“A Mean City”: The NAACP and the Black Freedom Struggle in Baltimore, 1935-1975

Dissertation

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Abstract

“A Mean City”: The NAACP and the Black Freedom Struggle in Baltimore, 1935-1975” traces the history and activities of the Baltimore branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) from its revitalization during the Great Depression to the end of the Black Power Movement. The dissertation examines the NAACP’s efforts to eliminate racial discrimination and segregation in a city and state that was “neither North nor South” while carrying out the national directives of the parent body. In doing so, its ideas, tactics, strategies, and methods influenced the growth of the national civil rights movement.
Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the Jackson, Mitchell, and Murphy families and the countless number of African Americans and their white allies throughout Baltimore and Maryland that strove to make “The Free State” live up to its moniker. It is also dedicated to family members who have passed on but left their mark on this work and myself. They are my grandparents, Lucious and Mattie Gass, Barbara Johns Powell, William “Billy” Spencer, and Cynthia L. “Bunny” Jones. This victory is theirs as well.
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It goes without saying that any errors of fact and interpretation found within are entirely my own. I just hope that others find this story as exciting and fascinating as I have.
Vita

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Jean Wiley was excited. It seemed almost immediately after completing her master’s degree at the University of Michigan that Tuskegee Institute, the premier black institution in Alabama, came calling, offering her a teaching position in the English Department. It was June 1964, and the timing could not have been better. Things were moving fast in the Deep South. The Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) was about to flood Mississippi with seasoned, battle-tested field secretaries and white volunteers in an all-out assault against the most terrifying bastion of Jim Crow segregation while also toiling in neighboring Alabama’s Black Belt counties in places like Selma, where they were starting to plant the seeds that local people would use to push not only for social and economic equality but political power as well. Wiley badly wanted to be in Mississippi, to be in the thick of the action, but soon realized that along with the demands of teaching, SNCC’s work in Alabama was no less exciting and/or challenging than in the Magnolia State. In fact, there were those who thought it more important, since African Americans were setting the stage to go beyond just acquiring civil rights and seeking real, tangible power to shape their own lives and that of future generations. Wiley threw herself into the movement in Alabama, beginning in Montgomery, and henceforth lived her life as a

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SNCC woman, a person who did not adhere to convention and outwardly challenged the status quo, no matter the consequences.²

Alabama was not the first place where she had protested racial discrimination. Her family was from Baltimore, and she had attended Morgan State University, the largest historically black college in Maryland, as an undergraduate. The first of the Wiley and Boyers’ clans to graduate college, she spent her time at Morgan not only in the books, but picketing on the sidewalks as well. Wiley, like other black students, was appalled that a theater just two blocks from campus would have the audacity to tell potential customers that they could not enter the establishment because of their color. It was not long before she joined other students in sit-in demonstrations against the Northwood Theater. Riley had entered a struggle that had been going on for quite some time. Morgan students had been protesting against the theater and other segregated businesses at Northwood Plaza since 1955—five years before the famous Greensboro sit-ins of February 1, 1960. These protests had intensified every year, so much so that by 1963, Morgan students, joined by those at nearby Johns Hopkins, Goucher College, and other area institutions, had caused such a stir that the city could no longer ignore it and was forced to act. Wiley had participated in numerous strategy sessions and demonstrations, and her trial by fire was being arrested and thrown into a dirty Baltimore jail. She and her comrades were released only when officials were threatened with an influx of students from Howard

University in Washington, D.C., which was sure to bring unwanted media attention. Fearing this and other factors, the theater finally agreed to desegregate in early 1963.  

Still, despite growing up in Baltimore, a border city that was almost completely segregated—native Baltimorean Thurgood Marshall referred to it as “Up South Baltimore”—and participating in fervent demonstrations where her actions caused her to consider herself a part of SNCC before formally becoming a member, Wiley felt that something was missing. She believed that she needed to head farther south to experience “the real thing”—meaning the authentic freedom movement taking place in the Deep South. In her estimation, the struggle in Maryland was subordinate to the southern freedom struggle and only served as a prologue to the main event. In order to move south, Wiley had to procure her own financial resources, since her family was unable to do so. They naturally questioned her decision to venture south, reminding her that for African Americans “Baltimore isn’t exactly a picnic for our folks, nor Philadelphia or Washington or New York either.” They understood that racism was a national problem rather than a regional one and that African Americans were struggling to become first class citizens wherever they were. Although Wiley certainly agreed with them, having witnessed its ugliness firsthand, she still believed that the southern freedom movement was the epicenter of the struggle for racial equality, characterizing it as being “on the move,” as if the movement elsewhere was stagnant, and decided that her services were needed there.  

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4 Wiley, ibid.
That Wiley viewed the Maryland freedom movement as ancillary to the freedom struggle in the South is indicative of what I have termed the “middle state syndrome.” Maryland, because it sits on the border between the North and the South, is much like the middle child of three siblings. Often overlooked, and receiving less attention than its older or younger sibling, Maryland is routinely neglected when it comes to discussing and documenting the modern African American freedom movement that took place from the Great Depression to the Black Power Movement. Clifton Henry, another Baltimorean who was a member of the Civic Interest Group (CIG), the student-led organization that conducted the sit-in movement in Baltimore and Maryland and was an early affiliate of SNCC, was well aware of how Maryland was viewed by his fellow student activists. In an interview for Howard University’s Civil Rights Documentation Project, Henry claimed that SNCC members considered the Maryland freedom movement the “step-child” of the freedom struggle and they were not interested in what occurred there until events received national attention, such as in Cambridge. Henry further declared that this mentality existed despite the fact that CIG was more active and achieved significantly more success than student movements in the Deep South in the early 1960s. In fact, Henry alleges that SNCC considered Maryland “too Yankee” to be part of the southern movement.5

Part of this neglect may stem from Maryland’s unique geographical position. Maryland, located just below the Mason-Dixon Line, the imaginary line separating the

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North from the South, was a slave state and Baltimore, its largest city, was its economic and political center. In Baltimore, commercial industries existed alongside urban slavery, effectively linking both regions. The southern and eastern parts of the state reflected the rural slave environment of Deep South states. As a border state, Maryland contained aspects of both regions, which historians Barbara Fields and Robert Brugger make clear in the title of their works, *Slavery and Freedom on the Middle Ground: Maryland During the Nineteenth Century*, and *Maryland: A Middle Temperament*, respectively. It was no wonder that Maryland was the linchpin of Lincoln’s strategy to protect the nation’s capital from being totally surrounding by the seceded Confederate states during the Civil War and unite the country by having it remain in the Union.7

Being a border state made for complex race relations that were often contradictory. Although slavery existed in Baltimore it was also home to the largest community of free African Americans before and immediately after the Civil War. African Americans enjoyed the franchise despite state attempts to eliminate it during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and had also held seats on the Baltimore City Council and as state delegates during that period. There were whites of goodwill that were willing to work with African Americans behind the scenes to create a more equitable society, but that did not mean that African Americans could remain lax; they always had to remain

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6 Historian George Calcott argues that Maryland could be rightly viewed as “America in miniature” because it linked all three regions, since it was connected to the West through the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. See George Calcott, *Maryland and America, 1940-1980* (Baltimore; The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), xi-xii.

vigilant and persistent despite being in the Upper South, for many whites believed in white supremacy and viewed African Americans as inferior and subordinate. ‘Charm City’, as it was sometimes known, was not always charming to its African American residents and they had to be constantly aware of it. Clarence Mitchell, Jr., a native Baltimorean and the director of the NAACP’s Washington Bureau, made this clear when he commented that “It is not trite to say that we in Maryland have been lulled into a false sense of complacence because the scare-head stories of injustice have largely been written about happenings in distant places [in the Deep South].” Racism in Baltimore may have been tempered by a supposedly northern influence, close proximity to the nation’s capital, and a black press that had a large circulation and a mission to expose racial discrimination wherever and whenever it manifested itself, but that did not negate the fact that Maryland, for all intents and purposes, was “a border state with southern tendencies,” where racism and racial discrimination was considered more deceitful because the city, and the state, tried to portray race relations as more ‘enlightened’ as compared to the other southern states.8

Today, there is still considerable debate amongst historians and freedom activists about Maryland’s place. In his study of southern black teachers and their efforts to eliminate racial discrimination in education, Adam Fairclough readily acknowledges that the campaign to equalize teachers’ salaries began in Maryland in 1936, but nevertheless

maintains that his study looks at the results of such a campaign in the South ‘proper,’ meaning the former Confederate states. In her article on Gloria Richardson and the Cambridge Nonviolent Action Committee (CNAC) during the Cambridge campaign between 1962 and 1964, Jenny Walker claims that this city on the Eastern Shore, an area many compared to the Deep South, was only “spiritually and psychologically” southern. Walker gave Cambridge such a designation because it was geographically north and tied to northern industries, though whites saw themselves as honorary southerners and held a southern outlook, particularly in race relations. Peter Levy’s study of Cambridge also noted that it had “a southern look and feel.” Again, this seems to imply that Cambridge had a southern atmosphere but was not of the South. At any rate, this southern outlook made Cambridge an extremely violent town for its African American residents, comparable to any in Mississippi, Alabama, or Georgia. Conditions were so tense and explosive during the freedom movement there that the National Guard occupied the town for the entire year in 1963, and the federal government, in the form of Attorney General Bobby Kennedy, had to directly intervene to attempt to negotiate a compromise between movement leaders and local whites.9

If Maryland has been left out of studies on the southern freedom movement, it has not been a focus of those who examine the freedom movement in the North either. In Thomas Sugrue’s *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the*

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North, Maryland, and other border states, have been forgotten. In defining the scope of what constitutes the North, Sugrue states some define the region encompassing all of the states outside of the former Confederacy; for others it is the Northeast and the Midwest.

For the purposes of his work, Sugrue focuses on the states with the largest African American populations outside of the South, which includes New York, New Jersey, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Michigan and Illinois,\(^{10}\) with a look at large cities such as New York, Philadelphia, Detroit, Cleveland, Newark and Chicago. Baltimore also had a large African American population that was comparable to some of the above cities, but it was not included. In *Freedom North*, Jeanne Theoharis and Komozi Woodard edit a volume that is also focused on urban cities in the Northeast, Midwest and West. In the introduction, Theoharis says that “the North” sometimes refers to northeastern cities, but could, again, include the rest of the country outside of the former Confederate states, and that the latter is how the North is defined by the editors. As in Sugrue’s work, border states like Maryland are not included in that definition.\(^{11}\)

On the other hand, Lee Sartain, in his study of the Baltimore NAACP, views Maryland geographically as a southern state, claiming that Baltimore’s population before the Civil War was 212,418 and that New Orleans was the only southern city that could compare. In an early study of Gloria Richardson, Annette K. Brock asserted that Cambridge had “an established pattern of discrimination and segregation, *like all* \(^{10}\) Sugrue also focuses less attention on California, Minnesota, Indiana, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Washington state. See Thomas J. Sugrue, *Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North* (New York: Random House, 2008), xxvii.

southern towns [emphasis mine]. As for some movement activists, Muriel Tillinghast, a native of Washington, D.C. who attended Howard University as an undergraduate, served as SNCC project director in Greenwood during Mississippi Freedom Summer and voices the ambiguity felt by area residents themselves when it comes to this question. In recounting her experience as a female SNCC organizer, she alludes to the psychological mindset of Washington, D.C./Maryland residents when it comes to their geographical position in the United States and their attitude and outlook concerning that position. Tillinghast concludes that she was “basically a northerner” but that D.C. residents like to think they are from the North. Although she did not specifically comment on it, residents supposedly have the requisite northern attitude to go with it, though she says the reality may be quite different. She does not necessarily proclaim the Washington, D.C./Maryland area as part of the South, but leaves room open for interpretation. She did spend considerable time protesting in Washington, D.C. and the Eastern Shore before heading further south, and echoes the sentiments on that region, claiming that it was a “cauldron of racial hostility,” but disputes the contention that it reflected the attitude of those in the Deep South, saying that her experience there “did not prepare me for the state of Mississippi.”

Even this author, a native Marylander, has to admit that it is often difficult to definitely place the state within a region. I often argue with colleagues that Maryland is a

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southern state, based on its geography and the fact that it was a slaveholding state that could have—and constantly threatened to—join the Confederacy during the Civil War. This occurred despite the fact that slavery had been dying out as an economically viable institution for years. However, I also recognize that Maryland certainly has cultural, political and economic ties to the North, that race relations were decidedly different than in the Deep South, and that Maryland can rightly be defined as a middle state.

Though there may be confusion on Maryland’s place geographically, those who fought to eliminate Jim Crow and create a more equitable society in Baltimore and Maryland were not confused about their place in the modern African American freedom struggle. Juanita Jackson Mitchell, a native Baltimorean and longtime freedom fighter, did not shy away from declaring that the movement she was involved in practically all of her life was in the forefront of the national African American freedom struggle to eliminate racial discrimination and create a more equitable society that respected the rights of all of its citizens. At a conference of oral historians held in Baltimore in 1988, Mitchell proclaimed “I am very happy to welcome you to Baltimore and Maryland, a city and state that have been in the vanguard of the struggle for freedom.” This was not an empty boast, for black Baltimoreans, since the 1930s, had an exemplary record in eliminating racial barriers to first class citizenship and democracy, and several of their victories were used as models for struggles in other states.

The list is impressive. Maryland was the first state to legally desegregate graduate and professional schools with the Murray decision and equalized salaries between black and white teachers, legal victories that spread to other southern states; marched on the state capital to protest police brutality and presented their grievances to the governor;
registered thousands of black voters from World War II onward; desegregated a library
training program with *Kerr v. Pratt*, which bound public and governmental institutions to
the equal protection clause of the Constitution despite being administered by private
entities; desegregated a major theater after a seven-year picketing campaign; and
desegregated a school immediately before racial segregation was declared
unconstitutional, among other achievements. This all occurred before the 1954 Supreme
Court *Brown* decision, which is still popularly accepted as the start of the modern civil
rights movement. In addition, the Baltimore freedom movement was responsible for
giving Thurgood Marshall and Clarence Mitchell, Jr., two nationally recognized civil
rights activists, the training and experience they needed to wield national influence and
advance the movement on a national scale.

The Baltimore branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored
People (NAACP) was largely responsible for these achievements. It was the second
branch established by the fledgling civil rights organization after its founding in New
York in 1909. Since it was chartered in 1913, the Baltimore NAACP was a major civil
rights organization in the city for the next fifty years, though moribund in the mid-1920s
and early 1930s. During that interim period, the leading civil rights group was the City-
Wide Young People’s Forum, a youth-oriented protest organization that was founded by
the Mitchell sisters, Virginia and Juanita, in 1931. The Forum, as it was known, formed a
coalition with the Baltimore *Afro-American*, a nationally recognized black newspaper
that was an uncompromising advocate for racial change and advancement in Maryland,
and whose influence extended beyond its borders due to its distribution along the east
coast, and black churches. It was this coalition that conducted the Buy Where You Can
Work Campaign against discriminatory businesses in the northwest African American community in 1933. After its revitalization in 1935, the Baltimore NAACP supplanted the Forum and quickly grew into one of the largest and most successful branches of the Association, inheriting the same coalition to forge a freedom movement. Though the branch was formidable under the effective leadership of Lillie May Jackson, who served as president from 1935 to 1970, it benefitted greatly from its allies. The *Afro* provided much needed publicity, kept the African American community fully informed of the branch’s purpose, intentions, goals, and achievements, and its editor, Carl Murphy, provided wise counsel and used his influence to bolster the NAACP’s programs. The black church provided much needed human and financial resources, and served as a barometer of community sentiment. Jackson also designed the branch to reflect the church’s leadership hierarchy. This coalition held firm throughout her tenure.

The branch was also the epicenter of the freedom movement in the state, since it revitalized defunct branches and chartered new ones, created the state conference of branches and administered its resources, and/or facilitated the elimination of racial segregation and discrimination on a statewide basis through their legal or legislative efforts. However, like the city and state in which it is located, the Baltimore NAACP, until recently, has also been ignored in civil rights historiography. This is symptomatic of the overall neglect of the national NAACP itself.

