

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form**

This form is used for documenting property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin *How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form* (formerly 16B). Complete each item by entering the requested information.

  X   New Submission                                 Amended Submission

**A. Name of Multiple Property Listing**

20th Century African American Civil Rights Sites in Washington, D.C., 1912-1974

**B. Associated Historic Contexts**

(Name each associated historic context, identifying theme, geographical area, and chronological period for each.)

The Struggle for Access to Public Accommodations in Washington, D.C., 1912-1964

Equal Employment & Economic Justice: Demands for Access to Jobs and Fair Wages in Washington, D.C., 1912-1974

Criminalization and Policing: Washington D.C.'s Black Citizens Fight for Freedom from Violence, 1912-1974

The Campaign to End Racial Covenants and Housing Discrimination in Washington, D.C., 1921-1968

The Legal Campaign for Equal Education in Washington, D.C., 1944-1967

African American Demands for Suffrage and Home Rule in Washington, D.C., 1930-1974

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Date 12/15/2020

**D. Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official

\_\_\_\_\_  
Title

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal Agency or Tribal government

I hereby certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

United States Department of the Interior  
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20th Century African American Civil Rights

Washington DC

## **Table of Contents for Written Narrative**

Create a Table of Contents and list the page numbers for each of these sections in the space below.

Provide narrative explanations for each of these sections on continuation sheets. In the header of each section, cite the letter, page number, and name of the multiple property listing. Refer to *How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form* for additional guidance.

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**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

Tier 1: 60-100 hours (generally existing multiple property submissions by paid consultants and by Maine State Historic Preservation staff for in-house, individual nomination preparation)

Tier 2: 120 hours (generally individual nominations by paid consultants)

Tier 3: 230 hours (generally new district nominations by paid consultants)

Tier 4: 280 hours (generally newly proposed MPS cover documents by paid consultants).

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**E. Statement of Historic Contexts**

(If more than one historic context is documented, present them in sequential order.)

**Introduction**

This Multiple Property Documentation Form documents the history and typology of buildings and sites related to African American Civil Rights in the 20th Century in Washington, D.C. The District of Columbia was significant for being a central location of organizing and protest on behalf of the advancement of African American civil rights nationally, and for local campaigns to demand equal citizenship within the District. The local campaign is unique in its attention to gaining self-governance, or home rule, for a population stripped of this essential marker of democratic citizenship in 1874. As a largely black city where African Americans became the majority in 1957, the struggle for home rule was a central civil rights issue.

For the purposes of this study, civil rights are defined as those rights granted by the 13th, 14th and 15th amendments to the U.S. Constitution, which served to officially endow African Americans with the full rights of U.S. citizens. Accordingly, the Civil Rights Movement is most clearly understood as the campaign to guarantee those rights, primarily via demands for racial equality and integration. This campaign culminated nationally with the passage of the 1968 Civil Rights Act and locally with the 1974 swearing-in of D.C.'s first self-elected government in a century.

The period of significance identified for this study begins in 1912, with the founding of the D.C. chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), and ends in 1974, roughly in keeping with the 20th century periods of significance identified by the National Park Service (NPS)'s *Civil Rights in America: A Framework for Identifying Significant Sites*. The NPS study lists four periods, beginning in 1900 and ending in 1976.

The NPS thematic framework lists the following six broad themes related to 20th Century African American Civil Rights:

- Equal Education
- Public Accommodation
- Voting
- Housing
- Equal Employment
- Criminal Injustice

In its list of examples of "civil rights, events, places and individuals," the NPS framework lists the following people and events related to African American civil rights in 20<sup>th</sup> century Washington, D.C.: Mary Church Terrell, Charles Hamilton Houston, Mary McLeod Bethune, Eleanor Roosevelt, Thurgood Marshall, Martin Luther King, Jr., and the March on Washington. It lists three associated National

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Historic Landmarks in D.C.: Mary Church Terrell House (326 T Street NW); Constitution Hall; Mary McLeod Bethune Council House, and John Philip Sousa Junior High. While not listed in the NPS framework, the Carter G. Woodson Home National Historic Site is included in the site survey for this multiproperty document.<sup>1</sup>

All of the above themes directly apply to the movement for civil rights in Washington, D.C., and can be used to shape a civil rights context for the city. A version of each theme is listed below with a summary of their specific relevance to the 20<sup>th</sup> century African American Civil Rights Movement in Washington, D.C.

The NPS has also identified Areas of Significance for designating properties to the National Register of Historic Places. The overriding area of significance for civil rights resources in Washington, D.C., is Ethnic Heritage-Black. Under that category, individual resources are most likely to be significant under education (e.g. sites related to efforts to equalize or desegregate schools), entertainment/recreation (e.g. venues subject to anti-segregation protests), law (e.g. sites subject to civil rights lawsuits; homes and workplaces of civil rights attorneys), politics/government (e.g. sites related to the campaign for self-governance/home rule), and social history (all sites). The NPS categories can be found in *National Register Bulletin 16A: How to Complete the National Register Nomination Form*.

## Historical Context

### Background, 1791-1912

#### The District of Columbia's Establishment and Early Political History

Named the capital of the United States in 1791, the District of Columbia was created at the confluence of the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers on land formerly belonging to Southern slave states of Maryland and Virginia. Its geographical location was the result of a compromise between representatives of more economically powerful states in the North and Southerners who saw locating the capital in the South as a way to protect Southern interests, including the institution of slavery. Indeed, by 1795, more than 300 enslaved laborers were engaged in the building of the capital, with around 50 of them assigned to construction of the president's house and the U.S. Capitol. Enslaved residents comprised more than 25 percent of Washington City in 1800.<sup>2</sup>

While District residents initially retained the right to vote in Maryland or Virginia, the Organic Act of 1801 interpreted the U.S. Constitution's stipulation that Congress "exercise exclusive legislation" over the capital to mean that District residents did not have the right to self-governance. In addition,

<sup>1</sup> The Carter G. Woodson Home National Historic Site nomination has recently been updated to reflect the site's historical significance *vis à vis* African American civil rights history.

<sup>2</sup> Asch and Musgrove, 31, 34.

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residents of Washington, D.C., would not be represented in Congress. Congress responded to objections to federal rule by instituting a form of limited self-rule, retaining veto power over local laws while allowing white male landowners to elect a council overseen by a presidentially appointed mayor. Congress gradually ceded more authority to the District's local government. Voters began electing the mayor in 1820, and by 1848, the number of elected officials had expanded from 12 to 27. By this time, the council had also increased its power to make laws and tax residents, and it used these tools to restrict the autonomy of free black residents.<sup>3</sup>

### **D.C.'s Early African American Community**

Many enslaved black residents (especially women) turned to the courts to petition for freedom. Roughly 500 people filed freedom suits in 1800-1862, while others managed to save enough money to purchase themselves or family members. Washington was also a destination for freedpeople from Maryland and Virginia—which required people formerly enslaved to leave the state within a year of their emancipation. As a result, free black residents comprised more than 30 percent of the District's black population by 1810, and by 1830, more than half the city's black residents were free. Washington became one of just three Southern cities whose black population was majority free before the Civil War. Based upon known addresses of free black residents, most lived around the edges of downtown; they were notably absent from the working class neighborhood around the Navy Yard, along the Anacostia River in the city's Southwest quadrant.<sup>4</sup>

By the 1830s, the black population of Washington was growing into the nation's largest, wealthiest, and most educated urban African American community, with a substantial network of private schools, churches, benevolent societies and businesses. The Bell School opened in 1807 at 2<sup>nd</sup> and D streets SE, followed by a girls' school in Georgetown and several other small schools.<sup>5</sup> By 1828, more than 100 black students attended the Columbian Institute (later Union Seminary) at 14<sup>th</sup> and H streets NW, founded by abolitionist John W. Prout and led by esteemed educator John F. Cook from 1834 to 1855. Myrtilla Miner's School for Colored Girls opened at 11<sup>th</sup> Street and New York Avenue NW in 1851.<sup>6</sup> By the eve of the Civil War, 14 black churches also dotted the city, including Fifteenth Street (then First Colored) Presbyterian Church, founded by John F. Cook in 1841.<sup>7</sup> (Among others, Georgetown's Mount Zion United Methodist Church, originally named The Little Ark, formed in 1816; Israel Bethel Colored Methodist Episcopal Church was organized in 1820 in the Capitol Hill neighborhood; and Asbury African

<sup>3</sup> As of 1820s, suffrage required ownership of \$100 (or more than \$70,000 today) in property (Asch and Musgrove, 66). Although the white elites who served on the council resisted extending suffrage to the poor, all tax-paying white men gained the right to vote in 1848.

<sup>4</sup> Asch and Musgrove, 42-43, 58, 59. Of 12,271 black Washingtonians in 1830, 6,152 were enslaved and 6,119 were free (<https://matthewbgilmore.wordpress.com/district-of-columbia-population-history>). Brian Kraft, Mapping Early Washington, at <https://briandkraft.blog/home/projects/mapping-early-washington>; Boyd's 1858 Directory for Washington City.

<sup>5</sup> Asch and Musgrove, 44-45.

<sup>6</sup> For the cultivation of private black schools in DC before the Civil War, see Masur, 79-80, 83-84.

<sup>7</sup> Asch and Musgrove, 68. See also, Nicholas Peang-Meth, "Washington's Ambush Family," Dec. 3, 2019, at <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/da9c2b437315488dbc0b2c507ba83892>.

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Methodist Episcopal Church opened at 11<sup>th</sup> and K streets NW in 1836.)<sup>8</sup> Perhaps the most upscale black-owned business during this period was Beverly Snow's Epicurean Eating House at 6<sup>th</sup> Street and Pennsylvania Avenue NW. Other black entrepreneurs included livery stable owner Lynch Wormley as well as barbers and boardinghouse-owners. African Americans also worked as domestic servants, seamstresses, and midwives; cooked and waited tables at restaurants and hotels; drove carriages and wagons; and labored on construction projects, especially around the Navy Yard.<sup>9</sup>

**Black Codes, Slavery, and Resistance**

Fearful of the city's growing black population, and its growing autonomy, white city leaders passed increasingly restrictive black codes in 1808, 1812, and 1820.<sup>10</sup> These laws made it illegal for African Americans to assemble in any manner perceived as threatening; subjected them to a curfew; and required free black residents to provide a city registry with proof of their status, multiple references from "respectable white inhabitants," and a \$20 bond. William Costin, a free black descendant of First Lady Martha Custis Washington, challenged these laws in 1821, declaring that neither the city's charter nor the U.S. Constitution included race as a condition of citizenship. The Circuit Court ruled in *Costin v. Washington* that the city's most recent black codes did not apply to people who were already living in the city, but that new black arrivals must still comply with them. In other words, free African Americans were not due the equality or freedom of citizens.<sup>11</sup>

At the same time the city was restricting the freedoms of free black Washingtonians, the nation's capital also emerged as a national center of the slave trade. A free black New Yorker, Solomon Northrup, wrote of being ambushed during an 1841 trip to the District and locked up at William H. William's slave pen at 7<sup>th</sup> Street and Independence Avenue SW (then B Street), in view of the Capitol. Known as the "Yellow House," the building looked like a private home but was filled with 12-foot-square cells and operated as a prison. Three more slave pens occupied a block just south of the Yellow House, and several hotels nearby—along the corridor stretching from the Capitol to the White House—counted slave pens among their amenities. Slave coffles could regularly be seen along Pennsylvania Avenue, and people were bought and sold at Center Market, on 7<sup>th</sup> Street and Pennsylvania Avenue NW. In fact, in the 1830s more enslaved African Americans were purchased and sold out of Washington—which then included the port city of Alexandria in what had been Virginia—than anywhere else in the country. In a nation whose foundational values espoused freedom, equality and democracy, the magnitude of slavery's presence in the nation's capital presented an undeniable conflict that attracted international attention. As a result, in the early decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Washington became the focus of the growing Abolitionist Movement within the United States.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Asch and Musgrove, 60; <http://israelcme.org/history>; <http://asburyumcdc.org/history.html>.

<sup>9</sup> Asch and Musgrove, 59.

<sup>10</sup> Asch and Musgrove, 45, 62.

<sup>11</sup> Asch and Musgrove, 63-64.

<sup>12</sup> Asch and Musgrove, 48-49, 70-76.

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In 1835, pressure from outside abolitionists, combined with the growing size and independence of Washington's free black community, led to a white backlash. After an enslaved servant threatened his owner with an ax, a mob of white workers drove black entrepreneur Beverly Snow and black educator John F. Cook out of town, ransacked Snow's restaurant, and torched two black schools, including Cook's Union Seminary. The city council followed suit by imposing more restrictive black codes in 1836—among other things, prohibiting black residents from being licensed for any trade outside of driving carts or carriages. When a barber named Isaac N. Cary was then arrested for selling perfume from his shop without a license, he sued the city. In *Carey [sic] v. Washington* (1836), the Circuit Court ruled in Cary's favor, arguing that "the right to exercise any lawful and harmless trade" was among the "civil rights" to which free African Americans were entitled, even if they lacked "political rights."<sup>13</sup>

The preservation of slavery became an increasing concern for white Alexandrians in the 1840s. Alexandria had been politically and economically depleted since becoming a section of the nation's capital, and the increasing potential that slavery could be outlawed drove a successful movement to "retrocede" the city back to Virginia in 1846. Alexandria's black schools soon closed, free blacks poured out of the city, and its slave trade thrived. Meanwhile, as abolitionists publicized the hypocrisy of maintaining slavery in the nation's capital, a growing biracial antislavery network within the District worked to facilitate escapes. Ex-slave Anthony Bowen, who had moved to D.C. from Maryland after purchasing his freedom in 1830, may have harbored fugitives in his house at 85 E Street NW, where he frequently hosted meetings. In the 1850s, he also used his home for organizing the nation's first black YMCA and for founding St. Paul's Church.<sup>14</sup>

In 1848, Washington became the site of the largest attempted slave escape in history, known as the Pearl Incident, when 76 enslaved people attempted to sail down the Potomac on a schooner called the Pearl. They were captured as they entered the Chesapeake Bay. The Compromise of 1850 ended the slave trade in D.C., but slavery remained legal and a harsher Fugitive Slave Law made escaping increasingly dangerous.<sup>15</sup> As of 1860, 22 percent of black Washingtonians were enslaved.

### **Civil War and Emancipation**

As Abraham Lincoln campaigned for president in 1860, he supported limiting the western expansion of slavery, while upholding it in areas like Washington where it already existed. However, after the Civil War began a year later, fugitives began pouring into Union camps in Maryland and the District. It quickly became untenable to determine which of them should be returned to owners loyal to the Union and which should be considered "contraband" of war. In addition, many clamored to join the

<sup>13</sup> Asch and Musgrove, 78, 81-82.

<sup>14</sup> Asch and Musgrove, 94.

<sup>15</sup> Josephine Pacheco, *The Pearl: A Failed Slave Escape on the Potomac* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2005). While most media references and abolitionist sources made reference to 77 escapees, Pacheco argues convincingly that there were 76.

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Union and contribute to the war effort. Republican lawmakers now filled the halls of Congress, and they pursued a bill to end slavery in the District. Signed by the president on April 16, 1862, D.C.'s emancipation act compensated enslavers up to \$300 for each person they had owned. Because some owners refused to come forward, Congress soon amended the bill so that enslaved residents could file their own claims.

Against the will of the city's local government, Congress then pushed through a series of bills to eliminate black codes, establish a black public school system, and allow for the free participation of African Americans in judicial proceedings.<sup>16</sup> The city's black population exploded as a result, soon attracting many black Virginians freed by Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation in January 1863 and black Marylanders freed from bondage in the fall of 1864.<sup>17</sup>

Some 180,000 black soldiers fought in the Civil War. Emboldened soldiers and citizens freed from the strictures of black codes held parades and mass gatherings in public spaces. When Congress passed the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment banning slavery altogether in 1865, the revered black minister Henry Highland Garnet addressed Congress, becoming the first African American to speak in the Capitol. That July, thousands of black Washingtonians gathered on the Ellipse, outside the White House, to celebrate Independence Day for the first time. In April 1866, 5,000 thronged Franklin Square to celebrate the fourth anniversary of D.C.'s Emancipation Day.<sup>18</sup>

### **Reconstruction and Black Governance**

D.C. had become a proving ground for federal lawmakers eager to advance African American citizenship in the wake of the Civil War. It was also home to a newly emboldened black community that comprised more than 30 percent of the city's population; 2,500 of them had signed an 1865 petition to Congress demanding the vote. In 1866, church leaders spearheaded a suffrage campaign and the First Ward Civil Rights Association, foreshadowing the Free D.C. movement a century later, boycotted businesses opposed to suffrage. Finally, in 1867, Congress overrode petitions from the city's leadership and a presidential veto to grant black (male) suffrage in D.C. three years prior to the passage of the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment. In June of that year, black Washingtonians flocked to the polls in overwhelming numbers to vote for aldermen and councilmembers, and in 1868, to vote a new mayor into office. Mayor Sayles J. Bowen, a white Republican from New York, appointed black officials to occupy some 30 percent of the positions in his administration, integrating the city's fire and police departments, among other offices. In 1869, newly-elected Republican president Ulysses S. Grant followed suit by removing references to race in Washington and Georgetown's charters and laws and extending the right to serve

<sup>16</sup> Asch and Musgrove, 115.

<sup>17</sup> Chandra Manning, *Troubled Refuge: Struggling for Freedom in the Civil War* (Alfred A. Knopf, 2016), 49-52. The Emancipation Proclamation ended slavery in states at war with the Union. In Maryland, a new state constitution ended slavery on November 1, 1864.

<sup>18</sup> Asch and Musgrove, 134-35.



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on juries to black men. The biracial city council soon passed another series of laws outlawing racial discrimination by theaters, restaurants, hotels, and other businesses that served the public. (Left out of D.C.'s legal code in 1901, these would later be known as the "lost laws.")<sup>19</sup>

Local black lawmakers were soon joined in Washington by an increasing number of African American Congressmen, eventually totaling twenty-two. As African Americans gained power both as voters—they comprised 45 percent of the District's electorate in 1868—and as legislators, both the city's white leadership and elites in Congress became increasingly concerned about their influence on local and national affairs. When the city's charter was up for renewal in 1868, a rising local businessman named Alexander Robey Shepherd worked through the nascent D.C. Board of Trade and the *Evening Star* newspaper to successfully push for a new form of local government. Congress proceeded to pass a bill in 1871 for the creation of a new, "territorial" government that consolidated Georgetown, Washington City, and Washington County under governance by a presidentially appointed governor, upper Legislative Council and Board of Public Works. Only the less influential lower house and a non-voting delegate to Congress would be elected. The District's black leadership—including Frederick Douglass—vigorously protested the bill, recognizing it as a deliberate means to strip the franchise from African Americans. Upon its passage, black laborers on public projects staged a week-long boycott.<sup>20</sup>

### Loss of Home Rule

Shepherd proceeded to shrewdly cultivate black support by securing a few high-profile black political appointments as well as black jobs, via his massive public works program. In exchange, African Americans supported a referendum to authorize increased funds for public projects, only to be blamed when the city went bankrupt as a result of the Panic of 1873. By this time, Shepherd had just been appointed governor and almost no black people served in the city government. Congress, however, joined by local white elites and the national white press, blamed black voters for Shepherd's excessive spending, and in June 1874, put the city entirely under the governance of a three-member commission appointed by the president. It would be an entire century before D.C. residents regained the right to elect their own government.<sup>21</sup>

The loss of home rule in the District presaged the end of Reconstruction nationally via the Compromise of 1877. While white D.C. residents were also denied the franchise, white elites were able to curry favor with the D.C. Commissioners via business and social connections. Along with whites-only neighborhood citizens associations, the white real estate and business community exercised an enormous amount of political influence, and mostly embraced this form of government-by-proxy as an efficient means of consolidating its power over city affairs. This arrangement effectively barred black

<sup>19</sup> Asch and Musgrove, 142-43, 148-51; Pauli Murray, *Song in a Weary Throat: An American Pilgrimage* (New York: Harper & Row, 1987), 230.

<sup>20</sup> Asch and Musgrove, 157-161.

<sup>21</sup> Asch and Musgrove, 160-61, 165.

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political participation and helped ensure that Congress would provide 50 percent of the city's budget, which was considered at risk if African Americans were permitted to have any role in governing the city.<sup>22</sup>

The increasingly white supremacist political climate in Washington prompted black elites such as Calvin Chase, editor of the city's premier black newspaper, to push for a limited form of black suffrage. Chase's strategic advocacy for a subset of "respectable" African Americans to be granted the right to vote aligned with the assimilationist views of Frederick Douglass and others who had begun to see black civil rights as dependent on integration with the white middle class.<sup>23</sup> Integration for an elite subset of African Americans was considered by many to be a precursor to advancing civil rights for black Americans writ large.

### **The Rise of D.C.'s Black Establishment**

Black migration to the nation's capital continued apace after Reconstruction. Many came for the city's premier black schools, Howard University and the M Street School (later Dunbar High School),<sup>24</sup> established in 1867 and 1870, respectively, and to teach in the city's renowned black public school system, which was led by its own black assistant superintendent and operated relatively independently of white leadership. Inaugurated in 1883, the federal government's civil service also provided stable, white collar employment at agencies such as the Treasury Department's Bureau of Engraving and Printing and the Government Printing Office. In addition, black Washingtonians with connections to Republican lawmakers were able to land patronage appointments in positions such as the Register of Deeds. As a result, the city's black population grew by more than 45 percent between 1880 and 1900, and Washington became home to the largest black community in the country.<sup>25</sup>

In an area south of Florida Avenue NW between around 4<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> streets, a robust black business community began to emerge in the 1880s. Just south of Howard University, this area had been dotted with Union Army facilities during the Civil War, and had attracted black migrants seeking shelter, employment, schools and medical care. Many remained in the area after the war, creating the foundation for a thriving black community that operated more than 300 businesses by 1920. Local leaders such as St. Luke's Episcopal Church pastor Alexander Crummell and *Washington Bee* editor Calvin Chase, along with the influential NAACP cofounder W.E.B. Du Bois, had begun to view black entrepreneurship, and the patronage of black businesses, as central to black empowerment in the face of an increasingly hostile political establishment. The opening of the nation's first black YMCA in a modern, five-story building on 12<sup>th</sup> Street NW symbolized the black community's ability to finance (in

<sup>22</sup> Asch and Musgrove, 175-77, 195.

<sup>23</sup> Asch and Musgrove, 172, 177, 192-93.

<sup>24</sup> The M Street School (renamed Dunbar High School in 1916) was staffed by graduates of some of the nation's top colleges; many were barred by race from more lucrative employment.

<sup>25</sup> Asch and Musgrove, 214-216, 206.

