

“WHO DIVIDED THE CHURCH?”: AFRICAN AMERICAN POSTAL WORKERS FIGHT SEGREGATION IN THE POSTAL UNIONS, 1939-1962

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The Committee on Separate Charters reports complete success, 1962. Chairman Lloyd Nowak made the report as committee members look on (left to right): Oscar Durant, Frank Wetschka, and Walter Samples. Courtesy of National Association of Letter Carriers, AFL-CIO.

A spirited debate had broken out on the floor of the 1939 convention of the National Association of Letter Carriers (NALC) at its birthplace in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. This was the 50th or “Golden Anniversary” of the largest postal union in the United States—an American Federation of Labor (AFL) affiliate that first emerged from an 1889 Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) encampment in that same city. The NALC included African Americans among its charter members.¹ P.M.E. Hill from NALC Branch 986 of Yazoo City, Mississippi; R. M. Casey from Branch 27 in Memphis, Tennessee; and Horace H. Scott from Branch 496 in Richmond, Virginia were among the African American letter carriers who led the

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fight to block Jim Crow branches (euphemistically referred to as “separate charters” or “dual charters”). It was a fight that Hill had been involved in since 1917 when separate black NALC branches were first introduced in the South ostensibly to “reduce conflict” and bring in more white dues-paying members who would not join an integrated union. With Hill and Casey leading the charge at the next convention in 1919, those branches were dissolved in large part because of a widespread notion within the NALC that segregated union branches had been implicitly banned by the 1917 Supreme Court *Buchanan v. Warley* decision outlawing residential segregation.²

Some twenty years after Jim Crow’s removal from the NALC, however, a white delegate from New Orleans Branch 33, J. M. Bistowish, was confidently lecturing his audience of mostly white and a few African American letter carriers as to why they should approve “separate charters.” First, there was the “custom and tradition” of segregation, he noted, quickly adding, “We are not here to discuss the idea of segregation, whether it is for good or for bad. Our sole motive here is to get in those members in the South, numbering approximately five thousand, who do not belong to any organization.”³ He rationalized racial separation, using the example of segregated southern churches to illustrate how unfair it was for white southerners to be prohibited from practicing segregation in their union halls, especially since segregation was alive and well in northern cities and states. Bistowish concluded pitifully by citing what he deemed the injustice being perpetrated by African American postal workers in Mississippi. “Now in the State of Mississippi, in Jackson particularly, they have an organization where the whites do not happen to have the charter—the colored have it, and they will not admit any member of the white group into that branch.”⁴ Bistowish, from the all-white New Orleans branch, was on shaky ground with both his allusion to segregated churches and his claim of white letter carrier exclusion. Hill angrily fired back:

Mr. Chairman, I want to puncture something that the first speaker said. He called your attention to the fact that the church is divided. *Who divided the church, but the devil?* (Laughter.) And [Bistowish] called your attention to the segregation down in the South. Who did that but the devil? And what did we do to alleviate *that* kind of segregation? We took up arms and fought against it.⁵

The “devil,” according to Hill, was white supremacy, whether it was in the House of the Lord, the House of Labor, or American society as a whole. Opposing that devil was a major goal of African American freedom struggles throughout the 19th century. In connecting the Civil War with black civil rights, and the union of the states with trade unions, Hill and other militant black postal workers defied the post-Civil War national reconciliation that resulted in the abandonment of African Americans to white supremacists in the South.⁶ In 1917 when Hill first blasted the

Jim Crow branches, he invoked equality, faith, patriotism, and internationalism.

Mr. President, I regret that I must arise as an American citizen and a member of the greatest organization in the world which seemingly is purely democratic and stands for all men, to defend myself as a black man to be separated from other Americans just because I was born black. . . . I was in Argentina, where they had an organization of this kind, and there were [no separations]. . . . When the great [postal union] convention met in Canada, no such action as this was taken. . . . I was in the Spanish-American War. . . . I have a boy now who is in the trenches in France. . . . I hope you gentlemen [whom] I know are all Christians will remember that the Lord said, "God is no respecter of persons." I believe in the proposition of all men up and no man down, and this is wrong. (Applause.)⁷

By 1939 there were even more voices raised against the existence of segregated branches. Barney Bernstein, a white postal worker in Chicago's Branch 11, won both boos and applause for citing the Reconstruction Amendments to the U.S. Constitution as a basis for blocking Jim Crow branches (something he had also pointed out at the 1935 convention). "This little baby pops up every two years, clothed in new clothes," he exploded. This separation "is not designed for the purpose of anything but hate. . . ."⁸ Not only did the convention vote down separate charters, but it also took the unusual step (for the NALC) of passing a resolution introduced by members of the Detroit Branch No. 1, calling for the abolition of the discriminatory civil service application photograph that had been used since 1913 to screen out African American applicants. The National Federation of Post Office Clerks (NFPOC), led by leftist Brooklyn Local 251, passed a similar resolution at their 1941 convention. But it was the National Alliance of Postal Employees (NAPE), or the National Alliance, the historically black union, that had led that campaign since 1913, and was instrumental, along with the NAACP, in finally convincing Democratic President Franklin D. Roosevelt to abolish the photograph requirement in 1940.⁹ Yet less than two years later at the September 1941 NALC convention in Los Angeles, the majority of delegates, this time with the approval of the Resolutions Committee and deferring to southern whites' shibboleths about "tradition," voted to reinstitute Jim Crow branches. They did so over the impassioned objections of delegates such as Barney Bernstein, B. P. Newman from Jackson, Mississippi; Emanuel Kushelewitz from New York City; and Ray Lieberman and Pete Craig from Detroit. Newman and Craig, both African American, were also National Alliance members. This time, white supremacy trumped arguments that compared Jim Crow to "global fascism."¹⁰ What would it take to defeat Jim Crow in the government service unions?

CIVIL RIGHTS UNIONISM v. JIM CROW UNIONISM

Union convention minutes and journals, government documents, and oral histories document the campaigns against racially separate union locals or

"branches," as the NAPE and NALC called them. The struggles were led by P.M.E. Hill and other activists who have been typically "under the radar" of recent studies that often separate labor and civil rights campaigns. In addition to the NALC, I also examine three other major postal unions: the NAPE, the NFPOC, and the National Postal Union (NPU). The NFPOC was, like the NALC, an American Federation of Labor (AFL) affiliate that also had a small but vocal African American minority. The NPU, formed from a 1958 walkout by African American and white postal clerks protesting among other things the NFPOC's segregated locals, was both independent and industrial like the NAPE.¹¹ While postal management historically bears primary responsibility for constructing white privilege and African American discrimination in the post office, postal unions for the most part supported that system or acquiesced in it until challenged by an African American-led alternative. Fighting Jim Crow union branches and locals was a key part of the broader struggle by African American postal workers and their allies against white supremacy in the post office and its unions. It was led by the NAPE, formed in 1913 by African American railway clerks excluded from the Railway Mail Association. African American postal workers (many with both NAPE and other postal union memberships) battled Jim Crow branches and locals in the two largest postal unions (the NALC and the NFPOC) as part of the overall fight for equality that included issues of union leadership, postal hiring, promotion, discipline, and occupational segregation.¹²

Jim Crow union branches and locals were not anachronistic institutions marginal to the overall labor struggle. Instead, they symbolized important white supremacist choices made by white organized labor that often crippled worker unity. Those separate and unequal choices hampered African American competition with whites for jobs and union representation. Jim Crow locals were contested sites and the debates over their existence revealed starkly the assumptions among postal unionists, spoken and unspoken, concerning white privilege, patriotism, and labor peace and prosperity. Nor were segregated unions unique to the post office before the 1940s. While the majority of unionized workers were AFL members, many unions either segregated or excluded African Americans. Even the more radical Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) had some member unions with Jim Crow locals from its origins in 1938 to 1955 when it merged with the AFL creating the AFL-CIO. The federation did not ban all Jim Crow locals in its affiliated unions until 1963.¹³

Some researchers have focused on the "long civil rights movement" that they claim began in the 1930s with the organizing of black workers by white communists and other labor union activists, and that was eventually interrupted by the federal government's anticommunist crusades of the late 1940s and early 1950s.¹⁴ I argue that the effectiveness of anticommunism in the postwar era derived mainly from white supremacy, which was the chief agent in labor's divisions long before the coming of the Cold War. Manipulation by elites is not

sufficient explanation for white worker opposition or indifference to the fight for racial equality within organized labor. Moreover, most of the labor activists opposed to racial segregation in unions were African American. I believe that African American civil rights activists, including black postal workers, were more central to the ongoing struggles to end Jim Crow unions than white communists or members of the CIO. Black labor activists never abandoned an economic emphasis in their campaigns as they kept "fair employment practices" alive as a demand throughout the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s.¹⁵

"Civil rights unionism," a term coined by labor historians Michael Honey and Robert Korstad to describe antiracist union interventions in the mid-20th century South by members of the CIO and the Communist Party USA (CP), also drew upon a venerable tradition of African American labor protest.¹⁶ The National Alliance, representing roughly one-fourth of the black postal workers, considered itself a civil rights organization *and* a labor union, even while other postal unions disparaged the idea.¹⁷ The National Alliance formed a bridge across the civil rights-labor divide noted in the early 1960s by NAACP executive director Roy Wilkins, who argued that the NAACP's "primary purpose" was "to combat discrimination against Negroes" while the "primary purpose of labor organizations" was "to protect wages, hours, and working conditions of its members. Civil rights activity for them is desirable, but must be secondary."¹⁸ The National Alliance worked closely with, but independently of, the NAACP. It also maintained a critical posture in the labor movement, such as when Elmer E. Armstead, a New York Alliance official (and NFPOC member) blasted the NFPOC in 1951 for not defending its members against McCarthyite charges of "communist infiltration."¹⁹

Historians of private sector unions, including Thomas Sugrue, Earl Ofari Hutchinson, George Lipsitz, and David Roediger, have already noted the conflation of white supremacy and anticommunism in the 1940s among white workers. They also point to vacillating positions on racial equality taken by the CP and the CIO, and the importance of African Americans initiating coalitions.²⁰ My examination of a public sector workplace de-centers the CIO and CP in locating civil rights activism within an important labor institution that existed *outside* those two organizations. The post office itself was in many ways unique because most postal unions, including the NALC and the NFPOC, were craft-based AFL affiliates, and there was only a marginal presence within postal unions of both the CIO and the CP. NAPE, one of the largest and most influential postal unions, was a civil rights union that embodied the best of the CIO and the NAACP's programs and objectives. However, postal workers as federal employees were denied even partial collective bargaining rights until 1962, and full bargaining rights were not granted until 1970 after a nationwide postal service "wildcat strike" forced the issue.²¹

Postal workers had to rely on congressional lobbying (some called it

"collective begging") for pay raises and benefits, while work rules were imposed by post office executives. Unlike private sector unions, postal unions during this period had no exclusive representation rights over the workforce, enabling the National Alliance to make the best of that limited role of congressional lobbying by elevating the fight for black equal rights above all other issues.²² Many of the failures and successes of civil rights unionism could be seen in the debates over postal union Jim Crow branches and locals, the battleground often being the floor of the biennial union conventions as well as in the pages of monthly union journals. The anticommunism that many have argued as having been mainly responsible for dividing the labor and civil rights movements, and marginalizing the left, grew primarily out of Jim Crow unionism which, cloaking itself in "Americanism," was nevertheless vulnerable to charges of "anti-Americanism" by African Americans and their allies. African American postal workers as government employees were vulnerable to anticommunist witch-hunts that often conflated civil rights with communism. But as government employee unionists, many of them also NAACP activists, they had a respected status that they used to lobby Congress and maintain pressure against Jim Crow practices in the postal system.²³

