his victories as an attorney are inspiring to a group struggling to take its place in the sun. . . . Mr. Looby's name has (come) to mean to Negroes everywhere, a symbol of a fighting, relentless, stalwart giant of character in the struggle for human rights for all mankind. (47)

The postwar decade became the most glorious years of public recognition for African American lawyers, particularly in black communities. As historian Adam Fairclough noted, during the years from 1946 to 1956, "black lawyers were slayers of dragons, Davids who killed Goliaths." (48) Writing of this era, social scientist G. Franklin Edwards concluded that most of the seventy-two black attorneys he surveyed were motivated by service to the black community. African American lawyers had gained pride and independence with the coming of more equitable legal fees, greater trust from the communities, and fairer treatment in white-dominated courts. (49) Edwards concluded, "The fight which Negro lawyers have spearheaded for the expansion of civil rights for the Negro minority has been dramatic in character. The conception of the Negro lawyer as a champion of the group, reinforced in recent years by the dramatic successes in the Supreme Court, has done much to create a new image of the Negro's place in law." (50)

Without question, by the late 1940s Looby was "Mr. Civil Rights" in Nashville and beyond. Little wonder that, a few years after the Columbia trials, another African American attorney interested in civil rights would seek Looby out and join his practice. This was Avon N. Williams, Jr., who was Thurgood Marshall's first cousin. Marshall was an early influence on Williams's chosen profession. (51) In 1951 Looby and Robert Lillard, a lawyer and former fireman, won Nashville city council seats. Looby, a Republican, kept his city council seat until advanced age and failing health forced him to step down in 1971. Looby also served on the NAACP Board of Directors, 1953-1954 and 1956-1962. So, with Looby now devoting much of his time to his NAACP and political duties, the civil rights legal battle in Tennessee benefited from the addition of Avon Williams to Looby's law firm.

In 1965 Wayne Whitt, reporter for the *Nashville Tennessean*, wrote that Looby was "regarded as one of the most dedicated and sincere men in the local government." (52) Many people praised Looby as a civil rights leader and teacher, and toward the end of his life they called him the "dean" of black lawyers and recognized that he had become legendary for these efforts in the area of civil rights. (53) As Williams himself later expressed it, Looby was "the greatest lawyer in Tennessee, who happened to be black..." (54)

AVON WILLIAMS AND THE NEW CIVIL RIGHTS AGENDA

Avon N. Williams, Jr., began practicing law in 1949, filed his first civil rights lawsuit in 1951, and was thus poised to ride the huge wave of litigation that followed the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision (1954). (55) In September 1955, shortly after the *Brown* ruling, Looby and Williams filed the *Kelley v. Board of Education of Nashville* suit that became the most protracted school desegregation litigation in Tennessee. (56) It spanned thirty years and encompassed initial and revised school desegregation plans and the entire "busing" controversy. The suit began

when Williams was still Looby's junior law partner, and ended when attorney Richard H. Dinkins was Williams's junior law partner. Federal judges who sat during the first hearings retired before the final deliberations were concluded. During one of the interim trials in May 1980, U.S. District Judge Thomas A. Wiseman, Jr., felt compelled to recite "the tortuous twenty-five-year history of desegregation efforts in Metropolitan Nashville" as a necessary prologue to the latest findings in Kelley. (57) In the meanwhile, the Nashville legal team pursued other public school desegregation cases from one end of the state to the other. (58)

During the late 1950s and early 1960s, the Civil Rights Movement began to grow more visible and active in the South, and the NAACP began providing legal advice and services to the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Again mirroring the national scene, a similar dynamic developed in Nashville, where Looby and Williams provided legal services to the Reverend Kelly Miller Smith, who led the Nashville Christian Leadership Conference (NCLC), the local affiliate of the SCLC. (59)

The NCLC operated mostly out of Reverend Smith's First Baptist Church, then located on 8th Street in downtown Nashville. Initially, the NCLC concentrated on registering African Americans to vote. By 1959 the activists in NCLC had switched their focus to desegregating downtown restaurants. Their plans actually preceded the well-known February 1960 lunch counter sit-in of Greensboro, North Carolina. In Nashville, Smith and others involved with NCLC helped to raise funds to publicize and otherwise support college students sitting in and boycotting local businesses. One remarkable aspect of the Nashville sit-ins was the broad-based support that the students received from the black community. Lawyers from the Looby and Williams law firm and others provided legal support, and Looby served as primary counsel. (60) Black professionals raised funds for bail money and other expenses, but just as importantly, offered a great deal of moral support. (61) Vivian Henderson, a Fisk University economics professor and chairman of the executive committee of the Nashville branch of the NAACP, declared that, "The entire community has rallied to the students and their cause. Every Negro lawyer in Nashville offered his services for their defense. Every Negro minister is in back of them." (62) Such community involvement contributed to the superb organization and discipline that characterized the Nashville sit-ins. Among others, Looby and Williams regularly advised Jamye C. Williams of the NAACP Youth Council regarding student participation. (63) As Avon Williams recalled, "We did not as lawyers ... encourage or urge those black students to fight back. On the contrary, we urged them to stay within the law and we represented them in the courts and urged them to utilize the courts to redress their grievances within the framework of the Constitution of the United States." (64) Enemies of the NCLC's efforts recognized Looby's role as lead attorney, and in April 1960 several criminals (who were never apprehended) exploded a large bomb that seriously damaged Looby's home and two others, and shattered dozens of windows in the surrounding area. Fortunately, no one was killed or injured. (65)

Ironically, the attempted assassination of Looby only solidified his role as civil rights leader. Leo Lillard, a Tennessee State University student during the Nashville sit-ins, remembered that the bombing "worked to the benefit of the movement, because once you attack Looby--a pillar of the community, a councilman, a professional--what that did was send a signal to Nashville as a whole that no longer is it going to be a student-only movement." (66) The Associate Press carried the story of the attack and as a result, the news was spread all over the nation and beyond. During the spring and summer of 1960, in addition to rebuilding their house, Looby and his wife Grafta Mosby Looby tried to answer the numerous telegrams and letters of sympathy (some containing checks) that poured into their mailbox from Kenya, Nigeria, Switzerland, at least twenty states, and all over Tennessee. Senator Albert Gore, Sr., sent his best wishes, as did many ministers and rabbis. (67) Perhaps the most wonderful tribute honoring Looby and what he stood for in this moment of tribulation came the day after the bombing, when Looby attended a gathering at Fisk University to hear the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. Over 4,000 people in the audience gave Looby a prolonged, standing ovation, and Looby--usually a composed, self-possessed man--broke down in tears. (68) In the end, the NCLC's actions resulted in desegregating seven restaurants, a first for a large southern city. (69) About a year later, in an interview with a white reporter, Looby was quoted as saying, "I am not the leader of the Negro people. The people know where they want to go. I am merely part of a team that helps them choose the right road. . . . You ask me, what do I want for my people. My answer is, what do you want for yours?" (70)

Early in 1963 Rev. Smith sent letters to the owners of dozens of Nashville motels and hotels praising them for their practices of non-discrimination. At the same time, however, he launched "Operation Open City," an effort to make Nashville "a beloved community" and a "city without a color line." (71) Rev. Smith and NCLC secretary Andrew White sent Looby and Williams \$500 in April 1963 with the following note:

Although our financial campaign is not over and our receipts are falling considerably short of the anticipated goal, we did not feel that we should delay in sending some initial payment to you. We do not know what your fees are, but we felt that this check could at least serve as evidence of our appreciation and our recognition of indebtedness. We still await any statement which you may send.

There is no way for us to adequately express our gratitude for the service you are rendering. (72)

Apparently, Smith and the NCLC never stopped waiting for that statement of legal fees. In addition to the sit-ins and school desegregation cases, Looby and Williams won many other civil rights cases in the courts, involving discrimination in employment, housing, and other areas. (73)

UNIVERSITY MERGER LANDMARK

One of Avon Williams's most significant legal victories was in obtaining the merger of University of Tennessee-Nashville with historically black Tennessee State University (TSU). The Geier v. University of Tennessee case began in 1968 when Rita Sanders filed suit seeking an injunction to prevent UT-Nashville from expanding. The expansion, the suit alleged, would perpetuate and strengthen a dual system of higher education in the state, and TSU would remain predominantly black. (74) During the early 1970s, however, TSU supporters formed Tennesseans for Justice in Higher Education (TJHE), and began to lobby against merging TSU into the University of Tennessee system. TJHE members in a 1972 position paper expressed a point of view that went well beyond the Nashville scene. "The TSU plan hits at the heart of the national black community's interests," they declared. "It is in keeping with all the other integration plans which destroy black educational resources and leadership and do not replace them." (75) In some ways, many African Americans had held these concerns from the time of the Brown ruling in 1954. (76)

In the wake of the Civil Rights-Black Power Movement, many African Americans had come to appreciate the central role of using the courts to shape the social and political system. What the NAACP attorneys had known all along had now become more widely understood. The TJHE writers themselves revealed this when they insisted that their vision for TSU's future become the reality: "This must mean proportionate representation of blacks at all levels of higher education in Tennessee, including students, faculty, administrators and (on) governing boards. In addition, it must mean doing all things legal and just toward rightening the wrongs which segregation has inflicted upon black people and black institutions." (77)

This passion to preserve TSU's traditions had great emotional appeal, and in the end the federal circuit court indeed found strong logical and legal reasons for protecting TSU. Historically, the state of Tennessee had operated TSU and the UT system as part of its planned segregation of higher education. The court found that the state and University of Tennessee had failed to end this segregated system after 1954, and therefore ordered University of Tennessee to relinquish its Nashville campus to TSU. It was, Williams reflected, "the first time in America that a significant white institution of higher learning was ordered to be absorbed by a predominantly black institution of higher education under the leadership and guidance of the black President and his predominantly black faculty and staff." (78) In the final decision on the merger in 1984, Judge Thomas A. Wiseman, Jr., wrote that, "The ultimate goal is not any ideal ratio or mix of black and white students or faculty. The goal is a system of higher education in Tennessee tax-supported colleges and universities in which race is irrelevant, in which equal protection and equal application of the laws is a reality. (79) Two years later officials changed the name of the TSU downtown campus, and today it bears the name of its most prominent legal advocate--the Avon Williams Campus of Tennessee State University.

CONCLUSION

In the early 1970s legal scholar Kenneth Tolleff urged black lawyers to remember their loyalty to the black community and to avoid the monetary lure of the legal profession. Tolleff argued that, "Commitment and knowledge combined sustain the assurance and unpretentious dedication to the realization of economic, political, and social justice in the black community." (80) Without question, Looby and Williams had such knowledge and commitment. In typical laudatory fashion, concerted city council and

state senate efforts gathered together to name, in Nashville, a street and a library after Looby and a university campus after Williams--in other words, the treatment usually reserved for outstanding white citizens.

African American attorneys often worked in obscurity and ignominy throughout much of the Jim Crow era. In the 1930s, however, idealistic lawyers committed to black social advancement began to change this reality and image. Charles Hamilton Houston and Thurgood Marshall led the effort nationally, and relied on numerous local attorneys working with the NAACP to help them in various states, such as Looby and Williams in Tennessee. As black newspapers lauded African American lawyers working for civil rights, African Americans throughout the nation began to appreciate their efforts. Local papers were especially helpful in galvanizing support for local attorneys. As early as 1946, many black Nashvillians were made aware of Looby's role in the trials stemming from the Columbia riot through articles in the Nashville Globe. But even before this time, most black southerners had been aware of NAACP legal efforts on their behalf. Looby and Williams not only fulfilled their NAACP duties, but on their own initiative conducted their own civil rights crusade in and beyond the courtroom. A strong tradition of civil rights activism in Nashville provided them with a favorable home base from which to work across the entire state.

Looby and Williams' work bridged several eras of black lawyers' involvement in civil rights efforts--from a period of ignominy, to heroism, then ironically to media obscurity, just when their political activities increased. Their work transcended these various eras, however, and should be appreciated for its remarkable degree of continuity. In the final analysis, working against unjust laws and immoral social practices from within the legal system proved to be among the most effective and enduring approaches for advancing black civil rights. The long dedication of individual lawyers contributed a great deal to the brilliant successes in the legal arena.

NOTES

(1.) Telephone communication to the author, April 1, 2001. Lovett presents this theme and others in his forthcoming book, *Avon: Biography of the Civil Rights Movement in Tennessee*. Also see John Hope Franklin and Alfred A. Moss, Jr., *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of African Americans*, 8th ed. (New York, 2000), 524-25; and J. Clay Smith, Jr., *Emancipation: The Making of the Black Lawyer, 1844-2944* (Philadelphia, PA, 1993), 17.

(2.) Alexander Looby papers, Fisk University Special Collections (hereafter referred to as Looby Papers), boxes 2,4-10; Bobby L. Lovett, letter to the author, May 15, 2001; Bobby L. Lovett and Linda T. Wynn, eds., *Profiles of African Americans in Tennessee* (Nashville, 1996), 144-45.

(3.) Two lengthy articles documenting this are Robert Jerome Glennon, "The Role of Law in the Civil Rights Movement: The Montgomery Bus Boycott, 1955-1957," *Law and History Review* 9 (Spring 1991): 59-112, and Randall Kennedy, "Martin Luther Kings Constitution: A Legal History of the Montgomery Bus Boycott," *Yale Law Journal* 98 (April 1989): 999-1067. James A. Colaiaco also points out that a number of talented attorneys, including William Kunstler and Jack Greenberg, helped Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference; see Colaiaco, *Martin Luther King, Jr.: Apostle of Militant Nonviolence* (New York, 1988), 62, 144; and Adam Fairclough, *To Redeem the Soul of America: The Southern Christian Leadership Conference and Martin Luther King, Jr.* (Athens, GA, 1987), 98.

(4.) Steven B. Barkan, "Legal Control of the Southern Civil Rights Movement," *American Sociological Review* 49 (August 1984): 552-65. Probably the most notorious failure of the federal government in the area of civil rights in the twentieth century was the refusal of J. Edgar Hoover and the FBI to investigate civil rights violations and other crimes and to punish those responsible. See John T. Elliff, "Aspects of Federal Civil Rights Enforcement: The Justice Department and the FBI, 1939-1964," *Perspectives in American History* 5 (1971): 605-73. It should also be noted that from 1956 to 1959, southern whites launched a concerted attack on the NAACP, partly because of its legal work. Alabama outlawed the NAACP altogether, which meant the U.S. Supreme Court had to overreach local courts in outlawing the segregation addressed in the Montgomery bus boycott. See Aldon D. Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change* (New York, 1984), 26-35.