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this case, with matching grants from two white philanthropists) their own institutions. John Whitelaw Lewis's Industrial Savings Bank, established in 1913, and several other institutions he established in buildings financed, designed and built by African Americans, served to foster black economic autonomy. Likewise, the Deanwood headquarters of Nannie Helen Burroughs' National Training School for Women and Girls was intentionally built with funds solicited from black Baptist women throughout the U.S., and the school never relied on white philanthropic support.<sup>26</sup>

D.C.'s thriving black businesses contributed greatly to the growth of social, political and religious institutions during a period in which the city was becoming increasingly segregated and hostile to black residents. At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, entire new subdivisions barred black occupancy; Reconstruction-era anti-discrimination laws were ignored and then dropped from D.C. code; white citizens associations advocated for segregated streetcars; and police committed violence against black citizens with increasing impunity.<sup>27</sup> Ten years after cofounding the National Association of Colored Women (NACW)—in the wake of the Supreme Court's landmark 1896 *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision—Mary Church Terrell wrote this of the nation's capital: "Surely nowhere in the world do oppression and persecution based solely on the color of one's skin appear more hateful and hideous than in the capital of the United States, because the chasm between the principles upon which this Government was founded, in which it still professes to believe, and those which are daily practiced under the protection of the flag, yawns so wide and deep."<sup>28</sup>

**The Modern Civil Rights Era, 1912-1974**

**The Growth of Organized Resistance, 1912-1933**

The modern push for civil rights in Washington, D.C., began in 1912 with the founding of the D.C. branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). With a wide base of middle class support and strong leadership from Archibald Grimké, the D.C. branch soon grew to become the largest and most influential NAACP chapter in the country. Its access to federal lawmakers provided some measure of political voice to black Washingtonians in the absence of Congressional representation and a city government. Through the 1910s, Grimké and other black Washingtonians fought segregation in the federal government, pushed for equal access to jobs during World War I, and mobilized to demand federal action against racial violence in South, a goal that was never achieved.

<sup>26</sup> Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Righteous Discontent: The Women's Movement in the Black Baptist Church, 1998-1920* (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1993), 220.

<sup>27</sup> "That a movement has been started among citizens' associations to secure the establishment of 'Jim Crow' cars in the District was evidenced by a communication from the Capital Heights Citizens Association asking that they indorse [sic] the bill of Representative Heflin, of Alabama, providing that separate cars be run for negroes" ("Discuss Road Extension," *Washington Post*, May 5, 1906). As evidence of a continued move to segregate streetcars during this period, the Reno Citizens Association passed a resolution opposing "Jim Crow" street cars on in February 1915 ("Reno Association Meets," *Sunday Star*, Feb. 15, 1915, 13.

<sup>28</sup> Asch and Musgrove, 216 (cites Mary Church Terrell, "What It Means to Be Colored in the Capital of the United States," *Independent*, Jan. 24, 1907).

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However, a newly confident black political voice and culture that emerged out of World War I and its violent aftermath marked the birth of what Grimké dubbed "a New Negro" who "has come back...to challenge injustice in his own land."<sup>29</sup> Likewise, Howard University literary theorist and philosopher Alain Locke's 1925 anthology *The New Negro* signaled the rise of a rich black intellectual and artistic culture in D.C. during this period. Locke saw this work as asserting African Americans' claim to the full rights and benefits of American citizenship.

**The Evolution of Protest, 1933-1939**

In the 1930s, local civil rights struggle became increasingly visible as organizers moved beyond mass meetings and lobbying lawmakers to boycotts and pickets in the streets. Established organizations like the D.C. NAACP and the YWCA—a headquarters for women's organizing writ large—would join the New Negro Alliance, the National Negro Congress, and others in advocating for freedom from police violence, fair employment and working conditions, and self-governance. Others such as the National Council of Negro Women, the Non Partisan Council on Public Affairs, and the Washington Urban League would take up work behind the scenes.<sup>30</sup> In addition, the early 1930s saw the transformation of Howard University Law School into a full-time program dedicated to civil rights and dismantling segregation within D.C. and nationwide.

**The Road to Legal Desegregation, 1939-1954**

Between 1939 and 1954, especially in the wake of a renewed backlash against African American advancement in the wake of World War II, middle class activists waged an all-out campaign to gain access to public accommodations such as theaters and restaurants.<sup>31</sup> They also worked across class to demand fair employment, equal schools, access to housing, and an end to police violence. The beginning of this period was marked by Marian Anderson's concert at the Lincoln Memorial, the result of organizing by the Marian Anderson Citizens Committee, mass meetings, and pickets. In the 1940s, a series of legal challenges to racially restrictive deed covenants led to the Supreme Court's landmark 1948 decision in *Hurd v. Hodge*, D.C.'s companion to *Shelley v. Kraemer*. In 1953, *D.C. v. John R. Thompson Co.* finally served to officially desegregate restaurants, hotels, and theaters in the city, and in 1954, *Bolling v. Sharpe* led to the desegregation of the D.C. public schools.

**Washington, D.C.'s Rising Black Leadership, 1954-1968**

Despite civil rights activists' legal victories, D.C.'s black communities struggled in the face of continued assaults after 1954. Urban renewal obliterated the neighborhood of Southwest, while public and private disinvestment degraded the areas where African Americans lived or were forced to move.

<sup>29</sup> Asch and Musgrove, 231.

<sup>30</sup> All of these organizations were established between 1933 and 1938.

<sup>31</sup> In 1945, the DC Recreation Board voted to uphold segregation of recreation facilities and Lansburgh's department store reinstated its policy against serving black customers. In 1946, Congress voted to close the FEPC (Asch and Musgrove, 288; <https://washingtonspark.files.wordpress.com/2019/12/1945-landburghs-discrimination-1.pdf>).

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Many black Washingtonians lacked access to decent jobs or housing, and they continued to be victimized by police. In this context, in the first major U.S. city with a majority black population as of 1957, a new generation of black leaders rose to prominence.

Activist Julius Hobson used picketing and the threat of boycotts to win thousands of black jobs in downtown department stores. Hobson also worked with other housing activists for passage of a local fair housing regulation in 1963, and to ensure its enforcement. Marion Barry arrived in D.C. in 1965, launching a bus boycott in January 1966 and then a movement to demand home rule. Via a campaign he called Free D.C., Barry effectively framed the fight for home rule as a civil rights issue and galvanized black advocacy for the city's self-governance. In 1967, the same the year that President Johnson appointed a black mayor and a city council, Hobson won a legal victory against the D.C. public schools, requiring that steps be taken to eliminate racial discrimination and persistent segregation. However, the outbreak of civil unrest in the wake of Martin Luther King's April 1968 assassination was evidence that despite these achievements, D.C. had a long way to go toward achieving equality for its black citizens.

**The Transition to Home Rule in Washington, D.C., 1968-1974**

Throughout the late 1960s, black citizens continued to demand home rule, winning an elected school board in 1967 and a nonvoting delegate to Congress in 1970. After winning election as D.C.'s representative, Rev. Walter Fauntroy orchestrated a successful campaign for the ouster from Congress of segregationist John McMillan (D-SC), the longtime chair of the House District Committee. A black representative, Charles Diggs (D-MI), replaced him and proceeded to win support for D.C. home rule in Congress. Advocacy against highways through black neighborhoods led to a key victory in 1971, when federal highway funds were diverted to the construction of a new public subway system for the city. Finally, the D.C. Home Rule Act was passed in 1973, by which time more than 70% of D.C. residents were African American. The following year, District residents elected their own mayor and city council, and most of these leaders were black.

**Context Themes**

**1) The Struggle for Access to Public Accommodations in Washington, D.C., 1912-1964**

**Overview**

For many years during and immediately after Reconstruction, African American residents in Washington had enjoyed somewhat equal access to public accommodations, including restaurants, stores, entertainment venues, and recreation areas due to local anti-discrimination laws passed during Reconstruction. By the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, however, those laws had been dropped from the municipal code. The protracted struggle to regain equal access to public accommodations—including recreation

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areas, stores, and auditoriums that had formerly been open to all but increasingly barred black access in the 1920s and 30s—culminated with two major events during the period of this study: 1) Marian Anderson's 1939 concert at the Lincoln Memorial, the result of a successful campaign by local organizers in partnership with federal officials, and 2) the Supreme Court's 1953 decision in *District of Columbia v. John R. Thompson Co.*, ruling that the city's Reconstruction-era "lost laws" banning discrimination were still in effect. This decision followed three years of sit-ins and pickets at downtown stores, a tactic first used by Howard University students a decade earlier. A year later, the Supreme Court's ruling in *Bolling v. Sharpe* that segregated schools were unconstitutional led the city to desegregate public recreation sites after at least six years of picketing at white-only playgrounds and pools.

The National Park Service study [Civil Rights in America: Racial Desegregation of Public Accommodations](#) includes the following sections related to 20<sup>th</sup> century Washington, D.C.: Segregation in the Federal Government; Howard University Sit-Ins; The First Freedom Rides [1947]; The Elmer Henderson Case; Desegregation in Washington, D.C.; The 1961 Freedom Rides. Notably, however, this study's appendices neglect to list the student sit-ins or D.C.'s Greyhound Bus Terminal among key events and sites that should be recognized.

### **Resistance to Increasing Segregation, 1912-1930s**

The election of Woodrow Wilson to the presidency in 1912 led to an expansion of segregation in the nation's capital in the 1910s and 1920s. In 1915, black educator Nannie Helen Burroughs urged a boycott of the city's transportation system, apparently provoked by the discriminatory treatment of African American riders.<sup>32</sup> On Easter Sunday in 1922, black picnickers were unnerved to discover new Jim Crow signs in Rock Creek Park, designating specific areas for "white" and "colored." The D.C. NAACP worked to have them removed. The following month, black guests at the dedication of the Lincoln Memorial were shocked to be directed to a segregated section almost a block away from the stage. Many left in protest. And in 1925, more than 200 performers from Howard University and other elite black colleges, whose choirs had been invited to perform at the (now demolished) Washington Auditorium downtown, discovered upon their arrival that the seating had been segregated, with black audience members required to sit on one side of the main aisle and in the balcony. The choirs refused to perform, and African American audience members walked out in protest.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Evelyn Brooks Barnett, "Nannie Burroughs and the Education of Black Women," in Sharon Harley and Rosalyn Terborg-Penn, eds., *The Afro-American Woman, Struggles & Images* (Baltimore: Black Classic Press, 1997, orig. pub. 1978), 97-108.

<sup>33</sup> In 1948, educator and civil rights activist Edwin B. Henderson wrote of the period prior to the Wilson administration, that for many years, "Washington citizens played and enjoyed recreation in all sections of the city without restriction because of race. As late as 1906, colored citizens could go into any downtown theater.... All of us swam in the river and Rock Creek.... White and colored boys and men played baseball, often together on the many vacant lots and on the park areas south of the White House." (Hamilton, 155); Asch and Musgrove, 237-38; Craig Simpson, "D.C.'s Old Jim Crow Rocked by 1939 Marian Anderson Concert," at <https://washingtonareaspark.com/2013/03/14/dcs-old-jim-crow-rocked-by-1939-marian-anderson-concert>.

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In the 1930s, black attorneys Charles Hamilton Houston and William Hastie worked to get a D.C. civil rights bill through Congress that would penalize businesses for discriminating.<sup>34</sup> In 1933, during his service as assistant solicitor for the federal Department of the Interior, Hastie joined his colleague Robert Weaver, an economist, in desegregating that agency's cafeteria. They apparently met little resistance.<sup>35</sup> The following year, however, Howard University professors and students failed to desegregate the U.S. Capitol's cafeterias—decades earlier, African Americans had been welcome to eat in them—after waging a six-month direct action campaign by insisting on service and engaging in sit-ins.<sup>36</sup> This followed a campaign by the Washington Interracial Committee (IRC) of the D.C. NAACP to investigate and report on discriminatory treatment by chain stores.<sup>37</sup> In 1936, local black papers began reporting that Hecht's, a major downtown department store, had begun barring black women from its fitting rooms, forcing them to try on clothes in a bathroom in the store's basement. Following a mass meeting on the topic at the YWCA, a delegation met with the store's owner, but he threatened to fire black employees in response to their complaints. A decade later, when Rep. Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. (D-NY) tried to amend a District appropriations bill to outlaw the segregation of public facilities, he lost by 122 to 49.<sup>38</sup> While D.C. wasn't as rigidly segregated as other Southern cities, none of these efforts were successful in breaking down the unwritten rules that forced black people into humiliatingly subordinate roles or the official policies that barred black children from decent school buildings and playgrounds.

**Marian Anderson, 1939**

In 1939, national attention focused on the struggle for equal access to public spaces in Washington, D.C., when the Howard University Music School invited internationally renowned singer Marian Anderson to perform. To accommodate the large crowd expected for the concert, Howard personnel requested that the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) lift its no-black-performers policy at the 4,000-seat Constitution Hall. DAR refused the request. When the use of the 2,000-seat auditorium at Central High School was also denied, the newly formed Marian Anderson Citizens Committee, chaired by Charles Hamilton Houston, picketed the school board, generated national news coverage, and organized a series of interracial mass meetings attracting up to 1,500 people. Meanwhile, the NAACP's Walter White worked with First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt (who eventually withdrew her membership from DAR in protest) and Interior Secretary Harold L. Ickes to arrange for an outdoor concert at the Lincoln Memorial. On Easter Sunday 1939, Marian Anderson performed for 75,000 people, beginning her concert with "My Country 'Tis of Thee." "It was a spark that ignited the whole city," reported *The Crisis*, and especially D.C.'s black elite, who saw the concert as their symbolic

<sup>34</sup> The civil rights bill was introduced in Congress in June 1935 and again in March 1940. See Murphy, 148-49, 167-69.

<sup>35</sup> Colbert I. King, "They Laid the Foundation," *Washington Post*, July 26, 1997.

<sup>36</sup> Craig Simpson, "Origins of the civil rights sit-in—U.S. Capitol: 1934," at <https://washingtonareaspark.com/2018/02/26/origins-of-the-civil-rights-sit-in-u-s-capitol-1934>.

<sup>37</sup> Murphy, 145; Hamilton, 66-69.

<sup>38</sup> Gellman, 308, n.95. On the failure of Powell's amendment, Gellman cites the *Norfolk New Journal and Guide*, April 13, 1946.



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entrance into a public sphere that had excluded them until now.<sup>39</sup> However, despite the Interior Department's order that federally-operated recreation sites be opened to all in the wake of the Anderson concert, many remained segregated in practice for another decade.

**Resistance to Continued Segregation, 1940s**

On the verge of the United States' entry into World War II, black Washingtonians continued to be barred from many of the city's restaurants, hotels, and department stores, or were forced to comply with policies that dictated if or where they could sit, where they could try things on, or what restroom or water fountain they could use. Many preferred to stay away from such places altogether. Many public and private entertainment venues also remained closed to black patrons, including downtown theaters. In fact, nine months after the Anderson concert, Eleanor Roosevelt joined federal and local officials in crossing a picket line at the still-segregated Keith Theater to attend a movie about Abraham Lincoln.<sup>40</sup>

The city's transit system became the target of protest during the war as the number of black federal workers quadrupled from fewer than 10,000 to more than 41,000 in 1940-44.<sup>41</sup> Labor organizers Marie Richardson and Jewell Mazique joined Thelma Dale of the New Negro Congress in a campaign to desegregate employment at Capital Transit, which ran D.C.'s public bus and streetcar system. Because many black workers had to cross the Potomac River from Virginia to work in Washington, activists also challenged segregated interstate travel. In early 1943, at least three women were arrested for refusing to move to the back of buses during the Virginia portion of their trips. The following year, a group of Howard University women on a bus from Fairfax, Virginia, also refused to give up their seats, but by this time, another case was already moving through the courts; their case was joined with that of Irene Morgan, who had been arrested after boarding a bus in Virginia to visit her mother in Baltimore. *Morgan v. Virginia* (1946) ruled that buses traveling across state lines could not enforce discrimination laws that did not apply outside the state. The next year, the Chicago-based Fellowship of Reconciliation organized integrated groups to ride Greyhound and Trailways buses from D.C. to the South, as a means of testing the *Morgan* decision and pushing for federal enforcement. Riders were imprisoned in North Carolina, and buses remained segregated until the 1960s.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Asch and Musgrove, 271-72; Murphy, 162-165; Lauren Elizabeth Pearlman, "Democracy's Capital: Protest, Politics and Civil Rights in Washington DC, 1933-1978," (Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 2013), 38; <https://washingtonareaspark.com/2013/03/14/dcs-old-jim-crow-rocked-by-1939-marian-anderson-concert>.

<sup>40</sup> The NNA, the *Washington Afro-American*, and D.C. public schools all organized their own events to celebrate the legacy of Abraham Lincoln in response to the theater's barring of black patrons (Murphy, 167-69).

<sup>41</sup> Asch and Musgrove, 274; Craig Simpson, "The Fight against Capital Transit's Jim Crow Hiring: 1941-55," at <https://washingtonareaspark.com/2012/10/14/the-fight-against-capital-transits-jim-crow-hiring-1941-55>. Murphy, 184-85, 197-198. Upon opening in 1940, D.C.'s Greyhound Terminal restricted its dining area on the main floor to whites only, with African Americans relegated to a cafeteria in the basement. A complaint by the Washington Urban League resulted in the terminal's removal of segregated signage, but it continued to deny service to black patrons upstairs ("Greyhound Lines Welch on No Jim Crow Promise," *Baltimore Afro-American*, Sep. 28, 1940).



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**Restaurant and Lunch Counter Sit-Ins, 1943-1944**

Among the Howard University students arrested in 1943 for refusing to sit in the back of a bus in northern Virginia was Ruth Powell. That January, Powell had also been arrested at a United Cigar Store downtown, after she and her companions were initially refused service at the whites-only café, and then overcharged for their hot chocolates. Howard law student Pauli Murray, an experienced organizer, soon joined forces with Powell and others to organize additional sit-ins, with mixed results, in the spring and fall of 1943 at Little Palace Cafeteria, Thompson's Restaurant, People's Drug, and G.C. Murphy's. In April 1944, they organized an interracial group of 56 students to picket Thompson's at 11<sup>th</sup> and G streets NW, for at least five hours. Students entered the restaurant in small groups, asking to be served. Although the restaurant briefly opened to African Americans as a result, it soon went back to serving whites only, and the students were ordered by Howard University's president to call off the sit-ins. The university was dependent on Congress for 60 percent of its funding, and with a Mississippi segregationist at the helm of the Senate District Committee, the university risked retaliation if the students continued to challenge Jim Crow in D.C.<sup>43</sup>

**Revival of the "Lost Laws," 1948-1953**

While the Howard students' campaign received little recognition for pioneering the tactic of sit-ins nearly two decades before the movements in Greensboro, North Carolina, and Nashville, Tennessee, locally their work resulted in the rediscovery of D.C.'s anti-discrimination laws by a clerk at the Bureau of Engraving and Printing. Passed during the city's brief period of home rule in the 1870s, these laws outlawed restaurants, theaters, and hotels from discriminating based on race, but as Pauli Murray determined with the help of Howard University librarian Daniel Mercer, they hadn't appeared among D.C.'s official statutes since 1894. Murray's research quickly revealed that the laws were still valid, and they would soon become the basis for a renewed campaign to have them enforced.<sup>44</sup>

After serving alongside some 1.2 million African Americans nationwide in World War II, black veterans and their families continued to be barred from most restaurants, hotels, and theaters, especially downtown. The National Theater employed a "spotter" to detect black patrons attempting to pass as white, and in 1946-47, was picketed by the Committee for Racial Democracy (chaired by Howard University law professor Leon Ransom). George Washington University's Lisner Auditorium was also segregated upon its opening 1946, leading to pickets and refusals to perform at the venue. The university finally agreed to admit black patrons the following year, but only to school-sponsored events. Across town, despite its location in a largely black neighborhood and being the subject of pickets and boycotts led by Dr. E.B. Henderson, Uline Arena remained segregated until 1948.<sup>45</sup>

<sup>43</sup> Murphy, 189-90; Pearlman, "Democracy's Capital" (Ph.D. diss.), 45; Murray, *Song in a Weary Throat*, 220-231. None of these restaurants and stores or their buildings are extant today.

<sup>44</sup> Murray, 193, 230-231.

<sup>45</sup> <https://historicsites.dcpreservation.org/items/show/1027>. In February 1949, after leading a panel discussion at Metropolitan

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After a reference was made to D.C.'s 1870s anti-discrimination laws in the 1948 report *Segregation in Washington*, a legal team headed by Charles Hamilton Houston and two National Lawyers Guild attorneys, Joseph Forer and David Rein, demanded that the D.C. commissioners take action. When the commissioners neglected to follow through, seasoned labor activist Annie Stein—who was a neighbor of Forer and Rein's at Trenton Terrace in Congress Heights—joined with 86-year old Mary Church Terrell to launch the Coordinating Committee for the Enforcement of D.C. Anti-Discrimination Laws (CCEAD).

The CCEAD hatched a multipronged plan to educate the public, negotiate with businesses, pressure city and federal officials, and pursue litigation. After securing a promise from the D.C. commissioners that the city would bring a lawsuit to force compliance with the law, in February 1950 an interracial group of committee members made a return visit to Thompson's Restaurant, which had previously refused to serve the African American members of their group. When Mary Church Terrell was again refused service, the city sued. Over the next several months, 145 volunteers for the CCEAD proceeded to make multiple visits to a total of 99 downtown restaurants and lunch counters known for serving whites only, informing managers at each location that they were violating D.C. law.<sup>46</sup> As they began negotiating with each business, the CCEAD made a list of those that served African Americans, and distributed it to generate public support while creating pressure on managers to reform their policies.<sup>47</sup>

As the public face of the campaign, Terrell launched the group's first picket in December 1951 during a snow storm. The target was Kresge's five-and-ten-cent store on 7<sup>th</sup> Street NW, and after six weeks of picketing and leafleting, management agreed to serve black diners at its lunch counter. Other nearby discount stores along 7<sup>th</sup> Street followed suit, but the Hecht Company, within two blocks of Kresge's at 7<sup>th</sup> and F, retained its policy of barring black diners, and became the target of the CCEAD's next campaign. After three months of failed negotiations and a widely supported effort to inundate management with some 8,000 postcards, CCEAD launched a boycott and sit-in in June 1951. According

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Baptist Church during a two-day meeting of the Legislative Assembly and Rally to End Segregation and Discrimination, for which W.E.B. Du Bois and other civil rights leaders traveled to D.C., E.B. Henderson orchestrated a three-hour, 80-person sit-in at Childs restaurant, across the street from Union Station ("Racial Rally Group Demonstrates at Childs," *Washington Post*, Feb. 13, 1949).

<sup>46</sup> Beverly W. Jones, "Before Montgomery and Greensboro: The Desegregation Movement in the District of Columbia, 1950-1953," *Phylon*, Vol. 43, No. 2, 1982, 147. Another group, the Interracial Workshop also tried to integrate at least one restaurant, Sholl's Cafeteria, in July 1950, and were arrested for disorderly conduct ("Dig Up Old Laws to Punish Young Civil Righters," *Baltimore Afro-American*, July 29, 1950; "15 Fined in D.C. Bias Case; Appeal Filed," *Baltimore Afro-American*, Aug. 5, 1950; "Fight to Appeal Sholl's Ruling," *Baltimore Afro-American*, Aug. 12, 1950).

<sup>47</sup> Rev. A. Powell Davies of All Souls Unitarian Church produced a similar list, which likely grew out of a sermon he gave on Feb. 1, 1953, in which he proclaimed that he would no longer "knowingly eat a meal in any restaurant in the District of Columbia that will not serve meals to Negroes," and invited "all who truly believe in human brotherhood" to follow his lead, according to a 2011 column in the *Washington Post* (John Kelly, "D.C. restaurant list is a relic from a painful past," *Washington Post*, Oct. 5, 2011).