Ironically, the oldest, most influential, and most successful civil rights organization in United States history has been woefully understudied by historians until recently, and this mainly in conjunction with its centennial anniversary in 2009. Although there were early histories of the NAACP, they were never comprehensive. Even Patricia Sullivan’s recent
work, *Lift Every Voice: The NAACP and the Making of the Civil Rights Movement*, ends right on the cusp of the 1960 student sit-in movement. Of course, Sullivan and any other historian should be congratulated on taking on such a monumental task, considering the vastness and richness of that history, so allowances should be made for examining the national NAACP within manageable parameters. However, that still does not negate the fact that the NAACP, either on a national, regional, state, or local level, was not the subject of sustained historical inquiry in the last few decades as other civil rights groups such as the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) in terms of its history, campaigns, leadership, or accomplishments.  

Even after the appearance of these direct action organizations in Baltimore in the 1950s and 1960s, the Baltimore NAACP still remained in the forefront on the local and state level. Though it now had to share the spotlight, the branch did not fade into the background but continued to make its mark, assisting other organizations in doing the same. The branch was largely responsible for Baltimore being the first southern city to

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immediately comply with the 1954 *Brown* decision and having Maryland be the first state to desegregate state parks and swimming pools. The NAACP assisted CIG with financial and logistical support in spreading sit-in protests throughout the state, but it introduced the students to the importance of voter registration work and facilitated their training in door-to-door canvassing when questions of whether to engage in such activities threatened to tear SNCC apart. The Baltimore NAACP remained a viable entity for the next few decades after these and other organizations either faded into obscurity or transformed into shadows of their former selves.

This dissertation is a study of the Baltimore NAACP and the Maryland freedom movement from its revitalization during the Great Depression until the end of the Black Power Movement, and examines the efforts of the branch to eliminate racial segregation and discrimination in a city and state that was “neither North nor South.” I argue that the freedom struggle in Baltimore and Maryland is central to understanding the growth and development of the national civil rights movement. Baltimore had the advantage of being in close proximity to Washington, D.C., where activists had access to federal governmental institutions and could realistically expect federal intervention in affecting change there, which could, and did, have national consequences. In addition, Baltimore was a reflection of both de jure (southern) and de facto (northern) racial segregation and discrimination, and the branch dealt with both forms in all of its complexities from the very beginning. Not only did it have to contend with outright segregation in public accommodations and transportation but the covert racism in education, housing, police-community relations, employment, and municipal services in a city with a large African American population, an active and influential middle class, and an influx of southern
migrants looking to escape the Deep South and find better living conditions and quality of life.

It was for these reasons that the national NAACP, and specifically the Legal Defense Fund under Charles Hamilton Houston, launched its offensive against educational inequalities in Baltimore. Baltimore and Maryland were used as the NAACP’s ‘legal laboratory,’ for it was rightly believed that their grievances would receive a hearing, which made it possible to win precedent-setting cases that could be used in other southern states. It was in Baltimore and Maryland that the roots of Brown were laid, and this study hopes to paint a more complete picture of the origins of the modern civil rights revolution of the 1950s and 1960s.

In doing so, I also complicate the standard periodization of the civil rights movement by challenging the notion that the modern civil rights movement appeared spontaneously and autonomously after the 1954 Brown decision. In contrast, historians in the last decade have advanced the alternative view that the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s was part of a “long civil rights movement” that extended into the Great Depression and the World War II era. This rights movement was connected to other social movements, particularly the labor movement, that had the potential to become a mass based, cross-class freedom movement that addressed both racial and economic equality, but was derailed due to the exigencies of the Cold War. The Baltimore and Maryland freedom movement falls within this view, as the freedom movement began in 1931 and continuously grew through World War II, becoming the largest branch in 1946, so that by the time of Brown and the Montgomery Bus Boycott, the Baltimore NAACP had already achieved significant gains in eradicating racial segregation. However, this
conceptualization of the African American freedom struggle is inadequate to fully
describe the Baltimore freedom movement. It fails to account for the community
organizing traditions that had its roots in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.
Many of the local community institutions that built the freedom movement in Baltimore
and Maryland were established during this period and this dissertation demonstrates that
the coalition that formulated the modern freedom movement in the state had been
challenging racial segregation and discrimination long before the Great Depression.

As a corollary to my main argument, I contend that the Baltimore freedom movement,
due to its length and breadth, was ahead of the curve of the national civil rights
movement in terms of ideas, tactics, strategies, and methods, which influenced and/or
were utilized by national civil rights organizations. By the 1950s, the Baltimore NAACP
had engaged in a wide variety of tactics and methods to achieve racial equality, including
legal campaigns, picketing, marches, boycotts, youth activism, and voter registration
campaigns. These tactics would be used to great effect before a world audience as the
freedom struggle in various locales evolved into a national social movement from the
1950s through the 1970s. For example, the national NAACP tapped Juanita Mitchell
[nee Jackson] to resuscitate the NAACP Youth Movement in 1935 due to her success in
leading the Forum. Mitchell modeled NAACP youth and college chapters after the
Forum, and fostered the notion of using direct action to affect change. It was NAACP
college and youth chapters that held successful sit-in protests in Oklahoma City,
Oklahoma, Wichita, Kansas, and other cities in the late 1950s, and this network indirectly
assisted the 1960 Greensboro protests that sparked the national student sit-in movement.
One of the most unique features of the Maryland freedom struggle was the fact that black women formally lead the movement for over four decades. In Baltimore, black women did not serve as “bridge leaders” in social movements as defined by sociologist Belinda Robnett, where they organized and mobilized their constituents through informal leadership positions while providing opportunities for men to assume formal leadership within a local or national organization and/or movement. Instead, black women were responsible for resurrecting and formally leading the freedom movement from the 1930s into the 1980s. Juanita Jackson Mitchell, Lillie May Carroll Jackson, and Enolia McMillan were all committed activists whose careers extending from the Great Depression into the Black Power Movement and beyond in the case of Mitchell and McMillan. These women’s activism ran along parallel lines and intersected at various times. When Juanita Mitchell led the Forum, her activism allowed her mother, Lillie Jackson, to become an informal leader in support of her daughter’s efforts, politicizing her in the process. Because of her education, financial independence, availability, and vast network of contacts within the social and institutional life of the black community, Jackson assumed the mantle of formal leadership of the revitalized branch in the aftermath of the Forum’s success, while her daughter ascended to a national position with the parent body.

Jackson would remain the leader of the Baltimore movement and the de facto head of the state freedom movement for the next thirty-five years, with Mitchell returning to Baltimore in the early 1940s to assist her mother for the rest of her tenure. Jackson’s tenure is highly unusual, for rarely did a black woman hold such a position for an extended period of time. The only black women comparable to her on the local and state
level are Daisy Bates in Little Rock, Arkansas and Lulu White in Houston, Texas.\textsuperscript{14} McMillan, meanwhile, was highly active during the teachers’ salary equalization cases from 1936-1941, and was rewarded as leader of the newly formed state conference of branches in 1941. After her resignation, both Jackson and Mitchell assumed the position. McMillan was later assumed the presidency of the local branch after Jackson’s retirement and ascended to the national presidency of the NAACP in the 1980s. This was certainly extraordinary considering the gendered view of leadership that permeated American society. This dissertation examines the trajectory of each of their careers, detailing their leadership styles, especially Jackson’s, their accomplishments, their critiques of and conflicts with each other, and how the branch, the African American community, national NAACP officers, and white civic and political leaders responded to them.

Finally, this dissertation examines the relationship between the local branch and the parent body. The Baltimore branch was largely successful in carrying out national directives while also responding to local concerns. As a membership organization, the Baltimore NAACP was able to attract a cross section of African Americans in the state to join and support the national organization’s goal of African Americans’ full integration into American society while also concentrating its energies on pursuing racial democracy at home. The NAACP has often been accused of being a top-down bureaucracy that dictated the national agenda to its many local branches, but the truth is that the NAACP was closer to a democratic organization than originally thought. The branches enjoyed a

\textsuperscript{14} For more on Daisy Bates’ activist career, see John A. Kirk, \textit{Redefining the Color Line: Black Activism in Little Rock, Arkansas, 1940-1970} (Tallahassee, Florida: University Press of Florida, 2002); for Lulu White, see Merline Pitre, \textit{In Struggle against Jim Crow: Lulu White and the NAACP, 1900-1957} (College Station, Texas: Texas A&M University Press, 1999).
certain amount of autonomy and the national office was beholden to the branches for they accounted for much of the organization’s drive and ultimate success. Legal campaigns such as the attack on educational inequalities would not have been successful were it not for local branches doing the groundwork in finding willing plaintiffs, financing court cases, and rallying community support. The Baltimore branch proved to be outstanding in this regard, making it one of the top five branches of the Association for decades and the reason why the national office chose Baltimore to implement some of their most important initiatives because of its location and potential for national impact. There were certainly conflicts and tensions within the relationship. Jackson often clashed with national officers due to personality conflicts, issues of autonomy, financial obligations, prioritizing local concerns over fulfilling national objectives, and charges of nepotism and misconduct. However, this did not negate the fact that the local branch and the national office enjoyed a symbiotic relationship and this dissertation illuminates that relationship in rich detail.

This dissertation takes both a chronological and thematic approach. It details the activities of the branch from its resurrection in 1935 until the mid-1970s, but it is selective in what areas it chooses to cover. The Baltimore NAACP was interested in attacking all vestiges of racial segregation and discrimination in Baltimore and Maryland and the scope of their activities was vast. These included desegregating state institutions such as hospitals, orphanages, and prisons; protesting employment discrimination in public utilities; initiating letter-writing campaigns to persuade federal, state, and local legislators to introduce and/or pass meaningful legislation to achieve racial equality; and serving as a de facto welfare agency to respond to the needs of those less fortunate and
suffering from racial discrimination on an individual basis. To try to analytically detail all of the branch’s activities would have resulted in an inflated, potentially unwieldy dissertation that would not be a joy to either write or read. Therefore, I have chosen those areas that were most pertinent for my purposes, highlighting those that had the most national significance and impact to bolster my central argument. Therefore, this dissertation discusses in detail their efforts to eliminate racial segregation and discrimination in education, municipal employment, and public accommodations, address police brutality, register African Americans to become a significant bloc of the voting electorate, and spread the freedom movement into other areas of the state.

In writing this dissertation, I made the conscious effort to construct a narrative story to begin each chapter. I wanted to experiment with historical storytelling, staying true to the principles of historical scholarship, but also aiming to tell a story that is accessible to a broader audience. Therefore, each chapter begins with a narrative that focuses on a particular “character” and details an event that corresponds with the theme of that particular chapter. My hope is that the narrative will draw the reader in and want to delve into the historical background that follows.

The main focus of this study is the Baltimore branch. The intention was not to compare the branch to others of the Association or argue whether the Baltimore NAACP typifies the average branch or is exceptional. Any mention of other branches occurs only when discusses the place of the Baltimore branch in terms of membership numbers. It is important to note, however, that Baltimore, like all branches, had its share of conflicts with the national office and jostled with it over whether to prioritize local over national concerns. It also very well could have been a biography of its long time president Lillie
Jackson, since she looms large due to the longevity and the success achieved under her stewardship. While it does provide biographical information on Jackson and her family, I chose to instead concentrate on examining the broad work of the branch from the prewar period to the end of the Black Power Movement.

This dissertation seeks to fill significant historiographical voids in civil rights studies concerning the NAACP and freedom movements in border states. To date there are only two published study of the Baltimore civil rights movement or the Baltimore NAACP. Lee Sartain’s *Borders of Equality: The NAACP and the Baltimore Civil Rights Struggle, 1914-1970* appeared in early 2013. Admittedly, its publication caught this author by surprise, since I believed that I was aware of all other historians who focused on either the Baltimore NAACP or the Maryland freedom movement. However, though Sartain’s work examines relatively the same time period, that are substantial differences in methodology, scope and content. Sartain employs a class and gender analysis to access the early history of the branch and Jackson’s leadership, which I do not, though I do present a brief gender analysis of Lillie Jackson and Juanita Mitchell as seen by some of their white male critics. There is no discussion of the branch’s efforts to desegregate public recreational facilities. Furthermore, when discussing the student sit-in movement during the 1960s, Sartain seems to concentrate more of his energy on the conflicts that existed between the NAACP, CIG, and CORE rather than the cooperation between them nor is there any discussion of how the Baltimore NAACP felt about Black Power and its relationship to Black Power organizations such as the Black Panthers.\(^\text{15}\)

\(^{15}\) Sartain, 3.
Andor Skotnes’ *A New Deal for All?: Race and Class Struggles in Depression-Era Baltimore* (2013) is concerned with the interaction between the African American freedom movement and the burgeoning labor movement. It concentrates more on the labor movement and ends at the start of World War II. Other works briefly discuss the Baltimore NAACP and only hint at its importance. C. Fraser Smith’s *Here Lies Jim Crow* is a statewide view of civil rights for a popular audience and concentrates more on the personality of Lillie Jackson rather than the organization she led. George Callcott’s *Maryland and America, 1940 to 1980* discusses the importance of the African American freedom movement and the work of the NAACP, making sure to highlight instances in which Maryland influenced or reflected national trends. Barbara Mills’ *Got My Mind Set on Freedom* is a popular account of the African American freedom movement in Maryland from colonial times to the dawn of the twenty-first century from a former activist with Baltimore CORE.\(^{16}\)

Howell Baum’s *Brown in Baltimore* is a detailed and engaging study of the efforts to desegregate the educational system in the city and the NAACP’s role in preparing for the *Brown* ruling and its implementation. Of course, Baum’s examination is more narrowly focused while this dissertation considers the NAACP’s activities more broadly. Kenneth

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Durr’s *Behind the Backlash* and Dan Carter’s *The Politics of Rage* consider Baltimore and Maryland when discussing the national white reaction to civil rights.17

Chapter One gives a detailed history of the imposition of racial segregation in Baltimore, the formation and maturation of the northwest African American community, and the founding of the Baltimore NAACP. Chapter Two examines the revitalization of the Baltimore branch after a period of inactivity during the 1920s and early 1930s and building the membership in the wake of the success of the Forum and the favorable decision in *Murray* that desegregated the University of Maryland Law School. Chapter Three discusses the branch hosting the 1936 Annual NAACP Conference, gives a brief biography of its president, Lillie May Carroll Jackson, and her efforts to build the NAACP into a community institution, and the beginnings of the legal campaign. Chapter Four chronicles the branch’s efforts to extend the freedom movement outside of the city into Baltimore County. It discusses Thurgood Marshall and the NAACP’s unsuccessful attempt to force equalization within segregation in Baltimore County public schools and the successful legal campaign to equalize salaries between black and white teachers.

Chapter Five examines the myriad activities of the branch during the World War II era, when Baltimore was briefly the largest branch of the Association. They include addressing police brutality and the fight to add African Americans to the police force, the 1942 March on Annapolis, the state capital, addressing the shortage in wartime housing,
and the *Kerr v. Pratt* court decision. Chapter Six analyzes the branch’s efforts to desegregate public schools, public recreational facilities, and public accommodations such as downtown department stores. It culminates with Baltimore being the first city below the Mason-Dixon Line to accept the *Brown* decision, its implementation, and the brief backlash against it. Chapter Seven discusses the branch’s relationship with direct action organizations such as the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) and the Civic Interest Group (CIG) and their cooperation and conflicts with them as the nation witnessed the modern civil rights movement. Chapter Eight ends with the Black Power Movement coming to Baltimore with the CORE ‘Target City’ Project, the Baltimore branch’s reaction to and interaction with Black Power organizations, and the effects of the Baltimore riot of 1968. It ends with the resignation of Lillie Jackson as president and the new administration of Enolia McMillan.
Charm City Was Not So Charming

For Juanita Jackson, going back home was bittersweet. As she prepared to leave Philadelphia for Baltimore, she most certainly looked forward to seeing her family again. The Jackson clan was tight knit, and Juanita and her three siblings were always encouraged by their parents to excel. In fact, it was largely her mother’s encouragement that led Juanita to Philadelphia in the first place. When Juanita was only 16, her mother secured a place for her at the prestigious University of Pennsylvania, despite the fact that Juanita had spent her first two years of college at the unaccredited Morgan College. For her mother, that fact should not have deterred Penn from accepting her child. For her part, Juanita was more than up to the challenge. Dr. John Minnick, dean of the School of Education, was thoroughly impressed by Mrs. Jackson’s gumption and Juanita’s academic record. He not only admitted Juanita, but also gave her full credit for her coursework at Morgan.