(5.) Donald Barnett King and Charles W. Quick, eds., *Legal Aspects of the Civil Rights Movement* (Detroit, MI, 1965), ix.

(6.) Abraham L. Davis, "The Role of Black Colleges and Black Law Schools in the Training of Black Lawyers and Judges, 1960-1980," *Journal of Negro History* 70 (Winter/Spring 1985), 25-26; W. B. B. Du Bois, *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study* (1899; reprinted, Millwood, New York,

1973), 114-15; G. Franklin Edwards, *The Negro Professional Class* (Glencoe, IL, 1959), 135; Charles Hamilton Houston, "The Need for Negro Lawyers," *Journal of Negro Education* 4 (January 1935): 51; Adam Fairclough, *Race and Democracy: The Civil Rights Struggle in Louisiana, 2915-1972* (Athens, GA, 1995), 19; Joseph Gordon Hylton, "The African-American Lawyer, the First Generation: Virginia as a Case Study," *University of Pittsburgh Law Review* 56 (Fall 1994): 137-56; Judith Kilpatrick, "(Extra)Ordinary Men: African-American Lawyers and Civil Rights in Arkansas before 1950," *Arkansas Law Review* 53 (2000): 311; Smith, *Emancipation*, 11-15; Carter G. Woodson, *The Negro Professional Man and the Community*, with Special Emphasis on the Physician and the Lawyer (1934; reprinted, New York, 1969), 221-39.

(7.) Woodson, *The Negro Professional Man*, 240. Such criticisms never entirely disappeared; during the late 1950s, civil rights leader Fred Shuttlesworth and others involved with the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights accused its lawyers of opportunism and self-interest. See Andrew M. Manis, *A Fire You Can't Put Out: The Civil Rights Life of Birmingham's Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth* (Tuscaloosa, AL, 1999), 214-15.

(8.) Houston, "The Need for Negro Lawyers," 52; Kilpatrick, "(Extra)Ordinary Men," 380; I. J. K. Wells, "A Counselor of the People," *The Crisis* (March 1931): 84-85; Woodson, *The Negro Professional Man*, 224, 241-44, 246-47.

(9.) Smith, *Emancipation*, 15.

(10.) Kilpatrick, "(Extra)Ordinary Men," 396.

(11.) Smith, *Emancipation*, 335-44.

(12.) Nashville Tennessean, March 3, 1961, box 3, Looby Papers; Avon Williams's autobiography, written in the early 1980s, was kindly loaned to the author by Avon N. Williams, III. This document is comprised of a series of transcripts made from tape recordings. Internal evidence, such as the pending appeal of the TSU-UTN merger (completed in 1984), suggests the time period. Hereafter, this document will be cited as the "Williams autobiography." Also included in this document is the entire transcript of the Bob Allen-Avon Williams interview, ca. 1979, an edited portion of which was published in an unidentified issue of the Nashville Magazine. Excerpts from the former document, not found in the latter, will hereafter be cited as the Bob Allen-Avon Williams interview, original transcript.

(13.) Bob Allen, "Avon Williams: A Study in Blacks and Whites," *Nashville Magazine*, ca. 1979, 107.

(14.) Bob Allen-Avon Williams interview, original transcript.

(15.) Richard H. Dinkins, interview with the author, May 3, 2001, in Nashville; hereafter referred to as Richard Dinkins interview.

(16.) Gunnar Myrdal et al., *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (1944; reprinted, New York, 1962), 694, 695, 703-4.

(17.) Richard Dinkins interview.

(18.) George E. Barrett, letter to the author, June 1, 2001.

(19.) Richard Kluger, *Simple Justice: The History of Brown v. Board of Education and Black America's Struggle for Equality* (New York, 1976), 126; Smith, *Emancipation*, 17; Mark V. Tushnet, *Making Civil Rights Law: Thurgood Marshall and the Supreme Court, 1936-1961* (New York, 1994), 6, 7. On Houston's work at Howard, see Genna Rae McNeil, *Groundwork: Charles Hamilton Houston and the Struggle for Civil Rights* (Philadelphia, 1983), chapter 6; Leland Ware, "Charles Houston's Transformation of Legal Education," *Howard Law Review* 32 (1989): 479-93.

(20.) Smith, *Emancipation*, 3, 15, 16.

(21.) McNeil, *Groundwork*, 218, 220.

(22.) Juan Williams, *Thurgood Marshall: American Revolutionary* (New York, 1998), 94. Following the more purely journalistic, undocumented books by Michael D. Davis and Hunter R. Clark, *Thurgood Marshall: Warrior at the Bar, Rebel on the Bench* (New York, 1994), and Carl T. Rowan's *Dream Makers, Dream Breakers* (New York, 1993), Williams's footnoted work presents a marked improvement for scholarly readers. Legal scholars and those looking for more specialized analysis of Marshall's judicial legacy can turn to Howard Ball, *A Defiant Life: Thurgood Marshall and the Persistence of Racism in America* (New York, 1998), and to two books by one of Marshall's former law clerks, Tushnet, *Making Civil Rights Law*, and *Making Constitutional Law: Thurgood Marshall and the Supreme Court, 1961-1991* (New York, 1997). Williams's book remains the most accessible, while Ball's book offers the greatest combined content of biography and legal history.

(23.) Kluger, *Simple Justice*, 133-36; Tushnet, *Making Civil Rights Law*, 12, 20, 116; Williams, *Thurgood Marshall*, 101-2, 108-9, 111, 113-19, 128-30, 145-46, 147, 150-51.

(24.) Fairclough, *Race and Democracy*, 72-73; Franklin and Moss, *From Slavery to Freedom*, 467-68.

- (25.) Henry Lewis Suggs, ed., *The Black Press in the South*, 2865-2979 (Westport, CT, 1983), x.
- (26.) Myrdal, *An American Dilemma*, 744; see also 908-11, 920-21.
- (27.) Samuel Shannon, "Tennessee," in Suggs, *Black Press in the South*, 331, 337, 338, 339.
- (28.) Lester C. Lamon, *Black Tennesseans, 2900-2930* (Knoxville, 1977), 15.
- (29.) A sampling of stories related to civil rights litigation from Tennessee's black press may be found in the following: *Chattanooga Observer*, May 7, 1948; July 16, 1948; November 12, 1948; December 10, 1948; December 31, 1948; January 28, 1949; February 25, 1949; March 4, 1949; *Memphis Tri-State Defender*, May 5, 1962; May 26, 1962; *Nashville Globe*, February 22, 1946; August 19, 1955; September 23, 1955; October 14, 1955; November 4, 1955; January 6, 1956; December 21, 1956.
- (30.) *Nashville Tennessean Magazine*, April 23, 1961, 20.
- (31.) *Ibid.*
- (32.) Lamon, *Black Tennesseans*, 3, 89, 187, 208, 209; David E. Sumner, "The Local Press and the Nashville Student Movement, 1969" (Ph.D. diss., University of Tennessee, 1989), 1, 56, 63-64.
- (33.) Fairclough, *To Redeem the Soul of America*, 60, 78; Franklin and Moss, *From Slavery to Freedom*, 531; August Meier and Elliott Rudwick, *CORE: A Study in the Civil Rights Movement, 1942-1968* (New York, 1973), 116; Sumner, "The Local Press and the Nashville Student Movement," iii, 63-64.
- (34.) Meier and Rudwick, *CORE*, 163, 170; Dr. Jamye C. Williams, letter to the author, July 18, 2001.
- (35.) Biographical sheet, Z. Alexander Looby Public Library (Nashville); Linda T. Wynn, "Leaders of Afro-American Nashville," *Looby Papers*; John Britton interview with Z. Alexander Looby, November 29, 1967, 2, 3; box 1, f. 4, *Looby Papers*; *Nashville Tennessean Magazine*, April 16, 1961, 22; and April 23, 1961, 14, both in box 3, *Looby Papers*.
- (36.) One of the best studies of Crump can be found interspersed throughout Michael K. Honey, *Southern Labor and Black Civil Rights: Organizing Memphis Workers* (Urbana, IL, 1993). The earlier, standard work on Crump is William D. Miller, *Mr. Crump of Memphis* (Baton Rouge, LA, 1964), but much good material pertaining to the earlier era can be found in David M. Tucker, *Memphis Since Crump: Bossism, Blacks, and Civic Reformers, 2948-1968* (Knoxville, TN, 1980). For other materials, see Gerald M. Capers, "Memphis: Satrapy of a Benevolent Despot," in Robert S. Allen, ed., *Our Fair City* (New York, 1947); Allan A. Michie and Frank Riley, *Dixie Demagogues* (New York, 1939), chapter 12; *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, July 3, 1938.
- (37.) November 3, 1928, announcement of Memphis practice; box 2, f. 26, *Looby Papers*; *Nashville Tennessean Magazine*, April 23, 1961, 14; Smith, *Emancipation*, 62, 343; *Who's Who Among Negro Lawyers* (Chicago, IL, 1945), 24.
- (38.) *Nashville Tennessean Magazine*, April 23, 1961, 20; box 3, *Looby Papers*.
- (39.) Kent College of Law, *Bulletin 1933-1934*; *Nashville World*, September 16, 1932, both in box 2, f. 26, *Looby Papers*; Smith, *Emancipation*, 57, 60, 62. Around the time Kent College was closing, Looby and two other NAACP attorneys were fighting a case before the Tennessee Supreme Court over enrollment discrimination at University of Tennessee. See State ex rel. Michael et al v. Witham et al, Supreme Court of Tennessee (1942), 165 SW2d 378.
- (40.) The basic account of the "Columbia riot" is given in Dorothy Beeler, "Race Riot in Columbia, Tennessee: February 25-27, 1946," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 39 (Spring 1980): 49-61. The *Nashville Globe* printed numerous stories on the incident and trial in most issues during March-November 1946.
- (41.) Looby's own account of this event is found in Z. Alexander Looby to Leon A. Ransom, November 25, 1946, box 1, f. 15, *Looby Papers*. Other sources recapitulate the event: John Egerton, *Speak Now Against the Day: The Generation Before the Civil Rights Movement in the South* (New York, 1994), 365; Kluger, *Simple Justice*, 225-26; Carl T. Rowan, *Dream Makers, Dream Breakers: The World of Justice Thurgood Marshall* (Boston, MA, 1993), 102-12; Tushnet, *Making Civil Rights Law*, 52-55; Gilbert Ware, William Hastie: *Grace Under Pressure* (New York, 1984), 173-74; Williams, *Thurgood Marshall*, 131-42.
- (42.) Looby to C. Francis Stradford, October 11, 1946; box 1, f. 17, *Looby Papers*.
- (43.) Chicago *Defender* telegram to Z. Alexander Looby, December 30, 1946, box 1, f. 16, *Looby Papers*.
- (44.) Charles Hamilton Houston to Secretary, Spingarn Medal Award

Committee, October 30, 1946; box 1, f. 17, Looby Papers. Timing was against Looby in this regard, as Thurgood Marshall had won the Spingarn the previous year. And though the NAACP itself focused on legal efforts, the award committee may have been reluctant to give the Spingarn to an attorney two years in a row. Instead, in 1947, the Spingarn went to the chemist Percy Julian. (Houston won it in 1950.) Still, simply to have Houston's preferential endorsement spoke extremely well for Looby as a compliment from an esteemed peer--although Looby himself said Houston "had no peers"; Britton interview, November 29, 1967; 16, 38; Looby Papers.

(45.) J. Randolph Fisher, "Z. Alexander Looby: An Effective Leader," *The Crisis* (November 1947): 339.

(46.) *Nashville Globe*, December 20, 1946 (front page).

(47.) "A Champion of Justice: Z. Alexander Looby," *Church Service Directory and News Journal 2* (Nashville, February 27, 1949), 16; box 3, Looby Papers.

(48.) Fairclough, *Race and Democracy*, 134.

(49.) Edwards, *The Negro Professional Class*, 133-37, 161.

(50.) *Ibid.*, 137.

(51.) Avon N. Williams, III, e-mail to the author, November 20, 2000.

(52.) *Nashville Tennessean*, September 12, 1965; box 3, Looby Papers.

(53.) *Nashville Banner*, November 17, 1969; *Nashville Tennessean*, November 17, 1969; *Nashville Tennessean*, August 30, 1970.

(54.) Williams autobiography.

(55.) The school desegregation cases included *Gray et al v. Board of Trustees of University of Tennessee et al* (1951), 100 F.Supp.113; *McSwain et al v. County Board of Education of Anderson County, Tennessee* (1952), 104 F.Supp.861; *Goss et al v. Board of Education, City of Knoxville* (the history is recounted in 1967, 270 F.Supp.903). Other school desegregation and civil rights cases are cited below.

(56.) In 1963 metropolitan Nashville schools consolidated with Davidson County schools, and, in turn the court consolidated a county case with the Kelley case under the new name of *Kelley v. Metropolitan County Board*.

(57.) *Kelley v. Metropolitan County Board* (1980), 492 F.Supp., 167-77.

(58.) *McSwain et al v. County Board of Education of Anderson County, Tennessee* (1952), 104 F.Supp.861; *Mapp et al v. Board of Education of the City of Chattanooga* (1962), 203 F.Supp.843; *Vick et al v. Board of Education of Obion County* (1962), 205 F.Supp.436.

(59.) Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement*, 174-78, 205-13; Linda T. Wynn, "The Dawning of a New Day: The Nashville Sit-Ins, February 13--May 10, 1960," *Tennessee Historical Quarterly* 50 (Spring 1991): 44.

(60.) Sumner, *The Local Press and the Nashville Student Movement*, "33, 121.

(61.) *Ibid.*, 63-64; Richard Dinkins interview.

(62.) *Nashville Tennessean*, March 3, 1960; box 3, Looby Papers.

(63.) Dr. Jamye C. Williams, letter to the author, July 18, 2001.

(64.) Bob Allen-Avon Williams interview, original transcript.

(65.) Wynn, "Dawning of a New Day," 50.

(66.) Henry Hampton et al., eds., *Voices of Freedom: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement from the 1950s through the 1980s* (New York, 1990), 65. Lillard's analysis is supported in Sumner, "The Local Press and the Nashville Student Movement," 123, 124.

(67.) This correspondence is found throughout box 1, Looby Papers.

(68.) *Chicago Daily Tribune*, April 21, 1960 (Looby papers, box 1, f.14); *Nashville Banner*, April 21, 1960; box 3, Looby Papers.