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to Stein, the sit-ins at Hecht's basement lunch counter were set up "like a picket line, with two-hour shifts. We had between 15 and 20 people sitting down at a time all through the day on Saturday." On other days, volunteers sat at the counter for two hours a day, and as the campaign persisted over the next four months, it garnered national support. Hecht's quietly began serving African American diners in January 1952.<sup>48</sup>

Next, the CCEAD turned its attention to Murphy's five-and-ten at 12<sup>th</sup> and F NW. While African Americans could be served at Murphy's lunch counter, they were not permitted to sit and eat. After the store refused to change its policy, Terrell and Stein commenced three-day-a-week pickets in May 1952. Over the course of a very hot summer, some 100 volunteers came out for each picket, eventually pushing Murphy's management to change its policy that September. Meanwhile, as the city's case to reinstate D.C.'s antidiscrimination laws moved through the courts, the CCEAD received support from the federal Department of Justice, which filed a brief with the U.S. Court of Appeals, and from President Eisenhower, who publicly decried segregation in the District during his first address to Congress in February 1953. That spring, D.C. officials appealed the case to the Supreme Court, which ruled in *District of Columbia v. John R. Thompson Co.* in June that the laws were still valid. The 89-year Terrell celebrated with a luncheon at Thompson's, where she and her group were served by the manager himself.<sup>49</sup>

CCEAD's success in opening downtown restaurants and lunch counters to black customers soon led to more widespread desegregation of public accommodations while also creating momentum for the Urban League, the NAACP, and the President's Committee on Government Contracts to secure a limited number of higher-level jobs and training for black workers at a few of the city's major employers.<sup>50</sup>

### **Desegregation of Recreation**

As the CCEAD worked to open public businesses to all, other activists focused on integrating the city's recreation sites. Black access to public recreation facilities was fairly limited prior to the 1950s, although a few sites, such as Francis Pool and the Banneker recreation complex, were dedicated expressly for black use. In response to years of lobbying to desegregate the city's golf courses, the National Park Service also opened Langston Golf Course in 1939, just west of the Anacostia River along Benning Road NE.<sup>51</sup> As the outcome of a 1939 report on segregated recreation sites in the District, the

<sup>48</sup> Asch and Musgrove, 302; Jones, 148-151; Traci Parker, *Department Stores and the Black Freedom Movement: Workers, Consumers, and Civil Rights* (UNC Press, 2019), 153-61.

<sup>49</sup> Asch and Musgrove, 302-03; Jones, 151-54.

<sup>50</sup> Constance Green, 314-15. In March 1958, a one-day boycott of department stores that had refused to hire black clerks for the Christmas season was widely supported, but unsuccessful (Parker, 162-64).

<sup>51</sup> "Civil Rights Tour: Recreation—Langston Golf Course," at <https://historicsites.dcpreservation.org/items/show/945>. Lincoln Playground Field House, built in 1934, is listed in the DC Inventory as the only building of its type constructed for black use. (<https://historicsites.dcpreservation.org/items/show/887>), but Banneker's recreation center and pool were built the same year.

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National Negro Congress succeeded in desegregating a federally-operated tourist camp so that its members could stay there for the organization's national conference in 1940.<sup>52</sup>

Unless attached to a black school, however, most of the city's formal recreation sites were available only to white children. Yet segregation in recreation did not become official policy until 1945, three years after the D.C. Recreation Board began managing sites formerly operated by several other government entities.<sup>53</sup> In a seeming fit of backlash against black advancement following World War II, the board voted in 1945 to enforce segregation despite heated pushback from civil rights groups and local citizens. Established in response to this mandate, the D.C. NAACP's Citizens' Committee Against Segregation in Recreation worked for the next five years with lone black recreation board member Alice C. Hunter, educator and activist Edwin B. Henderson, and some 80 community and labor organizations across the city to pressure the recreation board to desegregate its facilities.<sup>54</sup>

In 1949, the Recreation Department agreed to a study whereby playgrounds in six transitioning neighborhoods would be conditionally opened to biracial use. These included Petworth's Park View Playground, where black children were permitted to play only outside of school hours and were not allowed to use the pool, and Georgetown's Rose Park, D.C.'s only playground unassociated with a school that was designated for African American use.<sup>55</sup> Ultimately the Board desegregated a total of 12 play areas in 1949-52, while leaving 70 of them segregated.<sup>56</sup> Most continued to be reserved for white people only, especially outside of areas where large numbers of black residents lived.<sup>57</sup> The biggest fight over segregated recreation in the District played out at Rosedale Playground at 17th and Gales streets NE, in D.C.'s Kingman Park neighborhood. Established in 1913 in an area where

According to a National Register nomination for Banneker, it was renovated in 1942 to serve as year-round facility for black servicemen, housed a USO Club, and was a ROTC training facility for Howard University (<https://historicsites.dcpreservation.org/items/show/846>).

<sup>52</sup> Gellman, 128; "NNC Wins Fight on Color Bar Tourist Camp," *Baltimore Afro-American*, Mar. 30, 1940; "Congress Wins Fight; Cracks Jim-Crow Rule," *Chicago Defender*, Apr. 5, 1940.

<sup>53</sup> Recreation sites were originally managed by the D.C. Commissioners and the Board of Education and later by a merged agency that oversaw sites controlled by National Capital Parks (an entity of the National Park Service, which is a unit of the federal Department of the Interior) and the National Capital Park and Planning Commission, an independent executive agency established in the 1920s (Martha H. Verbrugge and Drew Yingling, "The Politics of Play: The Struggle over Racial Segregation and Public Recreation in Washington, D.C., 1945-1950," *Washington History*, Vol. 27, No. 2, 58). Educator and activist Edwin B. Henderson wrote in 1948 that as of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, prior to the establishment of formal recreation facilities, white and black Washingtonians had more commonly enjoyed recreational activities together (Hamilton, 155).

<sup>54</sup> Hamilton, "Making a 'Model' System", chapter 3, is about the efforts of the Citizens' Committee Against Segregation in Recreation, Alice C. Hunter, Edwin B. Henderson and others to desegregate recreation in D.C. Hamilton notes that the group engaged in successful protests against the segregated use of recreational facilities at Anacostia Receiving Station in 1946 (p. 158, n. 395).

<sup>55</sup> Rose Park was converted from white to African American use around 1922 (Civil Rights Tour: Recreation—Rose Park Playground, at <https://historicsites.dcpreservation.org/items/show/965>).

<sup>56</sup> Kent Boese, Park View Playground & Field House, National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, Dec. 30, 2013, at <https://www.nps.gov/nr/feature/places/pdfs/14000014.pdf>.

<sup>57</sup> DC's Segregated Recreation System (Mapping Segregation in Washington DC), at <https://www.arcgis.com/apps/MapSeries/index.html?appid=1033092aabe54293b5359f17e6f43fc0>.

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African Americans already lived, it remained a whites-only playground even as increasing numbers of black families had moved to nearby blocks. In 1948, a local chapter of the Young Progressives of America organized neighborhood residents to picket Rosedale's pool and recreation center. In 1951, the Interdenominational Ministers Alliance renewed the campaign, and the following summer, the Congress of Racial Equality's (CORE) Summer Interracial Workshop joined with a neighborhood committee to wage additional pickets.<sup>58</sup> In September 1952, more than 100 neighborhood children climbed over and under the fence in what was "believed to have been a spur of the moment inspiration," reported the *Afro-American*.<sup>59</sup> After a public hearing the following month, the Recreation Board voted to open the playground and recreation center; the pool was desegregated six months later.

Anacostia Pool became the site of another significant battle in the summer of 1949. National Capital Parks (NCP) officially desegregated the site, but black swimmers were threatened by white patrons when they attempted to use the pool. Violence between patrons and by police erupted a few days later, and members of the group Young Progressives were arrested for handing out flyers. NCP emptied and closed the pool until the summer of 1950, when it finally desegregated.<sup>60</sup>

It was not until D.C.'s schools desegregated in accordance with the Supreme Court's ruling of May 1954 that all of the city's public recreation sites were officially opened to all.<sup>61</sup>

By the mid-1950s, restaurants, stores, entertainment venues, and recreation areas in D.C. had been officially desegregated, but sites outside the city limits remained segregated. In 1960, Howard University students Stokely Carmichael, Laurence Henry, and Dion Diamond formed the Nonviolent Action Group (NAG) as an outgrowth of pickets for civil rights on Capitol Hill, but the group soon turned its focus to desegregating lunch counters in Fairfax County, Virginia. After student protesters were

<sup>58</sup> Ministers Ask Biracial Use of Playground, *Washington Post*, Dec. 7, 1951; "Interracial Playground Again Asked," *Washington Post*, Feb. 10, 1952; "Mix District Playground, Congregationists Urge," *Afro-American*, March 8, 1952; "14 Arrested in Picketing at Rosedale," July 18, 1952, 23. Nishani Frazier, *Harambee City: The Congress of Racial Equality in Cleveland and the Rise of Black Power Populism* (2017), 49-51.

<sup>59</sup> "D.C. Children Defy Ban, Play at Restricted Spot," *Baltimore Afro-American*, Sep. 20, 1952.

<sup>60</sup> Verbrugge, 61-66. The McKinley/Eckington Pool, attached to whites-only McKinley Tech High School but close to the increasingly black Bloomingdale neighborhood, was desegregated between 1949 and 1951, during a conflict over the conversion of Langley Junior High School (on the same campus) from the white to the "colored" division.

<sup>61</sup> In keeping with the desegregation of schools and recreation sites, in December 1954, All Souls Unitarian Church severed its longstanding relationship with the Police Boys and Girls Club, which met in the church but insisted on maintaining a whites-only club. In its place, the church organized an integrated youth group. (The police department maintained its racially exclusive policy until 1962 (DC Commissioners' Council on Human Relations Progress Report on Metropolitan Police Department Program, ACT, Police, 1960-68, Box 4, Julius Hobson Papers, DC Public Library). Under the leadership of Reverend A. Powell Davies since 1944, the church had become increasingly activist in its orientation (<https://historicsites.dcpreservation.org/items/show/921>). In February, 1952, All Souls was slated to host the national steering committee for the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights, which would become a longstanding organization devoted to lobbying Congress ("Plans Set for Leadership Conference on Civil Rights," *Baltimore Afro-American*, Feb. 2, 1952; <https://civilrights.org/about/history>).

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treated violently by residents and arrested on multiple occasions over the course of two weeks, Alexandria city officials and the Fairfax County government announced that chain stores and restaurants would be open to all. NAG then turned its focus to Montgomery County, Maryland, most notably the whites-only Glen Echo amusement park. Joined by residents of nearby Bannockburn, Maryland, and later by prominent civil rights leaders such as A. Phillip Randolph and the NAACP's Roy Wilkins, NAG started picketing the park on June 30 and continued until the park closed for the fall. In late July, NAG also picketed for 100 hours outside a Bethesda movie theater that barred African Americans, and the following month, NAG's Laurence Henry, Gwendolyn Britt, and others undertook a 12-hour march to Baltimore to demand a federal court injunction against Glen Echo. As protests started back up in advance of the park's reopening in spring 1961, and the owners were pressured by local and federal officials to rescind their whites-only policy, Glen Echo finally desegregated.<sup>62</sup>

### **Desegregation of Hospitals**

Three years later, in the summer of 1964, former D.C. CORE director Julius Hobson took on the city's hospitals, which remained segregated. At Washington Hospital Center, Hobson staged a one man "lie-in" and led a sit-in in the lobby, leading the hospital to end the practice of separating patients by race. Casualty Hospital agreed to the same thing after CORE began picketing there in July, and Columbia Hospital for Women integrated patients before picketing started there.<sup>63</sup>

## **2) Equal Employment & Economic Justice: Demands for Access to Jobs and Fair Wages in Washington, D.C., 1912-1974**

### **Overview**

Federal jobs had long helped sustain D.C.'s black middle class but came under attack after the 1912 election of President Woodrow Wilson, a Southern Democrat. The NAACP's D.C. branch was founded the same year as Wilson's election, and soon focused its attention fighting segregation in the federal government. In the 1920s, Nannie Helen Burroughs' National Association of Wage Earners became the first to advocate for better wages and labor conditions on behalf of black women specifically, especially domestic servants.<sup>64</sup> The New Negro Alliance, founded in 1933, became the most visible advocate for

<sup>62</sup> <https://www.crmvet.org/info/dc60.htm>; <https://washingtonareaspark.com/2015/06/26/contradictions-in-the-cause-glen-echo-maryland-1960>. [https://www.flickr.com/photos/washington\\_area\\_spark/49479521926/in/album-72157654351579141](https://www.flickr.com/photos/washington_area_spark/49479521926/in/album-72157654351579141). NAG's Cleveland Sellers wrote in his autobiography that in 1960, NAG desegregated about 25 lunch counters, restaurants, and other facilities. (Cleveland Sellers, with Robert Terrell, *The River of No Return: The Autobiography of a Black Militant and the Life and Death of SNCC* (1973), 59-60.

<sup>63</sup> Sam Smith, *Captive Capital: Colonial Life in Modern Washington* (Bloomington: Indiana U. Press, 1974), 258; <https://washingtonareaspark.com/?s=reginald+booker&submit=Search>.

<sup>64</sup> Although a union was organized in 1909 by women who labored at the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, its affiliation with the segregated American Federation of Labor and the National Women's Trade Union League indicate that it may not have represented the black women who comprised much of the Bureau's workforce (Yellin, 31; Sharon Harley, "When Your Work Is Not Who You Are: The Development of a Working-Class Consciousness among Afro-American Women," in Darlene Clark Hine, Wilma King, and Linda Reed, *We Specialize in the Wholly Impossible: A Reader in Black Women's History*, Brooklyn:



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black employment in D.C. during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century via its "Don't Buy Where You Can't Work" campaign. The organization's victory in the 1938 Supreme Court case *New Negro Alliance v. Sanitary Grocery* secured the right of non-employees to picket discriminatory workplaces. Black labor organizers continued to be active in the 1930s, with a series of laundry strikes in 1937-41 leading to increased pay for a mostly black work force. Other organizers such as Elizabeth McDuffie and Mary McLeod Bethune worked within President Franklin D. Roosevelt's administration to increase jobs and wages for black workers. The National Negro Congress, founded in 1936 by union organizer A. Philip Randolph, was also active in protesting employment discrimination. Randolph broke with the organization in 1941 to form the March on Washington Movement, which organized to bring 100,000 protesters to D.C. as a means of successfully pressuring President Roosevelt to desegregate defense employment and establish the Fair Employment Practices Commission. (The march was called off.) In the 1950s, African American women led a campaign to desegregate hiring at Capital Transit, which operated the city's streetcar and bus fleet. Under the leadership of Julius Hobson, CORE's D.C. branch reportedly secured up to 5,000 black jobs in 1961-64 and helped win the passage of a 1965 regulation against employment discrimination in the District. In the 1960s-70s, the Washington Urban League continued its longtime mission of increasing middle-class black employment and salaries.

**Black Federal Employment and the Early Years of the D.C. NAACP**

In March 1912, three years after the national NAACP was established, a branch office opened in Washington, D.C. With a wide base of middle-class support and access to the federal government, the D.C. branch soon grew to become the largest and most influential NAACP chapter in the country. Unlike the national organization, its leadership was mostly black. Beginning in the summer of 1913, just months after Southern Democrat Woodrow Wilson was inaugurated and began assigning white appointees to take over political positions formerly occupied by African Americans, Archibald Grimké took over leadership of the NAACP's D.C. branch. A member of the city's black elite, which had long seen integration as the primary means of achieving equality, Grimké was a fierce critic of white supremacy. He lobbied federal lawmakers directly and testified before Congress. He also used his political connections, via his former service as U.S. consul to Santo Domingo under President Grover Cleveland, to intervene on behalf of individuals whose jobs were threatened. The NAACP's full-throated advocacy on behalf of black Washingtonians who may have otherwise been skeptical of the organization's nonpartisan, secular origins helped grow the branch in its early years.<sup>65</sup> Its access to federal lawmakers provided some measure of political voice to black Washingtonians in the absence of Congressional representation and a city government.

Segregation in the federal government was a priority for the D.C. branch in the 1910s. Because Washingtonians had no opportunity to vote officials in and out of office, "mass meetings" served as an

Carlson Publishing, 1995, 31; Mary Anderson, "Organizing the Bureau of Engraving and Printing Girls," *Life and Labor*, Jan. 1918, 11-12).

<sup>65</sup> Yellin, 147-158.

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essential tool for amplifying community concerns, and frequently included prominent speakers. Upwards of 10,000 people—the *Washington Bee* estimated 4,000 inside and 8,000 outside—attended a rally against federal segregation at Metropolitan African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church on October 27, 1913. In November 1914, 2,000 gathered at Second Baptist Church for a report by the radical *Boston Guardian* editor William Monroe Trotter on a meeting with President Wilson in which the president affirmed his support for segregation.<sup>66</sup> Metropolitan AME, at 15<sup>th</sup> and M streets NW, and Metropolitan Baptist, at 12<sup>th</sup> and R NW, regularly hosted these community meetings, with churches serving as primary sites of organizing.

The NAACP's impact was limited. Grimké and his colleagues expected that U.S. participation in World War I would improve black job prospects, especially within the military after nearly 300,000 black men responded to the draft. Grimké met with the Secretary of War to advocate for integrated training camps. Others pushed for a requirement that Red Cross register black nurses. However, both the military and jobs at home remained strictly segregated, with African Americans mostly relegated to low-level positions. Even as the need for multilingual federal employees increased at the outset of the United States' entrance into World War I, National Association of Colored Women founder Mary Church Terrell, who was fluent in French and German, was assigned to an entry-level position because of her race. She managed to find another opening in the "colored women's section" of the Census Bureau, but quit in protest when the bathrooms were segregated.<sup>67</sup> Black servicemen and local activists recognized the hypocrisy of serving in a war meant to promote democracy abroad while being denied equality at home.<sup>68</sup>

**The New Negro Alliance: "Don't Buy Where You Can't Work"**

In the 1930s, John Aubrey Davis, a D.C. resident and college student, launched what would become the most significant mass pressure campaign of its time, the New Negro Alliance (NNA). Davis started the organization after successfully using a picket to pressure the Hamburger Grill at 12<sup>th</sup> and U streets (now demolished), whose customers were all black, to rehire three black employees who had been replaced with white people in need of work. Davis worked closely with attorneys Eugene Davidson, who later led the D.C. NAACP, and Belford Lawson, who negotiated an early NNA victory by getting the *Evening Star* to hire black paper boys. Six women, including Mary Church Terrell and National Council of Negro Women president Mary McLeod Bethune, were also among the founding members of NNA, which secured many store clerk positions for women as well as teenage girls and boys.<sup>69</sup>

<sup>66</sup> Yellin, 150-151, 166-167; "Second Baptist Church," at <https://historicsites.dcpreservation.org/items/show/540>.

<sup>67</sup> Yellin, 153-158; Asch and Musgrove, 224-25. Initially led by J. Milton Waldron, the conservative pastor of Shiloh Baptist Church, the NAACP refused to take up the case of Maggie Keys, Rosebud Murrye and Bertha Saunders, printers at the Bureau of Engraving and Printing who refused to sit at "colored tables" in their workplace cafeteria. The class-conscious branch leadership did not approve of Murrye's "militancy" and outspokenness, and she was later fired for "insubordination" (Yellin, 136-317, 149-153; Asch and Musgrove, 224, 229).

<sup>68</sup> Asch and Musgrove, 229.

<sup>69</sup> Women's position as consumers for their families also made them essential participants in boycotts (Murphy, 124-26).



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With a name meant to distinguish the organization from the more conservative NAACP and National Urban League, NNA employed a two-pronged approach to pressuring stores and restaurants to hire African Americans: negotiate first, and if that didn't work, proceed with picketing and boycotts. With legal support from a cadre of Howard University Law School attorneys, NNA secured early victories in getting three A&P groceries to hire a total of 19 black employees, and integrated several small stores on the 1300 block of 7th Street NW. However the District Court issued an injunction against picketers at Kaufman's Department Store on the same block and at a High's Ice Cream Store at 11<sup>th</sup> and Irving streets NW, leading the organization to spend much of the next two years embroiled in legal disputes as it built its base and promoted boycotts.<sup>70</sup> In October 1934, thousands attended NNA's first anniversary celebration at Metropolitan Baptist Church, and by 1936, the organization claimed to have secured \$75,000 worth of jobs for sales clerks.<sup>71</sup> In 1937, a lawsuit brought by a new Sanitary Grocery just south of U Street and close to NNA's office led the organization to appeal the case to the Supreme Court. In *New Negro Alliance v. Sanitary Grocery* (1938), the Court upheld the right of non-employees to picket, galvanizing similar efforts across the country.

Some critics, such as Howard University's Ralph Bunche, argued that NNA's methods were divisive in the face of potential black solidarity with white workers and Jewish store owners, while others maintained that NNA was overly focused on securing low-level jobs at white-owned stores, rather than working for fair wages or black business ownership. Yet NNA expanded its membership rolls, especially when the D.C. NAACP temporarily folded in 1937-39, and secured well more than 5,000 jobs for African American workers by 1940.<sup>72</sup> NNA and "Don't Buy Where You Can't Work" campaigns in cities such as Los Angeles, Chicago, Cleveland and New York during the 1930s laid the foundation for the use of direct action, specifically picketing and boycotts but also sit-ins and other nonviolent tactics to highlight discriminatory treatment.<sup>73</sup>

### **Women Fight for Fair Wages and Working Conditions**

In 1921, longtime educator and organizer Nannie Helen Burroughs launched the National Association of Wage Earners, the first organization to demand fair pay and working conditions specifically for black women. Burroughs and her union, which functioned as a cooperative and provided training in a range of service jobs at its headquarters near Logan Circle, worked during the 1920s to pressure federal lawmakers into recognizing its members as citizens worthy of fair treatment. In the 1930s, a young laundry worker named Inez Robertson organized the mostly-black lowest paid employees of the Arcade Laundry in waging a successful strike for fair wages. Robertson would later work with the

<sup>70</sup> Pacifico, 72, 77-79. Neither Kaufman's Department Store nor the High's Ice Cream at 11<sup>th</sup> and Irving remain extant today.

<sup>71</sup> Pacifico, 78-79.

<sup>72</sup> Pacifico, 86. NNA recruited the national NAACP's Walter White and in 1939, Mary McLeod Bethune, then a member of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's "black Cabinet," to picket People's Drug, one of D.C.'s most stubbornly segregated businesses.

<sup>73</sup> Ralph L. Crowder, "'Don't Buy Where You Can't Work': An Investigation of the Political Forces and Social Conflict Within the Harlem Boycott of 1934," *Afro-Americans in New York Life and History*, Vol. 15, No. 2, July 1991.