A very precocious and highly intelligent young woman, there was no doubt in anyone’s mind that Juanita would exceed expectations. At an age when most young

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18 Morgan College, founded by black Methodists, eventually became a state institution in 1939 and a university in 1975, morgan.edu/About_MSU/University_History.html.
19 Juanita Jackson Mitchell and Virginia Jackson Kiah, interview by Charles Wagandt, 15 July 1975, OH 8094, Theodore McKeldin–Lillie May Jackson Oral History Project, Maryland Historical Society, Baltimore, Maryland (hereafter MJOHP), 37-38. Although Morgan was unaccredited, Dr. Minnick was impressed by Lillie Jackson’s courage in bringing Juanita to the University and her deep religious faith.
people were just entering college—eighteen—Juanita graduated as a distinguished student with a bachelor of arts in education. As with most freshly minted college graduates, Juanita wanted to make a significant contribution to her community back home. Her experience as a black teenager in Philadelphia was totally different from her childhood in Baltimore. In fact, Juanita looked at her time in Pennsylvania as a kind of study abroad.\textsuperscript{20}

The first thing that probably struck her was the size of the campus; it was much bigger than Morgan, which consisted of only a few buildings. Plus, the university was surrounded by a bustling city, while Morgan was nestled amongst the trees in the sparsely settled northwest section of the city where students kept to themselves as much as possible so as not to further aggravate the white folks who lived there. Some of the residents were already upset that someone had the nerve to have a black school in their midst without consulting them. Suffice to say, there was no chance that their surrounding ‘neighbors’ were going to do the Christian thing and invite the students or faculty over for dinner or even engage in friendly conversation.\textsuperscript{21}

Philadelphia folks were friendly enough, welcoming even. Everyone she met on campus was, and Juanita met a lot of people, a majority of whom were white. An active person, she was not one of those students who focused all of their attention on their studies; she was just as outgoing as she was studious. Still, people who looked like her

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\textsuperscript{20} Andor Skotnes, “Narratives of Juanita Jackson Mitchell: The Making of a 1930s Freedom Movement Leader,” \textit{Maryland Historian} I (Fall/Winter 2001): 62. In interviews, Mitchell referred to the years she and Virginia spent in Pennsylvania as “our years abroad.” She immediately explained that the experience was “almost like abroad from Maryland.”
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\textsuperscript{21} Morgan College actually started in the Old Northwest section of Baltimore, but was moved at the turn of the century. For more on the history of the institution, see chapter 5.
\end{flushright}
were few in number, and she surrounded herself with those who may have shared her experiences or could sympathize with them. So, she joined Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc., the first sorority organized by and for black women. It connected her with young women of similar interests and backgrounds and trained her in organizing mass meetings and cultural events. They brought such notable African American performers as Paul Robeson and Marian Anderson to the Philadelphia Academy of Music. She also engaged in her first forays into freedom fighting, educating the campus about the scourge of racial prejudice and discrimination by joining with black and white allies in Christian associations that spoke out against racial horrors like lynching.22

She carried that activist spirit with her into the city. Juanita had grown up a Methodist, and she was heavily involved in helping to promote Christian, interracial events in Philadelphia, too. She even parlayed her experience on campus into a position as secretary of the Interracial Commission, an organization sponsored by the American Friends Service Committee. But what really exhilarated her was the wide-open nature of the city. Juanita could go anywhere she wanted and thoroughly enjoy herself. She visited restaurants, museums, theaters, and other public places with no problem whatsoever. That is not to say that there were some places that did not look too kindly on Juanita entering their establishment, but if so, they kept it to themselves.23

What Juanita cherished most about her time in the City of Brotherly Love was that it taught her that she no longer needed to fear white folks. In Baltimore, Juanita was paralyzed by fear, afraid to speak out, afraid to be found on the wrong street—even in her own neighborhood—afraid to venture too far from the protective arms of the black community because of the bitter rebuff she would receive for even looking like she wanted to enter white establishments. White proprietors menacingly reminded her that blacks were not welcomed. Those unpleasant experiences were seared in her memory and happened far too often as far as she was concerned.24

Surprisingly, Juanita experienced little racial discrimination in Philadelphia on or off campus. Frequent interaction with her white classmates made her see that they were just as much flesh-and-bone as she was. She did not have to worry about the insults, the rejection, the stinging rebuff accompanied by a scowling face. But the best part was that she knew she could compete. She not only held her own but she excelled. The world may still have believed that she was inferior because she was black, but Juanita knew the truth, and she would believe in that truth for the rest of her life. The relative absence of racial segregation and discrimination she encountered was how the world she lived in was supposed to be.25

Her experiences in Philadelphia made the rigidity of segregation in Baltimore that much crueler. Juanita did not look forward to going back to the discriminatory world she had left behind in 1929. In fact, she never would have ventured out had the University of Maryland had the decency to recognize that area institutions should be the first choice of

25 Skotnes, ibid.
talented local youngsters of every color. The presiding white fathers in College Park, reflecting the attitude of the state itself, firmly believed that African Americans were not worthy of walking the hallowed halls of its buildings and enjoying the stately beauty of the campus. As a result, those who wanted to make something of themselves were forced to go elsewhere. But, even if one wanted to use his or her education simply to acquire a good job, opportunities to make a fairly decent living were severely limited since whites did their best to keep African Americans “in their place”—at the bottom of the economic ladder.26

Her apprehension was fully warranted. As a black woman in the early twentieth century, Juanita would have been shuttled into a position either as a teacher, a domestic, or some other semi-skilled or unskilled job. The Great Depression further restricted job opportunities for black women. When she and her sister, Virginia, graduated in 1931,27 they met young people at every turn who were becoming disillusioned and frustrated with the situation they faced. There were no opportunities to gain middle class employment as firemen, policemen, social workers, accountants, taxi drivers, or bus drivers—positions that would have made them feel that they were more fully part of their own communities. But what was most galling to her and others, what really stoked their collective fire, was the fact that stores on Pennsylvania Avenue—the “Strip,” the main community artery running their community—were willing to accept their money but were unwilling to hire

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27 A year older than Juanita, Virginia attended the Philadelphia Museum and School of Art at the same time that Juanita attended the University of Pennsylvania.
them to further their own economic advancement. This, Juanita resolved, could not continue. Something had to be done.\textsuperscript{28}

Juanita returned to Baltimore determined to end Jim Crow and open employment opportunities for young people like herself so that they could realize their full potential despite the depression. She most certainly realized that her efforts alone would not suffice and sought an organizational vehicle to assist her, but there was no such entity in Baltimore strong enough to do so. This prompted her to create her own. In the process, she not only revived the black freedom struggle in Baltimore, but also set in motion events that would have a major impact on the national civil rights movement.

\textbf{Up South Baltimore}

Baltimore has many nicknames, one of the most popular being “Charm City.”\textsuperscript{29} But, in the early part of the twentieth century, and for many years afterwards, Baltimore was far from charming for African Americans. To be black in Baltimore meant confronting segregation and racial discrimination. Despite being tied economically to northeastern and western industrial centers, Baltimore was as segregated as any Deep South city. Many white Baltimoreans readily embraced their southern heritage and took pride in the fact that Baltimore was below the Mason-Dixon line. Although Maryland remained in the Union during the Civil War, many of its native-born white residents, whose roots

\textsuperscript{28} Mitchell and Kiah, OH 8094, 40-42; Mitchell, OH 8095, 1-2; Juanita Jackson Mitchell and Virginia Jackson Kiah, interview by Charles Wagandt, 10 January 1976, OH 8097, MJOHP, 1.

\textsuperscript{29} This is just one of several nicknames for the city, the oldest being “Monumental City.”
were in rural Maryland and other southern states, fought for the Confederacy.

Baltimoreans even paid homage to Robert E. Lee and Thomas ‘Stonewall’ Jackson with public statues built as late as 1948.\textsuperscript{30}

Many whites in Baltimore, as well as those in the Maryland countryside, were also southern in their attitude and dealings with African Americans. They believed that African Americans should not occupy the same public spaces as whites or be afforded the same privileges. To maintain this system of control, whites relied on the threat of violence. The specter of being brutalized or murdered by the police in the city (or lynched on the Eastern Shore) was a frightening reality for African Americans. Historian Denton Watson contends that Baltimore was basically “not much more than a big country town, very rural in character and provincial in outlook.” In describing the Baltimore in which she grew up, Juanita characterized it as “a mean city.”\textsuperscript{31}

Race relations in the city were not always this rigid. During the 1870s and 1880s, race relations were fairly fluid, with blacks and whites congregating in the same public spaces. This situation stemmed partly from Baltimore’s geographical location. The largest city in a border state, Baltimore was “neither North nor South,” but was a mixture of both. As a result, Baltimore did not follow the same Jim Crow “script” as other southern states. During the late nineteenth century, African Americans retained their voting rights and


\textsuperscript{31} Mitchell, OH 8095, 11, 14-15; Thompson, “The Civil Rights Vanguard,” 12. In several interviews, Juanita constantly referred to Baltimore as ‘terrible,’ ‘bad,’ and ‘cruel.’

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held public office, despite widespread African American disfranchisement everywhere else in the South. Between 1890 and 1930, black men won seats in 13 out of 18 city council elections. Historian Suzanne Greene says that Baltimore was “almost unique in the continuing presence of blacks in high public office during this period.”

Circumstances soon changed that. Industrialization brought a huge influx of black migrants from other parts of Maryland and from the states of the Upper South such as Virginia and North Carolina, along with large numbers of southern and eastern Europeans competing for the same jobs. These newly arrived black migrants were usually rural, semi-skilled or unskilled, and generally much poorer than native black Baltimoreans and their sheer numbers inspired fear in the native-born white population. To deal with both of these populations, racial and ethnic segregation took root in Baltimore, marking the first time that the city imposed Jim Crow.

In the Baltimore of Juanita Jackson’s youth, segregation existed in some areas by custom. In other areas, it was by law. Hotels, theaters, restaurants, and bars were segregated. Office buildings did not rent to blacks. There were separate schools, beaches, swimming pools, tennis courts, and golf courses, and the black facilities were demonstrably inferior. Some of the worst segregation was in department stores and lunch

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33 Thompson, 13; Harold A. McDougall, *Black Baltimore*, 38.
counter facilities. Some department stores did not allow black women to try on garments before purchasing them; others barred African Americans from entering altogether. In fact, segregation was so bad in downtown Baltimore, the hub of the white business district, that some places, such as historic Ford’s Theater, forced blacks into segregated balconies. Even the Catholic churches had segregated seating for those African Americans who did not belong to one of the few all-black parishes. According to attorney and civil rights activist Thurgood Marshall, another Baltimore native, “The only thing different between the South and Baltimore was trolley cars. They weren’t segregated. Everything else was segregated.”

The prosperity that Baltimore experienced during the ‘Roaring 20s’ eluded a majority of African Americans. Blacks still found themselves crowded into the oldest and most congested areas of the city and were subjected to disproportionately high rates of disease, unemployment, poverty, crime, and infant mortality. In fact, infant mortality was thirty to fifty percentage points higher than in white areas of the city. In a metropolis that prided itself on being a “city of homeowners,” few African Americans could share in one of the cornerstones of the American Dream. Whereas over fifty percent of whites could boast that they owned their home, only seventeen percent of African Americans could make the same claim. Blacks also found themselves on the wrong side of the law. Their

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arrest rate during the 1920s was twice that of whites. By the early 1930s, African Americans constituted almost fifty percent of those incarcerated in the city jail.  

Employment discrimination prevented the majority of African Americans from enjoying a comfortable standard of living. According to the 1930 census, Baltimore City, a separate entity from Baltimore County, had a total population of 804,874, of which African Americans numbered 142,106 or 17.6 percent. Except for a few teachers, African Americans only constituted 2 percent of municipal workers, and 80 percent of that small percentage were black men employed as common laborers. Other black men worked as janitors, butlers, and porters or as ‘casual laborers’ who were irregularly employed. Many of these jobs were low paying, dirty, dangerous, and offered little job security. Most black women, about half of whom worked outside of their homes, constituted 87 percent of domestics and personal servants, earning as little as $6 a week. There were no black policemen, firemen, librarians or public transportation operators found anywhere in the city. Even in their own communities, African Americans could not serve as clerks or cashiers in stores that had an almost exclusive black clientele. It is no wonder that Thurgood Marshall referred to the city as “Up South Baltimore.”

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36 Mitchell, OH 8095, 16-17; Karen Olson, “Old West Baltimore: Segregation, African-American Culture, and the Struggle for Equality,” in *The Baltimore Book: New Views of Local History*, ed. Elizabeth Fee, Linda Shopes, and Linda Zeidman (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991), 61; Jo Ann E. Argersinger, *Toward A New Deal in Baltimore*, 3-4; Marshall’s quote is from Watson, 81. The limited employment opportunities in Baltimore reflected those in Maryland as a whole. African Americans numbered 276,379 (16.9 percent) out of a total population of 1,631,526 in 1930. 47,900 African Americans worked in domestic and personal service, 36,612 worked in semi-skilled or unskilled occupations, and 21,793 were agricultural workers. Very few owned land or were self-employed. The number employed in middle-class occupations were
Though segregation in Baltimore was harsh, the color line was not impenetrable. One of the things that made segregation in Baltimore “unique” was the fact that whites did not possess the “segregation or death” mentality of white communities in the Deep South. This attitude illustrates what has been termed the “passive aggressive” or “schizophrenic” nature of Baltimore—and Maryland—race relations. Whites sought to enforce the social separation of the races, but if there was a concerted effort to challenge the imposition of Jim Crow segregation then in some instances whites were willing to back off. For example, when Baltimore was implementing Jim Crow segregation in the early twentieth century, the Maryland General Assembly passed a law requiring segregation on all railroad lines in 1904. A bill was introduced in 1908 that sought to extend segregation to include all electric lines and steamboats. Though the legislation was popular in certain counties with a substantial black population, it was not in the city. To protest these new laws, community and civil rights activists such as Rev. Harvey Johnson, pastor of the 3,000-member Union Baptist Church, W. Ashbie Hawkins, a lawyer and future president of the Baltimore NAACP, and others rallied support that threatened to boycott the use of public transportation if it took effect within city limits. Baltimore was exempted from the

law, but African Americans in other parts of the state faced the humiliation of racial separation.\textsuperscript{38}

As demonstrated above, the primary reason that changes were brought about in Baltimore was that the black community was not willing to wait for the white community to decide whether or not black folks deserved full equality; it organized itself to fight for those rights. Segregated black communities throughout the South, using the resources within those communities, mobilized themselves to push for full integration into mainstream American society, and the African American community of Baltimore was no different. Individuals and institutions within the community served two important purposes. First, they sought to protect citizens from the harshness of life outside by forming close-knit bonds that affirmed their humanity. Second, they sought to give these same individuals a sense of purpose by organizing them to attack the very system that forced the community’s creation in the first place. This was particularly true of the black community of Northwest Baltimore, also called Old West Baltimore.\textsuperscript{39}

**Old West Baltimore—A Segregated, but Mature Community Takes Shape**

It is highly doubtful that those who sought to dictate where African Americans resided in Baltimore in the late nineteenth century fully realized that they were actually providing a base for a strong, culturally rich black community to attack the discriminatory system

\textsuperscript{38} Thompson, 31; Skotnes, “The Black Freedom Movement,” 65.

that was responsible for its establishment in the first place. Created by racial segregation and what historian Karen Olson calls “deliberate, often mean-spirited exclusion,” the African American community in Northwest Baltimore not only carved out a decent place to live and raise children but also consolidated its strength to press for first-class citizenship. It was from segregated Old West Baltimore that African Americans created a new black freedom movement in the 1930s.⁴⁰