Similar to conventions for private sector unions, those of the postal unions typically made policy decisions, conducted elections, and offered ritual reaffirmations of their purpose, with rousing speeches by sympathetic union and government officials. Delegates were local officers and activists. Despite NALC and NFPOC rules that provided disproportionate representation for smaller branches and locals, conventions generally had more of a democratic aspect than the unions' publications and allowed the rank-and-file to debate and bring resolutions to the floor regarding both craft and social issues. The debates over Jim Crow branches and locals became theaters that saw militant African American postal workers such as P.M.E. Hill setting the standard for effective argument and impassioned oratory, equating the historic fight for black equal rights with the one against contemporary totalitarian regimes in Europe and Asia. Their opponents countered with ideological arguments based on 19th century tropes of "peculiar institutions," "southern traditions," and postwar North-South reconciliation.²⁴

The tone of convention debates over civil rights was quite different among the unions examined here. While debate was contentious in the NALC, the National Alliance possessed a more unified anti-Jim Crow agenda. Belonging to more than one union was discouraged by virtually all union officials. But National Alliance members frequently also belonged to the NALC or NFPOC. They also played prominent roles in conventions and published debates and argued against discrimination in its many forms, not just through segregated locals. Ironically, while the NFPOC was able to limit the types of debates over segregation that occurred often at NALC meetings, the two groups wound up splitting in part over this issue in 1958. Very likely in larger percentages than in any other industry,

black postal workers were civil rights leaders and activists both on and off the shop floor. The rising level of protest against Jim Crow practices in the 1940s was not arrayed against a dying institution awaiting imminent collapse, but rather one that was stiffening its resistance, broadening its appeal, and determined to crush any incipient black-white unity. During World War II, African American activists put Jim Crow advocates on the defensive by supporting the "Double V" campaign, victory against fascism at home and abroad.²⁵

But the anticommunist crusade, which after 1950 came to be identified with the public denunciations against "communists and fellow travelers" made by Wisconsin Republican Senator Joseph McCarthy, was a key element in right-wing activism after the war, and it promoted a type of white supremacist "Americanism," similar to the Afrikaners' nationalism in South Africa that supported the introduction of legal apartheid in 1948. Despite some federal government officials' concern over the image of the United States internationally, black postal workers were more vulnerable to charges of communist affiliation because of their involvement in the fight for equal rights for African Americans, which was characterized by conservative politicians as being "subversive." At the same time, the growing intensity of the Cold War ideological and political competition between the United States and the Soviet Union and communist bloc made the continued practice of racial segregation a major disadvantage for Western interests in the era of emerging "colored nations" and advancing decolonization globally.²⁶

The World War II-era racial contradictions in the House of Labor included the postal unions. But the postal system was not beset by white worker "hate strikes" that were common in the private sector when African Americans attempted to enter the expanding national defense industries. The threat of a 1941 March on Washington by an all-black coalition led by A. Philip Randolph, President of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP), compelled President Roosevelt to issue Executive Order 8802, establishing the Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC) to investigate discrimination in the national defense industry, and in 1943, Executive Order 9346, which launched investigations of discrimination in federal agencies. The National Alliance alone among postal unions brought discrimination complaints before the FEPC.²⁷ Earlier, Alliance leaders had joined other black unionists at the National Negro Congress (NNC) conventions in 1936, 1937, and 1940.²⁸ An activist tide growing within the Alliance was empowered by the 1940 abolition of the inclusion of photographs in civil service applications that aided discriminatory practices, and it was inspired by successful CIO organizing among industrial workers. In addition to Alliance activists working within the NALC and NFPOC to overturn their Jim Crow branches and locals, Alliance conventions typically passed resolutions and planned actions against segregation. At their 1943 convention in St. Louis, the delegates

voted to boycott the segregated post office cafeterias after the guest speaker, Postmaster Rufus Jackson, adamantly refused to change that policy. "We are different from other Post Office organizations," former Alliance President J. O. Gilliam defiantly told Postmaster Jackson, and then showed him the door.²⁹ James B. Cobb, president of the Washington, DC, branch, later exclaimed: "I am glad that we are getting out of the category of a Christian Endeavor organization. . . . We ought to demand our rights because we have the power."³⁰

Meanwhile, with its Resolutions Committee members abstaining, the NFPOC delegates to the convention in October 1941 in St. Louis dismissed without debate the motion by Cleveland Local 72 to ban "Jim Crow Locals" as "contrary to all American principles."³¹ Yet the same convention voted against poll taxes after hearing white delegate Philip Stough of Miami offer this dramatic recollection: "Shortly after the close of the Civil War, when the [N]egroes were given their equal political rights with the whites, many of the Southern States sought methods where they might be able to enslave the [N]egro politically. . . . I oppose the poll tax and ask you to concur with the [resolutions] committee." New York Local 10 delegate Ephraim Handman condemned "the existence of dual Locals . . . in contradiction to a number of the resolutions against discrimination which were passed with little or no debate."³² Three years later, again with the "non-concurrence" of the Resolutions Committee, the NFPOC dismissed Local 251's proposal to "consolidate dual locals." There was no debate. President Leo George defended Jim Crow locals as a local matter for members who "feel that they are promoting the interests of their members."³³ But black delegate, Henry McWright, vice president of the Cleveland Alliance, speaking for the anti-poll tax resolution later approved, compared U.S. racism to fascism, promised future challenges to Jim Crow locals, and concluded simply: "There are some things that I hope will be bettered. . . ."³⁴

Wartime national defense had unleashed productive forces in the United States and emboldened agents of social change in the African American community, including black postal workers who were integral players as activists and role models. But as African Americans were moving forward, the white majorities in the postal unions were moving backwards, as were most American unions, acquiescing to the racial and political repression in the workplace. The collapse of Jim Crow postal unionism, however, can be traced through two "eras of activism": the post-World War II, early Cold War era, followed by the period between the 1954 U.S. Supreme Court *Brown v. Board of Education* decision striking down segregated public schools, and President John F. Kennedy's 1962 Executive Order 10988 allowing partial collective bargaining for government employees belonging to non-discriminatory unions.

FIGHTING JIM CROW LOCALS IN THE EMERGING COLD WAR ERA, 1945–1953

Anticommunism at the workplace and in the union hall gained ground in the late 1940s and early 1950s with the passage of the antilabor Taft-Hartley Act that, among other things, revoked government recognition of unions that refused to expel officials who were also CP members. This 1947 law led to the CIO and other federations purging communist-dominated unions. That same year President Harry S. Truman's Executive Order 9835 mandated "loyalty oaths" for government employees and allowed the removal of those who participated in alleged "communist" activities. The major postal unions were quick to proclaim their loyalty and determination to help root out communists even before Truman's loyalty oath was issued, and within the postal system only the National Alliance and its allies, mainly all-white postal union members, raised serious objections to both Jim Crow and "red-hunting" throughout the McCarthy era.³⁵ While the NALC rejected all pro-equal rights resolutions outright, the NFPOC leadership paid lip service to these measures while simultaneously committing the organization to anticommunist purges within the labor movement. Both the NALC and NFPOC followed the AFL in supporting the federal government's "loyalty probe" in 1946.³⁶

After the war, despite discrimination in hiring, returning black veterans were able to gain greater access to the post office through hiring preferences for veterans. They also demanded civil rights inside and outside the workplace.³⁷ The National Alliance's emphasis on worker education also put its members in touch with leftist CIO activists for joint workshops, even as NALC convention delegates typically booed positive references to that insurgent federation.³⁸ The NAACP was also a regular presence at Alliance conventions. And contrary to the perspectives offered by Robert Korstad and Nelson Lichtenstein, historian Richard Thomas pointed out that for black postal employees and other workers, "the NAACP had rocked their cradle and fought their battles long before the white-dominated labor movement had any use for them."³⁹ The story of civil rights unionism also requires a reevaluation of the role of the NAACP. Snow Grigsby, for example, who served as the editor of the *Postal Alliance*, and wrote articles and editorials that reflected Alliance organizing and activism in local branches, was also a longtime member of the Detroit NAACP, then the largest branch nationally. In addition, Snow and others also formed a Civic Rights Committee in Detroit to pursue more militant, autonomous action. This setting up of parallel civil rights organizations, while defying at times NAACP national office directives against armed self-defense, working with communists, or the use of direct action, seems to have been a common practice by local NAACP activists in the postwar era. Henry Wheeler of St. Louis, Frank Barnes of Los Angeles, John LeFlore of Mobile, and John Wesley Dobbs of

Atlanta were among the independent-minded black postal unionists who also belonged to the NAACP and involved themselves in its voter registration drives and court cases. Orsel McGhee of Detroit took his NAACP-sponsored case all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court where it served as the companion case to the landmark 1948 *Shelley v. Kraemer* decision overturning restrictive racial covenants in housing deeds and contracts. Heman Marion Sweatt of Houston, plaintiff in the 1950 *Sweatt v. Painter* decision desegregating the University of Texas School of Law, along with Wheeler, Barnes, LeFlore, Dobbs, and McGhee were all National Alliance members.⁴⁰

In 1946 an article published in the *Pittsburgh Courier* highlighted some major differences between the National Alliance and the NALC. Whereas NALC members at their national convention that year rejected resolutions calling for the abolition of Jim Crow branches, opposing lynching, and supporting the restoration of the FEPC now that the war was over, at the Alliance regional convention in Norfolk, Virginia, a resolution passed protesting the layoffs of women postal workers, especially African Americans, who had been restricted to "war service appointments."⁴¹ The NALC's *Postal Record* only carried convention summaries, and it was noted that the three amendments to alter or abolish "dual charters" had been offered. These were opposed by members of the Constitution Committee, and they all were rejected—one "after considerable discussion."⁴²

Meanwhile, within the NFPOC the issue of Jim Crow locals that had survived challenges in 1941 and 1944 was back on the table at the 1946 convention in Milwaukee. Black delegate Charles O. Maxwell, later vice president for New York's Local No. 10 and an Alliance officer, joined others in sponsoring resolutions against discrimination in the Armed Services and for federal antilynching legislation, and both passed. New York Local 10, along with Brooklyn Local 251, were members of the pro-democracy, anti-Jim Crow "Progressive-Fed" caucus in the NFPOC, which emerged at this convention and successfully sponsored a resolution opposing racial exclusion and segregation by AFL affiliates.⁴³ But when a resolution was proposed calling for the integration of NFPOC locals, the Resolutions Committee once again opposed barring "dual locals" because committee members "felt that the loss of dual locals would be a loss to the membership." However, the black delegates from Local 148 in Washington, DC (a "dual local"), recommended an "amicable solution for abolition of dual Locals wherever they exist between officials of such Locals, and no separate charter shall ever again be granted." This resolution, favoring what they termed "social movement from below," not "reforms from above," was unanimously adopted as a "compromise."⁴⁴

Even before the anticommunist purges of federal workers sparked by President Truman's loyalty oath, black postal workers were harassed for civil rights activity that some government officials associated with "communism." The 1947 National

Alliance convention in Cleveland discussed the cases of Joseph Bryant and John LeFlore. Bryant, a clerk and Cleveland Alliance member, was framed for overcharging a customer after he had been assigned to the previously all-white Shaker Square Post Office. He was defended by the leftist Civil Rights Congress (CRC), and his 1948 acquittal energized the local Alliance branch. LeFlore was a Mobile Alliance and NAACP member exonerated in 1946 on charges of violating both the Hatch Act and Civil Code for "unusual political activity" for trying to register African Americans to vote in Alabama. LeFlore was defended by a leading Alliance attorney, William C. Jason, Jr., the outspoken postal union activist.⁴⁵

African Americans who belonged to the postal unions took great personal and career risks in publicly exposing the political connections between the supporters of Jim Crow and anticommunism. For example, Brooklyn letter carrier Fred H. M. Turner, former president of the local NAACP and Alliance branches, was threatened with dismissal because at one time in the 1930s he was a member of the National Negro Congress (NNC). Although Turner was ultimately cleared by the Loyalty Review Board, in part due to outside public support, it has been reported that many other postal workers, similarly charged on such shaky grounds, were not so lucky.⁴⁶ The harassment was aimed at entire organizations such as the Alliance as well as at selected leftists and even liberals, primarily to create fear and distrust among those who might think about engaging in pro-civil rights activity or associating with those groups or individuals. For instance, Bertram A. Washington, the Cleveland Alliance branch president, NAACP official, and a member of the NNC and the Civil Rights Congress, was charged with disloyalty. After acknowledging membership in the CRC and NNC, Washington used his postal Loyalty Review Board hearing in 1948 not only to assert his innocence, but also to accuse the local post office and the Cleveland branch of the NFPOC of discrimination. Washington charged "that it was the N.A.P.E.'s fight for Negro job rights in the post office and against racial discrimination that led to the disloyalty charges."⁴⁷ Not only did the anticommunist activism lead to a decrease in labor union organizing in the late 1940s, "civil rights unionism" took several steps backward as well.