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United Federal Workers of America (UFWA), the first labor organization to focus on organizing federal employees across racial lines, to advance the rights of government cafeteria workers.<sup>74</sup>

Mary McLeod Bethune, a member of Franklin D. Roosevelt's "black Cabinet," worked to ensure that African Americans benefited from New Deal jobs programs, received fair wages, and labored under decent working conditions. (In 1935, she also cofounded the National Council of Negro Women, which later fought to outlaw poll taxes in the South, advocated for a national public health program, and worked to end discrimination in federal housing.) In 1938, the Howard University AKA sorority-affiliated Non-Partisan Council on Public Affairs (NPC) became the first full-time lobby for black civil rights, and focused its efforts on black employment. The NPC secured passage of the first anti-discrimination amendment to national legislation, requiring that black nurses be admitted for training at white hospitals or that black hospitals receive funds to train them. The NPC's lobbying efforts—resulting in Congress receiving 3,000 letters over the course of just three days in March 1941 advocating for black war jobs—led to black women's admission into the U.S. Navy and into the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps.<sup>75</sup>

White House servant Elizabeth McDuffie, after campaigning to get African Americans to vote for President Roosevelt in 1936, organized federal workers to advocate for extending New Deal employment policies and programs to black women's jobs. In addition, local women organizers pressured D.C. businesses to comply with new standards imposed by Roosevelt's National Recovery Administration (NRA) and set up an employment bureau at the YWCA.<sup>76</sup>

### **Demands for Black Jobs during World War II**

In 1941, union organizer and National Negro Congress founder A. Phillip Randolph joined fellow Socialist Party leader Bayard Rustin in launching the March on Washington Movement (MOWM), a campaign to bring 100,000 protesters to D.C. if President Roosevelt did not agree to desegregate defense employment.<sup>77</sup> Six days prior to the planned event, the president issued an executive order barring discrimination by defense-related employers and establishing the Fair Employment Practices Commission (FEPC), which was intended to ensure compliance. (Randolph would later found the League for Nonviolent Civil Disobedience against Military Segregation in response to the 1947 passage of the Selective Service Act, which required men to register for the draft. As a result, President Harry

<sup>74</sup> Murphy, 25-32; Asch and Musgrove, 265-66; Gellman, 141-42; Craig Simpson, "Cafeteria Local 471 leader Oliver Palmer; 1945," at [https://www.flickr.com/photos/washington\\_area\\_spark/25115186238/](https://www.flickr.com/photos/washington_area_spark/25115186238/); "Mixed Group Pickets 'Sweat Shop' in D.C.," *Baltimore Afro-American*, Mar 13, 1937; "Cop Brutality Fight May Go to Roosevelt," *Baltimore Afro-American*, May 22, 1937).

<sup>75</sup> Murphy, 146-47; Gregory Parks, "'Lifting as We Climb': The American Council on Human Rights and the Quest for Civil Rights," *American University Journal of Gender, Social Policy & the Law*, Vol. 25, No. 3, 2017, at <https://digitalcommons.wcl.american.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1690&context=jgspl>; Charlotte Crump, "The National Non-Partisan Council of Public Affairs of the Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority," *Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (Spring 1944), 240.

<sup>76</sup> Murphy, 123-24, 119-120.

<sup>77</sup> Simpson, "The Fight against Capital Transit."

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Truman abolished segregation in the armed forces in July 1948.)

In 1941, activists Marie Richardson, Jewell Mazique, and Thelma Dale helped launch a campaign to desegregate the workforce of Washington's streetcar and bus company, Capital Transit. Although the newly established FEPC ordered the company to end its policy of hiring African Americans only for low-level maintenance jobs but not as drivers, the company refused to order white operators to train them.<sup>78</sup> In 1942, Charles Hamilton Houston and Mary McLeod Bethune helped launch the Committee on Jobs for Negroes in Public Utilities, operating out of the black-owned Industrial Bank at 11<sup>th</sup> and U streets NW, and the committee organized a mass meeting at Vermont Avenue Baptist Church, where hundreds turned out for an address by Rev. Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., then a New York councilman. Throughout the spring of 1943, the group picketed Capital Transit's headquarters, distributed flyers at busy intersections, and conducted a march that concluded at Franklin Park. Ultimately, the FEPC did not impose penalties for the company's noncompliance with federal policy, and the campaign's leadership was neutralized by rising anti-communist fervor. (Known as the Red Scare, this period began with the 1947 passage of the anti-labor and anti-communist Taft-Hartley law and the institution of a requirement that federal employees sign a loyalty oath.) As a result, the company did not hire black drivers until 1955.<sup>79</sup>

During World War II, the Non-Partisan Council on Public Affairs (NPC), based in an office (now demolished) on Florida Avenue NW, worked to desegregate the Navy and the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WACs), and to ensure equal training for black nurses. The NPC also worked with the D.C. NAACP and the Washington Urban League—founded in 1938 with a central mission of securing black access to good jobs—to end the requirement by federal employers that job applications include photographs, and that three candidates be considered for any position. Both of these rules had effectively allowed hiring officials to exclude black candidates.<sup>80</sup> The American Council on Human Rights, which succeeded NPC beginning in 1948, continued advocating nationally for black employment but also fought locally for black jobs and for desegregating federally-operated swimming pools. The Council is also credited with opening D.C. hotels to African Americans via its annual civil rights dinners. (President Truman attended the first one in October 1948.)<sup>81</sup>

<sup>78</sup> The Fair Employment Practices Commission lacked the power to enforce or investigate workplace discrimination and was dissolved in 1946, just four years after its creation.

<sup>79</sup> Simpson, "The Fight Against Capital Transit"; Asch and Musgrove, 277-79; John DeFerrari, *Capital Streetcars: Early Mass Transit in Washington, D.C.* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2015), 185.

<sup>80</sup> Crump, 239; Frederick W. Gooding, Jr., *American Dream Deferred: Black Federal Workers in Washington, D.C., 1941-1981* (Pittsburgh, Univ. of Pittsburgh Press, 2018), 45-46. Future D.C. Council chair Sterling Tucker would lead the Washington Urban League from 1956 until 1969.

<sup>81</sup> "Seek Jobs in Defense," *Baltimore Afro-American*, June 7, 1941; "Civil Rights Council Plans Inaugural Fete," *Baltimore Afro-American*, Sep. 11, 1948; Parks, "Lifting as We Climb."

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**Postwar Organizing for Better Working Conditions and Jobs**

African Americans made significant employment gains during World War II, but these gains did not carry over after the war. In 1947-48, the UFWA's United Cafeteria and Restaurant Workers Union Local 471, led by Oliver Palmer, waged two major strikes for higher wages as well as vacation and sick benefits for its members, most of whom were African American women. The strike commenced in January 1947 with a mass meeting at Shiloh Baptist Church, where Rep. Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. (D-NY) was appointed to chair a committee to support the strikers. Representatives of the NNC, the NCNW, the NAACP, and local chapters of the progressive American Veterans Committee, among others, attended the meeting and declared their support. After eight days of picketing and work stoppage by 2,200 workers from at least 50 government cafeterias, the union won a one-year agreement to almost all of its demands.<sup>82</sup>

After the agreement expired the following year, workers struck again. A soup kitchen at Shiloh Baptist provided sustenance as picketers braved well-below-average temperatures, sleet and snow in January 1948. However, the concessionaire that ran the government's cafeterias, Government Services, Inc. (GSI) refused to meet with the union due to the latter's refusal to sign affidavits denouncing communism. The NCNW's Mary McLeod Bethune, NACW president Mary Church Terrell, Interdenominational Ministers Alliance founder Rev. William Jernigan, attorney Belford Lawson, and Howard University sociologist E. Franklin Frazier, among others, urged President Truman to require GSI to meet with the union.<sup>83</sup>

GSI's continued refusal to negotiate also prompted the D.C. NAACP to step in as well as Rep. Adam Clayton Powell, who charged the company with carrying out "the worst anti-Negro labor policy of any corporation in the nation" for never once having employed an African American as a manager or even as a cashier. A delegation of black ministers led by Lincoln Temple Congregational Church's Rev. Robert W. Brooks met with the U.S. Secretary of Labor when the strike entered its third week; a citizens committee raised \$7,000 to support five more days of strikes; and renowned performer and activist Paul Robeson gave a benefit concert at Turner's Arena (later demolished), attended by 2,500 people. Finally, after 78 days, the union reached a settlement with GSI, winning a pay raise and allowing those who refused to sign a loyalty oath to keep their jobs.<sup>84</sup>

During this same period, in 1947-1950, another federal workers union fought a successful battle for the retention and promotion of black workers at the Bureau of Engraving and Printing (BEP).<sup>85</sup> However, as the federal government's anti-communist fervor weakened the labor movement, it also pushed seasoned activists to focus their efforts more narrowly on racial integration. Thanks to the protests

<sup>82</sup> Craig Simpson, "Against the cold wind: the 1948 cafeteria workers strike," at <https://washingtonareaspark.com/2018/01/02/against-the-cold-wind-the-1948-cafeteria-workers-strike>.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> "Paul Robeson joins Bureau of Engraving fight: 1949," at [https://www.flickr.com/photos/washington\\_area\\_spark/28543001674/in/album-72157669685451524](https://www.flickr.com/photos/washington_area_spark/28543001674/in/album-72157669685451524).

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waged by black workers at the BEP and at government cafeterias, black unions helped generate the necessary ground troops for the Coordinating Committee for the Enforcement of the D.C. Anti-Discrimination Law's three-year campaign to desegregate the city's restaurants and department store lunch counters.<sup>86</sup>

**1960s Campaigns for More Black Jobs and Fair Treatment**

The struggle for equal employment and economic justice intensified in the 1960s. Julius Hobson, the head of the Congress of Racial Equality's D.C. branch from 1961-1964, focused largely on securing black jobs, using a combination of tactics pioneered by the New Negro Alliance in the 1930s and the CCEAD in the early 1950s. Hobson produced a list of stores with pro-black employment policies—a guide for use while Christmas shopping—and used it to pressure downtown retailers to hire and promote black workers. He also led some 80 pickets, essentially integrating employment at "all of the department stores downtown," recalled the activist Reginald Booker, who worked closely with Hobson. The group spent several months picketing Lansburgh's, a major department store with 1,000 employees that had relegated almost all of its 200 black workers to the company's lowest-level positions. Hobson eventually succeeded in negotiating close to 60 agreements with stores, and in getting around 200 companies to hire a total of 5,000 new black employees. He secured the hiring of 44 black bus drivers and clerks after threatening a boycott against D.C. Transit, and got African Americans hired and promoted in other areas such as auto sales and public utilities. (Hobson's call for utility customers to put stickers over the holes required for processing their bills led to a court injunction against him.)<sup>87</sup>

In 1963, Hobson protégé Reginald Booker co-founded District Action for Racial Equality (DARE), which organized pickets for black jobs and promotions at a local bank, and joined the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, Nonviolent Action Group (NAG), and CORE in organizing black Anacostia residents to protest racist welfare and real estate practices. His experience working on this campaign would later lead Booker to take the lead in demanding black employment in the construction of the Metro system in the early 1970s.<sup>88</sup>

While not an outgrowth of the local movement, Washingtonians contributed significantly to the planning and coordination of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference's (SCLC) 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. Locally managed by Rev. Walter Fauntroy, Howard University student members of NAG enthusiastically helped with logistics for the march, but were ultimately disappointed with its relatively conservative list of demands and its censorship of SNCC's John Lewis.

<sup>86</sup> Simpson, "Cafeteria Local 471 leader Oliver Palmer"; Craig Simpson, Longtime D.C. cafeteria union leader Oliver T. Palmer: 1975 ca." at [https://flickr.com/photos/washington\\_area\\_spark/38986264471/in/album-72157706559882924](https://flickr.com/photos/washington_area_spark/38986264471/in/album-72157706559882924).

<sup>87</sup> Pearlman, *Democracy's Capital*, 24; Asch and Musgrove, 337; <https://washingtonareaspark.com/?s=reginald+booker&submit=Search>; Smith, *Captive Capital*, 258.

<sup>88</sup> Craig Simpson, "The D.C. black liberation movement seen through the life of Reginald H. Booker," at <https://washingtonareaspark.com/?s=reginald+booker&submit=Search>. Hobson and Booker organized a one-day boycott of D.C. schools in 1967, and led a rally and picketing at Eastern High School on the day it was scheduled.

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(Lewis was required to cut passages from his speech that were deemed too incendiary by the march's leadership.)<sup>89</sup>

In the summer of 1969, underpaid black employees of the federal General Services Administration rallied with leadership of the Washington Urban League and the Black United Front at Vermont Avenue Baptist Church, where they signed a petition to demand equal wages and promotions. The Urban League was also instrumental in ensuring that Pepco, the city's electricity provider, was held to a requirement by the city's Public Service Commission that its percentage of black workers matched the percentage of D.C.'s African American population as a whole. Reginald Booker organized black employees at the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development, leading to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's finding that the agency had discriminated for years.<sup>90</sup>

### **3) Criminalization and Policing: Washington D.C.'s Black Citizens Fight for Freedom from Violence**

#### **Overview**

Black Washingtonians, many whose families or ancestors had fled racial violence in nearby states, were keenly aware of the violence being waged against African Americans across the South in the early twentieth century. Washingtonians Mary and Robert Terrell spoke and wrote publicly about lynching, and black D.C. citizens began pushing for Congressional passage of an anti-lynching bill in 1917, after rioting against black residents in East Saint Louis garnered national attention. Two years later, black Washingtonians faced a similar event at home, during what became known nationwide as the "red summer" of 1919. After successfully defending D.C.'s largest black business district from white mobs, black activists staged a Silent March against Lynching in 1922. Anti-lynching activism continued into the 1930s.

In the late 1930s, activists shifted their attention to the local issue of police violence toward black citizens, staging two mock police trials and participating in two marches against police brutality in 1938 and 1941. An investigation by the D.C. NAACP led to a nine-day hearing on abusive policing practices in 1957. A decade later, this topic was among the first to be addressed by the newly-appointed D.C. Council, but in the face of federal policy that increasingly empowered police at the expense of black citizens, the issue remained a significant barrier to equal citizenship for African Americans.

#### **Protesting Anti-Black Violence and D.C.'s Red Summer**

Black Washingtonians were keenly aware of the increasing violence against and imprisonment of

<sup>89</sup> Sellers, *The River of No Return*, 62-66.

<sup>90</sup> Negro GSA Workers Charge Administration with Discrimination," *Washington Post*, June 22, 1969; "Probe Set Into Pepco Minority Hiring," *Washington Post*, April 21, 1972; Simpson, "The D.C. black liberation movement."

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African Americans in the South beginning around the 1890s. Some had moved north themselves to preserve their own physical safety, and many had family or friends who had either fled racial violence or remained in the South. In 1893, attorney Robert Terrell (later the D.C. municipal court's first black judge) spoke out against "southern mob rule," and in 1906-07, Mary Terrell penned essays for the British press condemning racial violence in the southern states, specifically convict labor and the rape of black women by their white employers.<sup>91</sup>

In the wake of a rampage against black citizens in East Saint Louis in 1917, Nannie Helen Burroughs began working with fellow members of the National Association of Colored Women (NACW) and the D.C. NAACP to bring federal lawmakers' attention to the practice of lynching, which took some 3,000 lives between 1882 and 1918, and had ravaged countless black families and communities. That July, 5,000 women gathered at Metropolitan Baptist Church to pray for the passage of an anti-lynching bill, and in October, Asbury United Methodist Church hosted a lecture by Memphis-based journalist and anti-lynching activist Ida B. Wells.<sup>92</sup>

Although more than 360,000 black soldiers served in World War I, racism was still rampant in the U.S. after the war. Many white veterans from other parts of the country remained in D.C. to look for work after the war was over. A shortage of jobs and housing stoked resentment against African Americans, especially as black veterans emboldened by their military service demanded respect. Some presumably saw black residents as the source of white economic instability as the massive bureaucratic infrastructure that had supported the war began to wind down.

It was in this context that the city's major white-owned newspapers began reporting in June 1919 on a series of sexual assaults that were said to have been perpetrated by an African American man. Two of the victims were white women, and the reports triggered a riot. Up to 2,000 white men ultimately descended on areas where African Americans lived, marauding parts of Southwest D.C. and downtown, pulling black passengers from vehicles to beat them and shooting at people's homes.

While the violence in D.C. that summer was not unique—other than the deputizing of a white citizens' militia to assist with the manhunt—in this case, the black community's response was to fight back. Knowing that whites were likely to attack the flourishing black business district north of downtown near Howard University, black men stationed themselves with guns at Seventh Street and Florida Avenue NW and atop nearby rowhouses, while armed patrols monitored U Street. In the end, although seven people were killed, 69 were hospitalized, and hundreds more were injured, D.C.'s black community and its leadership had defended the premier business district as well as the community's reputation. The NAACP—both the local and national office—worked to ensure that black D.C. residents

<sup>91</sup> Joan Quigley, *Just another Southern Town: Mary Church Terrell and the Struggle for Racial Justice in the Nation's Capital* (New York: Oxford U. Press, 2016), 37, 58, 62-63.

<sup>92</sup> Murphy, 48-50.



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were not blamed for the riot and that those black people who had been arrested were exonerated.<sup>93</sup>

**Post-World War I Campaigns for Federal Action against Lynching and Racial Violence**

While Archibald Grimké appealed directly to President Wilson on the issue of racial violence, the NACW's Department for the Suppression of Lynching and Mob Violence worked on Congress. Burroughs and her colleagues were able to get an anti-lynching bill introduced in 1920; it passed the House in 1922, and that summer, 5,000 residents staged a Silent March against Lynching that wound past the Capitol and the House and Senate office buildings, ending at the White House.<sup>94</sup> However, despite their efforts and those of others who would later testify in Congress for passage of the Dyer Anti-Lynching Bill—including the National Equal Rights League's James Lincoln Neill, political organizer Marian D. Butler, the NAACP's James Weldon Johnson, and Mary Church Terrell—as well as an anti-lynching conference in December 1930, the bill never passed.<sup>95</sup>

Under the leadership of teacher Emma Merritt, followed by Jennie Richardson McGuire, the D.C. NAACP campaigned for a new anti-lynching bill in the early 1930s, holding meetings at the Phyllis Wheatley YWCA, a primary site of black women's organizing; John Wesley AME Zion Church, where Howard University Law School's Charles Hamilton Houston, attorney Belford Lawson, and Mary Church Terrell were among those who spoke at a mass meeting in December 1933; and at Vermont Avenue Baptist Church, where Nannie Helen Burroughs told an audience of more than 1,000 that "lynchings and burnings start as much in federal government as in Mississippi."<sup>96</sup> Burroughs penned an article during the same period arguing that the federal government's refusal to take action against lynching violated the 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment. In December 1934, McGuire organized a group of Howard University students to protest the exclusion of lynching from the agenda of the National Crime Conference, held at the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) Memorial Continental Hall. The students stood silently with ropes over their necks, holding signs small enough to avoid arrest.<sup>97</sup>

On May 8, 1933, an interracial crowd of 4,000 people marched more than six miles in the rain through downtown Washington to demand the freedom of the Scottsboro Boys, a group of eight African American boys falsely accused of raping two white women in Alabama, yet convicted by an all-white jury. This was the first major street protest since the Silent March, more than a decade earlier, and it was organized by the Communist Party's International Labor Defense (ILD). Over the next two years,

<sup>93</sup> David F. Krugler, "A Mob in Uniform: Soldiers and Civilians in Washington's Red Summer, 1919," *Washington History*, Vol. 21, Jan. 2009, 48-77.

<sup>94</sup> The march was coordinated by the Citizens Protest Parade Committee, which was led by DC Public Schools educator Theresa Lee Connolly (later Robinson) (Murphy, 52-54).

<sup>95</sup> 135 delegates lobbied Congress during the December 1930 anti-lynching conference (Murphy, 57-62). It was not until 2019-2020 that bills to make lynching a federal crime were finally passed in the Senate and the House. As of February 2020, no bill had been sent to the White House (<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/26/us/politics/anti-lynching-bill.html>).

<sup>96</sup> "Don't Be Cowards, Nannie Burroughs Tells Washington: School Head Applauds District NAACP for Its Persistence," *Baltimore Afro-American*, Jan. 5, 1935, 6.

<sup>97</sup> Murphy, 62-71.



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the ILD worked with D.C. civil rights attorneys, *Afro-American* editor Charles J. Murphy, YWCA president Julia West Hamilton and others to galvanize public support for the Scottsboro Boys via mass rallies as well as legal support for the boys and their families. In the end, only some of the defendants were acquitted, but none faced the death penalty. In reflecting on the impact of the Scottsboro movement on the "Negro bourgeoisie," Charles Hamilton Houston wrote that the case had introduced to them "the possibilities and tactics of mass pressure."<sup>98</sup>

Three decades later, after the bombing of 16<sup>th</sup> Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Alabama killed three 14-year-old and one 11-year-old girl, the Congress of Racial Equality organized a march from All Souls Church to Lafayette Park in which 10,000 people participated. The march proceeded to the Department of Justice, where Julius Hobson charged Attorney General Robert Kennedy with not doing enough to protect African Americans from violence.<sup>99</sup>

### **Mobilizing Against Police Brutality**

Activists in the 1930s also began to focus on police violence against black citizens, which historians have theorized had increased for a few reasons: African Americans were disproportionately arrested for violating Prohibition laws; crimes of poverty such as petty theft increased during the Great Depression, and African Americans were disproportionately punished for such infractions; and as protesters took to the streets to demand economic justice, interactions between black citizens and the police increased. Beginning in 1936, the Washington Interracial Committee (IRC) of the D.C. NAACP joined the New Negro Alliance (NNA), the YWCA, and the newly formed National Negro Congress (NNC), among other groups, in a united effort to challenge police brutality in the District, which killed 40 black men and resulted in the beatings or rapes of some 30 black women between 1928 and 1938.<sup>100</sup> The group's leader, John P. Davis, called for an end to "urban lynching" in the nation's capital at the NNC's first mass meeting in 1936, held at Metropolitan Baptist Church.<sup>101</sup> Davis and the NNC framed lynching and urban police brutality as violations of the 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment and pressured Congress and the federal Department of Justice to intervene. Notably, it was in the context of demanding federal protection from violence and forced labor, known as debt peonage, that the NNC first employed the term "civil rights," which was not widely used in the 1930s.<sup>102</sup>

The NNC joined the YWCA, the NAACP, and others to form the Joint Committee for Civil Rights (later

<sup>98</sup> Craig Simpson, "Scottsboro Boys – New Tactics and Strategies for Civil Rights," at <https://washingtonareaspark.com/2013/02/19/scottsboro-boys-a-new-type-of-march-on-washington-1933>; Genna Rae McNeil, *Groundwork: Charles Hamilton Houston and the Struggle for Civil Rights* (Univ. of Pennsylvania Press, 1983), 120.

<sup>99</sup> Asch and Musgrove, 338; [https://www.flickr.com/photos/washington\\_area\\_spark/27489066621/in/album-72157656318783079](https://www.flickr.com/photos/washington_area_spark/27489066621/in/album-72157656318783079); <http://libguides.dclibrary.org/1968/exhibit>.

<sup>100</sup> Murphy, 75-79.

<sup>101</sup> At another mass rally held at Metropolitan Baptist Church in September 1941, the FBI counted 1,100 in attendance (Gellman, 142).

<sup>102</sup> Gellman, 133.