Prior to 1890, African Americans were not concentrated in one specific residential area, but were scattered throughout the city. Mass migration as a result of urbanization brought thousands of African Americans from rural Maryland and the Upper South along with a large influx of southern and eastern Europeans between 1880 and 1900. Coming with very little money, both groups settled initially in East Baltimore where cheap housing was available and where most of the industries that were looking for cheap labor were located. However, racial prejudice in the job market forced new black immigrants to move to other areas and the new European immigrants displaced those African Americans already settled in East Baltimore. Many of those who were displaced settled in the southwestern section of the city, which by the 1890s had developed into the city’s first black ghetto. It became known as “Pigtown” because the conditions were reminiscent of a pig sty. The residents lived in poorly ventilated and poorly sanitized alley homes. Disease was rampant. Those who could moved away from Pigtown in a

northwesterly direction, settling in the Biddle Street area, displacing the mostly German families there, who relocated to newly developing suburbs.⁴¹

The expansion of existing industries also contributed to the flight of African Americans to the northwest. As the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad expanded its yards in South Baltimore after the turn of the century, over one hundred families had to relocate to the Biddle Street area. This constant influx soon saw the same poor conditions develop there as existed in Pigtown, and it quickly became the city’s most congested slum, with rampant poverty, crime, and contagious diseases. In fact, one street of crowded, two and three story tenement houses that contained multiple families was infamously known as “Lung Block,” since each home contained at least one person with tuberculosis.⁴²

Again, conditions around Biddle Street prompted more black flight as middle class African Americans moved again in a northwesterly direction, creating the community that developed into Old West Baltimore. Old West Baltimore was bounded by North Avenue to the north, Franklin Street to the south, Madison Street to the east, and Fulton Street to the west. Pennsylvania Avenue ran straight through the area and served as both an entertainment and business center. Old West Baltimore was approximately one-mile north to south and a quarter of a mile east to west. It contained a number of black professionals, including doctors, lawyers, and business people, a large number of

⁴² Thompson, 14. According to reports by the Baltimore Urban League, these other families may have been boarders, which not only assisted new migrants, but brought in much needed income to struggling families. Two-thirds of African American families took in boarders compared to less than one-fourth of other Baltimoreans. During the 1920s, boarding increased among African Americans while declining among whites. Argersinger, 4.
working-class folks, and some of the city’s poorest residents. Black professionals primarily occupied three-story brick rowhouses on Druid Hill Avenue, McCullough Street, and Madison Avenue, while the working class and the poor occupied dwellings on adjacent streets and in alleyways.\textsuperscript{43}

For its African Americans residents, Old West Baltimore was an exciting place to live; a city within a city that provided a respite from the hostile world outside. By the beginning of the 1930s, Old West Baltimore offered its citizens almost everything, except jobs. It was a neighborhood where businesses, schools, and homes stood next to one another and where residents formed close-knit bonds. Old West Baltimore was home to some of the oldest, strongest, and most respected institutions of African Americans in the entire city. Three of the largest churches were there. Sharp Street Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church (1898), Union Baptist Church (1908), and Bethel African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church (1910) all arrived in Old West Baltimore within a twelve-year period and stand within two blocks of each other.\textsuperscript{44} These and other churches, including Douglass Memorial, Sharon Baptist, and Enon Baptist among others, served not only as places of worship but fulfilled many of the social, educational, and economic needs of the community. Social and community meetings and activities, both religious and secular, were held there, and many educational and professional institutions had their origins in the church. These churches were the nerve center of the community, and


\textsuperscript{44} Thompson, 17-19, 22; Ryon, 57-58; Olson, 63.
served as magnets that pulled and anchored their congregants and others to Northwest Baltimore.\textsuperscript{45}

Old West Baltimore was also the entertainment center of Black Baltimore. Pennsylvania Avenue, widely known as “The Avenue,” or “The Strip,” was the place to go for a good time. Bars, juke joints, and nightclubs were located all along Pennsylvania Avenue and the adjacent streets and alleys. Dixon’s Comedy Club, the New Albert Auditorium, the Strand Ballroom, and others provided first-rate entertainment. African Americans from all over Baltimore and black servicemen from posts all over Maryland, excluded from base entertainment facilities, flocked to “The Avenue.”\textsuperscript{46}

Without a doubt, the pride of the “Strip” was the Royal Theater. Built in 1921, the Royal seated nearly 1,400 people and enjoyed a national reputation. The Royal was on “the chitlin circuit,” a network of white-owned establishments that featured top black entertainers and catered to a black audience, though whites attended them as well. The Royal was on par with the Howard in Washington, D.C., the Regal in Chicago, the Earl in Philadelphia, and the Apollo in Harlem. Famous entertainers such as Louis Armstrong, Billie Holiday, Duke Ellington, and Dizzy Gillespie regularly performed at the Royal, along with other popular black musicians, singers, and comedians, usually to capacity crowds. The Royal was the place to see and be seen, and to attend denoted a certain status.\textsuperscript{47}

\textsuperscript{45} Thompson, 19; Shoemaker, “We Shall Overcome Someday,” 265-266.
\textsuperscript{46} Thompson, 18; Olson, 65-66; Brugger, \textit{Maryland: A Middle Temperament}, 472, 475-6; Ryon, 65-66.
\textsuperscript{47} Thompson, 18, Olson, 65-66.
The only visible ugliness of segregation in Old West Baltimore were the businesses located on Pennsylvania Avenue. When the neighborhood became predominately African American, white business owners stayed on, accepting these new residents as part of their clientele. Many of these stores provided essential needs and services and were more convenient than the stores downtown. Unfortunately, these stores changed their clientele, but not their hiring practices; only whites served as cashiers and clerks. Ironically, blacks were good enough to shop in their neighborhood but could not work there. African Americans resented this situation from the beginning and later organized to rid themselves of this blight on the community.\footnote{Thompson, 17-18; Mitchell and Kiah, OH 8094, 41-42; Mitchell and Kiah, OH 8097, 1-2.}

If the residents of Old West Baltimore could be proud of nothing else in their neighborhood, they could most certainly be proud of the fact that their community was the home of the \textit{Afro-American} newspaper. The \textit{Afro}, as it was commonly called, is a very substantial and influential institution within this Northwest community. Though its heartbeat was in Old West Baltimore, its pulse was felt throughout the city, state, and indeed, the nation. Founded in 1892 by Rev. William Alexander, pastor of Sharon Baptist Church, the paper was taken over in 1896 by John H. Murphy, Sr., who saved it from bankruptcy. Serving as its first printer, he combined it with a rival paper, the \textit{Ledger}. In 1919, Murphy’s son, Carl, took over the editorship of the paper.\footnote{Thompson, 20. The paper was briefly called the \textit{Afro-American Ledger}.}

Dr. Carl H. Murphy was a native son of Old West Baltimore. A graduate of Douglass High School, he earned an M.A. in German from Harvard University, and did a year of advanced studies at Jena University in Germany. He was teaching German at Howard
University when he took over the paper. The *Afro* flourished under his editorship, turning into a weekly newspaper that had offices in Washington, D.C., Richmond, Virginia, and Philadelphia, in addition to Baltimore. It also reported news and was sold in the Mid-Atlantic region and New England. In fact, the *Afro* gained such a wide circulation that only the Chicago *Defender* and the Pittsburgh *Courier* could boast of wider circulation and distribution. Despite its national scope, the *Afro’s* focus remained Baltimore, with two local editions as well as a national edition.\(^{50}\)

In addition to reporting news important to the African American community, the *Afro* was also one of the most successful black businesses in Baltimore. More importantly though, the *Afro* provided leadership within the black community. The *Afro* spoke to and for the African American community, articulating its wants, needs, concerns, and demands. The *Afro* was straightforward in its advocacy of equality, justice, and fair play, and Murphy and other editors were not afraid to boldly state their positions on a number of issues, sometimes presenting different opinions. The *Afro* was also the voice of black opinion, providing an outlet for the views of its readership. The *Afro* was a strong advocate and supporter of black self-help, and took the lead in sponsoring cooking classes and clean block campaigns that were extremely popular and drew thousands of participants.\(^{51}\)

The *Afro’s* greatest contribution was that it was a strong supporter of those institutions and organizations that pushed for an end to segregation and racial discrimination, and Dr.


\(^{51}\) Thompson, 21-22; Shoemaker, 267-270.
Murphy himself was a member of several of these organizations. Organizations such as the NAACP could always count on the *Afro* to support their efforts and report on their activities, with the NAACP returning the favor. The *Afro* was crucial to the success of any program or activity that sought to destroy segregation and gain full equality for not only African Americans, but for all citizens.\(^5^2\)

All of the above institutions—the *Afro*, the churches, the fraternal, social, and religious organizations, and the entertainment centers—served, along with many individuals, to make Old West Baltimore a decent place to live and raise a family. This mature, self-contained community also helped to give its citizens a sense of protection and comfort from the all too often hostile outside world. Children raised in Old West Baltimore were shielded as much as possible from the worst aspects of Jim Crow, which resulted in many of them having a healthy sense of self-worth as they matured into adulthood. However, all were painfully aware that they could become a victim of racial hostility at any moment, and frequent incidents of police brutality in the city or a lynching on the Eastern Shore were stark reminders of that. Generally however, most residents maintained very little contact with the white world, and lived their entire lives within Old West Baltimore’s boundaries.\(^5^3\)

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52 Shoemaker, Ibid; Enolia McMillan, interview by Richard Richardson, 6 April 1976, OH 8110, MJOHP, 8. Murphy was a member of the national NAACP’s Board of Directors from 1931 until his death in 1967. He also was a member of Maryland’s Interracial Commission. Historian August Meier says that Murphy was the de facto head of the black community in Baltimore and was powerful enough to play an active role in selecting executives and board members for both the Baltimore branch and the Baltimore Urban League. See, August Meier, *A White Scholar and the Black Community: Essays and Reflections* (Amherst, Massachusetts: University of Massachusetts Press, 1992), 22.

53 Thompson, 22; Ryon, 57-62, 66; Watson, 82. Watson notes that Clarence Mitchell, Jr. grew up not knowing that African Americans were looked upon as second-class citizens
Besides protection from segregation and discrimination, the institutions of Northwest Baltimore also sought to unite the community to attack them. Generally isolated from the white community, and strongly believing in the Christian principle that all were equal under God, African Americans in Baltimore, but especially Old West Baltimore, never accepted their second-class status in. Realizing that what affected one affected all, these institutions—the *Afro*, the churches, and organizations like the Baltimore NAACP—formed a strong coalition that used the resources of the black community to fight for full freedom, justice, and equality. In an ironic twist of fate, segregation brought about its own demise, for in creating segregated communities it unconsciously brought together forces that mobilized people to press for first-class citizenship, using these very communities as a power base and source of strength.\(^5^4\)

**The NAACP Comes To Town**

Discrimination in residential housing prompted the formation of the Baltimore NAACP in 1911,\(^5^5\) the second branch established by the three-year-old organization. Due to the constant influx of African-Americans in the area, Old West Baltimore began

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\(^{54}\) Thompson, 13, 22.

\(^{55}\) There are several founding years for the Baltimore branch. Lucille Black, long-time national NAACP membership secretary, gives 1911 as the founding year. April 4, 1912 was declared the founding date when Mayor Theodore McKeldin proclaimed it NAACP Day in the city in 1963. However, a charter and regular correspondence dates from 1914. This was the year of the branch’s first president, Dr. F.N. Cardozo, a physician, who was also added to the national board of directors. See Sartain, 16.
to bulge at the seams of its segregated boundaries. To stop the spillage of African Americans into other areas, the city government passed three segregation ordinances in 1910 and 1911 that sought to prohibit African Americans from purchasing or occupying homes on blocks that were fifty-one percent white. Likewise, whites could not do the same on blocks that were fifty-one percent black.  

In 1913, in defending John E. Gurry, an African American who moved into an all-white block, W. Ashbie Hawkins, counsel for the Baltimore NAACP, successfully challenged the ordinances in both the Baltimore Criminal Court and the Maryland Court of Appeals, which declared the ordinances unconstitutional. The Gurry case was the first victory for the newly formed chapter. Unfortunately, the branch found it hard to maintain a consistent presence in the city for the next few decades because of the difficulties in finding people willing to put in the time and effort to lead. In addition, the branch seemed to largely serve the interests of the black middle class and found little support from the masses. By the beginning of the Great Depression the Baltimore NAACP existed in name only. Though there were no other organizations actively involved in defending black civil rights and attacking segregation and racial discrimination, the elimination of it remained a top priority for black Baltimoreans throughout the 1920s and 1930s. Developing ways to lessen its impact or completely eradicate it became even more urgent during the Great Depression because jobs were already scarce due to discrimination. The Depression, though, worsened things. Black Baltimoreans were restless and ready to move, and it would take an organization that had

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56 Ibid, 34-35.
57 Ibid, 35. The Maryland Court of Appeals found it unconstitutional because it didn’t allow an owner, because of race, to occupy housing that he or she owned.
the energy, daring, and resolve to organize them and re-kindle the fight for civil rights.

That organization was the City-Wide Young People’s Forum.\textsuperscript{58}

\textsuperscript{58} Ibid, 35-39.
Wanted: “A Brainy and Energetic Woman”

Carl Murphy was frustrated. It seems that, once again, the Baltimore NAACP will become inactive because of a lack of commitment and leadership. In fact, if the reports he has been receiving are true, the effects could be much worse. Not only did the branch president, Rev. Clark, fail to build the membership and make it relevant to African Americans in the city in the year since assuming the office in mid-1931, he has potentially brought shame upon the organization’s name through his personal actions. Murphy was informed not too long ago that Clark had been arrested in Virginia for grand larceny. This could not have come at a more inopportune time. The NAACP had previously received harsh criticism for not taking the lead on a number of pertinent issues concerning black folks in the state, such as saving Euel Lee’s life from the lynch mob’s noose. Once again, the Communist Party stepped up when the NAACP hesitated, just like with the Scottsboro Boys. 59 This could not be allowed to continue. Clark should certainly be commended for taking the office when no one else would, but he had not distinguished himself as an effective leader during his tenure and these new charges did not help. This was one more setback that the branch could not afford.

59 Lee was a sixty-year-old farm worker who confessed to murdering a white family in the eastern shore town of Ocean City in October 1931 over a financial dispute. To prevent his lynching, he was transferred to Baltimore and held until trial, where the International Labor Defense (I.L.D.), the Communist Party’s legal arm, defended him. For more on Lee and the outcome of the trial, see Thompson, 66-70.
Murray had been trying desperately for years to activate the Baltimore NAACP, and these fits and starts were not what he envisioned in trying to rebuild a branch that distinguished itself as one of the Association’s best during the 1910s. He had always been a strong supporter, not just as an individual, but also as the head of the Afro. The branch’s leadership did not have to seek the paper’s backing; it was automatic. Murphy saw the branch as the best vehicle to carry out the Afro’s civil rights agenda that it boldly and consistently printed in every issue, and the failed efforts were disappointing, to say the least. It was further embarrassing as a member of the Association’s board of directors to not have a strong branch in his own city. Several people, including NAACP top brass, had suggested that maybe he should be president given his fervent desire, but Murphy always declined.\textsuperscript{60} Running the Afro occupied too much of his time, and he figured that he would much rather excel at one thing than fail at two. No, someone else would have to take charge, but there were not many people that Murphy believed were up to the challenge.

Walter White and Robert Bagnall of the National Office shared Murphy’s sentiments. They, too, believed that somehow, someway, the branch needed to be brought back to life. Bagnall, as director of branches, thought it particularly shameful that Baltimore’s black community, which had always supported the NAACP, should be bereft of a viable, fully functioning branch. They deserved better, but branch leadership was shortsighted and lazy, to be perfectly honest. They were also not pulling their weight financially during these troubling times, knowing that the NAACP needed every dollar it could get.

\textsuperscript{60} Robert Bagnall, the director of branches, had suggested to Murphy that he head the branch, but Murphy recommended Rev. A.C. Clark instead. See Sartain, 20.
to survive. He had made several attempts to contact branch leadership and offer his assistance, even proposing to personally come down to Baltimore and talk about it. His efforts were ignored, compounding the frustration and annoyance with Clark and his crew. There was no doubt in his mind that they needed to be replaced, and he told Murphy as much. But the big question was with whom?

After much thought, Murphy believed he had the answer. He realized that the branch had relied on ministers and professionals too much. Yes, they already proved themselves to be leaders of their individual congregations, or sharp entrepreneurs, and gave the branch legitimacy in the eyes of those who may have been skeptical of possible Communist influence, but having to split their time ultimately proved detrimental. In the end, their vocation would always take second place to their livelihood, and really, no one could blame them. Plus, these men belonged to the old guard leadership who were set in their ways and reluctant to try new things—complacency was far more comfortable.