Throughout that postwar period the *Postal Alliance* monitored the civil rights policies of various postal unions. The coverage of the 1948 NALC convention in Miami made it clear that social activities were segregated, and revealed that African American carriers in the nation's capital continued to refuse to join the NALC until it banned its Jim Crow branches.⁴⁸ NALC's *Postal Record* blandly informed its members in November that its 1948 convention had turned back the effort led by the all-black Norfolk Branch 525 to abolish separate charters.⁴⁹ According to the *Postal Alliance*, however, it was a "heated session," where the white delegates defeated resolutions to ban Jim Crow locals and to keep conventions out of racially segregated cities. The branch integration resolution was introduced by the New

York City and eleven other northern branches.⁵⁰

In defending the "success" of the "separate charter situation," NALC President William Doherty observed, "I suppose it has been debated endlessly in all democratic forms of government since long before . . . the Civil War. *It is just one of those things.* I say definitely that there are sins on both sides of this question and the figures speak for themselves."⁵¹ However, official segregation was only then recently institutionalized in the NALC and the support for it reached its peak in 1948 when southern Democrats bolted the party and formed the National States' Rights Party (NSRP) or Dixiecrats. In southern cities without separate branches, whites often simply forced African Americans out of the older integrated group, and this practice of separatism in the NALC had the blessings of many NALC delegates, in the North and South. Indeed, NALC President Doherty proudly pointed to the newly formed separate branches in Jackson, Charleston, Memphis, Norfolk, New Orleans, Atlanta, Montgomery, and Washington, DC. Separate charters were later issued to Birmingham and Mobile, Alabama; Jacksonville and St. Petersburg, Florida; Albany, Georgia; Baton Rouge and Shreveport, Louisiana; Houston and Lubbock, Texas; and Portsmouth, Virginia.⁵²

At the same time, some southern white delegates such as Lucius Cowan of Hattiesburg, Mississippi's NALC Branch 938 resurrected the hoary charge that white carriers in Jackson had been denied NALC membership by African Americans until separate charters were instituted.⁵³ During the 1948 debate that saw Jim Crow solidified in the NALC, Norfolk's M. E. Diggs, an Alliance member, asked poignantly, "What is democracy except equality?"⁵⁴ Alliance members' great emphasis on economic and equal rights issues in the 1940s was combined with the pro-labor upsurge within the NAACP.⁵⁵ The Alliance's legal and lobbying efforts paralleled those of the NAACP, pushing Walter White, Roy Wilkins, and other officers to support issues of economic equality. In 1948 John T. Hall, Los Angeles postal supervisor and member of the local Alliance "Pay-raise committee," asked Walter White and the national office to endorse a congressional bill raising postal salaries.⁵⁶ Alliance members and those in other labor and civic groups attempted to put pressure on President Truman to support civil rights and labor issues.⁵⁷

By 1950 the Alliance found itself conducting a balancing act of praising President Truman's steps to halt Jim Crow, while criticizing his strident anticommunist measures, especially the 1947 government employee loyalty oath. The National Alliance was one of few unions or civil rights organizations that continued to oppose loyalty oaths and lobbied to change or abolish them, while the NAACP, AFL, CIO, and other labor unions went from condemning these practices to acquiescing in, and even joining anticommunist witch-hunts. Alliance conventions continued to host prominent postal officials and African American professionals who praised the group's civil rights activism and union organizing.⁵⁸

With the 1951 outbreak of the Korean conflict, those attacking Jim Crow within the NALC and the NFPOC invoked the war and compared segregated postal union branches and locals to totalitarian communism, just as they had previously likened segregated branches to fascism in Europe and Japan during World War II.⁵⁹

The battle over Jim Crow branches was on again at the NALC's 1952 national convention held in New York City, and the local branches' opponents were blamed for creating the turmoil. President Doherty, members of the Board of Laws, and white delegates from around the country either continued to defend segregation, or voted to table the proposed constitutional ban brought by delegate Philip Lepper, a member of the national executive board, and president of the NALC's largest branch, New York's Branch 36. Attempting to link moral appeals to American values, Lepper asked rhetorically, "Can there be compromise with human rights?"⁶⁰ Claude E. Sullivan from Atlanta's black Branch 172 challenged Doherty's charges that African American branches practiced racial exclusion. "[H]e said nothing about sin in the other house. If there was sin on our side of the house, he said nothing about it. . . . We, as Branch 172, will take anybody, regardless of race, creed or color. Just a few years back, we took in nearly 100 white carriers in our branch."⁶¹ Max Butler from New Orleans's all-black Branch 3866 supported Sullivan's challenge and called for abolition of the "so-called precious 'traditions' of Jim Crow" that were "fast disappearing with the march of American progress."⁶² But these efforts were in vain. "[It] is an overwhelming vote to this convention that the committee is sustained," announced Doherty to cheers and applause, "and I so rule."⁶³ Sullivan responded bitterly, "I want you to know that we shall ever and ever and on and on fight until this wrong is righted."⁶⁴ Frank B. Harris, a black letter carrier from the Norfolk Branch 525, declared, "Fellow delegates, one hundred years from [the Civil War] finds us so stupid as to be arguing the same question now," but many in the audience booed him and voted the resolution down.⁶⁵ The *Official Proceedings* for the convention noted the movement on to other business, but the NALC's *Postal Record* reported that "a spirited discussion" then ensued on dual charters, just as it had in 1948.⁶⁶ As soon as the resolution supporting Jim Crow locals was upheld in 1952, African American letter carriers walked out, but they indicated their determination to keep fighting.⁶⁷ One positive event occurred in 1953 when AFL convention delegates endorsed a resolution opposing the maintenance of segregated unions.

THE LAST DAYS OF JIM CROW POSTAL UNIONS, 1954-1962

Expectations among black postal union activists rose with the U.S. Supreme Court's *Brown* decision and the fall of Sen. Joe McCarthy in 1954. This was followed by presidential executive orders and civil rights laws during the Eisenhower administration and antidiscrimination executive orders from President

John F. Kennedy that were the most far-reaching since the New Deal. Unfortunately, foot-dragging on the abolition of Jim Crow locals became the main response among postal unions and in organized labor in general, even as pro-integration resolutions were being passed. African Americans and their allies in the various postal unions used direct attacks on Jim Crow and its compromises in order to weaken and slow it down, while the Alliance consistently reported these battles and intervened in support of individual members. *Postal Alliance*, the monthly journal, contextualized and compared African American labor struggles of the past that were the result of organized labor's failure to commit to equal rights and treatment.⁶⁸

The 1954 NFPOC convention in Cincinnati approved a resolution "requesting that [its] national officers make a determined effort to bring about the consolidation of existing dual locals."⁶⁹ An even more far-reaching resolution was passed that summer by the NALC.⁷⁰ The final vote of 596-450 reflected the modern Civil Rights Movement gaining ground against stubborn opposition within organized labor. One African American delegate noted that NALC President Doherty, who had promoted Jim Crow branches for the previous decade, had "gone on record" at the 1953 AFL convention in support of integrated unionism.⁷¹ NALC anti-"dual charter" resolutions were no longer buried in convention resolutions as they had been in the past. Even the Board of Laws changed its usual "disapproval" to a "neutral" position. NALC's *Postal Record* reported, "One of the most important decisions before the convention was first on the Board of Laws agenda—the question of separate charters."⁷² Yet it was Claude E. Sullivan, the black NALC delegate from Atlanta, who moved to strike the proposed amendment and substitute one of his own, which preserved existing dual charters while preventing future ones.⁷³ However, Clarence Acox from New Orleans's all-black Branch 3866 objected to this watered-down amendment: "We, being employees of the federal government . . . we set the pattern for all workers throughout America."⁷⁴ The convention heard a motion for tabling the measure from a white delegate from Miami, and seconded by one from Nashville. That motion lost a close vote of 499-578. On the next vote for Claude Sullivan's amendment, a voice vote was taken and the convention moved on.⁷⁵ Was this a missed opportunity? Perhaps. But Acox's amendment ending separate charters may not have had the votes to assure passage. Sullivan's "half a loaf is better than none" tactic is also understandable given his personal stake in passing something immediately. "I am an old man," Sullivan mused, "and I have been a member of this Association for thirty-two years. . . . So if we will get rid of this thing, I can die in peace."⁷⁶ Many applauded this dramatic declaration and it was a blow against fortress Jim Crow. But this vote sidestepped the issue of the *existing* "dual charters" and helped postpone their abolition altogether in the NALC until 1962.⁷⁷

The NFPOC convention debates over Jim Crow locals never approached the

passion and drama found at the NALC meetings. But in 1958 alienation from the NFPOC's undemocratic procedures and Jim Crow locals spurred its left-wing delegates to walk out of the August convention, an incident that later became known as the "Boston Tea Party."⁷⁸ It was unprecedented. For the NFPOC secessionists, it was gratifying at their first convention in May 1959, now as the "National Postal Clerks Union," to be greeted by Robert L. White, DC Alliance branch president, who declared, "I am glad to see this organization formed."⁷⁹ The following year the National Postal Clerks Union became the National Postal Union (NPU), a better reflection of its industrial character—having taken about one-fifth of NFPOC's membership from New York, Washington, DC, the Northeast, Midwest, and Far West. The members of the New York local, NPU's largest, had long opposed Jim Crow locals and the loyalty oaths for which the leading union members were red-baited, as would occur later within the NPU by former NFPOC members. Historian David Roediger has been critical of the CIO's "nonracial syndicalism" or the idea that integrated workplaces and unions were sufficient to unite African American and white workers. With African Americans making up 25 percent or more of the membership, the NPU embraced what could be called "interracial syndicalism," the idea that unions must be opposed to all barriers to working-class unity. The NPU members declared from the beginning: "There shall be no more than one local of this Union within any one postal installation."⁸⁰

The struggle over Jim Crow was still raging, however, in the summer of 1960 at the NALC convention in Cincinnati, where New York Branch 36 brought a resolution to the floor calling for the abolition of remaining "dual charters." This move was inspired by the Supreme Court's *Brown* decision, the commitment coming from the 1958 convention to explore postal union amalgamation, and from NALC's separate black locals.⁸¹ In 1960 the New York branch's resolution was supported by Harold Loewe from NALC's Cleveland Branch 40 who called for the appointment of a committee to carry out the dissolution process, and was also backed by Garrett Taylor from DC's all-black Branch 4022. A decade earlier the NALC convention floor was dominated by vocal supporters of Jim Crow; in 1960 Ralph Seery from the all-white Norfolk Branch 3947 was alone at the microphone objecting to the idea that Branch 3947 and Branch 525 would be consolidated. But even William Doherty ruled Seery out of order, and the measure passed. The "Committee on Separate Charters" was formed and was authorized to meet with the leadership of the segregated branches to facilitate their dissolution, starting with Washington, DC.⁸²