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the Citizens Committee Against Police Brutality), which, after a series of violent episodes in the winter of 1937-38, sponsored rallies at Lincoln Temple Congregational Church, Vermont Avenue Baptist Church, and the YWCA.<sup>103</sup> The group also sponsored two mock trials against "killer cops" in 1937, at John Wesley AME Zion Church, and in 1940, at Metropolitan Baptist. During the first trial, attorney George E.C. Hayes acted as the prosecuting attorney while Lucy Diggs Slowe, Howard University's Dean of Women, acted as the judge.<sup>104</sup>

In July 1938, some 1,600 black Washingtonians and 400 white residents gathered at the east end of U Street NW for a march against police brutality that drew between 10,000 and 15,000 spectators as it wound through the neighborhood and concluded after three hours at 9<sup>th</sup> Street and Rhode Island Avenue NW.<sup>105</sup> The NNC also organized a massive petition drive, ultimately gathering 24,000 signatures on a petition to President Roosevelt to suspend and bring charges against several police officers fire the police chief, provide pensions for families that were victims of police killings, and appoint a citizens' committee on policing.<sup>106</sup>

Three years later, after Congressman Martin Dies (D-TX) orchestrated a smear campaign against the NNC and the organization was weakened by the departure of its founder, A. Philip Randolph, police violence surged again in the nation's capital. While the city had gone an entire year without a police killing as of July 1939, brutality began to spike again in 1940; five black citizens were killed between April and August of that year, and during a strike at the Arcade Laundry, police beat picketers with their clubs. In September 1941, the Citizens Committee organized a protest involving four marches that wound through black neighborhoods throughout the city and converged at 10<sup>th</sup> and U streets NW for a rally. Again, around 2,000 participated.<sup>107</sup>

Thanks in part to the work of Mt. Carmel Baptist Church's Rev. William H. Jernigan, whose Interdenominational Ministers Alliance reportedly bridged the divide between the Communist-leaning NNC and more conservative groups such as the NAACP and the Elks, the broad coalition of organizations that came together in the 1930s to protest the police department's abusive treatment of black citizens experienced a measure of success. A civilian review board was established, and in 1941, a newly hired police chief would triple the number of black officers on the force and appoint an African American judge to the District Police Court.<sup>108</sup>

<sup>103</sup> Gellman, 120-126. Over 1,000 attended the mass meetings at Lincoln Temple and Vermont Avenue Baptist.

<sup>104</sup> Murphy, 97, 103.

<sup>105</sup> Murphy, 98-100; Craig Simpson, "Shootings by DC Police Spark Fight against Brutality 1936-41," at <https://washingtonareaspark.com/2013/04/20/shootings-by-dc-police-spark-fight-against-brutality-1936-41>.

<sup>106</sup> Gellman, 125-126.

<sup>107</sup> Simpson, "...Fight Against Brutality; 'Anti-Picketing Law is Held Invalid,'" *Evening Star*, Apr. 30, 1939. Organizers of the Sep. 1941 event included Theresa Lee Robinson and Natalie Moorman, a member of the NNA who had been arrested for picketing People's Drug at 14<sup>th</sup> and U streets NW in 1939 (Murphy, 106).

<sup>108</sup> Gellman, 126; Murphy, 107.

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Police violence reemerged as a major issue in the 1950s and 1960s. In 1957, the D.C. NAACP produced a scathing report on police brutality, under the leadership of Eugene Davidson.<sup>109</sup> Despite detailed affidavits and photographs attesting to violent, unprovoked attacks on African American women, men, and children described during nine days of public hearings, the D.C. Commissioners exonerated the department.<sup>110</sup>

Over the next decade, the city's almost entirely-white police department continued to abuse its power, waging violence against a black community that was becoming larger in numbers and increasingly emboldened by the racial confidence of a rising black power ethos in D.C. and across the country. Local civil rights leader Julius Hobson used a station wagon and megaphone to tail police cars on Friday nights, warning them to behave professionally as they interacted with black citizens.<sup>111</sup> In 1967, as a bill moved through Congress that would increase police power in D.C., young community activists east of the Anacostia River demanded to meet with the officers who patrolled their neighborhood and demonstrated outside precinct headquarters, for which they were attacked with batons and dogs.<sup>112</sup> That year, a newly-appointed D.C. Council made abusive policing a top priority, but lacked any power to address the issue, leading to continued conflict.<sup>113</sup>

Martin Luther King's assassination in Memphis in April 1968 sparked uprisings by black communities across the nation. Over the previous three years, confrontations with police had led to unrest in Los Angeles, Detroit, and Newark, and federal officials had prepared for the possibility of a similar outbreak in the nation's capital. In 1967, President Johnson signed into law a D.C. crime bill that emboldened the police by giving them increased powers to question and arrest people suspected of criminal activity. The bill also established mandatory minimum sentences and significant penalties for engaging in or inciting unrest. A conference held at Howard University in 1968 led to the publication of another report documenting police brutality, and the federal government's increasingly punitive behavior toward black Washingtonians undoubtedly contributed to the April 1968 uprising in D.C. Police brutality would continue to drive black citizens' advocacy for home rule.

#### **4) The Campaign to End Racial Covenants and Housing Discrimination in Washington, D.C., 1921-1968**

##### **Overview**

D.C. was an epicenter for the NAACP's legal campaign against racial covenants. Racial deed covenants

<sup>109</sup> For Davidson, see [https://www.flickr.com/photos/washington\\_area\\_spark/49080962562/in/album-72157708162190934](https://www.flickr.com/photos/washington_area_spark/49080962562/in/album-72157708162190934).

<sup>110</sup> "Chief Murray Is Exonerated of Police Bias," *Washington Post*, Nov. 8, 1957.

<sup>111</sup> Pearlman, *Democracy's Capital*, 24.

<sup>112</sup> "Probe Panel Named in Anacostia Unrest," *Evening Star*, Aug. 17, 1966, 1.

<sup>113</sup> Reports on policing produced in the 1960s cited the high frequency of brutality and arrests in black neighborhoods and the racist attitudes of D.C. police. See *Report on the Metropolitan Police Department*, by the President's Commission on Crime in the District of Columbia, 1962, and "A Police Department in Trouble: Racial Discrimination and Misconduct in the Police Department of Washington, D.C.," by the National Capital Area Civil Liberties Union, Aug. 1, 1968.

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were commonly used by developers of new housing beginning around 1910, and proliferated further beginning in the 1920s. In rulings on the case *Corrigan v. Buckley*, which emerged from D.C.'s Dupont Circle neighborhood, the District courts and then the U.S. Supreme Court essentially green-lighted the use of restrictive agreements by white neighbors to bar black settlement on their blocks. However, in the 1940s, a series of lawsuits challenging racial covenants in D.C.'s Bloomingdale neighborhood culminated in 1948 with the Supreme Court's decision in *Hurd v. Hodge*, (a companion case to *Shelley v. Kraemer*) that ended court enforcement of racially restrictive covenants.

The Washington Urban League and others also worked during this period to resist the clearance of black communities for new development. In 1958, as the real estate industry encouraged white flight and increased housing costs for African Americans, the interracial organization Neighbors, Inc. promoted integrated neighborhoods and fought for fair housing laws. The Congress of Racial Equality's (CORE) pickets and "dwell-ins" at white-only buildings increased pressure on the city to implement fair housing regulations in 1964. Over the next few years, Rev. Walter Fauntroy oversaw community-led urban renewal in Shaw, but continued lack of access to decent housing and homeownership was among the causes of civil unrest in the wake of Dr. King's assassination in 1968.

**Racially Restrictive Covenants and the Legal Campaign against Them**

Commonly used by developers of new housing beginning around 1910, racial deed covenants served to create whites-only neighborhoods in accordance with the theory that the presence of black residents would depress property values. The use of racially restrictive deed covenants increased in the wake of the Supreme Court's 1917 ruling in *Buchanan v. Warley*, which said that racial zoning was unconstitutional.

In 1921, white residents on the 1700 block of S Street NW became the first in D.C. to bar each other from conveying their property to black residents in an area where such covenants had not been written into deeds. (It was not far from here, in a neighborhood of graceful Victorian-style rowhouses just north of Dupont Circle and west of the U Street corridor, that playwright and poet Georgia Douglas Johnson hosted Saturday evening salons attended by artists and intellectuals such as Jean Toomer and Langston Hughes, who exemplified the role of black art in claiming full citizenship, per Locke's 1925 anthology, *The New Negro*.)

After a signer of the S Street agreement contracted to sell her house to an African American couple, the D.C. courts ruled in *Corrigan v. Buckley* (1923) that the neighbors' agreement was legally binding. The national NAACP intervened and took the case to the Supreme Court, which in 1926 declined to hear it and issued a statement that such agreements were private contracts in which the courts had no jurisdiction. As the case moved through the courts, D.C.'s white citizens associations began organizing to add covenants barring the conveyance of their homes to African Americans, especially in areas east of Rock Creek Park where "encroachment" from black homeseekers seemed imminent. Restrictive

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agreements soon covered much of upper Northwest, including all of Mount Pleasant, much of Columbia Heights and Bloomingdale, and by the 1930s, Park View.

As a result of racial covenants, much of the city was legally off-limits to black residents. Covenants also created barriers around areas where African Americans already lived. For example, in Park View, just north of Howard University, covenants prevented black settlement east of Georgia Avenue, while covenants in Columbia Heights prevented settlement west of 13<sup>th</sup> Street. As a result, African Americans were crowded into a narrow corridor extending from the old city, south of Florida Avenue, north to Spring Road, where additional covenants blocked black people from living in Petworth and beyond.<sup>114</sup> By constraining housing supply, covenants also confined much of the city's increasing black population to older, overcrowded housing while also driving up the cost of housing and making it almost impossible for middle class African Americans to purchase new homes. After the Supreme Court declined to hear *Corrigan v. Buckley* in 1926, the NAACP worked for more than two decades to bring another covenant case before the nation's highest court.

By the late 1920s, Howard University Law School's George E.C. Hayes began working with black homeseekers to break covenants in Bloomingdale, but the courts generally upheld them. Nevertheless, African Americans began to settle along this neighborhood's southernmost blocks and along its western edge, presumably because they were not challenged in court. The continued, gradual movement of black homeowners into much of Bloomingdale would later be deployed by civil rights attorney Charles Hamilton Houston as evidence that it was no longer a white neighborhood.<sup>115</sup> In nearby Park View, black real estate broker Geneva Valentine worked to persuade white homeowners to sell to African Americans despite covenants. Valentine would later represent black clients attempting to break covenants in other neighborhoods, and in 1949, she would establish an integrated

<sup>114</sup> Prologue DC, [Mapping Segregation in Washington DC: Legal Challenges to Racially Restrictive Covenants](#). On Columbia Road in Park View, covenants were upheld by the courts in 1936-38.

<sup>115</sup> In 1941, Houston represented his friends Mary and Frederick Hundley when they were evicted from their new home in Columbia Heights, a 1910 rowhouse at 2530 13<sup>th</sup> Street NW built by the prominent developer Harry Wardman, who had restricted its conveyance to whites only. Blocks west of 13<sup>th</sup> Street had been blanketed with restrictive agreements since that time, and white residents of the 2500 block sued the Hundleys shortly after they moved in. While the courts had consistently upheld covenants, Houston persuaded an appellate court that the neighborhood's recent racial transition was evidence that covenants were no longer effective. While covenants were not ruled unconstitutional, Houston's skillful handling of the case opened the door for additional legal challenges based on the changing racial composition of neighborhoods. In Bloomingdale, Houston was less successful at first, where in January 1942, he lost a case that effectively upheld covenants on at least nine houses along the 100 block of Adams Street NW. Two years later, Houston's colleague William Henry Hastie represented Clara Mays, who had purchased a house restricted by Harry Wardman at 2213 First Street NW. Mays's house stood along Bloomingdale's premier architectural corridor, also a racial divide, and her case brought increased attention to the housing crisis for African Americans during World War II. (Mays headed a household that included her sisters and nieces as well as her own children.) Although the covenant was upheld, an appeals court dissent addressed the neighborhood's shifting racial boundaries and the "acute shortage of Negro housing" (Sarah Jane Shoenfeld and Mara Cherkasky, "A Strictly White Residential Section": The Rise and Demise of Racially Restrictive Covenants in Bloomingdale," *Washington History*, Vol. 29, No. 1, 24-41.

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cooperative apartment house at 2008 16<sup>th</sup> Street NW, the first of its kind.<sup>116</sup>

In 1945, Houston began working with James and Mary Hurd at 116 Bryant Street. The Hurds were one of four black families on the block who knowingly bought houses with covenants from a real estate broker and attorney named Raphael Urciolo. Urciolo joined Houston's campaign to challenge covenants in court by willingly being sued, representing himself, and strategizing with Houston and his colleagues. After the District courts upheld covenants on Bryant Street, the case was joined with two others to be heard by the Supreme Court. For the NAACP, Houston's former student Thurgood Marshall joined attorney Loren Miller in representing Orsel and Minnie McGhee, from Detroit. The third case, out of St. Louis, was brought by J.D. and Ethel Shelley. (Their house was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1988 for its involvement in this case.)<sup>117</sup>

It would be argued in the Detroit and St. Louis cases that the enforcement of racial covenants violated the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment, which requires only states to treat citizens equally, so it was important for Houston to pursue a separate case for overturning covenants in D.C. Houston worked closely with his former student Spottswood Robinson and an experienced volunteer, Interior Department attorney Phineas Indritz, to prepare for the case. They held an all-day rehearsal at Howard's law school, with professors posing as judges and students joining as participant-observers. Four months after they argued the case in January 1948, the Supreme Court ruled in *Hurd v. Hodge* and *Urciolo v. Hodge* that upholding covenants in D.C. violated the Civil Rights Act of 1866. Racial covenants would no longer be enforced by the courts.

While the rulings in *Shelley*, *Hurd* and *McGhee v. Sipes* eliminated a fundamental barrier to equal housing in D.C. and nationwide, and constituted an essential step in gaining full citizenship for African Americans, the legacy of racial covenants could not be erased. The Federal Housing Administration's use of covenants as a criterion for backing mortgage loans until the 1940s, and its overwhelming rejection of mortgage applications for properties in or near where African Americans lived, effectively blocked black Americans from the primary means of accumulating wealth in the United States. Just 2.1% of all federally-backed mortgages went to black homeowners, and as of 1950, D.C. was "at the bottom of the list" when it came to the proportion of mortgages received by black residents.<sup>118</sup>

### Resistance to Displacement

West of Rock Creek Park, longstanding African American communities, for example along Chain Bridge Road and in Georgetown, began to be displaced in the early decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as these areas

<sup>116</sup> "Civil Rights Tour: Housing—Equitable Realty, Opening Neighborhoods," at <https://historicsites.dcpreservation.org/items/show/1002>.

<sup>117</sup> The Shelley House, National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, at <https://dnr.mo.gov/shpo/nps-nr/88000437.pdf>.

<sup>118</sup> Todd M. Michney and LaDale Winling, "New Perspectives on New Deal Housing Policy: Explicating and Mapping HOLC Loans to African Americans," *Journal of Urban History*, Vol. 46, No. 1, Jan. 2020, 23-24.



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became desirable for middle-class white Washingtonians. In Tenleytown's Reno City, a mostly black community of some 370 families, residents were forced to sell their properties for construction of Deal Junior High School, built in 1931, and a park, both meant to serve the growing white neighborhood. (Officials also wanted to establish a reservoir and a white high school.)<sup>119</sup> As historically rural black communities elsewhere in D.C. and the surrounding suburbs met the same fate, African Americans were displaced into the city as the federal government subsidized white outmigration by financing the development of racially exclusive suburbs and building amenities such as white-only schools and recreational facilities to support them.

The majority of black D.C. residents were confined to overcrowded housing in older neighborhoods closer to downtown. Since the 1900s, the city had worked to eliminate so-called slum housing, razing 545 "insanitary dwellings" in 1906-08.<sup>120</sup> However new housing was not provided. Demolition accelerated with the establishment of the Alley Dwelling Authority (ADA) in 1934. While the ADA replaced a few sets of alley housing with new, segregated, low-rent apartments, most alley housing was replaced with garages or parks, or sold for private development. In 1937, a black civic association in Foggy Bottom enlisted support from the Washington Housing Association and others to successfully resist the Alley Dwelling Authority's plan to build whites-only apartments in an area that had been largely African American. St. Mary's Court, a modern, two-story complex on 24<sup>th</sup> Street NW, would instead house black residents when it opened in 1938.<sup>121</sup>

D.C.'s black population grew by more than 50 percent in the 1940s, with many flocking to the city for federal jobs, but unable to find a place to live. Others migrated into the city from formerly rural enclaves in Montgomery County and northern Virginia, displaced by new suburban development, while within the city, black residents were also displaced for wartime construction projects. The ADA, renamed the National Capital Housing Authority in 1943, commenced a significant building program during World War II, but new public housing was mostly built in less developed areas far away from downtown. In addition, in keeping with federal housing policy, all of the projects were racially segregated. This sometimes reinforced existing settlement patterns but in other cases, served to displace black residents from areas that had been racially mixed, especially because most public housing built during this period was for white people.<sup>122</sup> Groups such as the Citizens' Committee on

<sup>119</sup> The National Equal Rights League's James Lincoln Neill, a Howard University-trained attorney, argued on behalf of the community at a 1926 Congressional hearing, but was unable to stop the city from taking the land (Neil Flanagan, "The Battle of Fort Reno," *Washington City Paper*, Nov. 2, 2017, at <https://www.washingtoncitypaper.com/news/article/20981322/the-battle-of-fort-reno>; Murphy, 57; Asch and Musgrove, 257-58).

<sup>120</sup> Appendix E, "Report of the National capital housing authority for the ten-year period 1934-1944," at <https://hdl.handle.net/2027/mdp.39015005704211>.

<sup>121</sup> Asch and Musgrove, 255-56. The original St. Mary's Court was replaced in 1974 with the building that stands at that site today. Early ADA housing for African Americans also included Hopkins Place (1936) on the 1400 block of L Street SE and the V Street Houses (1938) near Howard University in Northwest.

<sup>122</sup> Langston Terrace Dwellings (1937) was built for black residents in an existing black neighborhood in Northeast D.C., just west of the Anacostia River. On Capitol Hill, the Ellen Wilson Dwellings (1941) for white families replaced a racially mixed

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Race Relations, the Phyllis Wheatley YWCA (led by 27-year-old Dorothy Height beginning in 1939), and the Non-Partisan Council on Public Affairs, established in 1938 by the Howard University chapter (Xi Omega) of the Alpha Kappa Alpha (AKA) sorority, worked to ensure the construction of two publicly-funded dormitories for black war workers near Howard University—Lucy Diggs Slowe Hall for women and George Washington Carver Hall for men.

In the early 1940s, Geneva Valentine cofounded the (Citizens) Emergency Committee on Housing to address the taking of black land via eminent domain, but the group was unsuccessful in preventing the displacement of a longstanding black community in Arlington County, Virginia. With the Washington Urban League (WUL), the committee then attempted to have the new whites-only war housing that was built on the site converted for use by African Americans displaced for the Pentagon.<sup>123</sup> In 1944, the WUL successfully fought an effort by white citizens in Southeast D.C. to have the area zoned exclusively for detached, single-family homes. The League called this "tantamount to zoning by race," since moving to the area would be unaffordable to the vast majority of black Washingtonians, and pressured D.C.'s Zoning Commission to approve a 600-unit development for black residents in exchange for limiting just part of the area to the construction of detached dwellings for individual families.<sup>124</sup>

While the Supreme Court's landmark decisions in *Hurd v. Hodge* (1948), *D.C. v. John R. Thompson Co.* (1953), and *Bolling v. Sharpe* (1954), legally desegregated D.C.'s housing, public accommodations, and schools, another 1954 case severely undermined African American advancement. A lawsuit brought by business owners in Southwest D.C., where the city had begun demolishing buildings for urban renewal, led to the Supreme Court's ruling in *Berman v. Parker* that the federal government could seize private property, regardless of its condition, to promote private redevelopment. (The plaintiffs in *Berman* argued that the government's intended transfer of the land to a private construction company violated the 5<sup>th</sup> Amendment, which authorizes the taking of private property "for public use," but it was ruled that the takings contributed to the public good.)<sup>125</sup> As a result, in a section of Southwest D.C. where most residents were poor and 70 percent were African American, 23,000 people were displaced. A quarter of them relocated east of the Anacostia River, where most of the city's public housing was located and 80 percent of land became zoned for apartments despite the area's isolation from job centers and basic amenities. After decades of black migration to D.C. and other urban centers across

block that included a black alley community.

<sup>123</sup> "Group Urges Conversion of Pickett Homes," *Washington Post*, Aug. 11, 1943.

<http://lindseybestebreurtje.org/arlingtonhistory/exhibits/show/government-housing-during-wwii/government-housing-during-wwii>. Valentine cofounded the Emergency Committee with Virginia Maguire, who also chaired a committee to promote housing for black war workers that helped to get a large house at 1500 13<sup>th</sup> Street NW, now 15 Logan Circle, designated in January 1943 as a recreation center for black service members and war workers ("Recreation Center Approved," *Washington Post*, Jan. 20, 1943; Geneva Valentine Papers, Box 1, Folder 2, Special Collections Research Center, George Washington University Libraries).

<sup>124</sup> "Zone Board Ruling Paves Way for 600 Colored Housing Units," *Baltimore Afro-American*, Feb. 5, 1944.

<sup>125</sup> Wendell E. Pritchett, "The 'Public Menace' of Blight: Urban Renewal and the Private Uses of Eminent Domain," *Yale Law and Policy Review* 21, 1 (2003), at [https://scholarship.law.upenn.edu/faculty\\_scholarship/1199](https://scholarship.law.upenn.edu/faculty_scholarship/1199).



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the country, urban renewal systematically uprooted poor and working-class communities from networks of support, proximity to employment, and the safety of familiar neighborhoods.

After witnessing the apocalyptic impact of the urban renewal of Southwest D.C. on the lives of its former residents, local activists organized to block a planned system of highways that would have destroyed several of the city's black neighborhoods. Led by Reginald Booker and Samuel Abbott, a white resident of Takoma Park, Maryland, the Emergency Committee on the Transportation Crisis (ECTC) framed the issue in racial terms: "No White Man's Roads through Black Man's Home." From 1964 to 1972, as urban renewal-era highways tore through black neighborhoods in cities across the nation, ECTC helped lead a movement that ultimately resulted in the diversion of federal funds from building new highways to the construction of a new public transit system.<sup>126</sup>

Activists also worked to take control of the urban renewal process in their own neighborhoods as the federal government began providing funds to black communities in the latter half of the 1960s. In 1967, with a grant of \$1.8 million, Reverends Walter Fauntroy and Channing Phillips worked with residents of what had been designated the Shaw Urban Renewal Area to direct their own redevelopment project. Fauntroy formed the Model Inner City Community Organization (MICCO) to provide better housing, jobs, and amenities to people who already lived in the neighborhood—which had experienced decades of disinvestment by property-owners and the government. Dr. King came to D.C. in March 1967 to show his support by leading a parade through the neighborhood and giving an address at the Cardozo High School stadium.<sup>127</sup>

### **Fair Housing Campaigns to End Racial Steering and Discrimination**

As the city's black population grew in the 1950s—in 1957, D.C. became the first major city in the nation to have a black majority—many white residents left the city for the Virginia and Maryland suburbs, which remained off-limits to black homeseekers until after the 1968 Fair Housing Act. One organization in D.C. worked to stem white flight and promote integrated middle-class neighborhoods. Neighbors, Inc., was established in 1958 by white and black residents of Manor Park, one of several quiet, residential subdivisions east of Rock Creek Park and north of Missouri Avenue NW to which African Americans had begun moving in the late 1950s.<sup>128</sup> In the face of enormous pressure by Realtors for white residents to move out of these neighborhoods as African Americans moved in, Neighbors, Inc. worked to maintain a racial balance. By so doing, these areas would be less likely to experience the

<sup>126</sup> Bob Levey and Jane Freundel Levey, "End of the Roads," *Washington Post Magazine*, Nov. 26, 2000. The Committee of 100 on the Federal City also worked to block the highway plan by collecting detailed data, testifying before public officials, publicizing the issue, and bringing lawsuits (Zachary Schrag, *The Great Society Subway: A History of the Washington Metro* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U. Press, 2006), 199-121.