(69.) Wynn, "Dawning of a New Day," 44, 45, 53.

(70.) *Nashville Tennessean Magazine*, April 16, 1961, 14; box 3, Looby Papers.

(71.) Various correspondence, Kelly Miller Smith papers, Jean and Alexander Heard Library, Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tennessee (hereafter referred to as Smith Papers), box 1, files 3-4, 8-10, 12.

(72.) Kelly Miller Smith and Andrew White to Z. Alexander Looby and Avon N. Williams, Jr., April 17, 1963; box 1, file 10, Smith Papers.

(73.) *Vasco A. Smith v. Holiday Inns of America* (1963), 220 F. Supp. 1; *Dr. Sammie Lucas, et ux v. Clifford Earl Hooper, et al* (1974), 381 F. Supp. 1222; *Compact, et al, v. Metropolitan Government of Nashville* (1984), 594 F. Supp. 1567; *Rolfe and Peebles v. Lincoln County Board of Education* (1966), 282 F. Supp. 192; *Mary Johnson v. Lillie Rubin Affiliates*, 5 Fair Empl. Prac. Cas. (BNA) 547; 5 Empl. Prac. Dec. (CCH) P8542, March 15, 1972, January 16, 1973; *Thomas Ed Branham v. General Electric Company*, 63 F.R.D. 667; 19 Fed. R. Serv. 2d (Callaghan) 502; 15 Fair Empl. Prac. Cas. (BNA)

1070, July 12, 1974; Newman, et al, v. Avco Corporation, 15 Fair Empl. Prac. Cas. (BNA) 1404; 9 Empl. Prac. Dec. (CCH) P9979; 10 Empl. Prac. Dec. (CCH) P10, 300, June 3, 1975, memorandum, June 20, 1975; Robert B. Elliott v. University of Tennessee, 766 F.2d 982; 38 Fair Empl. Proc. Cas. (BNA) 522; 37 Empl. Prac. Dec. (CCH) P35, 419, July 9, 1985; Napoleon Batts et al, v. NLT Corporation, 34 Empl. Prac. Dec. (CCH) P34, 444, March 28, 1984--affirmed in part and reversed in part, April 12, 1988.

(74.) Geier v. University of Tennessee, et al (1979), 597 F.2d 1056.

(75.) Tennesseans for Justice in Higher Education, "Position Paper on TSU Case," ca. February 1972, 1; box 96, file 7; Smith Papers.

(76.) One of many early examples involved Whitney Young, Sr., and his efforts to preserve the Lincoln Institute located near Simpsonville, Kentucky. See Dennis C. Dickerson, Militant Mediator: Whitney M. Young, Jr. (Lexington, KY, 1998), 16-18.

(77.) Tennesseans for Justice in Higher Education, "Position Paper on TSU Case," 4; box 96, file 7, Smith Papers.

(78.) Williams autobiography.

(79.) Geier v. University of Tennessee, et al (1984), 593 F. Supp. 1263.

(80.) Kenneth S. Tollett, "Black Lawyers, Their Education, and the Black Community," in African Americans and the Legal Profession in Historical Perspective, ed. Paul Finkelman (New York, 1992), 438.

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Upon This Rock: The Black Church, Nonviolence, and the Civil Rights Movement.

Calhoun-Brown, Allison

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TEXT:

Churches have traditionally been viewed as places of stability and strength in the African-American community. From slavery through the long racially segregated history of the United States, when African Americans were prevented from building institutions of their own and precluded from participating in the institutions of mainstream America, churches developed and contained civil

society for them. In church, one could find politics, arts, music, education, economic development, social services, civic associations, leadership opportunities, and business enterprises. One could also find a rich spiritual tradition of survival and liberation. Whether their leaders repudiated the "curse of Ham," embraced the revolutionary religious vision of Nat Turner, or preached the more reserved doctrine that "Jesus will fix it after a while," black churches have always accepted securing and guaranteeing the freedom of black people as one of their central missions.

During the 1800s, when blacks were struggling to establish their own denominations and their own places in which to worship, they were rebelling against subordinating themselves to the principal institutions of oppression and racism in the country--white churches. Indeed, as Wilmore contended, the movement to establish independent black churches was, in every sense, the first black freedom movement (1983, 78). Thus, though black religion shares elements of evangelical faith and practice, "the

black church itself is a precipitate of its own culture, developed from and in response to its own experience" (Lincoln 1999, xxi). Because, to some extent, all black churches share a common history, the term "black church" is often used by historians to discuss all predominantly black Christian congregations. The fact that thousands of disparate groupings can be referenced with meaning as a single unit is a testament to the important role churches play in the African-American community and the degree to which black churches and their congregations have been separate and distinct from both mainstream religious organizations and white society.

Black churches have been aggregated into the singular institution called "the black church" to the extent that they are united by their cultural, historic, social, and spiritual missions of fighting the ravages of racism by "buoy(ing) up the hopes of its members in the face of adversity and giv(ing) them a sense of community"--regardless of denominational distinction, geographic location, or class composition (Myrdal (1944) 1962, 946). Although some denominational and congregational distinctions can be drawn, most black churches share a very similar religious culture. Similar scriptural analogies, messages, songs, prayers, symbols, rituals, oratorical styles, and themes of equality and freedom--even the "sanctuary red" carpeting of many of the facilities--are familiar from church context to church context. Although black churches operate with a high degree of independence, people going from service location to service location would feel little cultural disconnect. The many different congregations of the black church collectively have had the feel of the same organization.

Given the connection between the black church and the civil rights strivings of African-American people, the role the church played during the Civil Rights Movement and its relationship to nonviolent social change has been a subject of particular interest. The Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s was a social revolution. It culminated in the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which substantially ended the codification of racism in the United States. Although some have cautioned that the role the black church played in the movement has been exaggerated (Frazier 1964; Marx 1967, 105), most authoritative accounts emphasize the centrality and importance of African-American churches and African-American religious culture to the movement's success (McAdam 1985; Morris 1984). Indeed, there is a rich literature that documents the organizational support that many black churches provided to the Civil Rights Movement.

Still, while much of the research has highlighted the importance of the organizational resources that black churches contributed to the Civil Rights Movement, less attention has been given to how the message of nonviolence was constructed by black church leaders to support collective action or why that message resonated so strongly among followers. What was it about the nature and practice of black Christianity, institutionalized in churches, that facilitated nonviolent politics at both the institutional and individual levels? In this article I address these questions by reviewing the ways that churches were involved in the Civil Rights Movement and looking at how the culture of the black church helped leaders to frame the meaning of the nonviolent message and encouraged churchgoers to respond to it positively. Although most studies of the political effects of religion do not focus on the influence of religious culture, culture is important to political mobilization (Harris 1999; Legee, Lieske, and Wald 1991). Although the study of the relevance of culture to politics has been advanced by the meaningful work of scholars like Almond and Verba (1963, 1989), the manner in which culture--particularly the subcultures of minority groups--affects political action is not well understood. In the case of the Civil Rights Movement, the receptivity of African-American religious culture to the message of nonviolence is what really linked the black church to the movement. Reexamining these relationships may help to identify the contemporary opportunities for and constraints to political mobilization through black churches as well as lead to a more general appreciation of the importance and relevance of religious culture in social and political movements.

Churches as Organizational Resources

That black churches helped bring organization to the Civil Rights Movement has been well documented thanks to the embracing of resource mobilization theory by students of social movements. Before the explication of resource mobilization theory, much of the social movement literature asserted that movements resulted from psychological tension caused by disruptive structural or systemic strains. Until at least the mid-1970s, social movements were generally understood to be efforts to relieve these tensions, not to realize explicitly political goals (see Geschwender 1971;

Lang and Lang 1961; Smelser 1962; Turner and Killian 1957).

Resource mobilization theory asserts that discontent is basically constant. What really matters to organizers of a movement is "the amount of social resources available to unorganized but aggrieved groups, making it possible to launch an organized demand for change" (Jenkins and Perrow 1977, 250). Armed with this understanding, later analysts of the Civil Rights Movement focused first on the resources that groups external to the black community brought to the struggle and then on the resources that internal organizations could mobilize (McAdam 1985; Morris 1984; Oberschall 1973). Approached from this perspective, mobilization can be understood as the "process by which a group secures collective control over the resources needed for action. The major issues therefore are the resources controlled by the group prior to mobilization efforts, and the processes by which the group pools resources and direct these toward social change" (Jenkins 1983, 532-33). "In the absence of resources," McAdam explained, "the aggrieved population is likely to lack the capacity to act even when granted the opportunity to do so" (1985, 43). As the most resource-rich institution in the African-American community and the one most closely associated with civil society, the church had much to contribute. The resource mobilization literature notes that the black church could offer social communication networks, facilities, audience, leadership, and money to the movement.

Black churches did support the movement with these things. An examination of the national movement or of any city-specific desegregation effort provides ample evidence of this. At the national level, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference served as the "decentralized political arm of the black church" (Morris 1984, 91). The SCLC's mandate was to coordinate nonviolent direct action activities through churches in various locations and its initial leadership was made up of ministers who led many of the largest nonviolent actions in Montgomery, Tallahassee, New Orleans, Atlanta, Baton Rouge, Birmingham, and Nashville. Emphasizing the minimal differentiation between black churches and civil rights organizations, Wilmore recalled that it used to be a truism in many communities that "the NAACP is the black church on its knees" (1983, 142).

Black churches also worked with student-dominated groups like the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and Congress on Racial Equality (CORE) to organize demonstrations like the 1960 Nashville sit-ins which produced very accomplished mass-movement organizers who would go on to become leaders of those organizations. The Nashville sit-ins drew heavily on the resources of black churches. As John Lewis recalls, "The First Baptist Church became a rallying point, it became the meeting place, it became the place where students, young people, community leaders, could come and discuss, debate and argue about what the city should become" (quoted in Morris 1984, 175).

The First Baptist Church, its pastor, Kelly Miller Smith, and the Nashville Christian Leadership Council (NCLC), of which Smith was president, were all integrally involved in the 1960 sit-in movement. Morris (1981) explained that more than a year before the sit-ins, NCLC Project Committee Chair Rev. James Lawson began holding workshops on nonviolent direct action at churches throughout the city. Through the churches and ministers affiliated with the NCLC, students were equipped and trained for nonviolent action, and the black community was organized to support the students once the sit-ins began. In fact, the NCLC leaders organized mass meetings at the churches during which they raised money for bail, enlisted lawyers to represent the students, and promoted the economic boycott that was designed to reinforce the students' demands that lunch counters be desegregated. In Nashville, as they did throughout the South (and as resource mobilization theory might predict) churches provided the organizational resources needed by participants in the movement.

The Message of Nonviolence

Mobilization, however, requires more than resources. The presence of social movement organizations with resources and the existence of grievances are necessary but insufficient conditions for giving rise to social movements. The major critique of the resource mobilization explanation for the emergence of the Civil Rights Movement has been that its proponents "... ignore or gloss over mobilizing beliefs and ideas, in large part because of their presumed ubiquity and constancy, which makes them, in turn, relatively nonproblematic and uninteresting factors in the movement equation" (Snow and Benford 1992, 135). Critics of the resource mobilization model have stressed that the significance attached to grievances as well as the actions proposed to address them are socially constructed. Therefore, much of the work done by a social movement organization involves, literally, making meanings and communicating the appropriate mobilizing messages to its constituents.

The ideas underlying nonviolent action, particularly the notion of the "Beloved Community," have often been given little attention. This is probably because most researchers have taken the relationships among nonviolent direct action, black Christianity, and the black church as a given. To be sure, organizations like the SCLC worked hard in churches to make political activism an expression of practical Christianity, but the fact that many ministries refused to become involved in supporting nonviolent protests for the cause of civil rights demonstrates that the translation of black Christianity through black churches into a nonviolent political movement was by no means automatic. Even Martin Luther King Jr. was critical of the involvement of his fellow clergy members in movement politics. He charged them with being both apathetic and otherworldly (1958, 35). In assessing the Birmingham civil rights campaign, Wyatt Walker estimated that as many as 90% of black ministers shunned the activity of the SCLC there (cited in Fairclough 1981, 183).

Today, nonviolent resistance is frequently characterized as an obvious and rational political strategy for the powerless. According to this logic, blacks advocated nonviolently for social change because they lacked the power to win concessions by force. The church became instrumental in this change primarily because it was the dominant institution in the black community. Of course, blacks, like most people, were not naturally inclined toward nonviolent action. Civil rights activist Hosea Williams poignantly expressed this sentiment by stating, "Nonviolence as a way of life was just as foreign to blacks as flying a space capsule would be to a roach" (quoted in Morris 1984, 158). As E. Franklin Frazier commented concerning the Civil Rights Movement, the ideas of Gandhi had "nothing in common with the social heritage of the Negro" (quoted in Kapur 1992, 156).

Moreover, the church was not uniformly supportive of nonviolent activism. Joseph Jackson, the head of the largest black denomination, the National Baptist Convention, rejected the social gospel. In 1961, Martin Luther King Jr. and a group of ministers from the National Baptist Convention formed the Progressive Baptist Convention in response to the lack of support for social action among the National Baptists (Lincoln and Mamiya 1990, 36). The fact that Jackson continued as the leader of the National Baptist Convention for another 22 years after this incident is, in part, a testament to the diversity of opinion that existed among the ministers of the black church regarding the appropriate role for the church in securing social change. This, of course, does not diminish the important functions that many black churches, even National Baptist churches, performed during the Civil Rights Movement. However, it does serve as a reminder that the movement did not rise from the church and that, in many instances, the resources and ministers of the church had to be actively recruited into the movement.

Mobilizing For Nonviolence

When considering issues of political mobilization for the cause of civil rights, particular attention must be paid to how the message and meaning of nonviolence were constructed by the black church to support individual and collective action. The black church was able to mobilize people for nonviolent action because church membership provided individuals a frame for receiving the message and meaning of nonviolence. A "frame" is an interpretive schemata or way of understanding the world (Snow et al. 1986). Tarrow (1992) has explained that collective action frames work best when they are connected to the cultural meaning and symbols of a movement's audience. Religious culture is one of the most powerful systems of ritual and symbolic meaning in the black community and actively engaging in the activities of the church was very important to the leaders of the Civil Rights Movement.