In 1960 the Alliance strategy to defeat Jim Crow postal unionism and promote postal labor representation included lobbying Senator John Kennedy en route to his election to the presidency. As a senator, Kennedy had supported the Rhodes-Johnston bill extending limited collective bargaining rights to federal unions; once

elected, he preempted the bill's imminent passage by issuing Executive Order (EO) 10988 on 17 January 1962, which contained tougher language against racial discrimination. The order denied recognition to any federal employees' union "which discriminates with regard to the terms or conditions of membership because of race, color, creed or national origin."⁸³ Rhodes-Johnston, co-sponsored by South Carolina's arch-segregationist Democrat Olin Johnston, said nothing about union integration, nor did Minnesota Senator Hubert H. Humphrey, also a Democrat and one of the bill's liberal sponsors during floor debate.⁸⁴ In addition, Rhodes-Johnston provided for a "winner-take-all" employee referendum system for choosing a national collective bargaining agent for each craft. Had such an election been held and gone against the smaller independent industrial unions such as the National Alliance and the NPU, it would have stripped these groups of any representation. The Alliance had long objected to "exclusive" private sector union representation enshrined in the 1935 National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) that privileged large white unions—many of which excluded or discriminated against African American workers and their organizations at that time.⁸⁵

Like other postal unions, the Alliance expressed cautious praise for EO 10988, given its prohibition against discrimination and segregation by any federal employee union desiring official recognition, and its assurance that "no Federal Agency is to operate as a closed shop."⁸⁶ EO 10988 granted collective bargaining rights to all postal workers, but avoided "winner-take-all" contests by allowing "exclusive," "formal," and "informal" categories for official recognition on a "national," "regional," and "local" basis. The Alliance preferred "formal" recognition for *all* unions, and not divisions along craft lines that could potentially lead to domination by the larger unions. That summer's voting by postal workers allowed the Alliance and the NPU to maintain "formal" representation, as well as the opportunity to enter contests at the local and regional levels for "exclusive" representation.⁸⁷

Also in 1962, the end of Jim Crow locals finally came to the letter carriers' union. On 6 September 1962, at the NALC convention in Denver, the Committee on Separate Charters cited "moral" mandates from NALC and AFL-CIO members to abolish segregation and end discrimination. A white delegate from the recently merged Montgomery Branch 106 then objected, pointing out that the members of the Committee on Separate Charters had never even left the District of Columbia.⁸⁸ In response, committee chair Lloyd Nowak noted that they had run into strong white resistance in Washington, DC, in March 1961, which was the first test run in trying to merge the two branches. This prompted the NALC executive council to issue a directive on 14 April 1962 merging all remaining separate branches nationwide; this order affected over 5,000 members. The Committee's report praised President Doherty and the executive council for having acted well in advance of President

Kennedy's EO 10988 taking effect. Interestingly, in cities that formerly had dual branches, membership substantially increased after merging, despite dire predictions of "white flight." In addition to Washington, DC, and Montgomery, Alabama, other branches that had to surrender separate charters were located in southern cities with large African American populations, and they were oftentimes experiencing civil rights activism. In every case but Birmingham, these cities witnessed substantial African American in-migration, including Mobile, Jacksonville, St. Petersburg, Albany, Atlanta, Greenville, Charleston, Memphis, Houston, Lubbock, Norfolk, Portsmouth, and Shreveport. When the all-white letter carriers locals in New Orleans and Baton Rouge refused to surrender their charters, they had to be abolished and replaced by integrated branches. As early as March 1961 the members of NALC's Committee on Separate Charters were feeling the pressure coming from the Kennedy administration and the issuing of Executive Order 10925 (1961) that required the NALC and other postal unions to file "Non-Discrimination Compliance Reports," and the postmaster general's prohibitions on discrimination in promotions. However, it has been suggested that "the greatest pressure came from the denial of contracting authority to any organization practicing discrimination in connection with . . . the Federal Employees' Health Benefits Act."⁸⁹ No evidence has been found of African American objections to branch-mergers within the NALC. Two of the five members of the Committee on Separate Charters were African American: Oscar A. Durant, an Alliance official from New York, and Walter Samples from Mobile, Alabama.⁹⁰

After the "Progressive Feds" seceded in 1958, the NFPOC merged in 1960 with the more conservative United National Association of Post Office Craftsmen (UNAPOC) to become the United Federation of Postal Clerks (UFPC). In the process the group seemed to have abolished all its segregated locals, while capturing "exclusive" representation among postal clerks, except for the antiracist NPU in New York whose members charged in July 1961 that "at least one major postal union—the former NFPOC—has dual locals."⁹¹ The National Alliance, after twenty-two years of civil rights and labor activism beginning in 1940 with the campaign to end discriminatory civil service photo applications, was now able to compete for representation nationwide. Miami Alliance official Sam Armstrong recalled, "And then came Executive Order 10988 . . . and only then did the NALC decide, 'we'll accept [integration] . . . but you cannot go to any social functions. . .'" He added that, while previously there had been a segregated, partitioned cafeteria in the Miami post office, by the 1960s "the Alliance got that wall removed."⁹² In an interview, Atlanta Alliance official Samuel Lovett, a college graduate and military service veteran, proudly recalled the combining of African American labor activism and civil rights litigation in defeating Jim Crow, noting, "The Alliance always worked within the framework of the law. It was the [postal]

agency that worked outside of the law, [promoting] segregation and discrimination. . . ."⁹³

CONCLUSION

Looking back at the 1939 NALC convention debate, it is remarkable to see how much support an African American southerner, P.M.E. Hill, received in his denunciation of Jim Crow practices in the postal unions. His convention floor invocation of the Civil War and African Americans' crucial role in the victory over slavery was a vital piece of historical memory tying past social movements with modern civil rights and labor struggles. It also forced J. M. Bistowish, a staunch proponent of Jim Crow, to gingerly couch his arguments in opportunistic economic terms, even as he invoked the standard narrative of southern white victimhood in the Civil War and Reconstruction. This was the year of the popular Civil War film, *Gone with the Wind*, which won the Academy Award for Best Picture. Yet the day before the convention began, on 2 September 1939, France and Britain had declared war on Germany after Nazi forces had invaded Poland. German aggression gave American civil rights advocates ammunition to attack white supremacy as un-American and fascist.⁹⁴ While mainstream postal unions maintained the status quo during World War II, and afterwards with the start of the Cold War, those fighting for equal rights were put on the defensive and labeled "subversive." However, the campaign to abolish Jim Crow postal union branches and locals was part of the larger movement to end official segregation and racial discrimination throughout the postal system and in its unions.⁹⁵ Indeed, white supremacy and anticommunism worked together to forestall Jim Crow's abolition in postal and other federal unions another decade.

In the National Alliance as well as in the NALC, NFPOC, and NPU, however, African American postal workers brought civil rights activism into the labor movement, and labor issues into the civil rights campaigns. They were part of the continuity that in a sense suggest a "long civil rights movement." But as historians Sundiata Keita Cha-Jua and Clarence Lang point out, Jacquelyn Dowd Hall and others' argument for a "long civil rights movement" is problematic "because it collapses periodization schemas, erases conceptual differences between waves of the [Black Freedom Movement], and blurs the regional distinctions in the African American experience."⁹⁶ No matter how divisive and demoralizing the postwar red-baiting was, an alternative labor-left movement, with substantial African American leadership, did not completely die, but managed to survive the anticommunist onslaught. By 1962 interest convergence had emerged in Washington, DC, the Congress, the Kennedy administration, and the postal unions sought to transform the post office into a model workplace. Despite being red-baited by opponents for over a decade, activist black postal workers and their allies made elimination of

segregation and discrimination part of the modernization of the postal workplace. They did so in part by successfully exploiting the desire on the part of the U.S. government and organized labor to improve the image of the United States abroad.⁹⁷

P.M.E. Hill's impassioned and eloquent rebuke of postal union segregation at the 1939 NALC convention in Milwaukee tied the early 20th-century anti-Jim Crow movement to the ongoing struggle against white supremacy. Hill and other black postal unionists pointed out that allowing African Americans to enlist in the Union Army in 1863 paved the way for the abolition of slavery in the United States. And those same postal union activists had no qualms comparing Jim Crow postal unionism to southern secession in the 19th century and fascist totalitarianism in the 20th. African American postal activists were consistent participants in leftist and labor coalitions that sought progressive social change in early and mid-20th-century American society.

NOTES

⁹⁷M. Brady Mikusko, *Carriers in a Common Cause: A History of Letter Carriers and the NALC* (Washington, DC, 1989), 11, 44; see esp. 11. It is instructive that, according to Mikusko, Milwaukee letter carriers deliberately called that inaugural meeting in their city to coincide with the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) meeting "so that letter carriers who were veterans could take advantage of reduced train fares," suggesting that many of those first NALC delegates were Union Army veterans. The GAR's evolution into a powerful political lobby and fraternal order became a model for the NALC especially among the postal unions. On African Americans in the GAR, see Barbara A. Gannon, "The Won Cause: Black and White Comradeship in the Grand Army of the Republic" (Ph.D. diss., Pennsylvania State University, 2005). See also Stuart McConnell, *Glorious Contention: The Grand Army of the Republic, 1865-1900* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1992); Mary R. Dearing, *Veterans in Politics: The Story of the GAR* (Baton Rouge, LA, 1952); and the website of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, <http://www.suvw.org/gar.htm>. On African American NALC charter members, see Philip F. Rubio, "There's Always Work at the Post Office!" *African Americans Fight for Jobs, Justice, and Equality at the United States Post Office from the Civil War to the Present* (Chapel Hill, NC, forthcoming), chapter 1.

⁹⁸Coincidentally, the text case referred to in the text—litigated by the NAACP—involved William Warley, an African American Louisville, Kentucky, letter carrier and local NAACP president (Charles Buchanan, a white realtor, was a friend of the NAACP). See *Buchanan v. Warley*, 245 U.S. 60 (1917); and Roger L. Rice, "Residential Segregation by Law, 1910-1917," *Journal of Southern History* 34, no. 2 (May 1968): 179-99. On Jim Crow branches in the NALC, it was in the 1919 debate that "separate charter" was first heard. See "Convention Proceedings," *Postal Record*, October 1919, 332. In the 1935 NALC convention coverage I found the first reference to "dual charters"—by opponents and in the published minutes. See "Convention Proceedings," *Postal Record*, October, 1935, 509-10. By 1939, Jim Crow proponents (the Louisiana and Alabama State Associations) used the term "dual charters" in their resolution calling for segregation. See "Convention Proceedings," *Postal Record*, October 1935, 499. Between 1941 and 1962 NALC convention delegates argued over whether the correct term was "separate" or "dual" charters. Both "separate" and "dual" were used in NALC publications, and commonly heard roughly with the same frequency on the convention floor. President William Doherty liked to argue that there had been "separate" not "dual" charters in the NALC. See *Official Proceedings of the Forty-Second Biennial Convention of the National Association of Letter Carriers, Cincinnati, Ohio, August 21-26, 1960* (Washington, DC, 1961), 72. The amended 1941 NALC Constitution Article II Section 1 referred to "second charters." See "Convention Proceedings," *Postal Record*, October 1941, 533.

⁹⁹"Convention Proceedings," *Postal Record*, October 1939, 499.