<sup>127</sup> "Smithsonian's Anacostia Community Museum: 'Prepare to Participate'—When Dr. King Urged for Community Led Development in D.C.," at <https://www.washingtoninformer.com/prepare-to-participate-when-dr-king-urged-for-community-led-development-in-d-c>.

<sup>128</sup> Neighbors, Inc. was established as an alternative to the Manor Park Citizens Association, which barred black members in compliance with the Federation of Citizens Associations. The Federation retained this provision in its constitution until 1972 (Pearlman, "Democracy's Capital," Ph.D. diss., 330).

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disinvestment that characterized areas like Southwest D.C., while giving black families access to the basic amenities of white neighborhoods, including decent schools and playgrounds. While Neighbors was unsuccessful in maintaining integration beyond D.C.'s northernmost neighborhoods—Takoma, Shepherd Park, and Colonial Village—its exposure of the real estate industry's brazen promotion of residential segregation helped lead to the passage of D.C.'s Fair Housing Regulation in December 1963.<sup>129</sup>

While Neighbors, Inc., focused on educating the middle class about the benefits of racial integration, the Congress of Racial Equality's (CORE) D.C. chapter employed a more creative tactic to bring attention to the issue. CORE was founded in 1942 as an interracial organization committed to nonviolence as a central tenet of civil rights protest. Led by Julius Hobson from 1961 to 1964, the group's D.C. chapter staged "dwell-ins" by having white members of the group rent apartments and black members live in them. In May 1963, the group also picketed a new downtown office building owned by developer Morris Cafritz, who regularly barred African Americans from renting apartments in the residential buildings he owned.<sup>130</sup> (The following month, CORE joined SNCC, the D.C. NAACP, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and several other groups in staging a Rally against Racism at Lafayette Park and a march to the District Building, where D.C. Commissioner Walter Tobriner promised fair housing regulations and hearings on fair employment.)<sup>131</sup> In January 1964, CORE collaborated with SNCC in organizing a rent strike, the city's first, with tenants in Columbia Heights.<sup>132</sup>

Federal passage of the Fair Housing Act in April 1968 prohibited racial discrimination in housing, but both private lenders and the real estate industry continued to promote segregation and discriminate against black homeseekers. In addition, decades of institutionalized segregation had effectively prevented most African Americans from accumulating enough wealth to purchase homes or otherwise invest in real estate. (This further denied them of other opportunities that the returns on such investment would have provided.)

<sup>129</sup> Neighbors, Inc., along with CORE, the D.C. NAACP, and others, also collected evidence of discrimination against people attempting to purchase or rent housing in an effort to push the D.C. Commissioners to pass a local fair housing law (Asch and Musgrove, 338; Sarah Shoenfeld, "Race and real estate in mid-century D.C.," April 16, 2019, at <https://www.dcpolicycenter.org/publications/neighbors-inc.>)

<sup>130</sup> "Civil Rights Tour: Civic Activism—All Souls Unitarian," at <https://historicsites.dcpreservation.org/items/show/921>.

<sup>131</sup> Asch and Musgrove, 338; Craig Simpson, "Marchers demand job & housing equality in DC: 1963," at [https://www.flickr.com/photos/washington\\_area\\_spark/27489066621/in/album-72157656318783079](https://www.flickr.com/photos/washington_area_spark/27489066621/in/album-72157656318783079); Derek Gray and Marya Annette McQuirter, "Evolutions and Legacies: Martin Luther King, Jr. and D.C., 1957-1972," People's University, DC Public Library, at <http://libguides.dclibrary.org/1968/exhibit>.

<sup>132</sup> "Tenants Start First 'Rent Strike' in District," *Washington Post*, Jan. 25, 1964.

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**5) The Legal Campaign for Equal Education in Washington, D.C., 1944-1967**

**Overview**

D.C.'s African American population expanded by more than 50% in the 1940s, growing to more than a third of the city's population by 1950. The city's segregated school system provided too few schools for African American students, with many occupying deteriorating buildings deemed inadequate for white students and lacking up-to-date facilities. In addition, many neighborhoods lacked black schools altogether. The growing inequities within the school system led to lawsuits against the D.C. Board of Education. By 1950, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People's (NAACP) legal efforts to equalize black and white schools gave way to a campaign to end segregation altogether, culminating in 1954 with *Bolling v. Sharpe*, D.C.'s companion to *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*. While this decision opened white schools to African American students, a number of factors combined to quickly re-segregate the city's schools. Finally, a successful 1967 lawsuit, *Hobson v. Hanson*, led to the elimination of additional barriers to integration.

The National Park Service study [Civil Rights in America: Racial Desegregation in Public Education in the U.S.](#), includes discussions on the following topics related to the history of black education and the campaign for equal education in Washington, D.C.: Dunbar High School; Charles Hamilton Houston and Howard University Law School; the Consolidated Parents Group, Browne Junior High School, *Carr v. Corning*, and *Bolling v. Sharpe*.

**Howard University School of Law**

Many of the lawyers involved in civil rights litigation in D.C. either taught or studied at Howard University School of Law. Established in 1869 under the leadership of John Mercer Langston, Howard University's Law Department initially held classes at various locations downtown, eventually moving to 420 Fifth Street NW in 1887, where it remained until moving to the university's main campus in 1936. It would move off the main campus to 2900 Van Ness Street NW in 1974. In the 1930s, Charles Hamilton Houston transformed the institution from a part-time night school into a fully-accredited, full-time program dedicated to dismantling segregation and advancing African American civil rights within D.C. and nationwide. Houston was an alumnus of D.C.'s prestigious Dunbar High School, a veteran of World War I, and a graduate of Harvard University Law School when he joined his father's D.C. law firm in 1924 and began teaching at Howard. In 1929, he became Vice-Dean of the law school, where he remained until becoming the NAACP's first special counsel in 1935. Houston brought in top-rate lecturers such as Clarence Darrow and cultivated faculty and students who would devote their careers to civil rights law. Faculty during this period—including George E.C. Hayes, Spottswood Robinson III, Leon Ransom, Robert Ming, and James Nabrit—litigated major cases related to voting rights, racially restrictive housing covenants, segregated transportation, and "separate-but-equal" schools. Beginning in 1938, Nabrit is credited with teaching the first formal course on civil rights law. He and Hayes would

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later become the lead attorneys in *Bolling v. Sharpe* (1954), D.C.'s companion to *Brown v. Board of Education*.

Howard Law students during the 1930s included Oliver Hill, later a lead attorney in a Supreme Court case establishing equal pay for teachers and in the Prince Edward County, Virginia companion to *Brown v. Board*. William Henry Hastie and Thurgood Marshall, who would become lead attorneys in the 1946 *Morgan v. Virginia* case that ruled the segregation of interstate buses to be unconstitutional, were also students in the 1930s. Marshall also litigated the Detroit companion to *Shelley v. Kraemer*, which ruled restrictive deed covenants unconstitutional in 1948. In 1950, Marshall successfully argued in *Sweatt v. Painter* that the University of Maryland's maintenance of a separate law school for black students violated the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment. Law students also joined Houston and other faculty in providing local pro bono legal assistance and leadership to groups such as the New Negro Alliance and the National Negro Congress in the 1930s-40s, and to the Consolidated Parents Group, which successfully fought to desegregate public schools in the 1950s.

**Davis v. Board of Education (1945)**

Among the first lawsuits aimed at equalizing education in D.C. was filed by former National Negro Congress leader John Preston Davis. In February 1944, Davis attempted to enroll his five-year-old son Michael at Noyes Elementary School in his Brookland neighborhood and was turned away. Although approximately 100 elementary school-aged black children lived in the area, Noyes admitted white students only. Davis's goal in attempting to enroll his son was to challenge the "separate-but-equal" school system by filing a lawsuit exposing the inequality of facilities available to white and black children. When his suit was initially dismissed, Davis compiled a more detailed case, showing there were no elementary schools for African American children within walking distance; the closest one was at least 17 blocks from his house, while white neighborhoods had schools within close walking distance.

As it would for another decade, the court upheld segregated schools as constitutional. However, in a small victory, the D.C. Commissioners approved the school board's request for an elementary school to be built across the street from Davis's house at 3105 14th Street NE. The *Afro-American* newspaper reported in January 1945 that, as a result of Davis's lawsuit, the four-grade school for African American children had opened with 75 children enrolled. The school was housed in a private residence with two portable buildings; in January 1948, the Lucy Diggs Slowe Elementary School opened on the site at 3115 14th Street NE to a larger 143-student body. (Slowe Elementary closed in 2009; as of 2020, its building was occupied by the Mary McLeod Bethune Day Academy.)<sup>133</sup>

<sup>133</sup> "Civil Rights Tour: Education—John P. Davis and Equal Education Now!," at <https://historicsites.dcpreservation.org/items/show/1000>; Craig Simpson, "Attempt to end Jim Crow in D.C. school: 1944," at [https://www.flickr.com/photos/washington\\_area\\_spark/40498274913/in/album-72157704237892432](https://www.flickr.com/photos/washington_area_spark/40498274913/in/album-72157704237892432); Mary A. Morton, "The Education of Negroes in the District of Columbia," *The Journal of Negro Education* 16 (3), Summer 1947, 325-39, at <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2966339>. A school very close to where Slowe Elementary would be built was the subject of the

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**Browne Junior High School and Carr v. Corning (1950)**

As the city's black population growth accelerated after World War II, the city's black schools became so overcrowded that students had to attend in shifts, receiving fewer hours of education than mandated by law. At the same time, white families increasingly abandoned public schools, leaving larger, well-equipped schools under-enrolled. In April 1947, following a series of articles in the *Pittsburgh Courier* and then in the *Washington Post*, a group of parents at Browne Junior High School, the city's most overcrowded, partnered with the interracial Committee for Racial Democracy, the D.C. NAACP, and Howard University professor of Education James C. Carr, Sr., to petition the school board on behalf of Carr's 13-year-old daughter, Marguerite. Browne was located just west of the Anacostia River off Benning Road NE, in an area where increasing numbers of African American residents had moved to segregated public and private housing. Browne parents demanded that students be transferred to Eliot Junior High, a modern white school nearby. When the school board rejected the petition, they filed a lawsuit on behalf of Carr and her fellow students.

Rather than open Eliot Junior High to black students, the school board chose instead to annex two nearby decommissioned white elementary schools to serve the Browne student body. These schools, Henry T. Blow Elementary (now demolished), at 19<sup>th</sup> Street and Benning Road NE, and William B. Webb Elementary on the 600 block of 15<sup>th</sup> Street NE, lacked gyms, libraries, auditoriums, working cafeterias, and even fully functioning restrooms. In addition, students had to cross major roads on foot, and white elementary school students would also be transferred to other buildings. In opposition to this plan, which was set to begin on December 3, 1947, some 160 parents convened at Jones Memorial Church, off Benning Road on G Street SE, where they launched the Citizens Emergency Education Committee and planned a student boycott.<sup>134</sup> Leaders included three Browne JHS parents—writer Nellie V. Greene, barber Gardner Bishop, and Jones Memorial's Reverend Kenneth Barnes—as well as Banneker PTA president Joy P. Davis.<sup>135</sup> On December 3, they announced the boycott and began picketing at the school board's Franklin Administration Building (formerly the Franklin School) headquarters and at Blow, Webb, and Browne. Over the next three weeks, nearly all of Browne's parents joined the strike.

By January, after truant officers visited the strikers' homes over the holidays, attorney Charles Hamilton Houston persuaded Gardner Bishop, who had emerged as the group's primary leader, to call off the boycott as a precondition for filing another lawsuit on behalf of Bishop's daughter Judine. Most

1910 case *Oyster v. Wall*, brought by the parents of first-grader Isabel Wall who was expelled from whites-only Brookland Elementary School when it was discovered she was "colored." While her mother testified that excluding Isabel on the basis of race was unconstitutional, the court addressed only the question of whether the child was white (*Wall v. Oyster, et al.*, Court of Appeals of the District of Columbia, October Term, 1910, No. 2203, at [https://archive.org/details/dc\\_circ\\_1910\\_2203\\_wall\\_v\\_oyster/mode/2up](https://archive.org/details/dc_circ_1910_2203_wall_v_oyster/mode/2up)). See also, Hamilton, 189-92.

<sup>134</sup> Attorney Charles Hamilton Houston and Rep. Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. (D-NY) were speakers at this event.

<sup>135</sup> McQuirter, 66-82, 74-75.

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of the Browne parents sent their children back to school, and in 1950, an appeals court upheld the segregation of D.C.'s public schools in *Carr v. Corning*. (Hobart Corning was the superintendent.) Meanwhile, the school board secured two additional schools as annexes to Browne, spreading the student body among five schools, displacing students from the annexed schools, and forcing the schools receiving those students to operate on part-time shifts.<sup>136</sup>

**"Central to Cardozo", 1949-1950**

The failure of *Carr v. Corning*, which relied on "separate but equal" without addressing segregation *per se*, propelled local activists to recast the legal approach for equal education by attacking segregation head-on and fighting for integration of education instead.<sup>137</sup> In the interim, the Citizens Emergency Education Committee, now renamed the Consolidated Parents Group (CPG), threw its support behind a campaign to have the city's most prized (yet under-enrolled) white high school transferred to the "colored" division.

Like white schools across the city, for which enrollment had declined by 15 percent between 1935 and 1947, Central High School in Columbia Heights had far fewer students by 1948 than it was built to accommodate in 1916. About a mile away, at 9<sup>th</sup> Street and Rhode Island Avenue NW, Francis Cardozo High School (now demolished) was packed. Cardozo's black student body attended school in three shifts and attended classes in the basement, in hallways, and outdoors. A 1949 report commissioned by Rep. Everett Dirksen, a pro-civil rights Republican who led the House District Committee, recommended closing Cardozo altogether, fueling demands by residents that Central High School be opened to black students.<sup>138</sup> Activists delivered a 10,000-signature petition to the school board and bombarded newspapers with letters to the editor and full page ads demanding "Central for Cardozo." Despite pushback from alumni and others, including Central alumnus and school board chair Harry Wender, the board voted in March 1950 to transfer Cardozo to Central.<sup>139</sup> Activists considered this vote by the conservative school board a major victory, and it bolstered their confidence as they continued to push for equal education.

**Bolling v. Sharpe (1954)**

That same year, the CPG began working with parents to secure a new middle school for the city's growing black population in far Northeast and Southeast D.C., where students had to cross the

<sup>136</sup> McQuirter, 79; "Steps Taken for Peace in School Strike," *Washington Post*, Jan. 7, 1948.

<sup>137</sup> Notably, Pauli Murray had insisted that the latter strategy would be required when she was the sole woman student at Howard University's law school in 1944. In a class led by Leon Ransom, the same attorney who would go on to represent Marguerite Carr, she later wrote that her fellow students responded to her with "hoots of derisive laughter" (Pauli Murray, *Song in a Weary Throat*, 183, 221-22).

<sup>138</sup> Known as the Strayer Report, the 980-page study was authored by Columbia University Teachers College professor emeritus George D. Strayer with the help of 22 researchers. The report was highly critical of D.C.'s public schools, and especially the lack of resources provided to the city's black schools (Asch and Musgrove, 309).

<sup>139</sup> Asch and Musgrove, 309-311; Asch, 20-24.



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Anacostia River and travel about five miles to reach the closest of three black high schools in the city: Dunbar, Armstrong, and Cardozo.<sup>140</sup> (A fourth, Spingarn High School, opened in Northeast D.C.'s Kingman Park neighborhood in 1952, after two decades of pressure by black residents to provide a high school for the growing black community there.) Despite the area's significant African American population, there were no black high schools, and just one black junior high, east of the Anacostia River.<sup>141</sup> When the school board announced that a new white school, John Philip Sousa Junior High School, would open in Anacostia in September 1950, the CPG demanded that black students be able to attend it. The school board refused, so on opening day, escorted by the CPG's Gardner Bishop and Reverend Samuel Everette Guiles of Campbell AME Church, at least 10 students showed up at the school and were turned away.

In response to this denial, Howard University School of Law's James Nabrit and George E.C. Hayes (who had served on the D.C. school board since leaving Howard in 1936) represented two groups of children and their parents in bringing lawsuits against the school board, led by Melvin Sharpe. Unlike past suits, such as *Carr v. Corning* that sought to equalize education for black students, Nabrit and Hayes now charged that barring students from Sousa based on their race was itself unconstitutional.<sup>142</sup> Almost all of the families they represented were residents of Barry Farm Dwellings, a segregated public housing project built in the early 1940s and located near Sousa. (The only other junior high east of the Anacostia River, Kelly Miller Junior High School, was located more than seven miles away and was largely inaccessible via public transit.) The names on the lawsuit that moved forward listed the plaintiffs in alphabetical order, with the brothers Spottswood and Wanamaker Bolling named first and second. Barry Farm residents threw their support behind the case by hosting fundraising dinners and raffles at Campbell AME, and by soliciting contributions to pay for legal expenses (other than for the attorneys themselves, who worked for free).

In a similar move in 1952, Bishop Smallwood Williams, the leader of Bible Way Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ at 1100 New Jersey Avenue NW, attempted to enroll his son at the whites-only Wheatley Elementary School, which was in convenient walking distance from his house. Williams, a seasoned organizer who helped found the Citizens against Police Brutality and had led an effort to get President Truman to abolish segregation in the District, staged a sit-in in a first-grade classroom. When school officials rejected them, Williams sued the city.<sup>143</sup> However, as the new school year began, the Supreme

<sup>140</sup> Dunbar High School and Armstrong Technical High School were both located near First and O streets NW. Cardozo occupied and remains at the former Central High School building at 1200 Clifton Street NW, just north of Florida Avenue NW between 11<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> streets.

<sup>141</sup> Kelly Miller JHS opened in Northeast D.C.'s Lincoln Heights neighborhood in 1949.

<sup>142</sup> "Segregation in public education is not reasonably related to any proper governmental objective, and thus it imposes on Negro children of the District of Columbia a burden that constitutes an arbitrary deprivation of their liberty in violation of the Due Process Clause. In view of our decision that the Constitution prohibits the states from maintaining racially segregated public schools, it would be unthinkable that the same Constitution would impose a lesser duty on the Federal Government" (*Bolling v. Sharpe*, 347 U.S. 497, 1954).

<sup>143</sup> "Bible Way Church of Our Lord Jesus Christ World Wide/Smallwood E. Williams, African American Heritage Trail, Cultural



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Court asked to hear *Bolling v. Sharpe* as a companion case to *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, and Williams's case against the school board was tabled.<sup>144</sup>

Because D.C. was not a state, *Bolling v. Sharpe* had to be argued separately on different constitutional grounds. In May 1954, the Supreme Court ruled that segregating D.C.'s schools violated the 5th Amendment's guarantee that the federal government treat all citizens with "due process of the law." *Bolling* also established the principle of reverse incorporation, subjecting the federal government to the same standard of equal protection that the 14th Amendment requires of states.<sup>145</sup>

Black citizens and civil rights groups were overjoyed at the court's ruling, which served to overturn the Supreme Court's nearly 60-year old decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson* that "separate-but-equal" facilities were constitutional. However, as black students gained access to formerly white schools, white segregationists in Congress led by Rep. John McMillan (D-SC), who chaired the House District Committee, orchestrated a series of hearings in 1956 to undermine integration. White flight from the city's public schools accelerated. By 1960, many formerly white schools had become entirely black, and five years later, African American students comprised about 90 percent of students in D.C.'s public schools.<sup>146</sup>

### **Hobson v. Hansen (1967)**

By the mid-1960s, many black parents and civil rights activists had grown increasingly frustrated with what they saw as the inadequate education offered by the city's schools. In March 1964, D.C. CORE director Julius Hobson called for a one-day boycott and a week of picketing of the D.C. public schools for discriminatory treatment of black students. In a list of complaints to Superintendent Carl Hansen, Hobson listed overcrowding, inadequate supplies, the assignment of too many temporary teachers, and the use of police to handle problems that should have been addressed by school staff. However, after being criticized by other local civil rights leaders—who preferred to work more cooperatively with Hansen—and reportedly being told by Hansen that efforts were being made to address these issues—Hobson called off the boycott.<sup>147</sup>

Although Hobson was expelled from CORE in the wake of his call for a schools boycott—he had acted without the support of CORE's national leadership and had become increasingly autocratic in his leadership of the local branch—Hobson continued to monitor the schools.

Tourism DC, at <https://www.culturaltourismdc.org/portal/web/portal%20bible-way-church-of-our-lord-jesus-christ-world-wide/smallwood-e.-williams-african-american-heritage-trail>; "Civil Rights Tour: Protest—Bishop Smallwood Williams, Civil Rights Agitator," at <https://historicsites.dcpreservation.org/items/show/976>.

<sup>144</sup> Case File: CV-2666 (1952) - *Wallace W. Williams et al. v. James A. Gannon et al.*

(see <https://www.archives.gov/publications/ref-info-papers/112-brown-board-educ/prior-judicial-records.html>).

<sup>145</sup> Primus, Richard A., "Bolling Alone." *Colum. L. Rev.* 104, no. 4 (2004), 975-1041.

<sup>146</sup> Asch and Musgrove, 316-18.

<sup>147</sup> Simpson, "The D.C. black liberation movement."