They were not trying to shake things up. What the branch needed was new ideas, new ways of thinking, and new means of taking action, and if that meant getting someone who was not a minister or a doctor—or even a man, for that matter—than so be it.

Murphy had been mulling over something that someone had suggested to him not too long ago. Maybe, just maybe, the organization deserved to be led by a “brainy and energetic woman.” The idea of a woman heading the branch was not that far-fetched. Lillie Lottier, a teacher, had taken charge before in 1924, although it only lasted for a
year.\textsuperscript{61} Unfortunately, Murphy himself could not break free from accepted gender roles, and he suggested his friend, W.A.C. Hughes, a lawyer, to be the president, though Rev. C.Y. Trigg got the job in 1933. It was not long before the branch ran into the same problem, and going with a “brainy and energetic woman” became even more appealing.

In Baltimore, there was no lack of women with both attributes and much more. Two women, in particular, immediate came to mind—Juanita Jackson and her mother, Lillie. Juanita was outstanding in leading the Young People’s Forum, as their name was on the lips of almost every black Baltimorean because of its success with the Buy-Where-You-Can-Work campaign and other endeavors. Murphy personally knew Lillie Jackson and had for a long time, having gone to high school with her. She had done a remarkable job in raising funds for the Forum, and was deeply involved in her church. She was a successful entrepreneur who had the time and resources to take on the position. Since Walter White already had his eye on utilizing Juanita’s skills,\textsuperscript{62} Lillie Jackson seemed to be the perfect candidate. Plus, she seemed more than willing to take on the responsibility. Someone just needed to be bold enough to ask.

\textsuperscript{61} Lottier was unhappy as president and decided to step down and serve as an organizer. She also helped to found and organize the Baltimore Urban League the following year. See Sartain, 11.

\textsuperscript{62} Juanita Jackson would be tapped by Walter White to serve as his special assistant and be responsible for reorganizing the youth and college chapters of the NAACP to build a nationwide youth movement. See Tommy Bynum, “We Must March Forward!”: Juanita Jackson and the NAACP Youth Movement,” \textit{Journal of African American History} (Fall 2009): 487-508.
The City-Wide Young People’s Forum

From 1931 to 1942 the Forum was the leading civil rights organization in Baltimore, raising the political and social consciousness of the black community and breaking down barriers to equal opportunity and racial equality. Virginia and Juanita Jackson, the daughters of Lillie Jackson, came up with the idea of the Forum. Both graduated from college in 1931—Juanita from the University of Pennsylvania and Virginia from the Philadelphia Museum and School of Art. When they returned to Baltimore, they found that job opportunities were severely limited. Though the Depression affected all segments of the black community, it was especially hard on those young people in college or who already had earned degrees because they returned to their community only to find that “young people had nothing to do.” In the words of Juanita Mitchell, the Great Depression “was taking its toll on youth, destroying their enthusiasm, blighting their ideals, and robbing them of opportunities.”

In order to provide some relief, the Jackson sisters, with the enthusiastic support of their mother, planned to develop the Forum as a place where young people could go on

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63 Most studies on the Baltimore civil rights movement trace its beginning to the revitalization of the Baltimore NAACP in 1935 under the dynamic leadership of Dr. Lillie Jackson. See Shoemaker, 261-273; Callcott, 146; and Olson, 67, for this view. However, Thompson convincingly argues that the branch owed its rejuvenation to the City-Wide Young People’s Forum (1931-1942). See Thompson, 40-151.
64 Although the idea of creating the Forum belongs to Virginia, she soon realized that Juanita had more experience as an organizer, having organized events while at the University of Pennsylvania. Therefore, Juanita is acknowledged as being the official founder and first president. Mitchell and Kiah, OH 8094, 40-41; Thompson, 44-45.
65 Mitchell, OH 8095, 1-2; Mitchell and Kiah, OH 8097, 1; Thompson, 41; McNeil, 59. The quote is from William Dorsey, a young Baltimorean. The Jackson quote is from Thompson, 41.
Friday evenings for little or no cost and engage in a myriad of activities. These activities were to develop the talents of young people and feed them and the larger community spiritually, socially, and intellectually. After two previous meetings that drew overwhelming support, the City-Wide Young People’s Forum was officially founded on October 24, 1931 at Sharp Street Memorial Methodist Church.\(^{66}\)

The Forum grew rapidly. By the end of its first year it had one hundred members representing twenty churches and six denominations. Its weekly Friday-evening meetings, which occurred from October through April, were enormously popular, attracting between five hundred to one thousand people on a weekly basis, sometimes reaching as many as two thousand. The overwhelming majority of the attendees were African American but the Forum did attract some progressive whites. The large crowds were part of the reason why the Forum moved from its original home in the Sharp Street church to the Bethel A.M.E. Church, which had a larger auditorium.\(^{67}\)

Young people looked forward to these gatherings to lift their spirits after a depressingly frustrating week trying to find employment. By 1934, the Forum claimed a

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\(^{66}\) Thompson, 44; McNeil, 60. The formation of the Forum was made more urgent because the Baltimore black community was outraged over reports of attempted lynchings on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. See Skotnes, “The Black Freedom Movement,” 191.

\(^{67}\) Thompson, 85; McNeil, 60. The other reason why the Forum moved is that Sharp Street’s pastor, Reverend Waters, would grow increasingly disturbed by the Forum’s developing race consciousness and ‘radicalism,’ particularly their militant stance against lynching prompted by the case of Matthew Williams, a mentally-challenged black man who allegedly killed his employer over a pay increase in the Eastern Shore town of Salisbury. Williams attempted suicide but instead ended up in the hospital where a white mob numbering around two thousand, dragged him from his bed, hanged him on the courthouse lawn, and then took the body to the black business district and set it ablaze. See “Eye Witness to Lynching Tells How Mob Acted,” Afro, 12 December 1931; “Matthew Williams, Negro, Murderer of Daniel J. Elliott, Lynched at Salisbury, Md.,” Baltimore Sun 5 December 1931; Thompson, 62, 65.
membership of five hundred youth and young adults representing thirty-six churches and nine denominations. Although a fair number of these young people were from the black middle class like the Jackson sisters, the Forum was able to attract a strong following from all socioeconomic backgrounds. It should also be noted that although young people constituted a majority of the Forum’s membership and leadership, it enthusiastically welcomed the participation and advice of adults, many of them longtime activists and community leaders. They also had the strong backing of the church, which gave it an air of legitimacy in the eyes of many black residents. This helped the Forum earn respect and garner financial and moral support from individuals, organizations, and institutions in the community such as the *Afro*.

One of the primary objectives of the Forum was to expose its members to “experts in the various fields on the variety of problems which confront them and to discuss freely their ideas on these subjects.” Many of these experts were local activists, but the Forum also attracted speakers of national stature as well, furthering its popularity in the community. From 1931 to 1934, the Forum’s peak years, the community heard from such African American luminaries as Mary McLeod Bethune, Nannie Helen Burroughs, Charles Hamilton Houston, E. Franklin Frazier, Ralph Bunche, James Weldon Johnson, Sterling Brown, and national NAACP leaders Walter White, W.E.B. DuBois, Roy Wilkins, and William Pickens—a group historian Andor Skotnes calls the “national black intelligentsia.” As time progressed and the influence and reputation of the Forum grew, it attracted speakers from across the color line, particularly local and national progressive

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68 Thompson, 87-90; McNeil, 60. A major reason why the churches supported the Forum was due to the efforts of Lillie Jackson, who headed the Forum’s adult advisory committee and was a very active member of Sharp Street Church.
whites who represented various political persuasions, such as the Communists (Bernard Ades, a local Communist leader), Socialists (local party leaders Broadus Mitchell and Frank Trager), and New Deal Democrats (Clark Foreman).  

Both local and national speakers enraptured Forum audiences, discussing a wide range of topics, including African American history and culture, the history of the NAACP, migration from rural areas, racial consciousness, discrimination in relief, the black press, local, state and national politics, the criminal justice system, strategies to eliminate educational discrimination, black labor and radicalism, and the African origins of African Americans. These lectures were designed not only to inform, but also to inspire and motivate the audience to take action, a process that Skotnes says implicitly constructed a strong black ethnic identity and fostered community empowerment. No topic was off limits and some of them proved to be very controversial. What was unique about the Forum was that the audience itself chose some of the speakers and topics.

Because the Forum’s foundation was the black church, religion was also a popular topic. However, the Forum was not only interested in discussing religion as a cornerstone of their cultural and ethnic identity, but as a wellspring for their social activism. The Forum hoped to use religion to inform both personal moral behavior and collective social action designed to alleviate community ills. It was the conscious efforts

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69 Mitchell and Kiah, OH 8097, 42-43; McNeil, 60; Skotnes, “The Black Freedom Movement,” 197, 199. The other primary objectives of the Forum were leadership development, community activism, developing and expanding employment opportunities, intergenerational communication and cooperation, interracial fellowship, and developing spiritual consciousness. See Thompson, 81-82.

to have their strong faith in the social gospel undergird their civil rights activism that caused Juanita Jackson to characterize the Forum as “militant” and “radical.”\footnote{Skotnes, 198. As noted above in note 43, a few pastors, like Reverend Waters, believed that using religion to foster social and political action was beyond the purview of the church and caused them to be suspicious of the Forum’s motives and intentions.}

Despite its success at drawing in informative speakers, the Forum still had to deal with the fact that many people were unemployed and suffering under the weight of racial discrimination and the Great Depression. The black community, particularly youth, were already angered at employment discrimination, for Northwest Baltimore was “a totally segregated community and the barriers to economic opportunity were formidable.”\footnote{Mitchell and Kiah, OH 8097, 1; Thompson, 91-92.} The Great Depression certainly did not help matters. The black unemployment rate was nearly fifty percent, and by 1934, 42 percent of African Americans were receiving relief. In order to open up employment opportunities for young people and widen the spectrum of positions they could occupy, the Forum would have to challenge racial discrimination head-on as the first step in achieving full equality.\footnote{Thompson, 72-82; McNeil, 64-66; Argersinger, 8. According to Argersinger, even black women, who had a virtual monopoly on domestic service jobs, suffered during the early years, as one employment agency reported in 1934 that black women only filled 10 percent of the calls for a nursemaid, as opposed to 65 percent in 1928. The situation would not change until 1940.}

The Forum’s initial forays into civil rights activism were in support of the efforts of other organizations. In 1932, the Forum cooperated with the Communist Party and its legal arm, the International Labor Defense, in defense of Euel Lee, a black man accused of murdering his employer and his family over a labor dispute on Maryland’s Eastern Shore in October 1931. The Forum collected $73.60 for the defense fund and gathered petition signatures to stay his execution because of the lack of African Americans on the
jury. The Forum also supported the unsuccessful efforts of the Committee to Repeal the Maryland Jim Crow Law, a group of black and white organizations, to end segregation throughout the state in 1932 and 1933. Lastly, the Forum conducted door-to-door canvassing for a voter registration campaign sponsored by the *Afro* and led by the Good Citizens League during the same period.\(^74\)

By spring of 1933, the Forum felt comfortable and confident enough to initiate its own civil rights protest activities. These activities were in accordance with their third objective, which was to “open up avenues of employment for efficient qualified youth.” This new campaign sought to open up positions at the Enoch Pratt Free Library, a tax-supported institution, and training for such positions; to equitably distribute positions in the public school system; and to increase the number of black welfare workers in the Family Welfare Association.\(^75\)

The Forum exhibited its burgeoning maturation as a protest organization by not only initiating its own campaign but also formulating a process by which they chose their particular objectives. Instead of arbitrarily deciding the course that the Forum would take, the executive committee sought the input of their adult advisory committee, consulted with respected community leaders, polled those at the “town hall” meetings every Friday evening, and then finalized their decision based on the feedback. Lastly, the Forum demonstrated that it had a deep understanding of black folks’ needs by demanding positions that could be filled by qualified young people and assist the broader

\(^{74}\) Skotnes, 206-207. Lee would eventually exhaust his appeals and the courts refused to stay his execution, which occurred in October 1933. For more on the Euel Lee case, see Thompson, 66-71.

\(^{75}\) McNeil, 64; Skotnes, 207.
community, since by then 54 percent of black families were on relief and the targeted library branch (Pitcher Street) had a clientele that was 98 percent African American.\textsuperscript{76}

The Forum achieved a modicum of success with its own campaign. Between March and April 1933, the Forum gathered 6,000 petition signatures in support of opening the library training program and hiring black social workers. The Forum’s attorney, W.A.C. Hughes, Jr., presented the petitions to the Board of Estimates. The mayor, Howard Jackson, quickly shuttled the petitions to the Board of Trustees of the library and the Family Welfare Association administration. Not counting on the Welfare Administration to handle the demand on its own, the Forum cooperated with the reactivated Baltimore Urban League, under the direction of Edward Lewis, and was successful in acquiring employment for five black social workers with the Baltimore Emergency Relief Commission, which administered all welfare in the city. The Forum achieved this victory relatively easily by putting pressure on the head of welfare, and did not have to resort to a picket line. By 1934, eighteen black social workers were assisting needy families.\textsuperscript{77}

The Enoch Pratt Library was not willing to give up so easily. The library administration took the request to open up the training program at the Pitcher Street branch as the first step in demanding that the main branch downtown employ black librarians, which was totally segregated. In order to stave off the demand for qualified

\textsuperscript{76} Ibid. Skotnes also points out that the Forum chose to address issues that were part of the seven points of the ‘traditional’ civil rights agenda advocated on the masthead of every issue of the \textit{Afro-American} for over a decade that demanded equal employment opportunities in public, tax-supported institutions such as schools, libraries and social welfare agencies and that the positions demanded were in relatively middle-class occupations, which spoke to the economic orientation of most of the Forum’s leadership and membership. See Skotnes, 208-209.

\textsuperscript{77} Skotnes, 208. Bruce Thompson claims that six black social workers were hired. See Thompson, 81.
black applicants to enter the training program, the library, with the complicity of the city government, made the spurious claim that despite budgetary support from the city, the library was actually a private corporation not beholden to the demands of the city or the public. The battle to open up the library training program would be waged years later under the re-organized Baltimore branch.78

The Forum’s employment campaign came into its own in the form of a boycott that took place in the fall of 1933. One of the other racially discriminatory practices that the Forum wanted desperately to end was the refusal of white retail stores within the black community—or those in the city with large a black clientele—to hire African Americans to work in those stores at something other than a janitor. Juanita Jackson confronted this situation daily since:

Right across the street from where I lived at 1216 Druid Hill Avenue there was this A&P Store with all white sales clerks…And all over this Northwest ghetto, and all over the city, we had just white in black communities. Wouldn’t let us have jobs. Up at Lafayette Market, which is about six blocks up over on Pennsylvania Avenue, they had these stalls, and they wouldn’t let us in, except for cleaning up and just menial work.79

Boycotting as a tactic to eradicate racially discriminatory practices in white retail stores was nothing new in the African American community. A “Don’t Buy Where You Can’t Work” movement originated in Chicago in 1927, and several other cities such as Los Angeles, Toledo, Ohio, Washington, D.C., Detroit, and Cleveland, followed in its wake over the next several years. The idea of boycotting such businesses was not unknown in Baltimore either, as several organizations, including the Baltimore Urban League, called

78 Ibid, 208. Those who were admitted to the training program were screened, had to pass an entrance examination, and earned forty dollars a month while training for a full-time position—a lucrative sum in the midst of the depression. See Thompson, 78.
79 Quoted in Skotnes, 219.
for boycotts of those establishments that refused to hire qualified African Americans. The *Afro*, in several editorials in 1931, called for boycotting racially discriminatory businesses and even scolded the Baltimore NAACP, the Baltimore Urban League and the Woman’s Civic League, a local organization, for their inactivity around this issue. Sanctioned by these and other respected entities, the Forum was more than willing to engage in such a tactic.\(^80\)

Despite the Forum’s willingness to initiate a boycott, Kiowa Costonie\(^81\), a faith healer and “race man” who was sometimes known as the “Prophet,” actually set the wheels in motion. Disgusted with the fact that stores in the Northwest community refused to hire African Americans, Costonie initiated the Buy Where You Can Work boycott. To gather community support for the boycott, Costonie enlisted the aid of the Forum. Costonie, the Forum, and other organizations soon formed a Citizens Committee that served to oversee the boycott effort. The first target was the Great Atlantic & Pacific (A&P) grocery store chain. Enjoying widespread support, with approximately 500 people picketing, the management of A&P capitulated to the Committee’s demands after three days. Buoyed by this victory, the Committee next targeted discriminatory businesses in the 1700 block of Pennsylvania Avenue. These businesses proved to be more recalcitrant, and the white merchants received a permanent injunction against picketing in March 1934. Although

\(^{80}\) Skotnes, 217-218; *Afro*, 10 January, 10 October, 1931. Though the Baltimore Urban League called for a boycott at its annual meeting in 1930, it was not willing to put words into action, and the idea floundered. For more on the national “Don’t Buy Where You Can’t Work” movement, see Gary Hunter, “Don’t Buy From Where You Can’t Work”: Black Urban Boycott Movements During the Depression, 1929-1941” (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1977).