¹⁰⁰Ibid.; Bistowish's complaint also provides us a fascinating window into African American postal worker agency in Mississippi.

¹⁰¹Ibid. Italics added; for African American press praise of the victory, see "Bias Move at Postmen's Meet Blocked," *Chicago Defender*, 6 September 1939, 6.

¹⁰²See, for example, Frederick Douglass's 30 May 1881 speech in remembrance of John Brown reprinted in Louis Ruchames, *John Brown: The Making of a Revolutionary* (New York, 1969), 278-99. For African American memory and celebration of the armed struggle that overthrew slavery, see for example, Thavolia Glymph, "'Liberty Dearly Bought': The Making of Civil War Memory in African American Communities in the South," in *Time Longer Than Rope: A Century of African-American Activism, 1850-1950*, ed. Charles Payne and Adam Green (New York, 2003), 111-40, esp. 117. In postal union convention floor and journal debates, African American activists like Hill skillfully invoked that memory and found like-minded white allies. See also Donald R. Shaffer, *After the Glory: The Struggles of Black Civil War Veterans* (Lawrence, KS, 2004), esp. 160-63. Shaffer importantly cites a unique Civil War memory among African American military veterans, and notes William Carney and James Trotter's roles (among others) in the autonomous reunions of African American Civil War veterans from 1885 to 1887. On P.M.E. Hill: "Slight of stature and weighs but 100 pounds" is how the *Chicago Defender* described him in a 15 September 1923 report on the NALC's national convention that week in Providence, RI. But there was nothing slight about his capital accumulation. "Hill reported to be the wealthiest letter carrier in the country. He is said to have amassed \$100,000 by buying and selling cotton"; see "Carriers of U.S. Mail in Convention," *Chicago Defender*, 15 September 1923, 3.

¹⁰³"Convention Proceedings," *Postal Record*, September 1917, 294.

¹⁰⁴"Convention Proceedings," *Postal Record*, October 1939, 499. For Bernstein's 1935 speech see "Convention Proceedings," *Postal Record*, October 1935, 510.

¹⁰⁵"Convention Proceedings," *Postal Record*, October 1939, 511. A. L. Glenn, *History of the National Alliance of Postal Employees, 1913-1955* (Washington, DC, 1956), 92; Glenn notes that the January 1941 *Postal Alliance* heralded the abolition of the photo requirement. See also "Along the N.A.A.C.P. Battlefield," *Crisis*, December 1940, 390. See also "President's Order Prohibits Civil Service Discrimination," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 23 November 1940, 3, microfilm, PBL. See also the *New York Times* for the period of 8 November-30 November 1940. See also *Proceedings of the Twenty-first Convention of the National Federation of Post Office Clerks, Houston, Texas, September 4-9, 1939*, 129. "Civil Service—Appointment of First Eligible; Abolition of Photograph" was Resolution 411's self-explanatory title that challenged the civil service's discriminatory use of the photograph; the discretion allowed civil service officers to choose from among the "top three eligibles" (based on examination scores), and thus frequently screen out African Americans. It was passed without objection, but no resolutions were raised against Jim Crow locals at that convention. In the handful of antidiscrimination resolutions that passed, there were no sectional differences heard, and only one objection—recorded anonymously—to the antilynching resolution. The proceedings included the discussion of the "Anti-Lynching Bill," 103; "Discrimination Against Members," 103; "Dictatorship—Opposed to," 108; "Minorities—Persecution of," 112.

¹⁰⁶"Convention Proceedings," *Postal Record*, October 1941, 535. The Alliance also became an unintended beneficiary of the NALC's 1941 approval of Jim Crow charters, as the following year sixty-five African American letter carriers in Newport News, Virginia (including future NALC delegate John W. Lee), formed a new Alliance branch in that city. See "New Branch Established," *Postal Alliance*, June 1942, 13. See also *Postal Record*, October 1941, 535. In 1943 "Peter H. Craig, Jr." was listed as a Detroit delegate to the 1943 NALC national convention. See *Postal Record*, October 1943, 329. See also Peter H. Craig, "Intra-Group Unity," *Postal Alliance*, October 1964, 29. See also "Negro Clerks Rejected by New Orleans," *Postal Alliance*, April 1948, 19, for the campaign by the Alliance and the NAACP against discrimination in that city, where there were 283 African American and sixty-six white carriers, along with 451 white and seventy-four African American clerks. On Casey, see G. P. Hamilton, *The Bright Side of Memphis* (Memphis, TN, 1908), 198, in files on "History," folder "Dual Charters and Blacks," National Association of Letter Carriers Library, Washington, DC, (hereafter NALC Library). African American letter carriers effectively ran the NALC branches in parts of the South like Atlanta, New Orleans, and the NALC state association in Mississippi, Willenham Castilla, longtime National Alliance and NAACP activist, who was also a onetime NALC member, telephone conversation with the author, 16 January 2009. On B. P. Newman's Alliance membership, see 1943 NAPE "Convention Minutes," *Postal Alliance*, November 1943, 47. According to the report of the forty-fourth Mississippi state NALC convention in 1941, Newman, "one of Branch 207's oldest and most dependable members, was elected by acclamation" at the historically black Jackson College (today Jackson State University). Leading African American activists from this branch, such as Carsie A. Hall and Jack Young, also served as local Alliance and NAACP leaders. NALC national convention delegate John W. Dixon was also a local NAACP activist. This represented a southern African American wellspring of civil rights unionism in the postal labor movement. See also George Bell, "Mississippi," *Postal Record*, September 1941, 412. See also Glenn, *History of the National Alliance*, 295; "Convention Proceedings," *Postal Record*, October 1941, 567; and John Dittmer, *Local People: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Mississippi* (Urbana, IL, 1994), 30. Hall, Young, and Dixon, were all Jackson College alumni; and Dixon served on its Board of Trustees. See B. Baldwin Dansby, A

History of Jackson College: A Typical Story of the Survival of Education Among Negroes in the South (Jackson, MS, 1953), 125, 203, 207, 233. The final collapse of Jim Crow in the NALC in 1962 led to the creation of segregated Branch 217 in Jackson. See *Official Proceedings of the Forty-third Biennial Convention of the National Association of Letter Carriers, Denver, Colorado, September 2-7, 1962, Appendix to Proceedings, 7a*. The NAPE changed its name in 1965 to the National Association of Postal and Federal Employees (NAPFE) and to that extent, as is the NALC. The National Postal Clerks Union (NPCU) formed in 1959 after the 1958 walkout, and became the industrial union NPU in 1961, the same year that the NFPOC merged with the United National Association of Post Office Craftsmen (UNAPOC) to become the United Federation of Postal Clerks (UFPC) that in 1971 merged with the NPU and four smaller craft unions to become the American Postal Workers Union (APWU), still extant. See APWU website, <http://www.apwu.org/about>. Industrial unions included multiple crafts in a single industry. The typical union term for local organizational units is "local," but the NALC and the NAPFE used "branch." The NAPFE switched terms to "local" after the 1970 national convention. See the New York *Alliance Leader*, September-October 1970, 8. The CIO and AFL, formally separate since 1938, merged in 1955 to become the AFL-CIO, still extant. Figures on African American membership in the NALC and NFPOC during this period are hard to come by, but from my research I estimate they were probably no more than five to ten percent in each union. See Rubio, "There's Always Work," chapter 1.

²Rubio, "There's Always Work." See also William H. Burrus, Jr. (APWU President), interview with the author, 16 January 2009, Washington, DC; and Countee Abbott (NAPFE Labor Relations Director), interview with the author, 12 August 2004, Washington, DC. Burrus revealed that the NFPOC had segregated northern locals until the 1920s and 1930s—and in Cleveland until the 1950s. Abbott alluded to "de facto" Chicago postal union segregation until the 1960s.

³A. Philip Randolph's speeches and resolutions to the 1938 and 1943 AFL conventions, respectively, in Philip S. Foner and Ronald L. Lewis, eds., *The Black Worker: A Documentary History from Colonial Times to the Present*, vol. 7, *The Black Worker from the Founding of the CIO to the AFL-CIO Merger, 1936-1955* (Philadelphia, PA, 1983), 427-37; 467-75. See also Roediger, *Working Toward Whiteness*, esp. chapter 7; and Herbert Hill, "The AFL-CIO and the Black Worker: Twenty-five Years After the Merger," *Journal of Intergroup Relations* 10, no. 1 (Spring 1982): 5-79; see also reprint no. 241, Industrial Relations Research Institute, University of Wisconsin—Madison. See also, for example, Judith Stepan-Norris and Maurice Zeitlin, *Left Out: Reds and America's Industrial Unions* (Cambridge, UK, 2003), 236-37. By the late 1940s, twenty-nine of the CIO's thirty-six unions (81 percent) guaranteed membership to all eligible workers regardless of race or color, compared to the AFL's thirteen of eighty-nine (14.6 percent) major affiliates. CIO unions that had Jim Crow locals at any time included the oil workers (OIWU), textile workers (TWUA), men's clothing workers (ACW), United Auto Workers, United Rubber Workers, United Steel Workers, longshoremen (ILWU), and the Mine Mill and Smelter's Union; see also *Proceedings of the Fourth Constitutional Convention of the AFL-CIO, Volume 1, Daily Proceedings, Miami Beach, Florida, December 7-13, 1961* (Washington, DC, 1961), 488-516, for the debate over Resolution 33 outlawing AFL-CIO discrimination and segregation, brought by A. Philip Randolph and Milton Webster. It passed.

⁴See debates on Civil Rights Movement history at the Organization of American Historians (OAH) annual meeting, 27 March 2004, Boston, MA in Rick Shenkman, "Reporter's Notebook: Highlights from the 2004 OAH Convention," History News Network, <http://hnn.us/articles/4320.html>. Prominent among those arguing for 1940s roots of the civil rights movement was historian John Hope Franklin. Some recent studies of the Civil Rights Movement have also taken that position; see, for example, Jeanne Theoharis and Komoyi Woodard, eds., *Groundwork: Local Black Freedom Movements in America* (New York, 2005). Others have argued that it was the mass character of the 1950s movement that justifies locating its origins in that decade; see Aldon D. Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change* (New York, 1984), introduction.

⁵See Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past," *Journal of American History* 91, no. 4 (March 2005): 1233-1263. See also Robert Korstad and Nelson Lichtenstein, "Opportunities Found and Lost: Labor, Radicals, and the Early Civil Rights Movement," *Journal of American History* 75, no. 3 (December 1988): 786-811; Robert Korstad, *Civil Rights Unionism: Tobacco Workers and the Struggle for Democracy in the Mid-twentieth Century South* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2003), esp. 11-12; Manning Marable, *Race, Reform, and Rebellion: The Second Reconstruction in Black America, 1945-1990* (Jackson, MS, 1991); Michael Honey, *Black Workers Remember: An Oral History of Segregation, Unionism, and the Freedom Struggle* (Berkeley, CA, 1999). For a view of the NAACP as not having abandoned economic issues or the struggle against northern segregation, see Dona Cooper Hamilton and Charles V. Hamilton, *The Dual Agenda: Race and Social Welfare Policies of Civil Rights Organizations* (New York, 1997); Meier and Bracey, "The NAACP"; and Herbert Hill, "The Racial Practices of Organized Labor: The Contemporary Record," in *The Negro and the American Labor Movement*, ed. Julius Jacobson (Garden City, NJ, 1968), 286-357. For arguments that question what might be called the "blame the Cold War" thesis, see Steven F. Lawson, *Civil Rights Crossroads: Nation,*

Community, and the Black Freedom Struggle (Lexington, KY, 2003), 21-22; and Adam Fairclough, *Better Day Coming: Blacks and Equality 1890-2000* (New York, 2001), 215-16. Was the African American-left-labor coalition of the 1940s really viable, or was it more of an occasional interest convergence? Historian John Baxter Streeter, Jr., argued that the 1940 National Negro Congress (NNC) Convention represented the high water mark of that coalition in "The National Negro Congress, 1936-1947" (Ph.D. diss., University of Cincinnati, 1981). The undifferentiated use of the term "left" by many labor historians is itself problematic given the differences (especially over the Cold War) between liberals, socialists, anarchists, and communists despite their overall support (to varying degrees) for social progress (including equality) and opposition to the concentration of wealth and power. See also Noel Ignatiev, "The White Worker and the Labor Movement in Nineteenth-Century America," *Race Traitor: Journal of the New Abolitionism* 3 (Spring 1994): 105, for his cogent assessment that "the black church has historically been more of a proletarian organization than the white labor union." On postal labor, see, for example, Mikusko, *Carriers in a Common Cause*; and John Walsh and Garth Mangum, *Labor Struggle in the Post Office: From Selective Lobbying to Collective Bargaining* (Armonk, NY, 1992). For an extensive recent critique of the "long civil rights movement" thesis, see Sundiata Keita Cha-Jua and Clarence Lang, "The 'Long Movement' as Vampire: Temporal and Spatial Fallacies in Recent Black Freedom Studies," *Journal of African American History* 92, no. 2 (Spring 2007): 265-88.