Black religious culture provided such a strong collective action frame because the black church had been a "free space" in the black community for centuries. As a free space, the church offered an "environment in which people (were) able to learn a new self-respect, a deeper and more assertive group identity, public skills and values of cooperation and civic virtue" (Evans and Boyte 1986, 17). This was particularly vital in a thoroughly racist society that tried to deny to blacks all of these things. It was the church, and not simply black Christianity, that helped to shape these attitudes. Although internal religiosity can certainly have independent effects, attitudes and understandings about religious matters are significantly affected by the church to which one belongs. Whether otherworldly or this-worldly, the black church communicated the revolutionary message of equality before God. Its songs, prayers, rituals, and doctrines all reinforced this simple truth.

Morris (1992) explained that the development of this kind of "oppositional consciousness" is an important component in political mobilization. Many of the leaders of the Civil Rights Movement attempted to draw upon this religiously based oppositional consciousness by referencing biblical stories that reflected God's willingness to work for the benefit of the oppressed. Citing a quote from Andrew Young, Frederick Harris demonstrates how Martin Luther King Jr. was adept at raising this type consciousness among listeners.

Nobody could have ever argued segregation and integration and gotten people to do anything about that. But when Martin would talk about leaving the slavery of Egypt and wandering into the promised land; somehow that made sense to folks. And they may not have understood it; it was nobody else's political theory, but it was their grassroots ideology. It was their faith; it was the thing that they had been nurtured on. And when they heard the language they responded... I think it was the cultural milieu, when people were really united with the real meaning of that cultural heritage, and when they saw in their faith also a liberation struggle that they could identify with, then you kind of had 'em boxed. They all wanted to be religious. And when you finally helped them see that religion meant involvement in action, you kinda had 'em hooked then. (1999, 139-40)

Nonetheless, the fact that the leaders of the Civil Rights Movement could tap into an oppositional consciousness when framing their message of nonviolence does not explain why the message resonated so strongly. Though the black church historically operated as an affirming free space, it had not always embraced sociopolitical movements--even those most ostensibly tied to the church's liberational mission. Indeed, scholars have often characterized the black church in the first half of the twentieth century as "deradicalized" and withdrawn from political and social involvement in their communities (see, e.g., Wilmore 1983, chap. 6).

Harris' model of how religious culture acts as a resource for political mobilization helps to describe why the church served so well as a conduit for the ideas of nonviolent social activism. According to Harris, African-American churches "provide African Americans with material resources and oppositional dispositions to challenge their marginality," and at the same time help members "to develop positive orientations toward the civic order" (1999, 40). Harris called this dualistic orientation an oppositional civic culture. "An oppositional civic culture develops attitudes and behaviors that simultaneously support civil society and oppose a system of domination within that society" (67). Viewed from this perspective, the black church can be seen to have engendered in members an oppositional consciousness that predisposed them to challenging society, and concurrently, served to reinforce their attachment and loyalty to the societal regime. Paris observed that black churches have always stressed to their members a healthy respect for the rule of law. He contended that "the loyalty of the black churches to the nation's laws and customs has often limited (blacks) in the kinds of action that they could advocate" (1985, 30) and has prevented them from engaging in forms of sociopolitical action that might in any way compromise a respect for the law or for the political values of American society.

Most nonviolent protests during the Civil Rights Movement were entirely within the bounds of the law. Boycotts, meetings, parades, and mass demonstrations are all perfectly legal. For example, the March on Washington, even though it involved hundreds of thousands of people, was not an act of civil disobedience but an exercise of constitutional rights. These types of nonviolent protests allowed a person to advocate for social change without violating the norms of the dualistic oppositional civic culture they had absorbed through the church. The act of protest was consistent with an oppositional consciousness, but, because the protest was carried out within the bounds of the law, it did not require disloyalty to the regime. Even in cases where acts of civil disobedience did occur, they did not compromise respect for the law. Civil disobedience was usually undertaken to show that local laws were unjust and opposed to the Constitution. As Martin Luther King Jr. explained

One who breaks an unjust law must do so openly, lovingly and with a willingness to accept the penalty. I submit that an individual who breaks a law that conscience tells him is unjust, and who willingly accepts the penalty of imprisonment in order to arouse the conscience of the community over its injustice, is in reality expressing the highest respect for the law. (Quoted in Colainco 1988, 86)

Thus, one of the primary reasons that calls for nonviolent social action resonated so strongly in African-American churches was because it related consistently to the oppositional civic culture that the church cultivated. Through nonviolent protest and demonstration, people could

simultaneously challenge systematic injustice and racism and still embrace the principles of the liberal society. Both of these aspirations were valued objectives of the church. The Civil Rights Movement allowed individuals to accomplish both at the same time.

Understanding that black churches fostered development of an oppositional civic culture is also useful for understanding different levels of engagement by individual churches during the movement. If the church is viewed as only inculcating oppositional consciousness then it would be reasonable to expect all black congregations to have been heavily involved in movement politics. If the church is viewed only as a conservative institution that promotes loyalty to the social order, then it would be reasonable to expect all churches to have been alienated from movements directed at social change. In reality, individual black churches occupied every position on the continuum of involvement with the Civil Rights Movement. Though virtually all black churches shared elements of an oppositional culture and a civic culture, the exact balance of these that any individual congregation reflected varied from church to church. Congregational-specific characteristics such as socioeconomic background, educational achievement, age composition, ministerial disposition, and theological orientation were undoubtedly important determinants of the balance.

Culture can significantly influence not only mobilization and the types of activities for which groups are likely to mobilize. In the case of African Americans, the dualistic nature of oppositional civic culture helped to effectively frame what nonviolent social action meant and facilitated participation in it. In studies of the relationship between religion and politics, attention is most often paid to the resources that churches contribute to political action or how religion influences voting behavior, political attitudes, and political motivations. Only rarely has culture been considered an important independent component. Religious culture, however, and particularly the religious culture of minorities in society, may reveal much about the nature and practice of the politics of these groups. Considering culture also emphasizes that the relationship between religion and politics is multifaceted and more complex than is often appreciated. The black church contributed resources to the Civil Rights Movement and also provided a context in which the movement could be embraced and understood. Much of this was contingent on the nature of black religious culture, and it was this culture that affected the operation of nonviolent social actions.

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Black Thought and Culture:

Keyword search for "black church" and "civil rights" worked best. The initial search for "Southern Christian Leadership Conference" turned up no hits.

2. Wells-Barnett, Ida Bell. *"Diary of Ida Bell Wells-Barnett, March, 1887"*
[Page 141 | Paragraph | Section | Document]

a meeting of a local civil rights group organized to fight White violence and the politics of accommodation, which intensified in the decade following the Compromise of 1877. This passage underscores the role of independent Black churches, such as the Avery Chapel African Methodist Episcopal **Church**, in championing **civil rights** and the importance of **Black** ministers and businessmen in providing progressive leadership. *The Reverend Benjamin Albert Imes was born in 1848 to free Black parents in Pennsylvania. After graduating from Oberlin in 1880, he became the first Black pastor of the Second Congregational Church, which he served*

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Diary of Ida Bell Wells-Barnett, March, 1887

In the following entry, Wells hints at the reasons for her decision to move, suggesting that the Settles are "parsimonious," particularly in their treatment of Lily. She and Theresa Settle, however, continue to socialize together.

Ellen Dickinson taught with Ida B. Wells at the Kortrecht School, and John Carr was a barber, located at 59½ Beale Street. M. W. Dogan, her hairdresser, was originally from Holly Springs and made frequent trips there.

Tuesday, March 1

Paid at last. I went up to Mr. C[hurch]'s this morning before breakfast and paid him one hundred dollars, leaving 45 cts, still unpaid.

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Did not call for a receipt or think one necessary. Now when I pay Mr. Yates I will be all right. Had I only been ready could have gone to housekeeping this week, at a location just suited to me, but I had no furniture & there was no time to consult Mrs. Matthews. I am dissatisfied here, and much as I dislike the way things are arranged, I have decided to make no other break until I start out for myself. I believe in everybody's saving what they can, but I don't believe in one's being too parsimonious & when it comes to a point of offering to sell a pair of shoes to a child -- that might easily have been given away & taking dimes promised them & paying their way on the street cars when going on errands for them. I'll not rest till I am out of the house, as I've lost my interest in it. Not many letters last week -- in fact only one of special interest & that was from Mr. H[ackley]. He writes with his usual happy style & proposes to introduce me to a lady friend. Have not replied as yet -- will wait & curb my impatience. While I received none, I wrote more than for many a day. To Mr. P[oo]le, Mrs. Bowser, Mrs. Wells, Messrs Ousley, Harrison, Lewis (& a bundle of papers) Morris and Mrs. M. Later I wrote to Mr. B. & Rev. Wm. J. Simmons. Still owe Messrs Taylor & Coles letters. We had a holiday last week & Mrs. S[ettle] and I went calling -- a thing I've not done before since I've been in Memphis. We paid 22 calls in all & came home in the evening tired out, & then did not get around. Monday night 5 of us -- all that came of the large number expected -- went down to Ellen D[ickinson]'s & spent a very pleasant time. Tuesday night, the Messrs Bryant came & spent the evening playing parcheesi -- they left next night. They are very pleasant. Mr. Carr came that evening also & brought a Mr. Stewart with him. He seemed somewhat constrained, in the presence of the others, but said he would be here the first Sunday in the month. Practiced Wednesday night again, & the rest of the week tried to make up for any loss of sleep. Spent Saturday in writing for the American B[aptist]. Sunday went to church after a call from M. W. Dogan who took a picture I sent by him to Mrs. Rather. Had 10 in the class Sunday & my contribution was 75 cts. I am so proud of my success. Father help me, I pray be more thoughtful & considerate in speech, and in action be consistent. May my labors be attended with success & guide my pen in ways of wisdom & peace: and may my prayers be answered & may I be submissive to thy will.

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Wells promises Mr. Ousley to spend a month at his home in Woodstock, a town in Shelby County.

Sunday, March 6

No S[unday] S[chool], no church, no nothing today but a steady downpour of rain; so no one has been out but L[ily]. Letters from Mr. H[ackley] (nearly two weeks ago), Mr. J[ohnson] Friday and "Charlie"

yesterday. He started to write in answer to my peremptory card but was taken sick & the letter was concluded in a different handwriting & stated that he was sick. All anger & resentment dies away & I write him immediately solicitously, inquiring for his health. Was out every afternoon & night last week practicing my drama. We are getting along nicely. Bought a pair of shoes for myself yesterday for \$4.50 and a writing desk for Lily for 90 cts. Want to have my dress made soon, but I've no money to spare. Have not made Lily's dress either & tomorrow is her birthday. She will be 11 years old. Fan[nie] T[hompson] Mr. Mann, and Mr. Carr came to call this evening. Have not moved yet & hardly think I shall now until school closes anyway. Will have to put up with it, and if the Father prospers me, will go to housekeeping on my own hook. No letter from Mrs. Matthews yet. Mr. Ousley was in to see me yesterday & I agreed to go out when school is out & stay a month.

Florence Cooper taught at the Monroe School, and J. L. Fleming was a journalist who moved to Memphis from Marion, Arkansas, where he edited the Marion Headlight.

Monday, March 14

Letters from Mr. B. Mrs. A. W. M[atthews], Eli, Jim, Mr. Yates. Wrote to Messrs Johnson & H[ackley] last Monday. Every afternoon last week we practiced and Friday night the long expected event transpired & was an artistic & financial success. Wrote the American Baptist Saturday. I find myself running out of subjects. Will have to check up if I expect to hold out till Aug. Called on Mrs. E. W. Mosely who with her husband has been in town two weeks,

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in company with Mrs. Cooper Misses Thompson & Felton, week before last. Last Tuesday evening I went to the first named lady's to a sociable to meet her. Had a pleasant time. Mr. Marcus was my company. Our preacher is here and I heard him preach first Sunday. So far I like him except he assumes too much for a stranger. Went to Mrs H[ill]'s to dine & was too late to meet my class. Hated it badly, as I had to miss last Sabbath. Mr. S[ettle] went to the office yesterday & brought me a letter & card from B. F. [Poole] & Dr. S[immons] respectively. The former sent my letter & talks as tenderly as usual. I wonder if there is nothing to him but words. Heaven knows I would gladly help him, but he seems content to remain as he is, despite his tone and I cannot show more anxiety than he. Wrote to Mr. Taylor, Jim, Mr. P[ooole] and Mrs. M[atthews] last night. Took my dress & trimmings today and spent 3.22 in the store besides the money I'll have to pay for my dress. Dr. Braden of Nashville visited the school today -- also had a call from Mr. Fleming.

Tomorrow is the day of the drawing -- I wonder if 71796 will get anything, or if my approaching case in the Supreme Court will bring me any thing? A little help now would do wonderful things. I trust I may be prospered.

Wells's grandmother Peggy had at least one child, Jim Wells, by her slave master. She married (probably a man with the surname Butler) and had several children, including Margaret, her only daughter. Following the deaths of Jim and Lizzie Wells, Peggy, who did day work, took care of Ida's brothers and sisters until she had a stroke and moved in with her daughter (see Duster 1970, 8 -- 11). It is surprising that Wells had lost touch with her relatives and did not realize that her grandmother was still living.

Apparently, Fannie Butler owns property in Memphis, which, as she writes in a later entry, Wells wants to buy. Perhaps it is property that Fannie inherited after the death of her husband because the place has to be "probated."

Wells was elected editor of the Evening Star, a newsletter issued by the Lyceum, a literary society that met at LeMoyne Normal Institute on Fridays.

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Sunday, March 20

I am not happy & nothing seems to make me so. I wonder what kind of a creature I will eventually become?

A letter from Aunt Margaret last week that informs me grandma just died March 1st. I was very much shocked to know she had been alive all this time & I never knew it or where she lived. I wrote immediately asking for particulars. A letter from Aunt F[annie] who still wishes to know what it will cost to have the place "probated" to her. Must find out what she means before I write. One also from Mrs Rice who has a little girl. The new preacher called & we went to prayer meeting last Wednesday evening after supper. I like him rather well save a few mannerisms. Tuesday night Mr. Greenlee called. Friday night went to the Lyceum & was reelected as editor. Learned that George is at Mr. Payne's. I fear I've driven him away with my tongue again. Will write him. Mr. Carr was out calling Friday eve & went to the

L[yceum] with us. Mr. H. came home with me from the Institute. He's a nice little fellow. Added another dollar to my already long account at Menken's this afternoon. Am determined it shall be my last. Can buy things cheaper at other places & I'm going to do a cash business after this so help me.