\(^{81}\) For more on the interesting life of Costonie, see Spencer D. Tyrus, “Prophet Kiowa Costonie in Baltimore from 1933-1934” (M.A. thesis, Morgan State University, 2001).
disappointed that the injunction served to end the boycott, the black community was transformed by the experience and became convinced of the effectiveness of using direct action tactics such as boycotts to effect change.\textsuperscript{82}

Several important developments came out of the Baltimore Buy-Where-You-Can – Work Campaign. First, the campaign showcased the extraordinary leadership talents of both Juanita and Lillie Jackson. Juanita had already proven herself an effective leader of the Forum before the boycott began, and she continued in helping to organize members to picket the stores and using her developing relationship with national NAACP leaders such as Walter White and Roy Wilkins to allocate resources to assist the boycott. In order to finance the efforts—particularly the legal costs to fight the injunction against picketing in 1934—and garner moral support, Lillie Jackson used her extensive contacts within the black church and black fraternal and civic organizations such as the Odd Fellows, the Masons, and the Elks. In fact, Juanita credits her mother as being the “sparkplug” responsible for rallying the entire community around the Buy Where You Can Work Campaign. It was they who would eventually eclipse Costonie as the leader of the boycott, and Lillie Jackson, who became chairperson of the Citizens Committee after Costonie’s departure, would thereafter be viewed as the de facto leader of the Baltimore movement.\textsuperscript{83}

Second, the boycott was a grassroots movement that developed and used the resources within the community—the Forum, the churches, the \textit{Afro}, and other institutions and

\textsuperscript{82} Thompson, 91-148, 150-151; Skotnes, 740-747.
\textsuperscript{83} Mitchell and Kiah, OH 8094, 44; Juanita Mitchell, OH 8095, 3; Skotnes, 220, 232-233. Costonie left Baltimore after tensions developed between he and Jackson and her supporters concerning his behavior and leadership, his disagreement with the direction the movement was taking, and his financial difficulties.
organizations—to build and sustain a movement that enjoyed broad-based support. This resulted in, according to Juanita, “a cohesive community single-mindedness on the part of adults as well as the young people in the northwest community.” This “community single-mindedness” would provide the movement with financial and moral support for the next few decades. Events would soon push the Baltimore movement into the forefront of the burgeoning national civil rights struggle.\(^8^4\)

Third, the Buy Where You Can Work Campaign further inspired a number of participants to dedicate the rest of their lives to both the local and national civil rights struggle. Juanita Jackson [Mitchell], Lillie Jackson, Clarence Mitchell—Juanita’s future husband and a vice president of the Forum—and Thurgood Marshall, a young lawyer, “earned their stripes” in community organizing during this campaign and would go on to make highly significant contributions to the black freedom struggle, locally and nationally, over the next four decades. In addition, some veteran activists were very willing to assist them when the Baltimore NAACP was eventually re-organized.\(^8^5\)

**The Forum’s Impact and Legacy**

The Forum was arguably one of the most dynamic, homegrown, grassroots organizations of the 1930s. Having no formal ties to any national organization or entity, the young people of the Forum, with the enthusiastic support of their elders and community institutions, were able to build a mass movement using community resources

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\(^8^4\) Mitchell and Kiah, OH 8094, 43; Thompson, 150-151.
\(^8^5\) Thompson, 149-150.
while infusing the militant spirit of “New Negro” activism and youthful rebellion of the previous decade into the fabric of their organization. As a result, they re-invigorated the local chapter of the NAACP and consequently the black freedom struggle in Baltimore and Maryland.

The Forum had a very powerful and lasting effect on black Baltimore. It not only raised the consciousness of all segments of the community through its Friday town hall meetings, but it became, in Juanita’s Jackson’s words, a “molder of thought.” The Forum, however, was not just satisfied with enlightening the community through discussions and debates pertaining to the condition of blacks in Baltimore, Maryland, and throughout the United States. It also empowered them to construct a grassroots, action-oriented movement that organized to eradicate racial discrimination, segregation, and economic exploitation that they faced on a daily basis. This the Forum did by developing fruitful relationships with powerful institutions in the community such as the Afro-American newspaper, churches such as the Bethel A.M.E. Church and the Sharp Street Methodist Episcopal Church, and black fraternal and civic organizations.

The Forum greatly benefited from these relationships—largely cultivated through Lillie Jackson as head of the adult advisory committee—because it legitimized them as a respectable organization despite their willingness to work with left-leaning groups such as the Communist Party, the Socialist Party, and labor unions that were looked upon with suspicion by some community leaders.86

86 Mitchell and Kiah, OH 8094, 43; Mitchell and Kiah, OH 8097, 2; Thompson, 85-86, 88. By operating under the purview of the church, the Forum was shielded from charges of being Communists when the Communists lost support among some members of the black community as they began to attack the churches. There was a more personal reason
Many local and national leaders had tremendous praise for the Forum. Howard Murphy of the *Afro-American* newspaper said the Forum “keeps the community in close relationship with the present day current trends, both political and social.” Even outside of Baltimore, the Forum had an immediate impact. In 1933, Elmer Carter, editor of *Opportunity*, the National Urban League’s official organ, noted that “I have traveled a good deal and I have never seen a forum which approaches yours in the efficiency of its administration.” Mary McLeod Bethune, who spoke before the Forum’s Friday evening town hall meeting, called it “one of the most outstanding organizations of young people in the country.” The highest praise came from Nannie Helen Burroughs, a frequent speaker before the Forum, who said that it “is the best, most progressive and analytical organization of young people in America. It feels, thinks, believes, acts.” The Forum would inspire other communities to create similar entities in Annapolis, Washington, and Philadelphia.  

The Forum’s lasting legacy would be imparted to the Baltimore branch of the NAACP, which was re-organized in the wake of the success of the Buy Where You can Work Campaign. First, the Forum’s relationship with the *Afro-American* and the churches was transferred to the Baltimore NAACP and these three entities became the “triple generals” in the Baltimore freedom movement for the next three decades. Since why the Forum was closely connected to the church. Juanita says that her mother supported her daughters’ efforts to create the Forum “because at that time the Communists were active here and she didn’t want us to be Communists.” Skotnes, “The Black Freedom Movement,” 202.

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87 Thompson, 85; McNeil, 69-70. Burroughs further stated that the Forum “gives good account of its self-imposed responsibilities. It is socially sound in its attitude and spiritually dynamic in its deeper, inner life.”
Lillie Jackson was largely responsible for building those relationships, it was only natural that she would continue to do so as head of the Baltimore NAACP.\textsuperscript{88}

Second, the Forum continued to validate women as intelligent, skillful, and effective leaders of a protest organization and the movement that it created or fostered. Baltimore already had a long tradition of women taking a very active role in battling Jim Crow segregation and racial discrimination, but it was usually under the direction of men. Besides the Jackson sisters creating the Forum and Juanita Jackson serving as president, spokesperson, and principal organizer of the Forum during its formative years (1931-1934), the Forum was unique in that women occupied top leadership positions from the very beginning. In a listing of officers from 1931-1933, 19 out of the 26 were women, with 4 out of 10 serving as vice-president, and other women held important offices such as financial secretary, corresponding secretary, and treasurer. This changed little in 1934, as women were 10 out of 15 executive committee members, and 3 out of 6 vice presidents. In 1935, all 4 of the vice-presidents were men, but women still held important executive committee positions. Besides Juanita—Virginia left after getting married in 1933—Katrine White, Sarah Diggs, and Pauline Carroll were instrumental in the success of the Forum.\textsuperscript{89}

Thirdly, the Forum may have been founded and led by young people mostly from middle-class families who were well educated, but it sought to build a mass-based movement that solicited the participation and support of members from all socioeconomic backgrounds. Although the Forum was relatively unsuccessful in

\textsuperscript{88} Mitchell, OH 8095, 22.
\textsuperscript{89} Skotnes, 195-196; Thompson, 49.
incorporating members of the most marginalized and least educated classes of the community, it made a concerted effort to do so, because Lillie Jackson imbued within her children a respect for all people no matter their socioeconomic standing or degree of education. What mattered most was whether people were willing and able to make a contribution, no matter how small or seemingly insignificant. Lillie Jackson had the same attitude in building the Baltimore NAACP.  

Lastly, the militant spirit of the Forum manifested itself in the attitude and work of the Baltimore branch. Lillie Jackson also believed in social protest and using direct action protests to eliminate racial discrimination and segregation, as long as the protests were peaceful and within the law. The Baltimore branch was also willing to work with a variety of organizations as long as they believed in freedom, justice and equality, although the list of organizations was not as extensive as the Forum. Nevertheless, Jackson was ecumenical in her approach and welcomed help even from those who may have disagreed with her personal, religious, and/or political views, tactics, or methods, so long as they believed in attaining first-class citizenship and civil and political rights through lawful means.  

Perhaps the greatest indicator of the impact of the Forum and its Buy Where You Can Work Campaign was the close attention it received from the national NAACP. National NAACP leaders like executive secretary Walter White, director of branches William Pickens, and lead counsel Charles Houston, not only spoke often before the Forum but

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90 Mitchell, OH 8095, 22-23; Skotnes, 201. Skotnes states the topics during the Friday town hall meetings seem to have drawn mostly the most educated, literate, and established of the black working class, and attracted few of the most marginalized and illiterate from the black working class and poor.

91 Mitchell, OH 8095, 9, 23; Mitchell and Kiah, OH 8097, 5.
also frequently corresponded and met with Forum leaders like Juanita Jackson, Clarence Mitchell, and Thurgood Marshall. Sensing great potential in Juanita Jackson’s skills and leadership, she was groomed for national leadership by White and Houston. Juanita was one of thirty-three young black leaders, one of only eleven women, and quite possibly the youngest participant, to attend the Second Amenia Conference, a gathering of national NAACP officials and other prominent black intellectuals and activists at the estate of NAACP president Joel Spingarn between August 18-24, 1933. The Conference sought to address openly and forthrightly a new agenda for the national civil rights struggle and foster connections between older activists and those of the younger generation. Some other noteworthy participants were Abram Harris, Ralph Bunche, Sterling Brown and E. Franklin Frazier, with DuBois, Walter White and Roy Wilkins representing the national NAACP.92

Walter White went even further in preparing Juanita for national exposure and responsibilities when he tapped her to serve as his special assistant in New York City in September 1935. But White had bigger plans for Jackson. As executive secretary, White had been looking to re-organize the youth movement within the NAACP. During the early 1930s, young people of all races, ethnicities, and political backgrounds had initiated a youth movement that carried out protest campaigns independently and in conjunction

92 Skotnes, 338-339. Although people such as Houston thought that the Conference fell far short of its intend goals, Juanita found the conference “stimulating.”
with more established civic, labor, political and civil rights organizations, and White sought to organize the youth within the NAACP in order to carry out its programs.\footnote{93 Tommy Bynum, “‘Our Fight Is For Right’: The NAACP Youth Councils and College Chapters’ Crusade for Civil Rights, 1936-1965.” (Ph.D. diss, Georgia State University, 2007), 11.}

Up to that time, the young people in the NAACP were organized into junior councils (with ages ranging from fourteen to twenty-one) and college chapters. These divisions were poorly organized, and were without a national director and national agenda. In order to rectify this, White formally appealed to the NAACP National Board of Directors to hire Juanita as the first national youth director, which the Board approved in 1936. Given a mandate to organize the youth movement along the lines of the Forum, from 1935 to 1938, Juanita traveled the country and successfully created youth councils and college chapters in 30 states and 128 cities across the United States.\footnote{94 Mitchell, OH 8095, 40; Bynum, “Our Fight Is For Right,” 10.}

**Murray v. Pearson: The First Case in the NAACP’s Attack on Segregated Education**

There was another outcome of the national NAACP’s interest in the freedom struggle in Baltimore that would have far-reaching consequences for the national NAACP and the civil rights struggle against racially discriminatory institutions nationwide for years to come. Previously on the defensive against the injustices of racial segregation and discrimination, the national NAACP, beginning in 1935, decided to go on the offensive. The first target area chosen by the NAACP was in the field of education. NAACP leaders firmly believed that if educational barriers to equal opportunity were removed, the rest of
segregation would become vulnerable to legal assault and the walls of injustice would soon crumble in those areas as well. The NAACP’s initial target in their legal campaign was higher education, specifically graduate and professional schools.95

Nathan Margold, a white scholar at Harvard who was an expert in constitutional law, initially conceived the legal strategy. Margold, a protégé of Felix Frankfurter, a founder of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and later a Supreme Court Justice, was chosen in October 1930 by a joint oversight committee composed of members of the NAACP and the American Fund for Public Service—popularly known as the Garland Fund after its founder, Charles Garland—a New York-based philanthropic fund, to investigate how the law could be utilized to bolster African Americans’ civil rights. The Joint Committee had received $100,000 from the Garland Fund and proposed financing a number of taxpayers’ suits that would challenge the South’s segregated dual school system on a state-by-state basis, especially in the Deep South. The purpose of such suits was to make it cost prohibitive for states to support two separate but equal school systems, thus abolishing segregated schools, and compel African Americans to initiate

95 Thompson, 152; Sylvia Seawright, “Desegregation at Maryland: The NAACP and the Murray Case in the 1930s,” *Maryland Historian* 1 (Spring 1970): 59. Writing in the January 1993 issue of the *Crisis*, the NAACP organ, Professor E.A. Schaal stated “Equal opportunities for education at least pave the way for a struggle for racial equality in all things.” The quote is from the former source, 152. The NAACP had two other target areas: equalizing the salaries of black and white teachers and addressing the inequalities between the physical facilities of black and white primary and secondary schools. See Mark Tushnet, *The NAACP’s Legal Strategy Against Segregated Education, 1925-1950* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 34.
further action. The Joint Committee wanted Margold to lead the desegregation campaign as well.96

Margold conducted a thorough and extensive investigation of civil rights law, particularly concerning equal protection cases, and in 1933, issued a report that argued against filing mandamus suits seeking equalization in state courts, a strategy he believed would prove costly and time-consuming. Instead, he boldly advocated a direct legal challenge to \textit{Plessy v. Ferguson}, citing the equal protection decision in the 1886 Supreme Court case \textit{Yick Wo v. Hopkins}. However, Margold would never get the chance to implement his plan as he soon accepted the position of Solicitor in the Department of the Interior under Harold Ickes in Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal administration. To replace Margold, White felt that it was time that a black lawyer took the reins and in July 1933 informed Roger Baldwin, executive director of the ACLU and an NAACP legal advisor, that one particular lawyer had the credentials to do so and came highly recommended by Frankfurter and Margold.97

Charles Houston, the newly appointed general counsel for the national NAACP, would direct the legal campaign against educational inequalities. Another protégé of

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96 Genna Rae McNeil, \textit{Groundwork: Charles Hamilton Houston and the Struggle for Civil Rights} (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983), 114. Initially, the Garland Fund was to also fund the legal protection African Americans’ civil liberties, attack U.S. imperialism in the western hemisphere, particularly in Nicaragua and Haiti, finance propaganda in support of the legal campaign, and initiate litigation to end segregation and jury exclusion.
Frankfurter, Houston was no stranger to the struggle in Baltimore. As Dean of the Howard University Law School in Washington, D.C. during the 1920s and early 1930s, Houston had molded a cadre of socially conscious lawyers who not only handled the legal concerns of individual clients but also helped to shape and mold the larger society:

[the] Negro lawyer must be trained as a social engineer and group interpreter. Due to the Negro’s social and political condition…the Negro lawyer must be prepared to anticipate, guide, and interpret his group advancement…[Moreover, he must act as] business advisor…for the protection of the scattered resources possessed or controlled by the group…He must provide more ways and means for holding within the group the income now flowing through it.  