⁶See Honey, *Black Workers Remember*, chapter six, esp. 237, where he defines civil rights unionism as "a unionism engaged simultaneously with striving for decent jobs and equal political and legal rights." See also Korstad, *Civil Rights Unionism*, esp. 3, where he borrows Rosemary Feurer's term "civic unionism" to describe his study of 1940s African American tobacco factory workers "who combined class consciousness with race solidarity and looked to cross-class institutions such as the black church as a key base of support. . . ." Honey's study was of Memphis, TN; and Korstad's of Winston-Salem, NC. On the African American working-class protest tradition, see, for example, Earl Lewis, *In Their Own Interests: Race, Class, and Power in Twentieth-Century Norfolk, Virginia* (Berkeley, CA, 1993); and Charles M. Payne, *I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle* (Berkeley, CA, 1995).

⁷John Adams and Dorothea Hoskins, New York NAPFE members and former officials, interview with the author, 11 August 2004, Washington, DC: both agreed that the Alliance was a "civil rights union." See also Henry W. McGee, *The Negro in the Chicago Post Office: Henry W. McGee Autobiography and Dissertation* (Chicago, 1999), originally "The Negro in the Chicago Post Office" (M.A. thesis, University of Chicago, 1961), 17, who wrote that in the 1940s the Alliance became "more of a labor union than just a mini NAACP"; see 96 for McGee's estimate that the Alliance represented at most one-quarter of all African American postal workers and 97-98 for AFL unionists' remarks about the NAPE's civil rights unionism.

⁸Wilkins quoted in Hamilton and Hamilton, *The Dual Agenda*, 109.

⁹Elmer E. Armstead, "An Open Letter to the Editor of the New York Fed," *New York Alliance Leader*, August 1951, 4.

¹⁰See Thomas J. Sugrue, *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit* (Princeton, NJ, 1996); Roediger, *Working Toward Whiteness*, chapter 7; Earl Ofari Hutchinson, *Blacks and Reds: Race and Class in Conflict 1919-1990* (East Lansing, MI, 1995); George Lipsitz, *Rainbow at Midnight: Labor and Culture in the 1940s* (Urbana, IL, 1994), chapter 8; see also Manfred Berg, "Black Civil Rights and Liberal Anticommunism: The NAACP in the Early Cold War," *Journal of American History* 94, no. 1 (June 2007): 75-96; "Up for Debate" forum in *Labor: Studies in Working Class History of the Americas* 3, no. 4 (Winter 2006): 13-79, including Eric Arnesen, John Earl Haynes, Martha Biondi, Carol Anderson, and Kenneth R. Jenken. See also Daniel W. Aldridge, "A Militant Liberalism: Anti-Communism and the African American Intelligentsia, 1939-1955," paper presented at the 2004 American Historical Association, December 2003, <http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/45a/689.html>.

¹¹The NAPE opened its doors to all postal crafts in 1923. It never excluded workers based on race, ethnicity, or gender. See Paul Tennessee, "NAPFE: A Legacy of Contributions and Resistance," *National Alliance*, October 1999, 12-15.

¹²Ibid.; and Mikusko, *Carriers in a Common Cause*, 61.

¹³Tennessee, "NAPFE: A Legacy"; and Rubio, "There's Always Work," chapters 2-4.

¹⁴Rubio, "There's Always Work," chapters 1-4.

¹⁵Ibid., chapter 2. See also, for example, Robert J. Norrell, "One Thing We Did Right: Reflections on the Movement," in *New Directions in Civil Rights Studies*, ed. Armstead Robinson and Patricia Sullivan (Charlottesville, VA, 1991), 65-80.

¹⁶See Carol Anderson, *Eyes Off the Prize: The United Nations and the African American Struggle for Human*

1962-1965 (Cambridge, UK, 2003), and Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton, NJ, 2000). Dudziak holds to the thesis of Cold War vulnerability for the U.S. She argues that the NAACP lost ground following World War II to southern white supremacist red-baiting, and was forced to transform a "human rights" struggle into a compromised "civil rights" struggle. By cutting off the NAACP's more comprehensive "human rights" focus, yet was still able to wield the struggle for "civil rights" as a political weapon to embarrass the United States on the world stage during the Cold War. I suggest a combination of the two arguments, whereby the African American freedom movement was an agency in a deeply repressive era where organized labor all but abandoned them. "Civil rights" appears to have been narrower conceptually than "human rights," but in quotidian use it often carried the same meaning, much as "Jim Crow" in the early 1940s meant not just segregation but all forms of white supremacy. See *From Slavery to Freedom: A History of Negro Americans*, ed. C.L.R. James, George Breitman, Edgar Keemer, and others (New York, 1980), 25. See also H. M. Rollins, "A Christmas Message," *Postal Alliance*, December 1948, 13, who writes: "Civil Rights, the right to vote, to work and earn a decent wage, to be unmolesated in one's private person, to seek redress for wrongs, to get equal value for one's money, to have an education equal to any other citizen, and many other basic human rights. . . ." and August Meier and John H. Bracey, Jr., "The NAACP as a Reform Movement, 1909-1965: 'To Reach the Conscience of America,'" *Journal of Southern History* 59, no. 1 (February 1993): 3-30, for a reminder of organized labor's vulnerability to Cold War embarrassment on the world stage. This convention saw numerous overlapping references to civil rights, EO 10925, and the Cold War by President Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Jr., Walter Reuther, and A. Philip Randolph, among others. If the message was not made clearly enough in other speeches, then an African American delegate from the Transport Workers Union of America, Louis Manning, did so here: "Brothers and sisters, the eyes of the world are watching America. And every time a Negro is lynched and every time a Negro is denied his civil rights, communistic Russia and the satellites are looking on. You are giving them food and you are giving them ammunition to use against us," *Proceedings of the Fourth Constitutional Convention of the AFL-CIO, Volume 1, Daily Proceedings, Miami Beach, Florida, December 7-13, 1961* (Washington, DC, 1961), 509. For the debate over Resolution 33 (brought by A. Philip Randolph and Milton Webster) that passed outlawing discrimination and segregation in the AFL-CIO, see 488-516.

²On the FEPC, see Louis Ruchames, *Race, Jobs, and Politics: The Story of the FEPC* (New York, 1953); Herbert Hill, *Black Labor and American Legal System: Race, Work, and the Law* (1977; reprinted Madison, WI, 1985), chapter four; and especially the standard work: Merl E. Reed, *Seedtime for the Modern Civil Rights Movement: The President's Committee on Fair Employment Practice, 1941-1946* (Baton Rouge, LA, 1991). See also Reed, "FEPC and the Federal Agencies in the South," *Journal of Negro History* 65, no. 1 (Winter 1980): 43-56. McGee, *Chicago Post Office*, chapter 8 and "Appendix I: A Brief of Unfair Practices in the Chicago Post Office" for the January 1942 NAPE petition to the FEPC, 91. McGee's table showed African Americans forming the majority by 1960 in post offices in New Orleans, Los Angeles, Chicago, and Washington, DC, and substantial minorities elsewhere. By 1970 the Alliance was the largest postal union in the latter two cities. See Rubio, "There's Always Work," chapter 10. See also Jervis Anderson, *A. Philip Randolph: A Biographical Portrait* (New York, 1973), 247-61.

³Streater, "The National Negro Congress," 359-60.

⁴See 1943 NAPE "Convention Minutes," *Postal Alliance*, August 1943, esp. 32-33 (Gilliam quote appears on 33, including a reference to slave liberation during the Civil War); and Glenn, *History of the National Alliance*, 158, 168. See also National Secretary Thomas P. Bomar in "Unjust Discrimination in the Postal Service," *Postal Alliance*, January 1942, 10: "Complete victory will never come from the present struggle without unity among the people. . . . May the spirit of Lincoln live. . . ." And in 1941, the Fourth District of the NAPE passed a resolution backing New Orleans native Arthur J. Chapin, Sr., for NAPE national vice president with this rationale emphasizing their region's historic significance: "Whereas, Discrimination against the Negro Postal workers is most prevalent in the deep South. . . ."

⁵Glenn, *History of the National Alliance*, 103. Postal union conventions typically were biennial.

⁶"Locals—Merge Dual," *Union Postal Clerk*, October 1941, 140.

⁷Ephraim Handman, "Bright Lights of New York," 233; "Brooklyn Views—An Appraisal," 235; and "Poll Taxes," 147-48 in *Union Postal Clerk*, October 1941. See also Handman, "Establishes Miami Branch," *Postal Alliance*, November 1948, 15, where W. J. Arnold of Atlanta wrote that he had set up an NAPE branch in Miami where, he noted, "[T]here has never been a Negro Post Office Clerk or Mail Carrier . . . prior to this. . . ."

⁸On the 1944 NFPOC Jim Crow locals resolution defeat, see *Proceedings of the Twenty-third Convention of the National Federation of Post Office Clerks, Indianapolis, Indiana, July 24-29, 1944*, 128-29; for Resolution 159

(Anti-Lynching Legislation) that passed without debate, 118-20. Resolution 8 hypocritically put NFPOC members on record as opposing racial and religious discrimination everywhere, except in their own organization.

⁹*Ibid.*, 119. See also *Papers of the NAACP*, Part 13, NAACP and Labor, 1940-1955, series C: Legal Department Files on Labor, ed. John H. Bracey, Jr., and August Meier (Baltimore, MD, 1992), reel 6, frames 939 and 954, microfilm, Perkins/Bostock Library, Duke University, Durham, NC (hereafter PBL). The former frame has Henry McWright's name listed on Cleveland NAPE letterhead as vice president, and in the latter frame, he is listed as a twenty-seven year veteran of the post office, and as one of twenty-six mostly African American postal workers filing a 1949 civil suit against the federal government for attempting to remove them from the post office on charges of "disloyalty."

¹⁰For 1946 NFPOC convention resolutions against discrimination, see "Convention Proceedings," *Union Postal Clerk*, September 1946, 14-19. See also 1946 NALC convention resolution voted "by acclamation" recommending "dismissal" of Communists from the post office in "Communism," *Postal Record*, October 1946, 52. See similar measure in "Constitution-Eligibility to Membership," *Union Postal Clerk*, September 1946, 85-86; and "Loyalty Probe, U.S. Government Employees," in *Union Postal Clerk*, November 1947, 6. Both the NFPOC and NALC's anticommunism also embraced "Americanism." See also Tennessee, "Legacy"; Executive Order 9835, 22 March 1947 (also known as Truman's "Loyalty Oath" or *Employees Loyalty Program*), CFR, Title 3, 1943-1948 (issued 21 March 1947); and the 1947 Taft-Hartley Act (Labor Management Relations Act), Title 29, Chapter 7, U.S.C.