Tuesday, March 28

Letters last week from Aunt Fannie, Mr. H. T. J[ohnson], Mr. E. H. H[ackley] "Charlie" & Mr. Lawson. Wrote to George, Jim, Aunt F[annie] Mr. Taylor, Bowser & Simmons. Bought a hat costing \$3.50 that I am sorry for now. Fan[nie] & J[im] were over one night & played parcheesi. Friday night went to Lyceum & Saturday made a dress for Lily. Must make her some skirts. Mrs. Matthews was up yesterday and I went with her to her church & missed my own service, but we had a very affecting meeting. Mr. I[m]es preaches with such fervor. I wish to attend the series of meetings there this week, but I have no one to escort me. Went to meet my class in S[unday] S[chool] at Avery at one o'clock. Father help me to have some influence over them and use that influence for good! I want to be of use to them, show me the way, I beseech Thee. Mr. Imes preached about our religion costing us something & I thought of the beautiful Easter time coming, that my thoughts had strayed away from

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the true significance of the time to less important matters of dress; that I have made no preparation for an Easter offering, but must do so and instead of spending my holiday in fun & pleasure for myself will fast for my many sins of dereliction & remain home to work, watch and pray, and praise for the wonderful goodness of my Father to an unworthy servant. Went to see old man Bostic who has been sick so long, last week & was greatly refreshed by my visit. Mr. Carr brought a good motherly lady Mrs White from K[ansas] C[ity] to see me today at school. Paid Judge Greer \$10. today to continue the case; with what he has, makes \$15.

J. Pennoyer Jones was a Black politician from Desha County, Arkansas, who urged representatives to the Colored Republican State Convention in 1883 to break with the "party of Lincoln" and support the Democrats.

Monday, April 4

Last Tuesday evening Mr. Marcus took me to call on Mrs. Means & we spent a very pleasant evening. Wednesday night Messrs Carr & Woods called to take us to call on Mrs. White. We had a fine time going thro the rain and spent a very enjoyable evening. Mr. Wilkins was out to see me Tuesday evening & borrowed an American B[aptist]. Thursday evening went up to Mrs Hooks to meet the "Hon J. Pennoyer." He's a gas bag if not worse. Friday night to the Lyceum with my work unprepared. Was excused till next time. Saturday sewed most of the day, went to Fan[nie]'s in the afternoon and stayed quite a while in company with J[im]. Mr. C[arr] called that evening & we went to Mrs. Turner's for a moonlight walk. Fan[nie], Abbie, J[im] & Ike D. came by and serenaded me as a last goodbye from J[im] for he left yesterday morning before I opened my eyes. To take a morning walk we went out to Mrs. Love, Fan[nie] and I -- and I spoke about moving as Mr. S[ettle] & Lily don't seem to get along well together. Made hurried calls on Mesdames Page & Turner & returned in time to get Lily ready for S[unday] S[chool]. To church in the morning, from thence to S[unday] S[chool] then home where I found Lula Stanford awaiting me. Before she left Mr. W[ilkins] came & I spent a very pleasant

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afternoon in his company. Mr. Orr came home with me & made an engagement to call next week. Fan[nie] & I went to church at night alone.

Wells records rather matter of factly the death of Louis Payne, her mentor in Woodstock, before reporting the loss of her suit against the railroad.

Henry Rider Haggard's She: A History of Adventure was a popular novel published in 1886 by Harper's Brothers.

Monday, April 11

Nothing of especial interest to record for the past week. Wednesday evening went to Mrs. Love's & from there went to prayer-meeting. I asked the prayers of the church for my aunt. Went again Thursday night in company with Mr. & Mrs. Tate & Mr. A[lexander]. Mr. Orr came but he did not come on to the church as I requested him in a note I left for him. Received a note since, in which he says he went to the Christian Church instead. Letter from "Challie Boy" Thursday. Answered immediately. Letter from Mr. T of Nashville. He intends coming this way soon. Friday night Mr. Hart was in and informed me of Louis Payne's death & Fan[nie] & I went out there next morning, but were too late for the funeral. Sunday was Easter -- the day celebrated for that on which our blessed Lord was risen. Went to morning service S[unday] S[chool] and back home -- the usual routine except that I went to Mrs. Herman's for dinner. No callers in the afternoon but read or began to read the novel "She" that is creating such a stir. Letter from my dear Aunt who was

packing to move when she wrote. Will write her before I send the money; I think I can see my way clear to paying back the money if I borrow it. The G[ate] C[ity] P[ress] brought the sad intelligence that Louis B[rown] is paralyzed. I was very much shocked on reading it, and will write him a letter tonight. The Supreme Court reversed the decision of the lower court in my behalf, last week. Went to see Judge G[reer] this afternoon & he tells me four of them cast their personal prejudices in the scale of justice & decided in face of all the evidence to the contrary that the smoking car was a first class coach for colored people as provided for by that statute that calls for separate coaches but first class, for the races. I felt so disappointed,

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because I had hoped such great things from my suit for my people generally. I have firmly believed all along that the law was on our side and would, when we appealed to it, give us justice. I feel shorn of that belief and utterly discouraged, and just now if it were possible would gather my race in my arms and fly far away with them. O God is there no redress, no peace, no justice in this land for us? Thou hast always fought the battles of the weak & oppressed. Come to my aid at this moment & teach me what to do, for I am sorely, bitterly disappointed. Show us the way, even as Thou led the children of Israel out of bondage into the promised land. To Mr. Yates, Taylor, Johnson, Bonner, and Aunt F[annie] I must write when I'm able to buy stamps.

A WEEK after the loss of her suit against the railroad, Wells attended a meeting of a local civil rights group organized to fight White violence and the politics of accommodation, which intensified in the decade following the Compromise of 1877. This passage underscores the role of independent Black churches, such as the Avery Chapel African Methodist Episcopal Church, in championing civil rights and the importance of Black ministers and businessmen in providing progressive leadership.

The Reverend Benjamin Albert Imes was born in 1848 to free Black parents in Pennsylvania. After graduating from Oberlin in 1880, he became the first Black pastor of the Second Congregational Church, which he served until 1892. Edward Shaw (1820? -- 91) was a free Black who moved, in the 1850s, to Memphis, where he operated a saloon and gambling hall on Linden. A fiery orator and militant Republican, he ran for the Shelby County Commission in 1869 and for the U. S. Congress in 1870. Elected wharfmaster in 1874, he edited the Memphis Weekly Planet, one of the city's first Black newspapers, and practiced law in the 1880s.

Monday, April 18

Have just returned from what I consider the best thing out. The Negro's Mutual Protective Association had a public meeting at Avery Chapel tonight and Mr. A[lexander] escorted me down. I was very much enthused as I listened to the speeches and saw the earnestness of the men present. The object tonight was to draw up resolutions

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concerning John Sherman's action and touching also the competitive drill to be at Washington next month. The Negro is beginning to think for himself and find out that strength for his people and consequently for him is to be found only in unity. The earnest scholarly enthusiasm of Mr. Imes, the dignified patriarchal & stern demeanor and bearing of Mr. Shaw -- show that the men of the race who do think are endeavoring to put their thoughts in action for those and to inspire those who do not think. A note from Miss F. informed me Mrs Graham has returned home & I went to find out where she was. Mr. Wilkins & I also called on Mrs. C. and got her consent to sing for us. Went to Menken's & paid him \$10. bought a pair of shoes & a dress for Lily. \$3.25 & came very near buying a pattern, but refrained. No letters today. Mr. Fleming & Miss P. called on me yesterday afternoon & spent a pleasant afternoon. My Sabbath School class was quite interesting. Must go to S[unday] S[chool] at my own church. Saturday the school-board paid me \$120. \$50 of which I immediately sent to Mr. Yates & \$2.50 to Mr. Johnson for my pictures. Paid Williams 90 cts on acct. & bought 30 cts. of stamps, & Mrs. Settle \$40. Owe her 5 more; Mrs. H. \$4.00 for last & this month's washing & that about exhausts my pile, but I am thankful it is as well as it is. Ridie M. sent for me Friday afternoon. I went to see her & she told me a horrible tale of cruelty & mistreatment & said she was going home next day. Have not seen her since so can't say if she did. The Lyceum met as usual Friday night, Mr. A[lexander] accompanied me. Wrote Aunt F[annie] Messrs T[taylor], Orr, Bonner Yates. Wrote to Mr. B[rown] last week -- after the G[ate] C[ity] P[ress] informed me of his affliction & received the answer Saturday. Glad to know he is better.

In April, Wells corresponded with the editors of the Chicago Conservator, the oldest Black paper in that city. In 1893, she moved to Chicago, where she joined the staff of the Conservator, edited by F. L. Barnett. She bought the paper in 1895 and the Monday following her June 27 marriage to Barnett assumed editorship of the paper.

In 1887, Wells's circle of friends increased substantially to include teachers, businessmen, government workers, and their wives. William Davis, C. A. Thompson, and Ellen Dickerson (or Dickinson) were public

school teachers. James Willis was a blacksmith with a shop on [p. 143]

Union Avenue, and her friend Mrs. Matthews was the wife of Roland Matthews, also a blacksmith. Samuel Woods and John Selectman were barbers, while Mrs. Alfred Means was married to a hatter. Dallas Lee was a policeman, and Abraham Henderson, whose wife invited Ida to tea, was a letter carrier for the Memphis post office. Madison Wilkins, Thomas Stewart, and Patrick Mann worked for the Memphis and Louisville Railroad. Lewis Speigle worked at Cole Manufacturing Company, Andrew Orr at Floyd and Mooney, George Carr at Bohlen-Huse on Beale Street, and Charles Woodford was employed by J. W. Grant and Company.

In her diary, Wells never names either her minister or the church to which she belongs. "Mr. N." might have been the Reverend Taylor Nightingale, who took over the pulpit of the First Church (later the Beale Street Baptist Church) in the 1880s, probably after the Reverend Countee was forced to resign in 1882. Active in Republican politics, Nightingale was also a journalist who cofounded the Free Speech and Headlight, in which Wells later assumed an interest. At one time, the office of the Living Way was also located in the church. In Holly Springs, the Wells family most likely attended the Asbury Methodist Church. Furthermore, whenever she mentions the Beale Street Church, Wells lists it as one of the churches she visited.

Sunday, April 24

Have not heard from Mr. Arneaux since I sent him, at his request, my picture and sketch. If he published it, am anxious to see what sort of figure I cut. Wednesday evening Messrs Carr, Jackson & Hunter were out to call. Went to see Mrs. G[raham] Tuesday. She looks very thin & poorly. We formed ourselves into the nucleus of a Dramatic Club & wrote out a list of names of those who we thought would take part -- to meet here next Wednesday night. Thursday evening a letter from "Jim" and a call from Mr. Orr. We spent a most agreeable & enjoyable evening. He promises to call again. Friday afternoon brought a letter from Mr. H. T. J[ohnson] who will send my pictures this week. Mr. A[lexander] & I went out to Mrs. Henderson's to tea the same evening & returned to the Lyceum. A letter Saturday from The Conservator managers (Chicago) who wish me to write. Almost finished a dress for Mrs. S[ettle]. Mr. Carr brought me a note from L[ouis] M. B[rown] &

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came back this morning early & went with me to the conservatory to get some flowers to send him (L[ouis] M. B[rown]). After sitting up over half the night, was up by six this morning & enjoyed my walk much. The basket of flowers I bought were both lovely & fragrant. I sincerely hope they will help to cheer him in his loneliness. Back for breakfast, dressed, went to Cong[regational] Tabernacle, Beal sts. & personally requested they announce our entertainment. Also sent notices to Avery & the Episcopal Church. Then to my own church to service, from there to Mrs. Herman's, thence to Avery S[unday] S[chool]. Went to Mrs. Henderson's & ate another dinner, from there to Dr. Phillips' with another notice. Home -- to church tonight & now to bed. Met Lewis Speigle when on the way & he went back with me. Have spent for the week: Box of berries for Mrs. G[raham] 35 cts. Flowers for L[ouis] M. B[rown] \$1.25, calling cards 25 cts, church 25 cts. May all the mistakes of the past week be forgiven & the good deeds repeated.

I want here to speak a word of my delight in our preacher. He is the most energetic man I know. He has made the waste places blossom as a rose and the church is beginning to look up. He is also a hard student and good preacher. The way he handles the beligerents is admirable, for they are becoming as quiet as lambs, and yet they all stick to him and respond when he calls on them. They yet remain his friends. He is certainly a splendid judge of human nature.

Mr. N.

Pinckney Benton Stewart Pinchback (b. 1837) was elected lieutenant governor of Louisiana in 1871 and served as governor for forty-three days in 1872.

Monday, May 2

Last Monday nothing unusual occurred; went to the church meeting & everything passed off amicably. Miss P. & Mr. Gaillard called for me. Tuesday eve Mr. A[lexander] called & invited me to attend Mrs. S's concert but I had engagements at home that prevented. Messrs Woods, Carr, & Woodford called & we spent a pleasant evening. Each of the gentlemen bought a ticket for our concert. Wednesday received a letter of acknowledgement & thanks from

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L[ouis] M. B[rown]. That evening in response to invitation nearly a score of young ladies & gentlemen met to form the dramatic organization, & appointed a committee of which I am chairman to draft plan for permanent organization. Went out to Mrs. H[ill]'s with Ella & stayed all night. Came home early next

morning. Thursday evening called on & solicited the Hon. P. B. S. Pinchback to lecture for the Lyceum. He promised to be there & I published it so. The result was we had a nice crowd out & while they heard nothing extra as a speech, we got a crowd to make the announcement concerning Judge Douglass. Saturday finished the work of the previous S[unday]. Had an enthusiastic session of my S[chool] S[chool] Class yesterday. Mr. & Mrs. S[ettle] went to my church both morning & evening. Letters from Mr. Yates, Gus. Navers, Mr. Fleming, Mr. Orr. Spent for the week ending \$4.90 at Menkens. 25 cts. at church. Received my pictures which do passably well & exchanged with Miss B[aber]. Wrote Prof. H. T. J[ohnson] etc. Tonight after a good deal of worry, comes our concert & entertainment. The clouds lower but I sincerely hope it will not rain. Last Thursday the pictures of the school were drawn; today we had a sample of them.

Tuesday, May 3

The concert which was a grand success every way is over & done with. Our program was good (so they so [sic]) & they sold out nearly every thing. I recited "Le Marriage de Convenience" for the first time here and every one admired it. Indeed Judge Latham paid me a very high compliment when he said it was the most artistic piece of elocution he had ever heard. I felt greatly flattered. Jimmie W -- Mr. Carr -- & Mr. Froman were my especial helpers. The last named gave me a basket of flowers costing \$1.10. Taken all together it was a big success, for I learn we made clear nearly \$60. Thank the Lord for His blessing! Letters from my aunt & Mr. Bowser today.