One of his Houston’s protégés and closest collaborators was Thurgood Marshall, a native Baltimorean, who commuted from Baltimore to D.C. to attend Howard, and who had opened his own law practice upon his return to his hometown in 1934. Before becoming chief counsel of the NAACP in 1935, Houston was heavily involved in the campaign against racially discriminatory practices in D.C., particularly with the New Negro Alliance, and his proximity to Baltimore made him a frequent speaker before the Forum’s Friday meetings, addressing them yearly. In addition, he, along with Marshall and William Hastie, another brilliant black lawyer, lent their support in fighting the injunction against picketing during the Buy Where You Can Work Campaign in 1934.  

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99 Skotnes, 358-359. For Houston’s tenure at Howard Law School, see McNeil above. It should also be noted that the New Negro Alliance was an organization reportedly modeled along the lines of the Forum. The Forum and Alliance developed a close working relationship. As part of the national “Don’t Buy Where You Can’t Work” movement begun in the late 1920s, the Alliance began their own boycotts a week or two before Costonie’s movement in 1933, and Juanita Mitchell has stated that she believes Costonie got the idea to boycott in Baltimore from the Alliance’s protests in D.C., Skotnes, 217.
When Houston left his position as Dean to become the NAACP’s Chief Counsel, he directed the NAACP’s legal campaign against education because he strongly believed that an inferior education “makes [Negroes] less able to stand competition with whites for jobs” and made it difficult for “young Negro men and women [to be] courageous and aggressive in defense of their rights.” Based on enforcing previously existing legal rights, particularly the Fourteenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution that forbid states to deny equality of opportunity, the legal campaign was only one aspect of a broader, long-term struggle that consisted of both legal cases and direct action tactics. In an October 1934 memorandum to the Joint Committee not long after taking charge, Houston set forth a strategy that was different from Margold’s in philosophy and tactics, proposing a campaign that had to be modified considering the economic hardships of the Depression, which was, reduced the Garland Fund’s appropriation to $10,000.100

Houston proposal was similar to that of the Joint Committee’s strategy of first seeking equality within the segregated system. In the short term, he wanted to improve black institutions and give black students greater financial resources by attacking the unequal distribution of state funds for schools in the South, the racial disparity in teachers’ salaries, and allocating funds for black students who could not attend state institutions and therefore had to attend school elsewhere. In the long term, Houston’s proposal called for a carefully planned and protracted struggle that would demonstrate clearly the

financial burden incurred from supporting a dual school system, thereby necessitating a single system. The legal campaign was to also create a symbiotic relationship with black communities, with the NAACP providing a competent and capable legal team, advice, and resources, and the black community providing the plaintiffs, legal funds, and community support in order to successfully prosecute landmark cases which would benefit both the NAACP and black communities nationwide, an idea that was absent from Margold’s proposal.\(^{101}\)

With a $10,000 grant from the Garland Fund, Houston and the NAACP were looking for an ideal place to initiate a test case. They had initially chosen Durham, North Carolina because two NAACP-affiliated attorneys, Conrad Pearson and Cecil McCoy, were ready to file a writ of mandamus in state courts in 1933 in case their plaintiff, Thomas Hocutt, was denied admission to the University of North Carolina’s School of Pharmacy. When Hocutt was denied admission, the lawyers filed the mandamus suit. Unfortunately, there were problems from the beginning. First, William Hastie, who the NAACP sent to North Carolina to oversee the case, found that the state’s leading black educator opposed the case because its backlash could affect legislative support of all-black state institutions. Second, the black community and the local branch did not fully support the case. Third, the NAACP itself did not initiate the case, and therefore, the legal committee did not have full oversight of the process. Lastly, Hocutt was not the best plaintiff because his academic record in high school and college was less than stellar.

\(^{101}\) Houston, “Tentative Statement Concerning Policy of N.A.A.C.P.” NAACP Papers, I-C-97; McNeil, 116-117.
and he seemed barely literate on the stand. Faced with these and other problems, the NAACP decided to opt out of the case.\textsuperscript{102}

The NAACP learned the hard way that it was crucial that the plaintiff for any future challenges had to have a nearly impeccable academic record and good character and that community support was imperative for the success of such a bold initiative. In Houston’s estimation, Maryland was the perfect place to start over. He was very familiar with the state, he expected great support from the Baltimore black community, his protégé, Marshall, was there, and Maryland, as a border state, did not have legally mandated segregation. These factors made Maryland Houston’s “legal laboratory” for possible precedent-setting challenges. The first step was to open up the University of Maryland, a tax-supported public institution that nonetheless excluded African Americans.\textsuperscript{103}

It was fortunate that national and local interests converged around the impending case, for blacks in Maryland had long sought to open up the university, having very few opportunities for higher education within the state. Besides the University of Maryland, the only higher education alternative was Morgan College, a private institution run by the Methodist Church. The state promoted Princess Anne Academy on the Eastern Shore as an institution of higher learning, but it was nothing more than a glorified high school that served as an agricultural school for African Americans. The state supported two teacher-training institutions, but those who wanted to study other professions had to leave the state. For those who chose to do so, the 1933 Maryland Legislature passed Chapter 234,\textsuperscript{102}

\textsuperscript{102} Conrad Pearson and Cecil A. McCoy to Walter White, 6 February 1933, NAACP Papers, I-C-85; Thompson, 162-163; Tushnet, 52-53. Pearson was a graduate of Howard Law School under Houston, having graduated in 1932 before setting up practice in Durham, Tushnet, 52.

\textsuperscript{103} Skotnes, 359; Tushnet, 57.
which provided partial scholarships at Morgan College, or tuition funds for those who
opted to go outside of the state if Princess Anne Academy did not offer their preferred
professional courses. Clearly, Maryland did not provide equal opportunity when it came
to graduate and professional schools. 104

There were no shortages of potential plaintiffs, for many of the young people of the
Forum had been denied admission to the University of Maryland because of race,
including Juanita Jackson. Thurgood Marshall had specifically been denied admission to
the law school, and it was said that he wanted revenge for the slight. Members of the
Forum had been looking to launch a challenge back in 1933, and Walter White met with
a group of them and Marshall at Juanita Jackson’s home in November of that year.
Several of those attendees, including Juanita and William Proctor, applied to the
university’s graduate school and school of law respectively, in 1933 and 1934, but were
rejected by the university’s president, Raymond A. Pearson. To add insult to injury, all
thirty-five applicants to the university were told that their names were referred to the
Committee on Partial Scholarships in order to receive funds to either Morgan College or
an out-of-state institution, but no scholarships were ever given because Pearson
announced in March 1933 that the Maryland legislature did not appropriate money for
such a purpose. 105

104 R.A. Pearson to Harold A. Seaborne, 26 July 1933, NAACP Papers, Box I-D-93;
Thompson, 160. Princess Anne Academy’s designation as an agricultural school allowed
Maryland to receive land grant funds under the Morrill Act from the U.S. Department of
Education, but the state neither owned nor operated the Academy.
105 Thurgood Marshall to Walter White, 4 December 1933; Walter White to W.A.C.
Hughes, Jr., 5 December 1933, NAACP Papers, I-C-85; Raymond A. Pearson to Harold
A. Seaborne, 26 July 1933, ibid; Raymond A. Pearson to Juanita E. Jackson, 26 January
1934, ibid; Raymond A. Pearson to William W. Proctor, 8 June 1934, ibid; H.F.
The *Afro* had long demanded the desegregation of the university—it was part of the traditional civil rights agenda promoted by the newspaper—and it offered its full support. In fact, Carl Murphy, who was a member of the NAACP’s National Board of Directors, made it very clear that he welcomed such a challenge in Maryland. The Forum’s attorney, W.A.C. Hughes, Jr., had been working on challenging segregation at the university for some time, so Marshall suggested to White that he be part of the legal team.\(^{106}\)

Despite Houston’s desire that a test case not be hindered or dismissed because of technicalities, the Maryland challenge did not start smoothly. The community support was certainly there; it was a matter of finding the right plaintiff. Clarence Mitchell applied in 1933 to the university’s graduate school to study sociology, but was disqualified because he hastily applied to a non-existent program. Others, including, Juanita Jackson, were turned down because of potential complications.\(^{107}\)

Donald Gaines Murray was the ideal plaintiff for the NAACP. A native Baltimorean, Murray was the grandson and son of notable A.M.E. bishops and was a member of the upper class group of African Americans in the city. Murray had returned to Baltimore in mid-1934 after a stellar academic career at Amherst College in Massachusetts and found himself in the same situation as the other young people in the Forum who had little to no

\(^{106}\) Skotnes, ibid.

\(^{107}\) Ibid. Skotnes does not give a thorough explanation why Juanita and the others were rejected as plaintiffs.
money to further their education. Wanting to become an attorney in his hometown, Murray applied to the University of Maryland Law School in January 1935. Of course, Murray was told that he could not be admitted to the law school, but could either apply to Princess Anne Academy or apply for a partial scholarship to attend law school out-of-state. After contacting the university’s Board of Regents but receiving no satisfactory response, Murray, with the assistance of Houston, Marshall, and Hughes, filed a petition for the writ of mandamus against the university on April 8, 1935, charging that the refusal to consider his application was a violation of the charter of the university, state laws, and the equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. 108

While Houston, Marshall, Hughes, and other lawyers of the Legal Committee of the NAACP carefully and meticulously prepared the Murray case, university officials did everything that they could to both delay the proceedings and sway public opinion to bolster their position. They appealed to the standard segregationist argument that admitting Murray would lower the ‘prestige’ of the university, cause white students already attending to leave and compel potential white students to refrain from applying.

108 Murray application to the University of Maryland Law School, 24 January 1935, NAACP Papers, I-C-85; Marshall to Houston, 25 January 1935, ibid; W.M. Hillegeist to Donald Murray, 9 February 1935, ibid; Donald Murray to University of Maryland Board of Regents, 5 March 1935, ibid; “To Sue University of MD.,” Afro, 19 April 1935; “University of Maryland Sued By Student Who Would Enter Law School,” Afro, 20 April 1935; “Negro Seeks Writ To Enter U. of MD.” Baltimore Evening Sun, 20 April 1935. In fact, after Murray appealed to the Board of Regents, Pearson wrote to Murray and suggested that he seek to enter Howard University’s Law School since “it’s school of law is rated Class “A” and “is fully approved by the American Bar Association and it is a member of the Association of American Law Schools.” See Pearson to Murray, 8 March 1935, NAACP Papers. It should also be noted that Murray’s record at Amherst turned out to be less than stellar, as Murray barely maintained a C-average to graduate. See Donald Gaines Murray transcript from Amherst College, NAACP Papers, I-C-85; Thompson, 177, n. 39.
They also argued that they were complying with the ‘separate but equal’ ruling of the 1896 Plessy v. Ferguson decision by offering a scholarship for out-of-state study at equally prestigious institutions (neglecting, of course, to add that there was no money available even if students were approved for such a scholarship). The NAACP, ever conscious itself of publicity as an ally in elevating the prestige of the organization, countered in the Afro by reporting the continuing developments in the case, making them front page news. Walter White even contacted sympathetic white reporters and editors, such as H.L. Mencken of the Baltimore Sun, who reprimanded state and university officials for their recalcitrance and called for Murray to be admitted.109

Despite attempted delays, the Murray case finally came to trial on June 18, 1935 before Judge Eugene O’Dunne. Marshall requested O’Dunne, although it is not clear why. O’Dunne was very popular amongst lawyers and had an exemplary record on the bench, with many of his decisions seldom reversed on appeal. There is speculation that these are the reasons Marshall requested him, though another reason may have been O’Dunne’s talent for attracting publicity. Arguing for Murray, Marshall stated that as a native Baltimorean who was fully qualified to attend law school in his home state, Murray should be admitted to the university. The university officials, represented by Assistant Attorney General Charles LeViness, again argued that the state complied with the ‘separate but equal’ ruling, but it was obvious from defendants’ testimony that Murray was excluded solely because of his race. To the surprise of everyone, Judge

O’Dunne granted the writ of mandamus and ordered Murray to be admitted to the university in the upcoming fall term.\textsuperscript{110}

The case galvanized the black community. As Houston requested, the courtroom was packed with well-dressed, well-behaved supporters, since Houston wanted the court officials, defendants and reporters to see “a solid, sober, intelligent group of Black citizens who want their freedom, want to be first class citizens, want their Constitutional rights.” Juanita Jackson described the mood of the community as being as excited about the decision as they were in acquiring employment for qualified young people during the Buy Where You Can Work Campaign a few years earlier and all were greatly pleased that Judge O’Dunne ordered immediate compliance with his decision.\textsuperscript{111}

State officials and the university, now under the administration of Harry Clifton ‘Curley’ Byrd, who was adamant about excluding African Americans from the institution, would not take O’Dunne’s decision lying down and immediately took steps to prevent Murray from enrolling in the fall. They appealed to the Maryland Court of Appeals and attempted to have the case heard in the summer before the term began, but were unsuccessful. They also tried to have Murray attend Howard at their expense while the case was being appealed, but that failed as well. Since it seemed inevitable that Murray would be attending classes while the appeal was scheduled for October 1935, the university made one last desperate attempt to make Murray so uncomfortable that he would voluntarily leave the university. They sought to impose Jim Crow restrictions


\textsuperscript{111} Skotnes, 363. The Houston quote came courtesy of Juanita Mitchell.
within the school by having Murray seated separately from his classmates, which
Marshall protested. However, the victory was almost in vain when it was revealed that
Murray did not have the money to pay tuition. With help from the national NAACP, Carl
Murphy and the *Afro*, and Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc., Murray raised the funds for
tuition and entered the University of Maryland Law School in September 1935 to little
fanfare.\(^{112}\)

When the Maryland Court of Appeals did hear the case in January 1936, Murray had
already had one semester under his belt with little opposition, although an early survey
conducted by the *Afro* found that there was underlying hostility toward him. The Court
of Appeals affirmed Judge O’Dunne’s decision, and Murray continued as a law student.
Houston, Marshall, and White continued to monitor Murray’s progress, making sure that
he presented himself properly and maintained satisfactory grades. When Murray had

\(^{112}\) Ibid, 364. It is interesting that the Alphas were also interested in initiating a suit
against the university at the same time as the NAACP. In fact, the Alphas had even
found Murray as a plaintiff, when William Gosnell, a Baltimore attorney and an Alpha,
brought Murray to Marshall’s attention. Throughout 1935 and afterwards, the fraternity
and the NAACP clashed on who would handle the case, who would take care of the legal
expenses, and what would be the role of each entity. This put Houston and Marshall in
an awkward position since both were members of the fraternity as well. Eventually, the
NAACP won out, though Houston and Marshall made concessions by having Gosnell
involved with the case. See B.V. Lawson, Jr. to Rev. C.Y. Trigg, 9 October 1934; B.V.
Lawson, Jr. to William Gosnell, 1 December 1934; B.V. Lawson, Jr. to William Gosnell,
5 December 1934; B.V. Lawson, Jr. to Charles Houston, 5 December 1934; William
Gosnell to Charles Houston, 18 December 1934; B.V. Lawson, Jr. to Thurgood Marshall,
28 January 1935; B.V. Lawson, Jr. to William Gosnell, 29 April 1935; Theodore W.
Berry, General Counsel, to Charles Houston, 30 April 1935; Charles Houston to
Thurgood Marshall, 23 December 1935, NAACP Papers, I-C-85. Even the *Afro* was
unclear of who was actually involved in the suit during its early reporting. In several
articles, the *Afro* reported that the NAACP and the Alphas had brought the suit, and in
one article actually stated that the fraternity hired the NAACP lawyers. Later, the paper
noted that Marshall stated that a report that the Alphas were financing the case was false.
See *Afro*, 19 April 1935, 27 April 1935, and 4 May 1935.
difficulty with the coursework, the NAACP had Leon Ransom of Howard University Law School tutor him for his exams.\textsuperscript{113}