¹¹See "Quota Halts Enlistments," *Pittsburgh Courier*, 17 August 1946, 1; and Executive Order 9801.

¹²See McGee, *Chicago Post Office*; and Neil McMillen, "Fighting for What We Didn't Have: How Mississippi's Black Veterans Remember World War II," in *Remaking Dixie: The Impact of World War II on the American South*, ed. Neil McMillen (Jackson, MS, 1997), 93-188, esp. letter carrier and NALC member Dabney Hamner's story; 100-03, 185 n8, 186 n22, n26, and n32.

¹³"Object Lesson in Civil Rights in the Post Office," *Postal Alliance*, December 1948, 10. The late 1940s also saw an annual labor education summer institute held at Ohio State University in Columbus, which included unions from the CIO, AFL, and the post office, of which the Alliance contributed the greatest number, according to one observer. "Alliance Participates in Summer School Session for Office Workers and White Collar Workers at Ohio State University," *Postal Alliance*, August 1948, 2, 8-9; and Glenn, *History of the National Alliance*, 316. On the American Labor Education Service, see Wiley A. Hall, "Adult Education Programs of Labor Unions and Other Workers Groups," *Journal of Negro Education* 14, no. 3 (Summer 1945): 407-11; Eleanor G. Coit and John D. Connors, "Agencies and Programs in Workers' Education," *Journal of Educational Sociology* 20, no. 8 (April 1947): 520-28; and Eleanor G. Coit and Orie A. H. Pell, "Labor Education and Intergroup Relations," *Journal of Educational Sociology* 25, no. 6 (February 1952): 319-20. See also *1939 NALC Proceedings*, 461.

¹⁴Richard W. Thomas, *Life for Us Is What We Make It: Building Black Community in Detroit, 1915-1945* (Bloomington, IN, 1992), 248.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 236. For other examples, see E. D. Nixon and the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA) in Alabama, in Morris, *The Origins*, chapter 3; Amzie Moore and the Regional Council of Negro Leadership (RCNL) in the 1950s and 1960s Mississippi Delta, in Payne, *I've Got the Light*, 31-32; Frank Barnes (who worked with local communists in the 1950s), in Josh Sides, *L.A. City Limits: African American Los Angeles from the Great Depression to the Present* (Berkeley, CA, 2003), 146-47. Robert F. Williams advocated armed self-defense in the 1950s and 1960s in Monroe, North Carolina; see Timothy B. Tyson, *Radio Free Dixie: Robert F. Williams and the Roots of Black Power* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1999). For Ella Baker as a direct action-minded New York City NAACP leader, see Barbara Ransby, *Ella Baker and the Black Freedom Movement: A Radical Democratic Vision* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2003), chapter 5; Ruth Batson, Boston NAACP member who led a 1964 citywide school boycott against segregation and discrimination, in Theoharis, "'They Told Us Our Kids Were Stupid': Ruth Batson and the Educational Movement in Boston," in Theoharis and Woodard, *Groundwork*, 27; Henry McGee, militant president of both the Chicago NAPE and NAACP, in Christopher Robert Reed, *The Chicago NAACP and the Rise of Black Professional Leadership, 1910-1966* (Bloomington, IN, 1997); and St. Louis NAACP and NAPE leader Henry Wheeler, adviser to the 1940s direct action-oriented, largely female Citizens Civil Rights Committee; see Clarence E. Lang, "Community and Resistance in the Gateway City: Black National Consciousness, Working-Class Formation, and Social Movements in St. Louis, Missouri, 1941-1964," (Ph.D. diss., University of Illinois, 2004), 158. In the above examples, Grigsby, McGee, Wheeler, and Barnes were Alliance members, while Moore's postal union affiliation is unknown. The National Alliance promoted voter registration especially after the U.S. Supreme Court's *Smith v. Allwright* decision in 1944 banning the exclusive white Democratic Party primary that operated in Texas and throughout the South. *Smith v. Allwright* began as a 1940 lawsuit filed by the Houston NAACP in which the Alliance was actively involved. Similarly, the 1950 *Sweatt v. Painter* decision forcing the University of

Levan to desegregate its law school had as its plaintiff Herman Mann Sweat, a Houston letter carrier whose father had been one of the founding members of the Alliance and who himself was a local Alliance and NAACP activist. The Alliance was proud and excited to back Sweat: "This 'Sweat Case' may well prove to be '17' in setting the Negro on the road to full Civil Rights," the *Postal Alliance* predicted. "On Adding Some Blight to the Southern Scene," *The Sweat Case*, "Postal Alliance," January 1950, 11. See Tennessee, "Legacy," Glenn, *History of the National Alliance*, chapter 1, and "Editor's Notebook," Postal Employees Make Great Contributions to Civil Rights," *Postal Alliance*, May 1949, 4 & 8. On LeFlore see, for example, Bruce Nelson, "Organized Labor and the Struggle for Black Equality in Mobile during World War II," *Journal of American History*, 80, no. 3 (December 1993), 952-88. See also Shelley v. Kraemer 334 U.S. 1 (1948). On John Wesley Dobbs, see Gary M. Pomeroy, *When Leaders Meet: Sweet Auburn: The Saga of Two Families and the Making of Atlanta* (New York, 1990), esp. chapter 9; Clarence Myrick-Harris, "Alabama in the Civil Rights Movement," at Atlanta Regional Council for Higher Education, <http://www.atlanhighered.org>.

⁴⁰⁷Letter Carriers Reject Resolution for FEPC, *Pittsburgh Courier*, 22 June 1946, 13. They should let women keep their jobs, argued the Alliance, "on the basis of their ability instead of their race, color, creed, or sex."⁴⁰⁸ "Convention Summary," *Postal Record*, October 1946, 599.

⁴⁰⁹For resolutions against discrimination see *Union Postal Clerk*, September 1946, 14-19. See also Brooklyn NFPCC Local 251 minutes, 1946, reel 2, microfilm, American Postal Workers Union Collection, Tannment/Wagner Archives, New York University, New York, NY. See also minutes for 15 May 1940. Local 251 sent a delegate to the April 1940 convention of the National Negro Congress, which by then had become CPUSA-dominated. "Brother Clarke" reported back that among the resolutions passed were those in opposition to U.S. entry into World War II, the activities of the Dies Committee (the House Un-American Activities Committee), and the elimination of photos on applications for Civil Service positions. "On Maxwell's Involvement with the National Alliance, see available issues from 1945-1946 of its regular newsletter, the *New York Alliance Leader*," New York City Branch of the National Alliance of Postal Employees, 1945-1982, reel 1, microfilm, borrowed from the State Historical Society of Wisconsin (hereafter SHSW).

⁴¹⁰Local 148 delegate Ernest C. Frazer must have made Jim Crow supporters squirm when he recalled the "problem of dual locals" as "an old one" that had "been in existence for 30 years [with the NFPCC]." Yet Jim Crow opponents probably took comfort in his prediction that "we will gradually eliminate this condition in Washington." *Union Postal Clerk*, October 1946, 18. At the 1948 NFPCC convention the issue of Jim Crow locals was not even raised. In 1952 the NFPCC's national convention was renounced by New York Local 10 activists that it had in 1946 "unanimously adopted a resolution which recommended a new local solution for abolition of dual progressive caucus in 1946, organized to promote union democracy and an end to Jim Crow locals; see *Union Postal Clerk*, October 1952, 44.

⁴¹¹"The Branch That Hate Could Not Destroy: Remarks of Ashley G. Smith, President, NAFPE, at Testimonial Honoring Mary Gunn, Cleveland, Ohio, September 28, 1968," *National Alliance*, October 1968, 9. The fraud charges against Bryant preceded the postal disloyalty purges; Gerald Home, *Communist Front: The Civil Rights Congress, 1946-1956* (Rutherford, NJ, 1988), 284.

⁴¹²Martha Bondi, *To Stand and Fight: The Struggle for Civil Rights in Postwar New York City* (Cambridge, MA, 2003), 141. The National Alliance cited twenty-nine postal workers as having won jobs back, including Fred Turner in Brooklyn. See Tennessee, "Legacy," 13.

⁴¹³See "Bias at Post Office Charged by Negro in Loyalty Hearing," *Postal Alliance*, November 1948, 23. The Alliance commonly noted with some bitterness the presumption of disloyalty toward African Americans by either those who supported Jim Crow or were ostensibly its foes. See "Resume of Known Facts in Connection with the Operation of the Loyalty Program of the Post Office Department," *Postal Alliance*, November 1948, 8. "It is highly significant that to date no news is had of any employee of the Government who has been cited for affiliation with or sympathy for the Ku Klux Klan." See also Nelson Perry, *Black Radical: The Education of an American Revolutionary* (New York, 2007), 103-54, who wrote about Bert Washington as a friend and CP colleague. He recalled that both were expelled from the CP in 1953, along with other African American members who refused to comply with the new party line.

⁴¹⁴*Postal Alliance*, November 1948, 16-17.

⁴¹⁵Convention Proceedings, "Postal Record," November 1948, 17. In 1946 the AFL had voted down resolutions banning Jim Crow locals among its affiliated unions. See Richard Thomas, "Blacks and the CIO," in *Civil Rights Since 1787: A Reader on the Black Struggle*, ed. Jonathan Birnbaum and Clarence Taylor (New York, 2000), 293.

⁴¹⁶They also noted that the black delegate from New York, Herman Woolley, questioned the ban on "subversive elements," which did pass, see John A. Diaz, "Letter Carriers Rejoin Jim Crow," *Postal Alliance*, November 1948, 16 (from *Pittsburgh Courier*).

⁴¹⁷*Official Proceedings of the Thirty-sixth Biennial Convention of the National Association of Letter Carriers, Miami, Florida, Oct. 11-16, 1948*, 37. Italics added. Note Doherty's deference to the neo-Confederate term "War Between the States."

⁴¹⁸Ibid. On the NSRP, see National States' Rights Democrats Campaign Committee, *States' Rights Information and Speakers Handbook* (Jackson, MS, 1948).

⁴¹⁹1948 NALC Proceedings, 35, 44.

⁴²⁰Ibid., 36. Jimmy Diggs in opposing Jim Crow branches were delegates (Claude E. Sullivan of Atlanta Branch 172 and Fred C. Byrd (probably African American) of Little Rock, Arkansas, Branch 35, who proudly pointed to his branch as one of the first NALC branches, and also one that was southern, but not segregated).

⁴²¹See *Papers of the NALC*, Part 13, series C, reel 6, frame 1038, for 1947 NAPE national convention coverage; *Papers of the NALC*, Part 13, series C, reel 6, frame 1126. Italics added.

⁴²²See Darlene Clark Line, "Black Professionals and Race Consciousness: Origins of the Civil Rights Movement, 1890-1950," *Journal of American History*, 89, no. 4 (March 2003): 1279-94.

⁴²³See Rubin, "There's Always Work," chapter 4.

⁴²⁴1932 NALC Proceedings, 88.

⁴²⁵Ibid., 89.

⁴²⁶Ibid.

⁴²⁷Ibid., italics added. On William Doherty's support for separate charters see the official proceedings for NALC conventions in 1941, 1943, 1946, and 1948. But he made no mention of "dual charters" in his autobiography, *Maidman, USA* (New York, 1960).

⁴²⁸1932 NALC Proceedings, 94. There is no record of a walkout in the NALC's 1952 "Convention Proceedings," but there is reference to it in Glenn, *History of the National Alliance*, 417.