Thursday, May 5

Part of the Dramatic C[lub] met last evening but we did no work. Adjourned to next Tuesday night. Bought 65 cts. worth at Menkens yesterday; received my bill with the same mistake on it. Lily

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& I had a pitched battle this morning for some of her felonious practices. My Father help me guide her aright.

During this period, Wells had to take over some of the household chores because of the illness of her landlady, Mrs. Theresa Settle. Within the next year or so, Mrs. Settle must have died because on March 20, 1890, Attorney J. T. Settle married Fannie A. McCollough, a vocalist and musician, who headed the Music Department at LeMoyne Normal Institute. Miss McCollough, an acquaintance of Wells's, appears in one of the diary entries.

Monday, May 16

A whole week went by without a letter from any one. Finished Mrs. S[ettle]'s dresses & begun on one for L[ily] but had to go to town to be paid one months Sat. so got up early & finished ironing in time to go. Put \$40 in the bank, paid Mrs. S[ettle] \$5. remaining on board, spent \$4.30 up town to finish my dress this evening & I will have to pay \$3. for the making. Mrs. S[ettle] has been sick for three days, & I've done the cooking. Mr. Jack -- was out one evening last week. Went to the L[yceum] last Friday evening but no meeting. Letter from L[ouis] M. B[rown] Saturday. One from H. T. J[ohnson] today. Wrote to my aunt & instructed her to send a clear deed. Consulted Mr. S[ettle] about it & desired him to work it up. I owe so many letters & am getting too lazy to answer them. Messrs Woodford & Hunter came as callers yesterday.

On Sunday, May 29, Wells joined friends for an excursion to Raleigh, a small health resort with a population of about 1,500. Located on the Wolf River, eleven miles outside Memphis, the town was noted for its natural springs, health spas, historic cemetery, Tapps's Hole cave, and beautiful landscape of fountains, laurel bushes, and rustic bridges. Vacationers lodged at the Raleigh Inn and the Raleigh Springs Hotel as well as at a hotel owned by Blacks.

Monday, May 30

Two weeks since I scratched a line! Since then we have had our concert -- was caught in the rain -- Charlie sent me home in a hack. Very

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few letters from any one. Mr. A[lexander] has not called for some time: Mr. Spain was up from Sardis last Sabbath & Mr. W[ilkens] called as well as many others. Mr. Greenlee escorted me to church that evening. Messrs Carr & W[ilkens] were out Thursday evening & the latter perfected arrangements to take me to Raleigh the 29th (yesterday). Friday evening Mr. Froman was out & escorted me to the Lyceum also engaged my company for the concert two weeks hence. Ironed, sewed, went for my dress, -- all Saturday made preparations for lunch and all for Sunday and it rained until 12 o'clock. We went to Raleigh tho' our stay was necessarily short.

I enjoyed the quiet of the place very much and the drive was splendid! The Cemetery is a beautiful place. It all had the beauty of novelty to me. Am very grateful for the opportunity to do so. To church last night we went at Avery but I did not enjoy services much. Letter from Fayette Saturday & he is in Colorado Springs, Colo. He is certainly a rolling stone as is also L[ouis] M. B[rown] who, I see by the K[ansas] C[ity] Dispatch is en route for Baltimore. School out tomorrow. I cannot say I am sorry. I don't feel glad. Expenses go on just the same and I don't wish to leave town yet. I wish to get a school this summer if possible.

Wells-Barnett, Ida Bell, 1862-1931, *Diary of Ida Bell Wells-Barnett, March, 1887* in *The Memphis Diary of Ida B. Wells*. DaCosta-Willis, Miriam, ed.; Washington, Mary Helen, fwd.; Sterling, Dorothy, afterword. Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1995, pp. 134-147 [[Bibliographic Details](#)] [3-1-1887] S619-D020

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8. Alexander, Margaret Walker. "Chapter 6: In / Conclusion"
[Page 117 | [Paragraph](#) | [Section](#) | [Document](#)]

accommodations on the train, for example. (Of course, I associate the deterioration of the trains with racial integration.) But the Black Revolution did something else for black people. And I think that black men got a shot in the arm from both. In the first revolution we had that educated **black** man, that black Baptist preacher, capturing the imagination of the masses of the black people by harnessing the emotional drive of religion and the black **church** for the purpose of political activism and achieving **civil rights**. We were working toward voter-registration drives and economic boycotts and marches and using the tactics of a Gandhi and even some Marxist tactics-- using all these with great imagination, skill, and effectiveness for approximately ten years from 1954 to 1964. Then you have

Wells-Barnett, Ida Bell, 1862-1931, *Diary of Ida Bell Wells-Barnett, March, 1887* in *The Memphis Diary of Ida B. Wells*. DaCosta-Willis, Miriam, ed.; Washington, Mary Helen, fwd.; Sterling, Dorothy, afterword. Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1995, pp. 134-147 [[Bibliographic Details](#)] [3-1-1887] S619-D020

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Chapter 6: In / Conclusion **Chapter VI: In / Conclusion**

WI was thinking at dinner about two revolutions, the Negro Revolution and the Black Revolution. In the late fifties and early sixties we had a half-dozen black civil rights leaders. Men who have vision, who had purpose, who were able to use effective tactics and who got out in the street and accomplished something. It doesn't seem like much because it was primarily public accommodation and transportation and voting rights. And then integration of jobs through economic boycotts and marches. You know, you can go anywhere in the country now from Jackson, Mississippi, to New Orleans, to Chicago, to New York, to Philadelphia -- anywhere -- and it's nothing to go into the stores, certainly in the black community, and find a black clerk and cashier. You simply never had that before the Negro Revolution. You just didn't have it. Now, then there came the cry that this was just for the middle-class Negro. He's the one who can go to the motel and afford to get a room and who needed the overnight accommodations when he was traveling. And it was for him who used the first-class accommodations on the train, for example. (Of course, I associate the deterioration of the trains with racial integration.)

But the Black Revolution did something else for black people. And I think that black men got a shot in the arm from both. In the first revolution we had that educated black man, that black Baptist preacher, capturing the imagination of the masses of the black people by harnessing the emotional drive of religion and the black church for the purpose of political activism and achieving civil rights. We were
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working toward voter-registration drives and economic boycotts and marches and using the tactics of a Gandhi and even some Marxist tactics -- using all these with great imagination, skill, and effectiveness for approximately ten years from 1954 to 1964. Then you have immediately after the death of Malcolm the beginnings of the Black Revolution. And this was a revolution of the minds -- to change the minds of black people about themselves. All the problems of identity and alienation and the self-concepts of the child. Then it was a revolution in dress and in hair styles, revolution in terms of a sense of pride and beauty --

all of that. The Black Revolution was tremendous because it offered to give back to black people manhood and womanhood, such as the Negro Revolution did not do. The Negro Revolution was demeaning in that blacks continued to accept all kinds of abuses. The men let the policemen step on them and step on the woman's neck. The Black Revolution was not that kind and I think that's when your riots really began, about 1965. You had Watts and from then on through the time of King's death in '68. For about three years you had rioting. I guess the climax came with the Chicago trouble during the Democratic Convention. But that's when black people recognized that what they were dealing with in terms of repression was absolutely death-dealing and genocidal. I think that in '69 after the first hundred days, Nixon began his campaign of repression against black as well as poor people of *all* kinds. . . .

G And young people.

W Yes. In 1970 they tried to kill three movements at one time. I don't think they completely destroyed them but they attacked the student movement, the peace movement, and the black Poor People's Movement. The government attacked all three in 1970. But they began in 1969. And it was 1970 -- all the summer of '70 -- that we saw the attacks on black people in the community which have not stopped [p. 119]

since. Supposedly, at first, it was a shoot-out with the Black Panthers. And then they were getting rid of the RNA. Next they talked about these militant blacks in Harlem and in Florida and all over the country and this went on for almost all of Nixon's first term. Now what can we hope for in a second term if this is what happened in the first term? We can expect it to be worse.

G Yes, I think it's going to be worse. But, again, I think it's up to us. We were very late in recognizing that the attacks on the Panthers, for example, were simply attacks on black people, essentially black men. But we would debate their philosophy. When I talk about the corruption of the intellectual, that is what I mean. We would debate if the Panthers hadn't said this and hadn't done that then nobody would have moved against them.

W That wasn't true.

G The intellectuals debated things that were beyond debate. The thing that has depressed me most about them was their inability to defend Rap Brown -- their lack of interest in defending H. Rap Brown and their hatred of that movement. But those first two things, especially, were crucial issues in terms of the black community. Whatever Rap Brown is, he belongs to us. He came out of Baton Rouge. He went to Southern University. He went to Washington. He went to live in New York for a while. He followed the student movement. He came up through black people. There was no white intellectual anything supporting H. Rap Brown. He may have been intensive, he may have been offensive, he may have made many mistakes, but he belongs to us as no other person has belonged to us that has risen to that particular national level. He was our creation. He was a creation of the people.

W How much of the business of arresting Rap Brown and the so-called robbery was a frame-up, in your estimation? [p. 120]

G A great deal. And of course they must surely have known where Rap Brown was all the time. They shadowed everybody. They came by my house regularly to the point where I could say, "Oh, the FBI is by again today. What can I do for you gentlemen?" You know I'm serious about that. They shadowed all the people who ever *knew* Rap. So I'm sure that they knew where he was almost all the time, *'cause a nigger that tall can't hide anywhere*. And you figure if Angela Davis can't get out of the United States, Rap Brown sure as shit can't hide in New York City.

W You think Angela at the least was trying to get out of the country when they got her in New York?

G No. She was trying to be arrested in New York. The chances of being shot down are slimmer there.

W My neighbor asked me what I thought about her arrest. I said, "Well, I wish she had gotten out of the country. I wish they hadn't caught her. God knows what they don't mean to do to her." And my neighbor said, "Yes, all of us, if-push-came-to-shove and she came to our door tonight, any black woman worth a dime would hide her."

G That's right. Because everybody, for whatever reason, would identify with Angela. Now we're talking about a problem I am obviously pursuing rather closely. This is not true of black men.

W You mean they don't feel that way about each other?

G Nobody feels that they feel that way. Rap Brown was arrested because someone told where he was.

W Had to be.

G Exactly. Only three people knew where Rap was and
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none of them was his wife. You understand what I mean? Some black guy . . .

W Had to.

G At least that's the feeling one gets. I'm not accusing anyone. The point is, though, that the thing which saved Angela Davis, for example, that saved Huey Newton, and may still save Rap Brown, is the level of concern that is an across-the-board people show.

I just wrote a letter to the *New York Times* because they printed a horrible article on Coretta King. I've never written to the *Times* before in my life. But I had to protest.

W What did they have to say about her?

G That she was a black Jackie Kennedy. And that she was a snob and didn't really want to be black, that she really wanted to be a white woman. It was just a snide put-down.

W That's terrible.

G The point is that if they can put down Coretta King in November, Nixon will have free reign on Martin King by January.

W I have never felt good about Nixon in the second term. I feel that the kind of vote they claim he got is simply to make it possible to set up real military dictatorship in this country.

G I agree.

W That is what he envisions. I think that in this case of a man who is nearly sixty years of age. And anyone who has been doing the kind of ego-tripping this man has been doing for the past four years, talking about himself as the
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President of the United States and acclaiming himself over and over again over the house of cards -- a man who from the beginning has been supported by the country's chief industrialists, by the whole military industrial-complex, by the World Bank; a man who was put in the position purely by money, four hundred million dollars spent to buy the position -- there is nothing this man cannot be paid to do. He has been bought and paid for. He has got to deliver and in this country paranoia is what all of us have. Black people suffer from persecution because real persecution has existed.

G Yes.

W White people suffer from a God complex because they have educated themselves to believe they are God.

G And we have given them a lot of room.

W And they are paranoid.

G Because they know that they would not take it.

W What we have taken.

G That's right. They know that it has to come back.

W I'm afraid that black people are going to be pushed into a corner and provoked to real street violence. I truly believe that. And I know that street violence is no good for us. I know that street violence is not going to be our answer. The possibilities of what they intend to do to the minds and the bodies of the men in the prisons . . . they've already started that.

G Yes.

W They tried the love gas on the children. They have all

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these new medical things they're talking about -- operations and surgery on the criminal. They want to deal with retarded children. They want to sterilize the woman, they want birth control for all of us, they've got everything planned to destroy us. Now, as I say, there's the law of compensation in the world. It's just as universal as it can be. They cannot destroy everybody without destroying some of themselves.

G Listen, do you realize that in order to keep one Jonathan Jackson, a seventeen-year-old boy, from escaping with one judge and a couple of guards here or there . . .

W They would kill 'em all.

G They killed that judge. And what did they do in Chicago? They have no objections to sacrificing some of themselves.

W Did you hear about what that man in New Orleans said the other day, that governor of Louisiana? When they asked him if he valued anything more than human life, he said that he valued constituted authority more than human life. That man made that remark.

G What did Nixon say when the kids at Kent State were killed? Who they knew had no guns, who they knew had to be white?

W They were bums.

G They were bums and if they want to fight we'll fight 'em. Knowing that those kids had no guns and that they were their own children. I'm not talking about *my* children.

W Well, let me tell you. He didn't begin to do any worse at Kent than he did in Washington in May of '71. I was right

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there and saw it -- when they beat all their heads and put them all in jail and they weren't blacks.

G You can say I'm a child of the twenty-first century, but I don't care whether in order to kill twenty-five million black people they have to kill twenty-five million whites also.

W They don't care.

G If there are one hundred-and-eighty million of them, that will leave one hundred and fifty-five million white people to no blacks. Right?

W But you see I believe positively that, instead of letting them kill us off, we've got to come to power. I believe that more of us are moving into the thing everyday and yet I don't feel that the mainstream in integration will be the answer until something else more violent happens. I'm afraid of that violence. I don't advocate that violence but I'm afraid it's going to happen. In fact, I think everyday we're looking at it.

G Of course we're looking at it. I just think that black people have decisions to make about how they are going to respond.

W I think the first thing that's important is education.

G I won't argue. But I think the first thing is purpose.

W Knowing what you want is what you think is important?

G We must decide what we want.

W I think that black people can be as ruthless and vicious, once they get any control, as whites.

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G What we have to worry about is that we won't get any control.