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Three years later, he filed a lawsuit against Superintendent Hansen based on extensive research into the role of tracking, discriminatory teacher assignments, pay disparities, and residential segregation in keeping the schools segregated more than a decade after the Supreme Court's ruling in *Bolling v. Sharpe*. In June 1967, Judge J. Skelly Wright ruled in Hobson's favor. As a result of *Hobson v. Hansen*, school funding was equalized, the tracking system was abolished, faculties were desegregated, boundaries were redrawn, and busing was implemented.<sup>148</sup>

In 1968, as the D.C. schools began implementing the reforms required by *Hobson*, Meyer Elementary School, at 2501 Eleventh Street NW, was party to a little-known partnership with Bannockburn Elementary in Bethesda, Maryland. That September, 19 students (17 of whom were black) were selected to be bused every morning from Meyer to Bannockburn for what was described as “a dual purpose: to provide at least a small group of inner-city children with the quality education available in the suburban schools and help prepare suburban children for life in a multiracial society.” After D.C. gained an elected school board, it cancelled the program in 1971.<sup>149</sup>

After the 1967 decision in *Hobson v. Hansen*, Julius Hobson continued to collect and analyze data from the city's schools. He found that D.C. schools remained unequally funded along racial lines, and he filed another lawsuit. In 1971, Judge Wright again ruled in Hobson's favor. His decision required the equalization of per pupil funding, maintaining that because the schools remained largely segregated, that unequal funding—via the number of teachers allocated per school and their salaries—violated the Constitution's requirement of equal protection.<sup>150</sup>

## 6) African American Demands for Suffrage and Home Rule in Washington, D.C., 1930-1974

### Overview

Washingtonians lost the right to a self-elected government in 1874, after a brief period during which African American men had played a significant role in local governance. While African Americans continued to make up about a third of the District's population until the 1940s, the city was governed for 100 years by a presidentially-appointed three-member commission. Congressional committees led by southern segregationists also exercised significant power over District affairs. While D.C.'s white business community and white citizens associations exercised significant influence with both the commissioners and Congress, no one in the city had the right to elect their own leaders, and this was especially damaging to black residents, who had few friends on Capitol Hill. The struggle for self-

<sup>148</sup> “Civil Rights Tour: Protest—Julius Hobson, Iconoclast,” at <https://historicsites.dcpreservation.org/items/show/938>. Hobson lost a case he brought in 1966 charging that the city's presidentially-appointed, three-commissioner government violated the 15th Amendment, among other constitutional provisions (*Hobson v. Tobriner*, 255 F. Supp. 295, D.D.C. 1966. In 1969, Hobson brought another lawsuit charging federal discrimination against black people, women, and African Americans (Smith, 258).

<sup>149</sup> “Civil Rights Tour: Education—Meyer Elementary School, Experiment in Busing,” at <https://historicsites.dcpreservation.org/items/show/933>.

<sup>150</sup> *Hobson v. Hansen*, 327 F. Supp. 844, D.D.C. 1971.

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governance, therefore, became a central civil rights issue for African Americans in Washington, D.C.

While black citizens became increasingly engaged in electoral politics beginning in the 1930s, neither they nor white Washingtonians gained the right to vote for president until 1964, and D.C. continued to lack a voting representative in Congress. As the African American population ballooned to more than 70% of D.C. residents by the end of the 1960s, home rule became understood as essential for black liberation. While Marion Barry's 1966 Free D.C. campaign did not fully accomplish its goals, it successfully helped frame home rule as a civil rights issue. After President Lyndon B. Johnson appointed a mayor and city council the following year, Reverend Walter Fauntroy led a successful campaign to oust from office Rep. John McMillan (D-SC), the segregationist who led the House of Representatives committee controlling District affairs. This 1972 event paved the way for passage of the 1973 D.C. Home Rule Act. An elected black mayor and an almost entirely-black Council, most of whom had been civil rights activists, were elected and took office the following year.

The National Park Service study [Civil Rights in America: Racial Voting Rights](#) does not address the fight for home rule in Washington, D.C. or list any D.C. sites. It does include a brief discussion of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King's call for the national enforcement of black voting rights during the 1957 Prayer Pilgrimage for Freedom at the Lincoln Memorial.

### **Political Clubs and Mock Voting, 1930s**

In the 1930s, several groups formed that were devoted to increasing black women's engagement in electoral politics. Co-led by *Washington Tribune* writer Marian Butler and attorney Jeanette Carter, the Women's Political Study Club (WPSC) activated women who were absentee voters in other states to lobby their representatives in Congress for civil rights. Along with the Colored Women's Republican League (led by Nannie Helen Burroughs), the Absentee Voters' League, and the National Legislative Council of Colored Women (led by the NACW's Mazie Griffin), the WPSC advanced the interests of black women on Capitol Hill and succeeded in blocking the appointment of an avowed segregationist, North Carolina judge John J. Parker, to the Supreme Court. These women had also worked to prevent a planned parade by the Ku Klux Klan in 1924, although the group staged major parades down Pennsylvania Avenue in 1925 and 1926.<sup>151</sup>

Along with the continued establishment of black political clubs that promoted engagement in politics and suffrage for D.C residents, in October 1936, the black-owned *Washington Tribune* conducted a "voteless poll" inviting black Washingtonians to submit a ballot indicating their choice for president.

<sup>151</sup> The Young People's Study Club was established in April 1932 and held meetings at the National Association of Colored Women's Headquarters on O Street NW. The Progressive Democratic Club was founded several months later. In addition, Dorothy Boulding Ferebee cofounded the D.C. Voters League following the April 1938 referendum, and the Works Progress Administration's Adult Education Division held a free citizenship course on the workings of government at the Anthony Bowen YMCA (Murphy, 25-39, 149-162).

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Nearly 6,000 participated, with just over half voting for Franklin D. Roosevelt.<sup>152</sup> Two years later, the Citizens Joint Conference on National Representation for the District of Columbia—an interracial group comprised of 60 organizations and co-organized by black teachers union president Mary Mason Jones—persuaded the D.C. Commissioners to hold a referendum on suffrage for D.C. residents. More than 20,000 black residents participated, and the referendum was followed by a Congressional hearing on the topic.<sup>153</sup> Although most black and white Washingtonians favored home rule, the powerful chairs of the House and Senate committees that oversaw District affairs joined elite white Washingtonians in undermining efforts to gain representation in Congress.<sup>154</sup> Because D.C.'s lack of self-governance was especially harmful to black residents, the NNC worked to get Rev. Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. elected to Congress in 1944. Although he officially represented New York's Harlem, Powell used his role to advocate for civil rights in the District.<sup>155</sup>

**The Battle for Home Rule as a Civil Rights Campaign, 1964-1974**

D.C. residents finally gained the right to vote for president when the 23<sup>rd</sup> Amendment was ratified in 1961. However, as the black majority grew in a city largely governed by members of Congress who actively opposed black advancement, it became increasingly clear that self-governance was essential to achieving African American civil rights. Of six home rule bills passed by the Senate in 1949-1965, Rep. John McMillan (D-SC), who chaired the House District Committee, killed five of them. However in a 1964 ballot initiative, a 9 to 1 majority of D.C. residents voted for home rule.<sup>156</sup> Nevertheless, the following year, the Board of Trade orchestrated a national lobbying campaign against a home rule bill supported by President Johnson, whom D.C. voters had helped elect in overwhelming numbers.<sup>157</sup>

In August 1965, the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. returned to D.C. for two days of rallies in support of the home rule bill. After giving a press conference at Adas Israel Synagogue on August 4, King addressed a group of around 600 at Lomax AME Zion Church in Arlington, Virginia; visited Junior Village in Southwest; spoke to a crowd of around 1,000 people who gathered at Turner Elementary in Southeast; and led rallies in Deanwood and at 14<sup>th</sup> and Harvard Streets NW, in Columbia Heights. The following day, King joined his longtime SCLC colleague Walter Fauntroy—pastor of New Bethel Baptist Church and a lead coordinator of the 1963 March on Washington—and Fauntroy's D.C. Coalition of Conscience, who had organized the visit, for a rally at 9<sup>th</sup> Street and Rhode Island Avenue NW and a

<sup>152</sup> Murphy, 151-152.

<sup>153</sup> Murphy, 155.

<sup>154</sup> No bill for District suffrage would pass Congress before World War II (Asch and Musgrove, 270).

<sup>155</sup> At the mass meetings held at Lincoln Temple Congregational Church and Vermont Avenue Baptist Church in the summer of 1938, Charles Hamilton Houston called for voting rights as a prerequisite for ending police terror in the District. In his autobiography, Rep. Powell wrote that he was drafted to run "as the Congressman-at-Large for half of the District of Columbia," which was "ruled by men who came from areas that were against the Negroes' dreams and hopes" (Adam Clayton Powell, *Adam by Adam: The Autobiography of Adam Clayton Powell, Jr.*, 2002, orig. published 1971, 74).

<sup>156</sup> Pearlman, *Democracy's Capital*, 43; "The Genesis and the Exoduses of Free D.C. Movement," *Washington Post*, April 24, 1966.

<sup>157</sup> Asch and Musgrove, 344.

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march to Lafayette Park, where the group held a vigil.<sup>158</sup> The SCLC's Ralph Abernathy, King's close colleague and friend, spoke before some 1,200 people on the playground of Walker-Jones Elementary School at First and L streets NW. King also met with members of Congress and the District Commissioners, concluding with a rally attended by some 5,000 people at Metropolitan Baptist Church.<sup>159</sup>

Earlier that summer, in June 1965, civil rights organizer Marion Barry, the first national chair of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), had moved to D.C. to lead the city's local SNCC chapter.<sup>160</sup> Out of a rowhouse at 301 Rhode Island Avenue NW, which served both as SNCC's office and Barry's home, Barry began organizing local campaigns. After organizing a one-day bus boycott, in January 1966, that successfully delayed a fare increase for the bus system's mostly black ridership, he turned his attention to home rule. Barry was inspired by and initially joined the D.C. Coalition of Conscience, which had begun picketing the D.C. Board of Trade's headquarters during the same month as the bus boycott, to protest the Board's stance on home rule. Barry spent the next several months on a campaign that he called Free D.C., galvanizing supporters to frame home rule as central to the struggle for black civil rights in the District.<sup>161</sup> His tactics of threatening boycotts of businesses that refused to display Free D.C. stickers or contribute money to the campaign, drew criticism from mainstream civil rights groups, alienated some Coalition of Conscience members, and drew rebuke from the white business community and Congress. However Barry succeeded in bringing increased attention to the injustice of D.C.'s non-elected government and in revealing that many in the business community actually supported home rule.<sup>162</sup>

Throughout the summer, SNCC also threw block parties for black residents while Barry spoke forcefully on their behalf. In August, SNCC's Stokely Carmichael, a recent graduate of Howard University, addressed a crowd of 150 on the topic of home rule in the triangle park at 10<sup>th</sup> and U streets NW.<sup>163</sup> By the end of Free D.C.'s home rule campaign, the Board of Trade had appointed its first black member, civil rights attorney George E.C. Hayes, and a new, promising movement had been launched.

<sup>158</sup> Led by SCLC's Rev. Fauntroy and white Episcopal suffragan bishop Paul Moore, the D.C. Coalition of Conscience was organized in early 1965 and comprised around 40 religious and civil rights groups dedicated to bringing attention to the poor (Asch and Musgrove, 344).

<sup>159</sup> Gray and McQuirter, "Evolutions and Legacies"; "King Slates Two Days of Talks and Rallies," *Washington Post*, Aug. 1, 1965; "King Begins Tour Here On Call for Home Rule," *Washington Post*, Aug. 5, 1965. "Capital Takes Dr. King to Its Heart," *Baltimore Afro-American*, Aug. 14, 1965. According to a neighborhood resident who was present for the rally in Deanwood, Sargent Memorial Presbyterian Baptist Church (5110 Nannie Helen Burroughs Ave NE) was instrumental in bringing King to D.C.

<sup>160</sup> SNCC's D.C. office was previously located at 3418 Eleventh Street NW ("You can Help: Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, 14, at [https://www.crmvet.org/docs/640000\\_sncc\\_fos.pdf](https://www.crmvet.org/docs/640000_sncc_fos.pdf)).

<sup>161</sup> Pearlman, *Democracy's Capital*, 35.

<sup>162</sup> Rhonda Y. Williams, *Concrete Demands: The Search for Black Power in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century* (New York: Routledge, 2015, 115-119); "The Genesis and the Exoduses of Free D.C. Movement," *Washington Post*, April 24, 1966.

<sup>163</sup> William Raspberry, "Civil Rights Not Won by City Flames," *Washington Post*, Aug. 29, 1966.

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In early 1967, President Johnson again began to push for D.C. home rule, which he saw as key to his civil rights agenda and to empowering D.C.'s black majority at a time when other cities had begun to experience racialized civil unrest. Because he continued to encounter enormous resistance from segregationists in Congress and white Washington business elites, his proposal stopped well short of true self-governance; rather than elected leaders, a mayor and council would be appointed by the President, with Congress retaining the power to veto laws and control the city's budget. After his bill passed that fall, a newly appointed city government was sworn in the fall of 1967. While the appointed mayor and the majority of councilmembers were African American, they were a conservative group who garnered limited respect from civil rights leaders such as Julius Hobson, Marion Barry, Channing Phillips (who led Lincoln Temple Congregational Church), and Chuck Stone, editor of the *Washington Afro-American*.<sup>164</sup> Hobson and Barry, along with activist Charles Cassell, soon joined D.C.'s school board, the only city government entity for which D.C. residents were allowed to elect their own candidates, beginning in 1968. The city moved one step closer to self-determination when a 1970 bill gave D.C. a nonvoting delegate to Congress.<sup>165</sup>

Around the same time, a group of black nationalists, including the *Afro-American's* Chuck Stone, established the D.C. Statehood Committee as a platform to demand full political rights for a city that was now around 70 percent black. Julius Hobson adopted the party's platform in a run for the nonvoting delegate position against Walter Fauntroy, whose approach to civil rights was more conservative. Fauntroy defeated Hobson in the 1971 race for D.C. delegate to Congress.

Though he occupied a largely symbolic post without voting power, in 1972 Fauntroy successfully orchestrated a campaign for the ouster of John McMillan (D-SC), the longtime chair of the House District Committee and a notorious segregationist who had used his position to suppress civil rights in D.C. With connections forged during his years as a civil rights organizer for the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), Fauntroy mobilized a voter registration drive in McMillan's district and traveled to South Carolina in 1972 to campaign for his opponent. Passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act also contributed to a steep rise in the number of African American voters by 1972, and as a result, McMillan was voted out of office. Black Michigan Congressman Charles Diggs took over chairmanship of the House District Committee.

While the Nixon administration weighed the pros and cons of home rule for D.C. in 1973, the newly-formed Afro-American Bicentennial Corporation hosted its first annual July 4 reenactment of Frederick Douglass's 1852 speech, "What to the Slave is the Fourth of July," at Douglass's former home in Anacostia. Reverend Fauntroy also spoke and used the occasion to bring attention to the hypocrisy of

<sup>164</sup> After Johnson asked DC residents for their input on appointments to the council, Hobson received 11,614 votes in a straw poll while Barry received 471. Johnson ignored the poll (Pearlman, *Democracy's Capital*, 48-50).

<sup>165</sup> On the League of Women Voters' national campaign for a D.C. delegate to Congress, see Pearlman, *Democracy's Capital*, 193-95.

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denying tax-paying citizens of the nation's capital the right to representative government. Meanwhile, Rep. Diggs worked to win support for home rule in Congress, and in December 1973, nearly 100 years after Washington had been stripped of self-governance in 1874, President Nixon signed the D.C. Home Rule Act. The city finally would be able to elect its own mayor and city council, as well as representatives to 36 Advisory Neighborhood Commissions that would serve as liaisons to the council, the mayor, and city agencies. However, gaining support for the bill required significant concessions. The council was not permitted to alter the city's criminal code or levy a commuter tax, and Congress retained the power to enact and veto legislation, control the city's budget, and approve judicial appointments. In addition, the president could veto legislation and would appoint local judges, including the city's district attorney. The president was also authorized to take control of the city's police department in an emergency.<sup>166</sup>

While D.C. statehood activists, civil rights organizers, and most city residents were dismayed by the compromises required to achieve home rule—All Souls Unitarian's Reverend David Eaton accused Representative Diggs of "selling his soul" to get the bill passed—home rule transformed the D.C. Council, with longtime civil rights activists winning most of the thirteen seats.<sup>167</sup> Julius Hobson and Marion Barry joined the Black United Front's Willie Hardy, anti-poverty and housing organizer Nadine Winter, former sharecropper advocate John Wilson, tenants' rights champion David Clarke, the Washington Urban League's Sterling Tucker (who was elected council chair) and others who had dedicated their careers to advancing racial and economic justice.<sup>168</sup> All but two members of the District's first home rule council were African American, and the new council immediately turned its attention to issues of primary concern to the city's black residents, who made up more than 70 percent of the city's population. The legacy of D.C.'s long struggle for African American civil rights shaped the city's home rule government as it continued to address the many of the same issues that had influenced their activism and their campaigns for office.<sup>169</sup>

In addition to serving on the D.C. Council, a number of SNCC activists would eventually join Marion Barry's mayoral administration, following his election in 1978. Focusing largely on black economic advancement, the Barry administration succeeded in increasing the percentage of black contractors on city projects from seven in 1978 to 35 in 1985.<sup>170</sup> In addition, the city's summer youth employment

<sup>166</sup> Pearlman, *Democracy's Capital*, 197-201.

<sup>167</sup> Pearlman, *Democracy's Capital*, 201.

<sup>168</sup> By the early 1970s, D.C. was home to numerous veterans of SNCC's voting rights campaigns. Many, such as John Wilson and Frank Smith—served on the Council during the years that Marion Barry was the city's mayor—while others worked for the city government. Barry assistant Ivanhoe Donaldson, along with Courtland Cox, Wilson, and Smith were also among the SNCC veterans invited to work for a progressive think tank called the Institute for Policy Studies during their early years in D.C. Smith spent the summer of 1964 at IPS helping to coordinate Mississippi Freedom Summer and, with Donaldson, was invited back as a resident fellow (Sarah Shoenfeld interview with Frank Smith, June 4, 2019).

<sup>169</sup> Amanda Huron, *Carving Out the Commons: Tenant Organizing and Housing Cooperatives in Washington, D.C.* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 2018), 74-76.

<sup>170</sup> Asch and Musgrove, 395.



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program, modeled on a program launched by Barry in 1967, provided thousands of residents with their first jobs.<sup>171</sup> Barry also became known for his overall commitment to good government employment for black D.C. residents, helping sustain the city's longstanding black middle class in an era of declining federal support for urban communities.

**D.C. Activists Demand Black Voting Rights in the South**

In 1962, the Howard University student-led Nonviolent Action Group (NAG) took advantage of its proximity to Capitol Hill to meet with Justice Department officials on behalf of colleagues who had been arrested in the South for registering black voters. NAG member Stokely Carmichael was arrested for conducting a sit-in at Attorney General Robert Kennedy's office to demand the release of fellow Howard University student Dion Diamond, who had been arrested on a university campus in Louisiana for organizing students.<sup>172</sup> (Carmichael and Diamond had both participated in the 1961 Freedom Rides, which embarked from D.C.'s Greyhound Bus Terminal, to enforce a federal ruling that barred segregation in bus terminals and restaurants serving interstate passengers.)

The Freedom Riders, which included other Washingtonians and Howard University students, paved the way for D.C. activists such as Reverend James Reeb, a former associate pastor of D.C.'s All Souls Unitarian Church who traveled to Selma in March 1965. Brutal attacks on white northerners like Reeb, who then worked in Boston for the American Friends Service Committee and was beaten to death in Selma, brought national attention to voter suppression. In D.C., the historically white All Souls, where Reeb had pastored from 1959 to 1963, was galvanized by Reeb's death to continue advocating for civil rights. Although a historically white church—one of the few to remain in neighborhoods east of Rock Creek Park as they became almost entirely black-occupied by the late 1960s—All Souls was led by a black pastor, Reverend David Eaton, from 1969 to 1992.<sup>173</sup>

Carmichael and Diamond were among the numerous Howard University students who go on to become leading organizers for the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), which was established in 1960 and became a training ground for activists who later helped win home rule for D.C.

<sup>171</sup> Nicholas Lemann, "Marion Barry: The question is: Will he deliver?," *Washington Post*, Dec. 16, 1979.

<sup>172</sup> Jan Leighton Triggs and John Paul Dietrich, "Freedom Movement in Washington DC: 1960-61 Based on Actions of the Nonviolent Action Group (NAG), 1961, Revised 2011, at <https://www.crmvet.org/info/dc60.htm>; Craig Simpson, "Crazy Dion Diamond: A 1960 Rights Warrior in the Suburbs," at <https://washingtonareaspark.com/?s=dion+diamond&submit=Search>; Craig Simpson, "Contradictions in the Cause: Glen Echo Maryland 1960," at <https://washingtonareaspark.com/2015/06/26/contradictions-in-the-cause-glen-echo-maryland-1960>.

<sup>173</sup> "Civil Rights Tour...All Souls Unitarian." Around half of All Souls' congregation was African American during Rev. Eaton's tenure. The details in this paragraph, along with information in a previous footnote (see Desegregation of Recreation), are included here for the benefit of a pending National Register nomination for All Souls Unitarian Church.

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**F. Associated Property Types**

(Provide description, significance, and registration requirements.)

**Introduction**

Places significant for association with the history of 20th century African American civil rights in Washington, D.C. represent a wide range of property types, from the residences of notable persons such as houses and apartment buildings to residential or mixed-use neighborhoods to a range of commercial buildings, churches, schools, entertainment venues, and social institutions. Properties include individual buildings; groups of related buildings that comprise a single property (e.g. apartment complexes); buildings associated with spaces used as gathering sites or for recreation, e.g. a park where a rally occurred or a field house associated with a playground or swimming pool; and districts comprising multiple buildings in close proximity to one another and sharing historical and cultural associations.

The places associated with the struggle for African American civil rights in Washington, D.C. represent a somewhat fragile class of resource. Many important buildings and sites have been lost as a result of the redevelopment of old downtown and the Pennsylvania Avenue corridor beginning in the 1970s; damage inflicted to the city's major black commercial districts during the April 1968 civil unrest; and an intense wave of public and private reinvestment into these corridors beginning in the 1990s. With this diminished pool of resources that represent the city's rich civil rights history, it is imperative to preserve the remaining properties that convey this cultural and political legacy.

Following the guidelines of the National Park Service in its theme study Racial Desegregation in Public Education in the United States, along with earlier Multiple Property Document submissions that organized property types in accordance with that NPS study, the following property types have been identified:

- Strategy Centers
- Conflict Centers
- Properties Associated with Key Persons
- Historic Districts

These property type designations have more to do with the buildings' associations to the civil rights movement, rather than their original building type, their period of construction, or their design. Some properties may be classified under more than one property type.

In addition, nine property subtypes have been identified: Church, Residence, Organizational Headquarters, School, Business, Government Building, Entertainment Venue, Social Institution, and Recreation Facility. These sub-types may be relevant under any of the identified property types.

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As described below, Appendix A provides a list of civil rights themes associated with each property identified as potentially eligible for the National Register based on the criteria defined in this study. It should be noted that in addition to their association with the identified themes, many of the sites also have associations with women. Consistent with scholarship that continues to reveal the important role that women and girls played as leading civil rights organizers and as plaintiffs in civil rights lawsuits, these sites are distinguished in Appendix A.<sup>174</sup>

**General Registration Requirements**

To be eligible for listing as a building type or subtype under this MPDF, the property must be located within the boundaries of the District of Columbia; possess historical associations related to the theme of 20th Century African American civil rights; have attained its significance during the context period (1912 to 1974); and retain sufficient physical integrity related to the relevant theme(s) outlined in Section E of the MPDF to convey its significance.