⁴²⁹1932 NALC Proceedings, 94. There is no record of a walkout in the NALC's 1952 "Convention Proceedings," but there is reference to it in Glenn, *History of the National Alliance*, 417.

⁴³⁰The same article reported that an NALC official protested those walking out as unfair to label the NALC as being discriminatory given that "so many Negroes voted to support the union's board recommendation in this issue." Reprinted in Glenn, *History of the National Alliance*, 417.

⁴³¹See, for example, *Postal Alliance*, June 1954, 5; Ashley G. Smith, "Civil Rights—the January Trail," *Postal Alliance*, February 1956, 9; President James B. Cobb, "The Negro and the Merger," *Postal Alliance*, January 1956, 2; and "The Last Vote: Editor's Father Succumbs," *Postal Alliance*, March 1957, 21.

⁴³²Convention Summary, "Union Postal Clerk," October 1954, 10; and "The Progressive Fed's Report of the NFPCC in Convention at Cincinnati Ohio," *Bulletin* No. 2, 24 August 1954, box 60, folder Progressive Fed Convention 1958, New York Metro Area Postal Union Collection, Tannment/Wagner Archives, New York University (hereafter NYMAPU Collection, TWA-NYU).

⁴³³*Official Proceedings of the Thirty-sixth Biennial Convention of the National Association of Letter Carriers, Cleveland, Ohio, August 30-September 4, 1954*, 117.

⁴³⁴Glenn, *History of the National Alliance*, 419; and 1954 NALC Proceedings, 117.

⁴³⁵NALC convention coverage, *Postal Record*, October 1954, 33. See also 1954 NALC Proceedings, 116-17. The branches proposing the amendment were an interesting and ironic mix of branches that included the "hometown" of the Board decision, Topeka, Kansas. In order of appearance they were Branch 36, New York City; Branch 10, Topeka; Branch 11, Chicago; Branch 704, Tucson; Branch 3866, New Orleans; Branch 27, Memphis; Branch 4022, Washington, DC; Branch 38, Newark; and Branch 525, Norfolk. All four southern branches were African American, and included carriers who held memberships in both the National Alliance and the NALC.

⁴³⁶1954 NALC Proceedings, 116-17. See also "Editor's Notebook," *Postal Alliance*, September 1954, 4.

⁴³⁷1954 NALC Proceedings, 117. Italics added.

⁴³⁸Ibid., 117-18.

⁴³⁹Ibid., 117. Before the 1954 convention, the first two NALC branches to support Jim Crow abolition were African American, the separate "DC Branch 4022," and the all-black Norfolk Branch 525. This was Norfolk's original branch before whites left it in 1948, and also had included Alliance members.

⁴⁴⁰NALC convention coverage, *Postal Record*, October 1954, 11. See also 1954 NALC Proceedings, 117, and *Postal Record*, August 1954, 30. There were a number of dual Alliance-NALC members in attendance at this historic

convention, including W. C. White of Branch 52 Jacksonville, Florida; T. C. Almore, delegate-at-large from Mississippi; John W. Lee of Branch 609 Newport News, Virginia. See *Postal Record*, September 1934, 46. See also Lewis, *In Their Own Interests*, 60, and 1934 NALC Proceedings, appendix. The *Postal Alliance* made no criticism of Sullivan on his gradualist strategy, nor did it mention the division among the anti-Jim Crow forces. It criticized the event "Dual Charters get first blow," and praised the New York, Brooklyn, and Detroit branches for their activism that led out Chicago that in fact was also part of the "blow" against Jim Crow, according to the NALC Proceedings. See "Editor's Notebook," *Postal Alliance*, September 1934, 4.

¹³⁷See, for example, *Union Postal Clerk* convention proceedings and summaries for 1941, 1946, 1948, 1952, 1954, 1958. See also box 60, NYMAPU Collection, TWA-NYU, for resolutions to be acted upon by the Twenty-ninth Convention of the National Federation of Post Office Clerks, Chicago, 1956, esp. 165 for a South Carolina-sponsored Resolution 653 objecting to President George M. Murphy of the AFL-CIO praising the *Brimm* decision as "political," followed by a New York-sponsored Resolution 654 for civil rights. Three abolitionist resolutions (812, 813, and 814) appeared at the 1958 Boston NPFOC convention sponsored by the New York and DC delegations.

¹³⁸Herman Berdrow, "NPFU Adopts Constitution," 115 *Locals* Jan in 90 Days, *Progressive*, May 1959, 1.

¹³⁹NPFU Constitution, *Progressive*, July 1959, 4. On the union democracy issue, see Walsh and Mangum, *Labor Struggle*, 63-67. The last "Progressive Fed" resolution within the NPFOC was a protest resolution against a racist job transfer ad in the *Union Postal Clerk*. See Local 10, 1958 resolution, Letter from Local 10 President Bernard Schwartz to J. Chas. House, 10 November 1958; and Letter from House to Schwartz, 17 November 1958, box 1, folder Resolutions, Correspondence, Memos 1932, 1938, NYMAPU Collection, TWA-NYU. The ad involved a white clerk from Washington, DC, wishing to trade or transfer to Southern California; see also Douglas C. Holbrook, former Detroit Postal Union-NPFU president, interview with the author, 16 August 2005, Washington, DC, NYMAPU Collection, TWA-NYU, and Roediger, *Working Toward Whiteness*, chapter 7.

¹⁴⁰1960 NALC Proceedings, 71.

¹⁴¹Ibid., 72. See also "Appendix to Proceedings," in *Official Proceedings of the Thirty-eighth Biennial Convention of the National Association of Letter Carriers*, New York, NY—September 1-6, 1952, 9a, NALC Library, Washington, DC. See also "Resolution No. 2—Dual Charters," "Convention Proceedings," *Postal Record*, October 1941, 533 for the constitutional wording. See also 1948 NALC Proceedings, 37, NALC Library. See also duplicates of original charter certificates in Atlanta Branch 72 (African American), Branch 3837 (white), and Branch 71 (merged), at NALC Library. In 2004, James Pinderhughes, a retired African American Washington, DC, parcel post letter carrier and supervisor, told me that his small Branch 4022 met in schools or churches for the late 1940s until the spring of 1961 when it merged with the city's white NALC Branch 142. In 2005 when I interviewed NALC Branch 142 President Joseph Henry (African American) at the branch's new home in northeast Washington, DC, he told me that that before the 1961 merger, the all-white Branch 142 had held their monthly meetings at the NALC national office; James Pinderhughes, interview with the author, 17 July 2004, Washington, DC; and Joseph Henry, interview with the author, 15 August 2005, Washington, DC.

¹⁴²EO 10988, Sec. 2 (3). See also 1954 NALC Proceedings, 116, for the compromise resolution that passed during that convention with similar language, although not consummated in practice until 1962: "No letter carrier shall be denied membership in any Branch because of race, creed, color, or national origin." By contrast Rhodes-Johnston would have recognized no federal union "which . . . denies membership because of race, color, religion, national origin . . ." See Rhodes-Johnston bill, esp. Title II, Section 310 (d). Johnston and Humphrey's stance on civil rights during this bill's presentation came during a year where civil rights was often debated on the floor of Congress. Humphrey also acknowledged in his remarks that federal workers did not and should not have the right to strike, and this bill would not alter that fact. See Congress, Senate, Senator Johnston of South Carolina and Senator Humphrey of Minnesota, speaking for the Recognition of Federal Employee Unions bill, S.473, 87th Cong., 1st sess., *Congressional Record* 107-pt. 1, (17 January 1961): 863-65.

¹⁴³The Rhodes-Johnston antidiscrimination clause would have applied to none of the existing postal unions, since the last one to bar African Americans from membership, the National Postal Transport Association (NPTA), which had restricted membership to "Caucasians only" since 1911, lifted its ban at their 1958 convention. See "Hear Ye! Hear Ye!," *New York Alliance Leader*, Nov.-Dec. 1958, 4; and "Fed Briefs," *Progressive Fed*, January 1959, 2.

¹⁴⁴Senate Bill 1135—House Bill 554 and "You," *Alliance Leader*, May 1952, 3. At the time of the passage of the NLRA, also known as the Wagner Act, organized labor consisted of one federation—the AFL. In the 1940s, twenty-six of the AFL's 100 unions—a little over one-quarter—excluded African Americans outright, while many others like the NALC and NPFOC had Jim Crow locals. See, for example, Labor Research Association, *Labor Fact Book* 5 (1941); reprinted New York, 1972), chapter 7, and Thomas R. Brooks, *Fall and Trouble: A History of American Labor* (1964; reprinted New York, 1971), 255-65. At their 1941 convention, the AFL had urged protesting African

American workers to be "grateful" for mere membership. See Roediger, *Working Toward Whiteness*, 209.

¹⁴⁵Perspective on Executive Order 10988, "Postal Alliance," April 1962, 9.

¹⁴⁶On the Wagner Act, see Hill, *Black Labor*, 74-86. For the postal unions, March 1962 meeting with Kennedy, see Charles Braxton, "The Gift of Red Tape," *Postal Alliance*, April 1962, 8.

¹⁴⁷Report of the Committee on Separate Charters, "1962 NALC Proceedings," 131; and "Committee on Separate Charters," *Postal Record*, February 1961, 28.

¹⁴⁸Report of the Committee on Separate Charters, "1962 NALC Proceedings," 130-131. On African American migration, see Daniel M. Johnson and Rex R. Campbell, *Black Migration in America: A Social Demographic History* (Durham, NC, 1981), esp. 117. Between 1940 and 1950, while the overall African American migration pattern was to the North, Midwest, and Far West, of the cities listed with Jim Crow branches, only Birmingham showed a net African American population loss, while Atlanta, Memphis, and St. Petersburg showed modest African American population increases, and Houston and Norfolk had substantial increases. Even before the 1962 convention, NALC officials were sensitive to charges of having been coerced into dropping Jim Crow branches, protesting that President Doherty had proclaimed at their 1960 convention that the NALC had abolished separate charters before they were required to do so; see Harold L. Keith, "All Postal Votes Sought by Letter Carriers on Ballot," *New Pittsburgh Courier*, 23 January 1962, 12. Alliance President Robert White later recalled that the major postal unions agreed to disband Jim Crow branches only after Kennedy's executive order; see "Statement by National President Robert L. White at the Federal Bar Association's Seminar on Executive Order 11491," *National Alliance*, May 1971, 2.

¹⁴⁹1962 NALC Proceedings, 131. On Durant's activism, see, for example, the *New York Alliance Leader*, January-February 1959, 6, reel 1, microfilm, SHSW. Durant's dual NAPE/NALC membership discussed in telephone conversation with author by Noel V. S. Murray, NAPE District Eight President, 24 September 2008.

¹⁵⁰See "Agreement Reached On Mergers," *Union Postal Clerk*, November 1960, 2-3. See also "Kennedy Orders: Ties Cut with Dual Unions," *Progressive*, July 1961, 8, NYMAPU Collection, TWA-NYU.

¹⁵¹Sam Armstrong and Samuel Lawert, NAPE officials, interview with the author, 11 August 2004, Washington, DC.

¹⁵²Ibid.

¹⁵³"Gone with the Wind," Victor Fleming, 1939; Tim Dirks, "Gone with the Wind," review article at <http://www.filmstie.org/gone.html>; and Mikusko, *Carriers in a Common Cause*, 44.

¹⁵⁴See Tennessee, "Legacy," McJico, *Chicago Post Office*; and Glenn, *History of the National Alliance*.

¹⁵⁵Chai-Jua and Lang, "The Long Movement 'as Vampire'."

¹⁵⁶Rubio, "There's Always Work," chapters 3, 6.