W I think the answer to getting control is a coalition of people since this is a pluralistic society. There are many different peoples. I think that everybody is going to have to stand up and say, "Well I want my part of it. My share of the pie. I'm not going to take the whole pie because I can't take the whole pie. But I mean to have my share."

G I say *purpose*, which is a term I share with the militants in that we as a people must make a decision based on the fact that we're not pure.

W And not afraid to kill?

G No, don't put words in my mouth.

W All right.

G Is that we're not pure. We as black people have traded in on our so-called innocence: that we are not responsible for the mess we see in America.

W But we are.

G We are, indeed. If we could accept the responsibility that we share. . . .

W Guilt.

G The guilt -- O. K., if you want to use that -- the guilt that we share for the condition of the world, then we will become responsible enough to move into power. But as long as we play games telling ourselves we're innocent and we've been abused, it's not going to work. Once we can say we [p. 126] are responsible for it, we can begin to formulate the purpose of what we're going to do.

W Don't you think a lot of what has happened to us really is what the white man has done to us?

G No. It takes two people to make a slave: a master and slave. Take it or leave it. The Indians fought and lost but at least they did not surrender, you know what I mean? The Vietnamese fought and they won, so they are free.

W That's not the first time they won, either. They won in 1954 when they got those French out of there.

G I'm just talking in terms of the American context. We are a part of the guilt of this system. And that's one thing that black people are going to have to accept. We cannot escape to Africa, we can't. No more than white folks can escape to the moon. We must deal with what we have here.

W You know, I think we're closer to the real conflict than anyone would imagine? I don't think we're going to go through this decade and come out with the same sort of plain stuff hitting the fan like we did in the sixties.

G But it goes back to those young men that upset you so earlier, like the Essexes. They are taking responsibility. They're saying, "I will not go for it. I will be killed . . ."

W And that's why I don't believe that they're going to bring all those fellows back from Vietnam because of what that war has done to the minds of the black man. It's put some steel and iron in the minds and the backbones of all the black men. Tell me, Nikki, how do you view the future of black people in this country? [p. 127]

G I am concerned because too many black people seem to think that somehow the world . . .

W Ought to be handed to them on a platter.

G If we sit long enough . . .

W And wait, the good Lord will drop it in our laps.

G It won't work and it's not working. And it goes back to what we were talking about earlier. That's why I appreciate at least a response because we know that we cannot hold back the world. It would be a very different world if Africa had conquered Europe rather than Europe conquering Africa. It would be a very different world. But for some reason, despite all of our knowledge, despite all of our technology, despite all of the golden ages of Africa, we never really bothered to go much beyond the Mediterranean Sea. Hannibal would go into Rome because they got tired of coming.

W Well, I'll tell you one thing. When you study Roman history, government and literature, the thing that upsets me (and I couldn't stand that little old woman who taught Latin in Iowa, who was determined that I should never pass because she said I just didn't have the mind to get through it) was what she was always preaching in the Cicero classes: "Remember, Carthage must be destroyed." I don't care if Cicero was talking about the weather or if he was talking about money, he would end by saying, "And remember, Carthage must be destroyed." What was Carthage? A great African city. The culture of Africa declined from the day Rome conquered Carthage and sowed salt.

G So that nothing would grow.
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W "Remember and remember," he said, "Carthage must be destroyed." In other words, Rome can never conquer the world until they get rid of those Africans, until they get rid of those black people.

G Of course. But you have the same situation, Margaret, which is what we're talking about, when we deal with America today. We have someone who is determined -- I just keep coming back to our current argument because I think it's kind of important. We have an administration . . .

W Determined to destroy us.

G Determined. So determined to destroy us that at this point they don't have to say, "And remember, go get a nigger today." Carthage thought that they could coexist with Rome. They did, they really did, look at it. They said, O. K. Hannibal will go in and we'll show you and then we'll make peace. But the Romans had every intention always of doing exactly what they did. There was to be no peace with Africa. It was to be divided and destroyed and the white man recognized he could not conquer it; he did not have the men or the means to conquer, so he divided it. He got rid of Carthage immediately. But as you come into the New World they used the old tribal priest against us, and we never have understood that tactic.

W Octavius went up there and courted Cleopatra and they destroyed her by her weakness of falling in love with Anthony.

G I never believed that she fell in love. I think she did the best she could, having absolutely no help. Her priests were corrupt, everything around that poor lady was against her; she had no support. Look at it! Some brother told me that one day, "Well, if Cleopatra hadn't fallen in love." I said you gotta be crazy. Nobody was backing her up. Nobody.
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W She killed herself because she saw it was hopeless.

G She saw there was nothing more she could do for her people.

W And she wasn't going to Rome to be carried back.

G What happened, I think, to the Egyptians was that they kept knowledge from people and were destroyed. Everyone will pay for trying to hold back a coming age. And certainly if any group of priests were corrupt, the first group that I could put my hands on very easily are the Egyptian priests who had knowledge and said we must keep it for ourselves.

W They understood astrology, they understood philosophy, they understood navigation, they understood mathematics --

G Everything. They refused to give that to their people. Then come to the Roman Church and there is a parallel, which is one reason that you had a Reformation. When the Roman Church would not give the knowledge to the people, the people had to get rid of the church. You come into America, they say we will have education for everybody. As long as they attempted to educate the people you had a strong nation. When they said you cannot educate the slaves, through the black laws, is where I would document the fall of America.

W The trouble with America began with their attitude toward the Indian.

G No, you can't say that because the Indians and the whites fought it out, and the Indians lost. And *all* of us will pay for that, because you always pay for those you hurt. But I'm not going to fight the Indian battle. When you talk about the decline of America, you can take it right back to the
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1860s when they said those people are here, they are free, but we will not treat them as men.

W Well, I think it starts with the very beginning of the country.

G No, you can't say that, Margaret. You can't say that when a baby is born, he's wrong.

W The thing that we have to see is what neither black nor white people want to face: that in this country we have developed and arrived at a point where our culture is neither black nor white but mulatto, a synthesis of the two. The white man and the black man are still fighting over their racial integrity or entity when it doesn't exist anymore. It's a terrible thing to say, but I have just as many white ancestors as I've got black. That as an American, I am no pure-blooded African. I am no pure-blooded European. I have ancestors who came from both continents. And the white man doesn't want to admit it but he's got colored folks who are kin to him, just like he's got white folks kin to him. You can't go to the South without finding that this is true. And what America has to face, whether we like it or not, is we've been fighting bitterly trying to destroy the other one, when we're kin to each other.

G But that's the white man's battle. That is a white man's battle to tell me that he's kin to me.

W You don't want to hear it, do you?

G All I'm saying is that we must get in a position that a Faulkner comes up and says I'm kin to Nikki Giovanni. It is not up to me to say I'm kin to a Bill Faulkner.

If anything has been positive in American history it's that we can say we accept Africa. Africa will be a bit freer, just maybe a bit, when *it* can say we accept Afro-Americans,

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because Africans are trying to deny their complicity to our being here.

W I said once that I thought that if Africa had power in the twenty-first century, it would raise the standard and the stature of every black person in the world. That it would be the same as Israel is for the Jew. But that's a long dream away.

G You have to do it country by country.

W That's a long dream away.

G I don't think it's that far away.

W I'm going to say something that is just as negative as it can be. I don't care how great Africa becomes and what her international presence may be, it may raise our stature, but our destiny in America is tied up in America, not just with Africa, because of that twoness and that division in us that Du Bois was always talking about.

G Where is our dilemma? For a Du Bois, or maybe for you, there is a dilemma. It is not a dilemma for me. For me, and I think for a lot of young black people today, it is no longer a dilemma who we are. Our twoness cannot possibly get in the way and that's why these young men can go around and shoot cops. I know you say they're shooting black cops and white cops but they all wear blue. And what they're saying is that the old order must go and be replaced by not only some theoretical choice, but also by a physical choice. That we are saying today, I think quite clearly, that we want humane black people in positions. And we would like to have humane white people work with us. The NAACP can no longer be run by liberal whites. It must be run by black people in conjunction with liberal whites.

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W I think that we're getting into a bag there again. Because this is what is happening to us now. We backed up into this bag and it's a literary bag that we're backed up in, and a social bag and an economic bag. This is against what I have said and what I have written. It may be what we feel emotionally, but intellectually I have to question it, and this is why. As long as this country exists, until such time as the black man is standing up in all the halls of government, making all the laws, holding all the money, running all the businesses, there's no such thing as black people having power off by themselves. How do we get power? You're not saying seize it. I contend that the way to recognition and power is not backing off in the black bag entirely and saying that we can do everything by ourselves, we don't need these people and the best thing we can do is not to let them run our situations. You're saying let's get in our separatist bag, and separate.

G I did not say that.

W You said if we have black organizations, don't let the white man run it.

G I said he can't *run* it. Margaret, you didn't hear me at all.

W You did say get him out.

G We can play the tape back if you want to hear it.

W What did you say?

G I said that in terms of power, we must assume it.

W How? Tell me how.

G You know what assume means?
[p. 133]

W (*impatiently*) Yeah, yeah.

G O. K., we must prepare ourselves and assume it.

W To take over from the white man?

G The problem is that black people don't want to take responsibility for white people, and that includes, if I may say, you. We have simply got to say, this is what we're gonna do, this is how we're gonna do it and this is what you must do to make it work. Because white people have shown that they are not capable of taking responsibility for either themselves or us. And they've had every chance in the world to do it. It is now time for *us* to assume that role. We are the rightful heirs. That's all I'm saying. I'm not saying that we have to kill them off, I didn't say that we have to go and take the state of Mississippi over and live by ourselves; that's foolish. What we must do, what we must do if this country is to survive in any kind of political entity as we now know it is to take --

W We've got to have a truce, haven't we?

G But we have got to control it. You cannot take any cracker's word. How can you take Nixon's word? If we walk out in the street today, if we walk out on the Senate floor, half the senators don't believe in Nixon's cease-fire.

W I just think you need about two years --

G For what? In two years you and I won't be able to sit here without some guard standing there if we continue to let the Nixons run this country. We've got to continue moving and we've got to make a decision that we don't mind controlling white people.
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W We're already moving toward fascism. We're already into fascism.

G That's what black people don't want to do and that's what our problem is: We don't want to make a decision for those white folks. And we have got to do that and it's got to be shown in our literature. We cannot, you know, today still write stereotypical white people; it will not suffice. It will not suffice that we try to deal with them in the kind of way -- what's that play LeRoi wrote, where they're all sitting around looking at TV and we laugh at them -- we have got to be better. And that's an awful thing to say to a people who are much less on a certain scale. We have simply got to be better. For our own sanity.

W Well, aren't we already?

G (*emphatically*) No. No. No.

W We've got to get the skills.

G We've got to do what they do . . .

W Better.

G Better. If we can do what they do as well as what we do, we will be better. Because they're not trying to learn how to learn what we do. They send them little white boys to grow their hair, to try to sing them songs, they try to say if you get rid of niggers at least I'll be here to sing the blues. And blacks have got to

say if we get rid of white people at least I'll be here to govern! But we want to say, well I can sing and dance, fuck that. What else can you do?

W The answer is in understanding how that political, imperial, financial, military business works and cracking it up.
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G But it ain't no secret.

W You know how it works?

G It ain't no secret. I can sit on the Senate floor and vote for my friends to get a milk bill through and I can be President and let my secretary bug Watergate. I can do that. The point is that it's just one of me, you understand what I mean? We need a hundred blacks sitting there saying, "Well I can do that." That ain't no secret. What it takes is discipline. What it takes is that you get up at eight in the morning and you call John and say, John we got this bill, it's got to be passed, man. You got to help me out. Well, I'll give you my vote if you give me his vote, but what we want to do is wake up at noon, you understand what I mean? We've got to start getting up when dawn breaks and go to bed at midnight with no complaints.

W As my grandmother used to say, while they're asleep you've got to be thinking how you can beat them.

G You know, it's the world we're talking about. . . .

Alexander, Margaret Walker, 1915-1998, [Chapter 6: In / Conclusion in *A Poetic Equation: Conversations Between Nikki Giovanni and Margaret Walker*](#). Washington, DC: Howard University Press, 1974, pp. 117-135 [[Bibliographic Details](#)] [1974] S7584-D007

Sociological Abstracts:

Keyword search for: Black church *or* southern Christian leadership conference *and* civil rights.

Wed Apr 19 18:13:03 EDT 2006
CSA

Record 1 of 1

DN: Database Name
Sociological Abstracts
TI: Title
Organized Religious Protagonists in the US Civil Rights Movement and the Civil Movement in the GDR
AU: Author
Haspel, Michael
SO: Source
Forschungsjournal Neue Soziale Bewegungen, 2004, 17, 4, Dec, 53-60
DE: Descriptors
*Civil Rights Movements; *United States of America; *German Democratic Republic; *Churches; *Black Americans; *Protestantism; *Theology; *Church State Relationship
AB: Abstract
The Protestant churches in the German Democratic Republic & the Black churches in the civil rights movement in the United States are two among very few examples for non-fundamentalist Protestant churches which were decisively involved in processes of social transformation. In both cases it was paramount that the churches were developed institutions with substantial resources at hand in order to play an important role in the respective social movements. In order to explain why the churches were willing to commit their resources for the sake of the social movements, it is argued that a decisive development in the mode of theological reflection took place. In both cases, theological contextualisation in the given situation was the presupposition for the involvement of the churches in the social movements. 27 References. Adapted from the source document.

Descriptors: Churches; Black Americans; Civil Rights Movements.
Wed Apr 19 18:15:20 EDT 2006
CSA

Record 1 of 1

DN: Database Name
Sociological Abstracts
TI: Title
Linking Beliefs to Collective Action: Politicized Religious Beliefs
and the Civil Rights Movement
AU: Author
Williams, Johnny E
SO: Source
Sociological Forum, 2002, 17, 2, June, 203-222
DE: Descriptors
*Collective Action; *Religious Beliefs; *Civil Rights Movements;
*Black Americans; *Political Action; *Resource Mobilization;
*Churches; *Culture; *Arkansas
AB: Abstract
Are religious ideological antecedents factors in the emergence of
African American social protest? If so, how do these factors translate
African American discontent into political action? Rather than proceed
from standard renditions of social movement analysis arguing that
structural opportunities motivate people to act, this paper contends
that culture motivates many people to become & remain involved in
collective action. The civil rights movement in AR is examined to
explain how religious ideas enable movements to emerge & endure in
the face of tremendous opposition & uncertain prospects for
movement success. Findings suggest that in the context of oppression,
ideas can help motivate, guide, & give meaning to protest. 54
References. Adapted from the source document.