In accordance with *National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*, eligible 20<sup>th</sup> Century African American Civil Rights properties must retain integrity of location, setting, materials, design, workmanship, feeling, and/or association. Eligible buildings would ideally continue to have a recognizable relationship to the urban fabric of the city and their neighborhood. However, the District has undergone intense periods of redevelopment that have largely transformed the historic character and settings of many properties that may be deemed significant for their association with civil rights. While disinvestment in areas of mostly black residency during the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century may have resulted in "preservation by neglect" for some buildings, the more recent targeting of these areas for redevelopment also led many significant buildings to be partially or fully demolished. Conversely, in some cases, renewed investment has helped to maintain some of these buildings and the integrity of their settings, for example along U Street NW. In addition to the places where African Americans were most likely to live, work, and go to church, much of downtown D.C. and the Pennsylvania Avenue corridor has also been redeveloped since the period of significance for this study. These areas were home to most of the city's most well-known department stores, lunch counters, and theaters, including those picketed for barring black patronage or employment. All of this must be considered in determining whether a property may be eligible for listing despite whether its surroundings have become largely unrecognizable since 1974.

In accordance with recent scholarship on expanding the criteria for evaluating the historic significance of buildings that may be physically unremarkable or suffer from lack of maintenance, this MPDF

<sup>174</sup> Recent scholarship includes Mary-Elizabeth Murphy, *Jim Crow Capital: Women and Black Freedom Struggles in Washington, D.C., 1920-1945* (Univ. of N. Caroline Press, 2018); Rachel Devlin, *A Girl Stands at the Door: The Generation of Young Women Who Desegregated America's Schools* (Basic Books, 2018); Jeffrey D. Gonda, "As Much Right to Live in a House as Anybody," Black Women and the Fight for Housing Integration in the 1940s," *Journal of Civil and Human Rights*, 5, 1, Spring/Summer 2019, 43-75.

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prioritizes the activities and associations of the civil rights movement over architectural integrity. The following passages from essays included in *Preservation and Social Inclusion* (Columbia University Press, 2020) were considered during our evaluation:

“Spaces representing their [BIPOC] narratives have been underinvested in and undervalued, and were often made invisible or systematically destroyed...preservation must grapple with how its norms and standards, which privilege architectural value and material integrity, can perpetuate injustice”

(Erica Avrami, Introduction)

“Architecture and integrity are often the gateways to preservation protections and benefits, but, in marginalized communities, they are an excuse for exclusion.” (Stephanie Wyberg-Webster,

“Toward an Inclusive Preservation: Lessons from Cleveland”)<sup>175</sup>

Although properties must be evaluated in accordance with the National Register standards, special consideration should be given to understanding the ongoing impacts of segregation and discrimination—specifically barriers to wealth accumulation and financing—when evaluating the integrity of buildings.<sup>176</sup>

It is expected that common alterations, such as replacement windows and doors within original openings, roof replacement, covering of original siding, removal of or damage to architectural and ornamental elements, and small scale additions will not automatically disqualify a property for listing if its essential external characteristics remain intact. Any alterations, interior or exterior, must be evaluated within the context of the building’s overall ability to convey the association and feeling related to its significance within the historic contexts established in Section E before deeming the building eligible or not due to material or design changes.

Buildings should, in general, be identifiable in terms of their original architectural style (Bungalow, Tudor Revival, Commercial Brick, International style, etc.) with the understanding that in the case of some resources, stylistic alterations may reflect specific cultural practices of residents or building owners that were employed to make a property their own. Common alterations such as replacement of doors and windows will not generally diminish the historic integrity of a building. More significant changes to buildings, such as removal of character-defining features, additions of incompatible scale, etc. may negatively impact integrity if they occurred after the period of significance. Conversely, substantial alterations undertaken during the period of significance may be relevant to a building's

<sup>175</sup> Erica Avrami, ed., *Preservation and Social Inclusion* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2020), at <https://www.arch.columbia.edu/books/catalog/503-preservation-and-social-inclusion>.

<sup>176</sup> Alterations that happened both during and after the period of significance may reflect efforts to affordably maintain the functionality of buildings, at the cost of architectural integrity.

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function in the context of civil rights.<sup>177</sup>

Interiors were not inspected for this listing. Therefore, some buildings known to have interiors that bear little to no relation to their significance in the context of this study have been included if exteriors from the period of significance remain. (Examples include Capitol Theatre, formerly within the National Press Building at 1328 F Street NW; Keith's Theater, 675 Fifteenth Street NW; Casualty Hospital, 700 Constitution Avenue NW, and Uline Arena, 3<sup>rd</sup> and M streets NE.)

Appendix A consists of a survey undertaken in conjunction with this MPDF identifying properties that meet one or more of the registration criteria described here. Although the survey was comprehensive, the list of properties is not necessarily an exhaustive list of all buildings that are associated with the historic contexts established by this MPDF. Rather, it supplements this MPDF's guidance in identifying properties that may be eligible for designation based on the historic contexts and themes described in Section E. The properties in Appendix A do not necessarily qualify for listing in the National Register, but based upon additional research, may qualify based on this study's registration requirements.

Because so many sites significant to 20<sup>th</sup> century African American civil rights in Washington, D.C. have already been lost, Appendix D lists non-extant properties identified in the course of doing research for this project.

### **Associated Property Types**

**I. Strategy Centers** are properties that were sites of meetings, rallies, and speeches, or were properties that housed organizations, businesses, or persons that had a significant role in advancing African American civil rights. Churches are the most common subtype in this category. Organizational headquarters and black-owned businesses, including media outlets, also feature prominently in this category. Other subtypes include schools that were notable for pro-civil rights activities; social institutions focused on black advancement; government buildings, including public monuments, where notable events took place (e.g. Lincoln Memorial), where activities therein served to promote civil rights (e.g. Supreme Court), or that played an important symbolic role vis-a-vis civil rights (e.g. Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Library); or sites and structures where demonstrations were held, such as the Washington Monument grounds or the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool.

### **Significance/Registration Requirements**

Strategy Centers may be eligible under Criteria A and B. In order for Strategy Centers to be

<sup>177</sup> Examples include the exterior renovation of Billy Simpson's House of Seafood and Steaks, or the interior conversion of a residential building to an office for the Afro-American Newspaper, designed by Howard University architect Albert Cassell.

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eligible under Criterion A, they must be significant for their association with specific events or persons, or for their function more generally as a site for the advancement or promotion of African American civil rights. Churches where black congregations hosted rallies and meetings, sometimes featuring prominent speakers are generally considered eligible under Criterion A. A church may also be eligible under Criterion B based on its association with a pastor who was a civil rights leader, and/or who led his congregation to play an important role in the movement. Based on the survey conducted as part of this study, it appears that some identified churches have been largely rebuilt on their sites, but retain at least one building that dates to the period of significance. In this case, the church property may be considered eligible under Criterion A, but is unlikely to qualify under Criterion B. Residences may also be eligible under this property type, under Criterion A, if they were sites of organizing or had a significant relationship to civil rights organizing, e.g. Howard University's Sojourner Truth Hall and Geneva Valentine's cooperative apartment building at 2008 Sixteenth Street NW. Other likely subtypes include organizational headquarters and black-owned businesses that promoted civil rights; businesses or social institutions where meetings or other organizational activities took place; and government buildings with notable connections to civil rights.

**II. Conflict Centers** are properties associated with the suppression of civil rights. They were either the site of protests or significant subjects of protest for their role in maintaining racial segregation or discrimination. These are most commonly buildings that housed segregated dining facilities, stores, or theaters, all of which are classified as Businesses or Entertainment Venues, per the property subtypes identified. Conflict centers also include residences that were the subjects of challenges to restrictive deed covenants, whose residents were the targets of violence, or that were the sites of protests against discriminatory housing. Recreation facilities, hospitals, and government buildings where segregation was challenged also fall into this category. In addition, conflict centers may include sites of protest or structures that were the subject of protests, for example Anacostia Pool and Park View Playground and Pool.

**Significance/Registration Requirements**

Conflict centers are generally eligible under Criterion A for their association with documented civil rights protest activities such as sit-ins, pickets, walk-outs, and strikes, or for their association with legal challenges to racially restrictive deed covenants and segregated schools. Properties where protests were led by or were otherwise associated with significant civil rights leaders may also be eligible under Criterion B. Businesses, government buildings, schools, recreation centers, and entertainment venues where people protested against racial segregation or employment discrimination, regardless of whether the protest had a positive outcome, are the most common subtypes. Buildings associated with playgrounds or parks that were the subject of protest may be eligible if they date to the period of significance—for

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example, the recreation center at Rose Park, where the playground was a site of conflict, and Anacostia Recreation Center, where there were significant conflicts over the segregation of a public pool at the same site.

**III. Properties Associated with Key Persons** are those properties that best represent the activities of individuals, or that are most closely associated with individuals who were active in advancing African American civil rights. Key persons most typically identified with advancing civil rights may be organizers, civil rights attorneys, and community leaders. However, those associated with New Negro writers and intellectuals, and promoters of black scholarship or black history, should also be considered worthy of recognition for establishing that African Americans had an equal claim to the rights of citizens. Residences or workplaces are the most likely property sub-type associated with this property type. However, other sub-types associated with key persons may also be relevant.

**Significance/Registration Requirements**

Properties Associated with Key Persons may be eligible under Criterion B if it can be demonstrated that those properties are directly related to that period of a person's career associated with civil rights activities; a workplace such as an office would be most common, but properties may also be eligible if they are the most significant or long-term residence in which the person lived. People who were active in civil rights organizing, most of whom were African American and faced barriers to wealth accumulation and housing access, were likely to have lived in rented dwellings and to have moved frequently during the most active years of their civil rights career. For this reason, a home purchased in the late stage of an individual's most productive period, or a workplace—Gardner Bishop's B & D Barbers, for example—may be the property most identified with that person. Single-family houses in which a significant civil rights figure was a boarder or rented a supplemental unit may be eligible. However, an apartment building where someone lived is generally not eligible except under the following circumstances: 1) a strong case can be made for the person's significance and the building itself merits consideration—for example, the Capitol Park apartments at 64 G Street SW, the home of Thurgood Marshall; 2) the building was home to two or more households whose members played a significant role in advancing civil rights, in which case the building may also have served as a meeting site.

**IV. Historic Districts** are areas where there is a significant concentration of properties that share historical associations with the advancement of African American civil rights during the period of significance for this MPDF. While the National Park Service defines such a district as comprising properties that are "united historically or aesthetically by plan or physical development," the key unifying element here is that the properties share a relationship to people, institutions, or events



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significant to civil rights; they may not necessarily otherwise share similar physical or architectural characteristics or have been built during the same period. In addition to individual properties, the presence of public spaces in which civil rights activities took place may help define an area's association with civil rights. Residential districts may be significant for their ability to illustrate the struggle against racially restrictive housing, as is the case with Washington, D.C.'s Bloomingdale Historic District. Another area that may be considered for its association with this theme includes the 1700 block of S Street NW, where several prominent black families purchased homes as *Corrigan v. Buckley* moved through the courts. In addition, the Park View neighborhood just north of Howard University was the site of several legal challenges to covenants and also the target, in the 1930s, of Geneva Valentine's successful efforts to persuade white homeowners to sell houses to African Americans. The Kingman Park Historic District may also be eligible for its association with civil rights. In addition to residential districts, education campuses such as Howard University are likely to qualify for their role in promoting civil rights and for their relationship with significant people and events. The Young/Browne/Phelps/Spingarn Education Campus Historic District, already recognized for its role in serving Kingman Park's black community, may also come under the cover of this MPDF. In addition, black commercial districts, or mixed commercial/residential districts, such as the U Street and Shaw historic districts, are undoubtedly eligible under the cover of this MPDF based on their central role in the lives of black Washingtonians throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The historic contexts for a number of other D.C. historic districts include African American history, and may be amended to document their significance under the requirements of this MPDF. In addition, districts that have previously been designated based on architectural and aesthetic distinction may also be eligible for their relationship to African American civil rights.

**Significance/Registration Requirements**

Within the historic contexts of this MPDF, historic districts should be considered eligible based on a concentrated presence of properties associated with significant historical events or key persons relevant to the advancement of African American civil rights in the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Washington, D.C. Buildings within a district should retain sufficient physical integrity from the context period to convey their significance. As in all historic districts, individual buildings within the identified historic district are not required, individually, to meet the criteria for designation. Buildings should, in general, be identifiable in terms of their original architectural styles (Bungalow, Tudor Revival, Colonial Revival, etc.); however, common alterations such as the replacement of doors and windows within original openings, roof replacement, covering original siding, removal of or damage to architectural and ornamental elements, and small-scale additions will not generally diminish the historic integrity of the district. More significant changes to buildings, such as removal of character-defining features, additions of incompatible scale, etc. may negatively impact integrity if they alter the overall character that defines the historic district and occurred after the period of significance. Conversely, substantial alterations undertaken during the period of significance may be relevant to the property within its context

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of civil rights (see note 1).

**Associated Property Subtypes**

For the purposes of this MPDF, ten property subtypes have been identified as described below. These represent the most common resources identified during a survey conducted in 2019-2020, but property subtypes not listed may be considered if it can be demonstrated that they have a significant connection to the established contexts and themes in Section E and retain integrity.

**Churches** historically served as primary sites of community organizing, or "mass meetings" to advance African American civil rights. Until the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, churches were among the few social gathering sites available to African American Washingtonians outside of school buildings assigned to the city's "colored" division. Because D.C. was home to a large free black population as early as the 1830s, many black congregations date to the mid-19th century and most of the buildings they occupied during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were built by those congregations.<sup>178</sup> A church may be listed if, during the period of significance, it was a consistent site of civil rights organizing; it was the site of one or more major civil rights events; or it was led by and is the most significant site associated with a civil rights leader.

**Residences** were the homes of people known to have been active in advancing African American civil rights for a sustained period of time, or are the properties most associated with those individuals. Dwellings may be eligible under Criterion B if the relevant individuals lived in them during a demonstrably active period of their career, but may also be eligible if they are the most significant or long-term residence associated with that person. Residences were also the sites of conflicts over racialized housing discrimination, primarily to do with restrictive deed covenants or other modes of racial discrimination. Dwellings encompass a variety of forms and styles ranging from modest to grand rowhouses as well as suburban-style detached dwellings. Also considered eligible under this sub-type are apartments within single-family dwellings, and apartment buildings, such as Trenton Terrace.

**Organizational Headquarters** housed advocacy groups or other organizations with a primary focus on advancing African American civil rights in Washington, D.C., or are the sites most closely associated with individual civil rights leaders during the period of this study. This property type most commonly includes rowhouses and modest, multi-use buildings. Some organizations, such as the National Association of Colored Women's Clubs, were able to purchase larger, more ornate buildings for their headquarters, while other established groups, such as the NAACP's D.C. branch, relocated with some frequency during this study's period of significance, and were not associated with any single building

<sup>178</sup> It was generally not until the late 1950s that black congregations, many displaced by urban renewal, began purchasing buildings from white churches relocating to the suburbs. Only one of the churches surveyed for this study, John Wesley Zion AMEZ, was originally built by a white congregation.

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for a sustained period of time. Dual-use buildings include the headquarters of the National Association of Colored Women and home of Mary McLeod Bethune; and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and home of Marion Barry, among others. (A building that was used by an organization but had another other primary function, e.g. as a residence, a church, or a social institution, may be eligible as a different sub-type.)<sup>179</sup>

**Businesses** were either sites of commercial activity that was largely focused on the advancement of African American civil rights in Washington, D.C., e.g. Industrial Bank of Washington and the Washington Afro-American newspaper, or were locations where protests over segregation took place, e.g. Hecht's department store. A business may also be eligible under Criterion B if it is the property most associated with a civil rights leader (e.g. Gardner Bishop's B & D Barbers). Businesses occupied a range of buildings, from large department store buildings to modest storefronts.

**Schools** are most commonly those where conflicts over segregation played out, where lawsuits were initiated after African American children were turned away, or where protests took place. Schools also served as civil rights strategy centers (e.g. Howard University); were associated with key persons (e.g. National Training School for Women and Girls); or were sites where other pro-civil rights activities were carried out (e.g. Cardozo High School, where the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King gave a 1967 address supporting community-led urban renewal in D.C.) Schools that have previously been listed in the National Register may also be eligible for their association with African American civil rights in accordance with this MPDF.<sup>180</sup>

**Government Buildings** may be listed as the site of protests against segregated facilities (e.g. D.C. Public Schools' administrative headquarters at the Franklin School Building); as the site of civil rights rallies (e.g. District Building); as courts where civil rights cases were heard; or, in the case of Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial Library, as symbolic of citizen demands to honor a national civil rights leader who also helped advance the local movement. All of the government buildings identified in the survey accompanying this MPDF are already listed in the National Register based primarily on Criterion C, but would also qualify under Criterion A in accordance with this MPDF.

**Entertainment Venues** were whites-only theaters and auditoriums that were the location or subject of protests against segregation, e.g. Lisner Auditorium and DAR Constitution Hall. They range from large, formal buildings that remain physically and functionally the same as they were during the period of significance to buildings where interiors have been transformed to a new use, but the building retains

<sup>179</sup> Many organizations did not have their own offices, but met in churches, people's homes, or institutions such as the Phyllis Wheatley YWCA.

<sup>180</sup> The National Register nominations for Public School Buildings of Washington, D.C., 1862-1960 (2001); John Philip Sousa Junior High School (2001); and Young, Browne, Phelps and Spingarn Educational Campus Historic District (2016) are currently listed under Criterion A and C, with Ethnic Heritage: Black as an Area of Significance.

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its general character or exterior details, e.g. Uline Arena and Capitol Theater.

**Recreation Facilities** were sites of conflict over segregated play areas and swimming pools. This property type includes sites where protests occurred or that were a source of targeted controversy within the larger battle by civil rights advocates to desegregate recreation in the District. For example, Park View Playground and Field House is listed in the National Register, in part, for its instrumental role in the fight for desegregation of the city's playgrounds. While playgrounds and pools themselves were generally the primary subject of conflict, the recreation buildings associated with those facilities and that date to the same period may be eligible under Criterion A, e.g. Anacostia Recreation Center, for its association with the pool that remains at this site.

**Social Institutions** are buildings with the primary purpose of providing spaces for activities geared toward advancing African American civil rights in D.C., for example, the Phyllis Wheatley YWCA.

**Sites and Structures** are non-building properties that are associated with significant civil rights events, for example, protests over segregated recreation space or demonstrations. A **site** is the location of a significant event where the location itself possesses historic value regardless of the value of any existing structure. Parks or other public spaces where people gathered for demonstrations or protests may be eligible if the site retains a setting in relationship to surrounding features that make it recognizable as the location of one or more civil rights events. The site must retain enough of its historical character to convey its connection to the event/s that took place there. (Note: Sites were not included in the survey undertaken in association with this MPDF.) A **structure** encompasses resources that were not built for human shelter such a playground, swimming pool, or outdoor stage that was the site of a protest, demonstration, or event/s promoting African American civil rights. Examples include the Park View Playground and Pool, Anacostia Pool, and the Sylvan Theater, on the grounds of the Washington Monument. If rehabilitated since the period of significance, the structure must retain enough physical features or a strong enough relationship with the surrounding landscape features to convey its association with significant events.

## **APPENDICES**

### Appendix A: Identified Resources

Appendix A, described above, is a list of resources identified during the course of researching and writing this MPDF that may be considered eligible for historic designation based on the historic contexts described in Section E and the evaluation standards described in Section F. While each property must be associated with one or more civil rights themes (Public Accommodation, Equal Employment, Housing, Equal Education, Voting or Criminal Injustice) as a requirement for listing here, further research may be required for determining all of the themes associated with any given site.

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Appendix B: Property Survey

Appendix B consists of a property survey comprised of a survey form for each resource listed in Appendix A. This survey describes the basic architectural elements of each site and includes legal information as well as a photograph of each resource. The survey is based on a basic visual evaluation of each property's exterior integrity, with each resource assigned an integrity level of Intact or Compromised. Intact properties include those that have been rehabilitated using modern materials that match the original building. Compromised properties are those that have been significantly altered since their original construction. Alterations made during the period of significance for this study do not necessarily impact a property's eligibility for landmark nomination. To acknowledge the various levels of development that have occurred in the District which may have impacted these historic resources, we erred on the side of evaluating buildings as intact in order to allow future researchers to make determinations on an individual basis.

Appendix C: USGS Maps

Appendix C consists of USGS maps showing the location of each site included in the property survey.

Appendix D: Non-Extant Properties

Appendix D is a list of all resources identified during the course of researching and writing this MPDF that may have been considered eligible for historic designation based on the historic contexts described in Section E and the evaluation standards described in Section F, but that are no longer extant. Examples include churches with buildings that do not date to the period of significance for this MPDF. However most of the resources listed are the locations of residences, businesses or organizations that were demolished and ultimately replaced with buildings unrelated to history of civil rights. As shown for each property, they were most frequently located in wards 1, 2, or 6. These wards include neighborhoods that were home to significant African American communities during the 20<sup>th</sup> century and that have undergone intense redevelopment, especially in recent decades. The headquarters of the some of the most well-known civil rights organizations, for example, were along U Street NW. Ward 6 includes D.C.'s old downtown, which was commonly the site of segregated stores and theaters where picketing took place.

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**G. Geographical Data:** The scope of this study includes all four quadrants of the District of Columbia.

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**H. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods**

(Discuss the methods used in developing the multiple property listing.)

This Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF) was prepared by Sarah Jane Shoenfeld, Prologue DC and Nakita Reed, Quinn Evans Architects, under contract to the D.C. Preservation League (DCPL). Through an African American Civil Rights grant, the MPDF was produced with assistance from the Historic Preservation Fund, administered by the National Park Service, Department of the Interior. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in the MPDF or associated documents are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of the Interior.

In accordance with the NPS theme studies, *Civil Rights in America: A Framework for Identifying Significant Sites*, *Racial Desegregation of Public Accommodations*, *Racial Desegregation in Public Education in the United States*, and *Racial Voting Rights*, the goal of this project was to research the history and context of the African American civil rights movement in Washington, D.C. during the 20<sup>th</sup> century; to develop a National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF); to identify sites that meet the eligibility criteria described in the MPDF; to prepare a reconnaissance-level property survey for all identified sites; and to nominate at least two individual sites under the MPDF.

The scope of this study and the criteria for selecting sites to be included in the accompanying surveys were developed in consultation with scholars with expertise in D.C.'s African American civil rights history, historic preservation, and African American historic sites in Washington, D.C. In November 2019, a public forum and a session at the DC History Conference were held to solicit input on the study. In addition, a website was created for public submission of sites to be considered for inclusion. Research conducted by Prologue DC for the 20<sup>th</sup> Century African American Civil Rights Tour of Washington D.C., published online in 2019 by the D.C. Historic Preservation Office and supported by a NPS African American Civil Rights grant, served as a starting point for this study. Minimal archival research was required due to the wealth of research conducted for this project and others by Prologue DC combined with the number of existing publications on D.C. civil rights history that are listed in the accompanying bibliography. Input on the historic contexts (Section E) was incorporated per reviews by a scholar with content expertise, members of the DCPL's Landmarks Committee, and D.C. Historic Preservation Office staff.

A concurrent survey of all extant 20th century civil rights sites was conducted as part of this project. Sites identified as potentially eligible for landmark designations based on the criteria for this study, including sites previously listed in the National Register, were described and organized by property type and theme for the purposes of evaluating them comparatively and establishing preservation priorities based on historical significance. In addition, all identified properties were surveyed at the



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reconnaissance level and mapped using USGS topographical maps. A survey form prepared for each site documents the property's address, legal description, massing elements, character defining features, condition, and integrity, and includes a photograph.

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