LexisNexis Academic:

Initially searched AllTheWeb with "southern Christian leadership conference," and found an article from LexisNexis Scholar.

Searched LexisNexis Scholar, Primary Sources in U.S. History.

Search Terms: ((black church) and (civil rights) or (southern christian leadership conference))

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Author Note: Graduate student in history at the University of Georgia.

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Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights

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On 5 June 1956, more than one thousand people overflowed the Sardis Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama, to join the Reverends Fred L. Shuttlesworth, Edward Gardner, R. L. Alford, and N. H. Smith in organizing the Alabama Christian Movement for Human Rights (ACMHR). Formed in response to the state attorney general's ban on the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the ACMHR quickly became the leading civil rights organization in Birmingham. Using direct action, the ACMHR challenged bus segregation in December 1956 and again in October 1958, attempted the integration of schools and the railroad station in 1957, and supported the student sit-ins in 1960 and the Freedom Riders in 1961. This dedicated group of militant Christian activists elected Shuttlesworth president, and his association with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference led to the Birmingham Confrontation of spring 1963. When Shuttlesworth stepped down as president in 1969, Gardner, the longtime first vice president, assumed leadership--a position he still held in 1990. The ACMHR endorsed Richard Arrington for the Birmingham City Council in 1971 and worked to get him elected as the first African-American mayor of the city in 1979.

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Glenn T. Eskew

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Papers of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, 1954-1970

Part 1: Records of the President's Office

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- [Editorial Note](#)

[This item added to Web May, 1997.]

Introduction

The Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) profoundly affected the modern civil rights movement as well as the course of American political history in the second half of the twentieth century. The organization's records provide researchers with a treasure of primary source material on the complexities of organizing a successful mass protest movement. Organizational working papers, internal memoranda, correspondence, minutes of meetings, field reports, press releases, pamphlet publications, questionnaire replies, statistical compilations, and many other types of documents bring to light the struggle for civil rights. Making these records widely available in microform provides students, scholars, and other researchers with the opportunity to experience the inner workings of this pivotal force in the modern civil rights movement.

The SCLC embodied the vision and philosophy of its founding president, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., as well as the hopes, aspirations, and energy of countless community leaders and local activists. It became the collective organizational extension for the hopes, aspirations, and activism of southern communities. Individuals representing varied political, social, religious, and ideological backgrounds found commonality in supporting activities that challenged racism. King's philosophy of nonviolent direct action and his vision for a mass movement based on Christian tenets of love and understanding guided the activities of the SCLC. Although there were precursors to this vision, such as the philosophies of labor leader A. Philip Randolph and the pacifists organized under the Fellowship of Reconciliation, nonviolent direct action only became a major force in American politics for the first time under the leadership of King and the SCLC.

The SCLC leaders had no illusions about either the danger or the difficulty of challenging the tyranny of jim crow in southern life. Fear of reprisals as well justified in light of traditions of lynching, police brutality, and economic discrimination in the South. Instilling the will, strength, and courage to throw off the yoke of subordination and dehumanization under jim crow was an ambitious undertaking. There were divisions within the African American population of the South and there were apprehensions about the formidable force of southern racism. These were considerable obstacles against the creation of a mass movement. Yet the realities of racist traditions and denigration spurred African American leaders into alliance and action. Their objective was to stimulate activities that would address, challenge, and correct the injustices of jim crow life. The new coalition sought to employ a mechanism that would secure basic civil rights and civil liberties. Many local groups and individuals who were prominent in addressing issues of segregation and discrimination were eager to employ the tactics of nonviolent direct action. The SCLC leadership worked to maintain confidence in nonviolent methods and to rally community after community against often discouraging odds.

Among the disparate groups and individuals who flocked to the SCLC, the success of the ethic of nonviolence gained appeal. King and other SCLC leaders worked tirelessly to maintain confidence in nonviolent methods. The SCLC succeeded again and again with nonviolent direct action and passive resistance campaigns. A seemingly endless cascade of demonstrations, marches, boycotts, and sit-ins confronted the practice of southern racism. Occasionally the demonstrators were beaten back. Occasionally they were met with only token concessions. Cumulatively, however, their campaigns wore down the defense of jim crow and energized the African American community in the South to address the issues of place and access.

It is important to recognize that the movement's success drew upon earlier traditions of African American protest. Foremost, the work of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) laid much of the foundation for the modern civil rights movement. Since early in the century, the NAACP cultivated local civil rights leaders amongst its vast branch network in the South. Its conspicuous involvement in numerous, high-profile civil rights legal cases, leading up to the landmark ruling that demolished the constitutional approval of segregation in America, provided a popular example that African American assertiveness could triumph in American politics. Equally important, the constitutional victory in *Brown v. Board of Education* required the federal government to side with advocates of desegregation. In theory, at least, this deprived the white South and provided the civil rights movement with a powerful ally.

Reaching even further back in the history of the South was the network of African American women's clubs. The activism and advocacy of Negro women's clubs and organizations was significant in the development of a mass social movement. These women were involved in campaigns for health care, access to decent housing, preparatory schools, organizing domestic workers, promoting employment, and strongly supporting antilynching legislation. Negro women had historically formed coalitions that relentlessly fought to improve the plight and well-being of their children, pinning many of their hopes and ambitions vicariously on future generations. These women have been at the forefront in the struggle for social, economic, and political justice. The traditions and strengths of feminine activism provide an important source of strength and inspiration for the modern civil rights movement.

The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP) was the largest all-African American labor union in America. Its members passed

through and often lived in the urban South. The porters spread the news that the segregation and racial oppression of the South was not a norm to which African Americans must submit. The message was reinforced by the union's leader, A. Philip Randolph. Randolph was the earliest major African American political leader to advocate nonviolent direct action. His threat of an organized mass demonstration in the nation's capital in 1942 compelled President Franklin D. Roosevelt to issue an executive order banning discrimination in defense industries and federal agencies. Randolph's dramatic victory served to inspire civil rights activists while his rank and file among the BSCP quietly subverted acquiescence to the southern way of segregation.

The political left also played a role in energizing the civil rights movement. The Civil Rights Congress--although not southern based--took on several high-profile cases involving police brutality and abuses of sharecroppers in the South in the 1940s and 1950s. This organization won many admirers, a number of whom remained active in the civil rights movement in the era of the SCLC. The Highlander Folk School was another source of influence from the political left. Since the 1930s, Highlander tried to forge a progressive interracial coalition of labor unions, tenant farmers, educators, and religious leaders in the South. Its educational workshops were attended by such pillars of the modern civil rights movement as Rosa Parks and Martin Luther King, Jr. While relations with the political left often posed a liability to the SCLC by exposing it to the slander of red-baiters, leftist activists brought both energy and disciplined intellectual commitment to the ranks of the modern civil rights movement.

Beyond self-conscious racial reform movements, there were political and cultural trends in the 1940s and 1950s that fed the development of the SCLC. African American military service during World War II and Korea had an impact. Southern veterans who returned home after serving the cause of freedom were reluctant to acquiesce in inferiority. The action taken by President Harry S. Truman in ordering the desegregation of the armed services in 1948 provided additional momentum. Thereafter, southern African Americans serving in the military served with the express understanding that racial equality rather than segregation was the official policy of the United States armed services. Many local-level civil rights activists in the 1960s were military veterans.

Popular culture and the mass media also contributed to a spirit of African American pride and assertiveness that made possible an insurgent mass movement in the 1960s. The immense popularity of boxer Joe Louis, baseball star Jackie Robinson, and Olympian Jesse Owens in the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s did much to enhance the African American self-image. Louis's victories over his white opponents, Robinson's stardom in a virtually all-white league, and Owen's dramatic refutation of Nazi racial pretensions provided indelible images of African American achievements. These were living refutations of the segregationist belief in black inferiority.

Finally, the African American ministry was also poised to take advantage of the developments favoring a more assertive political style in the 1950s. The church had historically been at the forefront in addressing the needs of the community, such as in the establishment of schools and benevolent societies. The church had long been responsible for picking up the pieces left in the wake of racist oppression in the South. The counseling and consoling of violated females, providing emotional and material relief for cheated sharecroppers, eulogizing of innocent victims of white violence--these were almost daily tasks of the African American clergy throughout the South. Clergymen frequently served as ambassadors to the white community in an effort to mediate disputes along the color line. As a result, many churches had for long expanded their activities beyond the traditional religious emphasis on the Sacred. In doing this, they often risked their reputations in the larger community, their resources, and sometimes even their physical security. Many in the black ministry were of necessity shrewd political strategists. They were willing to embrace new political concepts if those concepts bore a fair chance of improving the lot of their people. King's philosophy for nonviolent direct action struck many as an opportune strategy for social advancement and social justice.

Cynthia P. Lewis
Director of Archives
King Library and Archives
The King Center

Scope & Content Note

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. served as president of the SCLC from its founding in 1957 until his assassination in April 1968. This edition consists of the President's Office records during Dr. King's tenure as well as a small number of public statements made by him between 1954 and 1957. The President's Office File consists of two series of records: Series I, Correspondence, 1958-1968 and Series II, Manuscripts and Appointment Calendars, 1954-1969. A third series exists in the original collection, consisting of tape recordings of speeches made by Dr. King and other civil rights leaders. These have not been transcribed and hence are not a part of this microfilm edition.

Series I. Correspondence, 1958-1968

The correspondence series is divided into three subseries. The first two subseries are called "Primary Correspondence." The first subseries of primary correspondence is arranged chronologically from 1958 through 1968. The second subseries is arranged alphabetically by correspondent. These two series overlap significantly in content. The subject and correspondent indexes to the user guide can assist in cross referencing between subseries 1 and 2. Subseries 3, called "Secondary Correspondence," consists of letters from the general public to Dr. King.

Series I, Correspondence, Subseries 1, Primary Correspondence [Chronological], 1958-1968

This subseries consists of internal SCLC communications, such as notices of board meetings and conventions, correspondence regarding Dr. King's speaking engagements, and letters from prominent people concerning the civil rights movement. Many of the key events of the civil rights movement are covered, including the integration movement in downtown Atlanta (1962), the Birmingham, Alabama, demonstrations (1963), allegations of Communist affiliations among SCLC staff members (1964), the award of the Nobel Peace Prize to Dr. King (1964), the organization of SCLC's "Operation Dialogue" (1965), the Selma, Alabama, campaign (1965), SCLC's initiatives in Chicago, Illinois (1966), and Dr. King's opposition to the Vietnam war (1966-1967). This series extends from the beginning of Reel 1 through Reel 2, frame 0491.

Series I, Correspondence, Subseries 2, Primary Correspondents [alphabetical], 1958-1968

Most of this series consists of correspondence files with individuals, but there are also files on organizations and subjects. Key individuals include Ralph Abernathy, Ella J. Baker, James Dombrowski, Jack Greenberg, Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, A. J. Muste, and Roy Wilkins. More correspondents are represented, many of them prominent in the civil rights movement. Organizations with substantive amounts of correspondence include American Jewish Committee, American Negro Leadership Conference on Africa, Episcopal Society for Cultural and Racial Unity, Ford Foundation, and Leadership Conference on Civil Rights. Prominent subject files in the series include Albany, Georgia, Ministers, Atlanta Temple Bombing, Labor Leaders, and News Media Requests.

The Ella Baker letters are illuminating on the day-to-day functions of the SCLC during the years of Baker's tenure as executive director (1958-1960). The file on the Atlanta Temple Bombing includes an open letter from the "Negroes of Montgomery"

deploring the anti-Semitic bombing of the Temple of the Hebrew Welfare Congregation of Atlanta. Numerous files document the relationship between the SCLC and other civil rights organizations, including Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (Stokely Carmichael file), Southern Conference Educational Fund (James Dombrowski file), NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (Jack Greenberg file), NAACP (Roy Wilkins file), and Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (Lawrence Guyot file). This subseries extends from frame 0493 of Reel 2 through frame 0811 of Reel 3.

Series I, Correspondence, Subseries 3, Secondary Correspondence, 1958, 1960-1967

This series consists of correspondence from the general public to Dr. King and the SCLC. A great deal of it is hate mail, although there are also thousands of supportive letters from clergy, intellectuals, political leaders, and the general public. Some of the supportive letters voice skepticism and criticism about the pace and style of the SCLC direct-action campaign. The hate mail is revealing about racist attitudes toward African Americans in the 1960s, especially but not exclusively in the South. Many of the negative letters reflect the popular mood of anticommunism in the 1960s, as writers accuse King of Communist sympathies. Supporters, on the other hand, often note financial contributions to the SCLC. The correspondents often respond to specific events in Dr. King's career and in the civil rights movement, including arrests, major demonstrations like those in Birmingham, Alabama, the March on Washington, the Selma March, bombings, murders of civil rights workers, and King's opposition to the Vietnam War. The series is useful in charting popular reaction to King's career as well as in documenting the attitudes, both constructive and negative, that were faced by the civil rights movement on a day-to-day basis. King's responses to many of the letters shed light on his character and political style. This series is arranged chronologically. It begins at frame 0812 of Reel 3 and continues through frame 0627 of Reel 19.

Series II, Manuscripts and Appointment Calendars, 1954-1969. Subseries 1, Manuscripts, 1954-1969

This series contains many of Dr. King's most important speeches and essays. It includes sermons dating to 1954, statements on major civil rights demonstrations, his reply to FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover's criticism, transcripts of interviews with "Meet the Press" and *Playboy* magazine, newspaper columns written by King for the *Amsterdam News*, and copies of several anti-Vietnam War speeches. Also included are a few of Dr. King's itineraries. The series is arranged chronologically beginning at frame 0628 of Reel 19 through frame 269 of Reel 21.

Series II, Manuscripts and Appointment Calendars, 1954-1969. Subseries 2, Appointment Calendars, 1959-1965.

This series begins on frame 0270 of Reel 21. It contains incomplete appointment calendars that nonetheless list many of Dr. King's major engagements. The series ends at the conclusion of Reel 21.

Note on Sources

This collection was microfilmed from the holdings of the King Library and Archive at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Center for Nonviolent Social Change in Atlanta, Georgia.

Editorial Note

Records of the President's Office have been microfilmed in their entirety with the exception of Series III, Tape Recordings. Researchers should be aware of UPA's companion series of the *Records of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, 1954-1970*. These are Part 2, Records of the Executive Director and Treasurer, Part 3, Records of the Public Relations Department, and Part 4, Records of the Program Department. -->