Unfortunately, the NAACP was disappointed that the state of Maryland did not appeal the case further, for they wanted to bring it to the U.S. Supreme Court to set a national precedent rather than just a state one. Nevertheless, the immediate national impact was three-fold. First, the NAACP used the case as a model for suits filed in other states such as Tennessee and Missouri. Second, it galvanized black communities in the Border and Upper South to organize themselves to work with the NAACP to challenge segregation. Third, other southern states, fearful that they would be next, sought to somewhat level the playing field by improving higher educational facilities for African Americans so as to preserve segregation.\textsuperscript{114}

In Maryland itself, the \textit{Murray} case put a bright spotlight on the inequalities in the entire educational system in Maryland. Even before the initial \textit{Murray} decision was handed down in June 1935, Houston and Marshall were already investigating and documenting the disparity between black and white teachers’ salaries, the lack of an adequate high school for African Americans in Baltimore County, and the inequities in elementary and secondary schools between the races throughout the state. In desperation to have Murray be the only black person to enter the university, the state upgraded

\textsuperscript{113} Walter White to Donald Murray, 20 September 1935; Walter White to Carl Murphy, 20 September 1935; Houston to Marshall, 3 January 1936, NAACP Papers, I-D-93; Kuebler, “Desegregation of the University of Maryland,” 47.
\textsuperscript{114} Thompson, 201, 204 and Seawright, “Desegregation at Maryland,” 71.
Princess Anne Academy, provided more money for out-of-state scholarships, and purchased Morgan College in order to comply with the ‘separate but equal’ doctrine.¹¹⁵

For the black freedom struggle in Baltimore, the Murray case brought substantial changes in organizational structure and tactics. First, Murray demonstrated that the courts could be used to bolster the movement rather than stymie it as it had done during the Buy Where You Can Work Campaign, when the injunction against picketing effectively halted direct action. The Murray case not only was an offensive campaign conducted by the national NAACP, but it portended further action, with the Afro and other institutions calling for the courts to be used to attack other educational inequalities. Both methods were now viable weapons that could be used in conjunction with each other to effect reforms.¹¹⁶

Second, the case strengthened the local movement’s ties to the national civil rights movement. As noted above, Juanita Jackson was ‘promoted’ to the national office to build the NAACP youth movement modeled on the Forum. Third, members of the Adult Advisory Committee under Lillie Jackson had moved to the forefront of the movement during the mid-1930s and as more and more adults became excited by the Murray victory, they began to become more involved in the local movement. In addition, many of the ‘youth’ of the Forum were no longer young by 1935 and were looking to transition to other entities to carry the movement forward, causing the Forum and its influence and effectiveness to slowly decline. It did not help that many of the Forum’s early leaders

¹¹⁵ Afro, 10 May, 17 May, 21 May 1935; Marshall to Houston, 29 May, 16 August, 19 August 1935; Houston to Marshall, 21 August 1935; Memorandum from White to Houston, 12 July, 1935, NAACP Papers, I-D-88; Thompson, 200.
¹¹⁶ Skotnes, 365-366.
such as Juanita Jackson and Clarence Mitchell were leaving Baltimore to advance their education and/or careers.\footnote{Ibid, 367, 369.}

It was this lack of an organizational form that could encompass these re-energized adult activists and young activists that caused Carl Murphy and the national NAACP to again expend considerable time and energy reviving the moribund local branch. They reasoned that only a strong Baltimore branch could continue to coordinate and sustain the legal campaign against racial discrimination and segregation begun by the Murray case, which was of mutual benefit to both the NAACP and the Baltimore black community. For the local movement, the branch would continue to connect them with national resources and provide guidance and direction in obtaining equal opportunities, as demonstrated by Murray. For the national NAACP, it meant continuing to draw upon a community that had become more powerful and organized with the coalition the Forum had formed with the Afro and the local churches in order to support and finance further challenges to racial discrimination and segregation.

**Resurrecting the Baltimore NAACP**

It is ironic that the Forum and the movement that grew out of its militancy would lead to the revival of the Baltimore NAACP, since it is highly probable that the Forum would have never existed had the NAACP been active when Juanita Jackson [Mitchell] returned home in 1931. Mitchell hinted as much years later when detailing the course of her life. She had been looking for a vehicle to address the rampant unemployment and social
conditions that young people faced in 1931 but found the one organization most qualified to do so inactive. That is because the local branch, as noted above, had fallen on hard times before the 1920s, and bringing it back to life over the next decade and a half proved quite a challenge.\textsuperscript{118}

The lack of a functioning branch, much less a strong one, concerned both the national NAACP staff and Carl Murphy, who was a member of the NAACP National Board of Directors, throughout the 1920s and early 1930s. There were several efforts to revive the branch prior to and during the years of the Forum. In June 1930, the national office sent Daisy Lampkin, one of its veteran field secretaries, to Baltimore to conduct a much-publicized membership drive. Lampkin worked with a wide variety of community institutions that pledged their full cooperation in soliciting new members, but the campaign ultimately went nowhere. After this attempt, the branch chose Rev. A.C. Clark to replace Linwood Koger as president, and again attempted to conduct a membership drive in mid-1931. However, the branch procrastinated in its call for help from the national office, and Robert W. Bagnall, the director of branches, cited scheduling conflicts as the reason why he was unable to render assistance. Bagnall then criticized the branch for its lateness and in a memo to White, complained that the branch “will not do anything without help from us.” White did visit the branch in October 1931 to speak to Clark, and plans were set to conduct a membership drive later that year.

\textsuperscript{118} Mitchell, OH 8095, 2; Mitchell and Kiah, OH 8097, 2; Skotnes, 381.
Unfortunately, Rev. Clark had a nervous breakdown that severed communication between him and the national office. The membership drive failed to materialize.\(^{119}\)

The situation worsened during 1932, as Murphy lamented the fact that the branch was inconsequential to the developments happening in the city and in other parts of the state. The local branch did nothing as the International Labor Defense mounted a spirited campaign to save the life of Euel Lee, and he called for another re-organization. As director of branches, Bagnall had his own frustrations with the branch. He felt that the branch was not developing itself to its fullest potential, particularly since it was one of the most effective branches years ago. He also felt that the branch was not pulling its weight in assisting the national office in acquiring funds during the depression and was doing a disservice to the black community in its lack of a viable program “commensurate with the intelligence and the population of Baltimore.”\(^{120}\)

To rectify the situation, during the month of September, Bagnall sent several letters to Mary Cook, secretary of the branch, for two purposes. First, he wanted to meet with the executive committee in October in order to plan a membership campaign in November and second, he wanted a general conference of members and interested persons from October 18-19 to have a “heart-to-heart” talk about the problems and develop solutions in order to move forward. His letters went unanswered. Writing to Murphy, Bagnall castigated the branch for its failure to do anything and in a letter to Lillian Lottier, the

\(^{119}\) Carl Murphy to Robert Bagnall, 11 June 1931; Murphy to Bagnall, 15 June 1931, NAACP Papers, I-G-85; Memorandum from Robert Bagnall to Walter White, 30 September 1931, ibid; Carl Murphy to Walter White, 12 November 1931, ibid; Hayward Farrar, “See What the Afro Says: The Baltimore Afro-American, 1892-1950 (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 1983), 287.

\(^{120}\) Robert W. Bagnall to Mary B. Cook, 20 September 1932, NAACP Papers, I-G-85.
assistant secretary, made it clear that he was getting no response from either Rev. Clark or Miss Cook, and that it was vitally important that he meet with representatives because “it is absolutely necessary, in view of conditions, that the Baltimore branch be revived.”

Things took a turn for the worse when Rev. Clark was indicted in Norfolk, Virginia for grand larceny in September 1932, which is probably the reason why he never responded to Bagnall’s requests. Clark resigned, but Murphy convinced Clark not to completely abdicate the office until a new president was found. Murphy reached out to White and for the first time suggested—no doubt because of the work of Juanita Jackson and the Forum—getting a young person or a woman to run the branch. However, Murphy eventually went the traditional route of suggesting a man head the branch and recommended W.A.C. Hughes, the Forum’s legal advisor. Bagnall agreed. Despite these endorsements, Rev. Charles Y. Trigg, pastor of the Metropolitan Methodist Episcopal Church, was chosen as the new president. Murphy even proposed that the re-organized branch planned to attack the University of Maryland for its exclusion of African Americans.

121 Robert Bagnall to Mary B. Cook, NAACP Papers, I-G-85; Bagnall to Cook, 30 September 1932, ibid; Bagnall to Cook, 8 October 1932, ibid; Bagnall to Murphy, 8 October 1932, ibid; Bagnall to Lillian Lottier, 8 October 1932, ibid.
122 Afro, 17 September 1932; Robert Bagnall to Carl Murphy, 8 October 1932, NAACP Papers, I-G-85; Murphy to White, 12 October 1932, ibid; Bagnall to Murphy, 14 October 1932, ibid; Murphy to White, 20 December 1932, ibid; White to Murphy, 23 December 1932, ibid; Farrar, “See What the Afro Says,” 288-289. Despite his endorsement of Hughes, Bagnall also considered a woman leading the branch. In letters to George Bragg and Vashti Murphy, Carl Murphy’s wife, Bagnall seems to agree with Carl Murphy that a “brainy and energetic woman” needed to head the branch and asked Bragg and Murphy for recommendations. Again, this conclusion is no doubt due to the work of Juanita as
Throughout 1933, as the Forum initiated the Buy Where You Can Work Campaign, protested the lynching of George Armwood on Maryland’s Eastern Shore, and supported the national NAACP’s efforts to pass a federal anti-lynching bill, the branch struggled to remain relevant. Rev. Trigg contacted White to have the national office scrutinize the codes drafted by the cotton textile industry, since they affected black workers’ wages and hours. Roy Wilkins, assistant executive secretary, suggested that Trigg harness the energy of young people into a youth division of the branch, keep watch on the Communists in the city, and continue to support a federal anti-lynching bill. Rev. Trigg did participate in a delegation organized by the Baltimore Urban League to meet with Governor Richie over the Armwood lynching, but he was just simply one of a number of representatives, and held no special distinction. In order to generate support, White turned to the Forum, specifically Juanita, for assistance, and Juanita helped to organize an NAACP Boosters Club in 1933, which many Forum activists and adult leaders, including Lillie Jackson and Prophet Costonie, joined. A rally was set for later that year with White as the featured speaker to jump-start another membership drive, but this, too, was unsuccessful.123

In 1934, the Forum and national NAACP developed a closer relationship when the Forum increasingly reached out to the national office to help the boycott campaign because of the injunction against picketing. They appealed to White for funds to fight the

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123 Rev. Charles Y. Trigg to Walter White, 24 June 1933, NAACP Papers, I-G-85; White to Trigg, 7 July 1933, ibid; White to Juanita Jackson, 28 November 1933, ibid; Roy Wilkins to Trigg, 31 October 1933, ibid; White to Trigg, 5 December 1933, ibid; White to Juanita Jackson, 5 December, 13 December, 1933, ibid; Skotnes, 382.
injunction, and White made requests of the NAACP Board of Directors and the American Civil Liberties Union for assistance, while also encouraging the local movement to raise its own funds by promising to contribute $100 for every $400 raised by the local movement. This, along with the increasing attention Houston and Marshall were receiving as they set about planning the attack on the University of Maryland, sparked local interest in the NAACP, and the national office hoped to capitalize by holding their national convention in Baltimore in 1935. Unfortunately, the branch was still too weak and disoriented to pull off such a feat.  

The Murray case was the impetus needed to convert enthusiastic interest in the NAACP into a vibrant and effective branch. Not letting the opportunity to re-build pass him by, Carl Murphy called a meeting of twenty-three people in his office in April 1935. There, they decided to once again ask veteran field secretary Daisy Lampkin to lead the fall membership drive in October of that year with the assistance of Juanita Jackson, new to the national staff. Rev. Trigg, who had tendered his resignation because of personal matters, was asked to remain as titular head until a new president was elected. A decision was made to also send Juanita to the 1935 national convention in St. Louis, Missouri to persuade the delegates to have the 1936 national convention in Baltimore, which she was able to do by effectively arguing that Maryland was being used as a ‘laboratory’ where test cases could be used as ‘model procedures’ for cases in other states in the NAACP’s

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124 Juanita Jackson to Walter White, 29 May 1934, NAACP Papers, I-G-85; White to Arthur Spingarn, 1 June 1934, Ibid; White to Juanita Jackson, 1 June 1934, ibid; White to Roger Baldwin, 1 June 1934, ibid; Baldwin to White, 4 June 1934, ibid; White to Juanita Jackson, 5 June 1934, ibid; Lillie Jackson to Joel Spingarn, 22 June 1934, ibid; White to Lillie Jackson, 25 June 1934, ibid; Lillie Jackson to White, June 30, 1934, ibid; Farrar, 290.
equal education campaign. She added that the city was ready to work with the NAACP. Finally, the participants at the meeting also decided to “avoid charges that the administration is the choice of only a few people” by re-organizing the branch after the membership drive.125

Asking to host the annual NAACP convention was a huge undertaking, so the stakes were high if the branch failed to reorganize itself after Juanita was able to sway the delegates from having it in Columbus, Ohio or Omaha, Nebraska. To ensure that the branch was successful, the Afro enthusiastically announced the coming campaign in September 1935. Carl Murphy headed the drive steering committee, and solicited the help of Thurgood Marshall, Clarence Mitchell, ‘generals’ in charge of the men’s division and youth division, chairpersons of various committees, and the Afro’s own Ralph Matthews, Sr. to handle publicity. Ms. Lampkin was charged with signing up five thousand members, and Juanita and a reorganization committee, headed by her mother, Lillie, had already solicited a hundred members before Ms. Lampkin arrived.126

The membership drive officially began October 1, and the Afro provided incessant coverage. The theme of the campaign was “You Can’t Win By Yourself—Join the NAACP!” and the community was plastered with posters and slogans that emphasized key issues such as lynchings, the University of Maryland, the lack of black police and fire fighters, educational inequalities, and Jim Crow. Announcements were made in churches

125 Murphy to White, 29 April 1935, NAACP Papers, I-G-85; White to Murphy, 16 May 1935, ibid; Murphy to White, 17 May 1935, ibid; Afro, 30 April 1935; Juanita Mitchell, OH 8095, 4; Thompson, 225-226.
on Sunday to submit one dollar for membership and youth speakers set up soapboxes on
street corners and spoke through borrowed loudspeakers on the back of truck platforms in
the busiest sections of the city explaining to people why they needed to join the local
branch. The drive lasted until October 10. On that day an African American company of
the Maryland National Guard, the F.E.W. Harper Temple of the Elks, and a young
people’s group were among the participants in a parade early in the day. A Victory Mass
Meeting was held later in the evening, where hundreds of people heard a play
presentation by Ralph Matthews on the Ossian Sweet case in Detroit.127

The campaign proved to be a tremendous success and all of the publicity surrounding
it left “the whole city talking about the NAACP” according to the Crisis. After extending
the campaign for six more days, the local reorganization committee garnered over 2,000
members and raised $2,314 dollars in total memberships. The women’s committee
solicited the most memberships with $1,300.05, and received a silver loving cup as a gift
from a local jeweler. This amount was more than what the NAACP had spent on the
Murray suit ($1,058) and clearly demonstrated that black Baltimoreans (and black
Marylanders) were willing to pool their finances for their freedom. The drive also proved
to be an all-encompassing mass mobilization, a fact noted by the Crisis:

All groups, all classes, all types of people were reached in the membership solicitation. Trades and labor groups, fraternal groups, social, civic, and
educational organizations, churches, businesses, institutions—all were
solicited in this drive.128

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127 “Baltimore Campaign Nets $2,314 in Memberships,” Crisis 42 (December 1935): 374; Thompson, 228; Skotnes, 385.
128 “NAACP Drive Passes 2,000 Mark; To Be Extended,” Afro, 19 October 1935, 15; “Baltimore Campaign Nets $2,314 in Memberships,” 374.
It was now time to choose someone to lead this revitalized branch, and the re-organization committee was cautious. They wanted someone who had the drive, commitment, and experience to lead. One of the major problems that plagued the branch in the previous years was weak leadership, a fact Walter White pointed out in 1931, noting that “the trouble is those who can won’t give the necessary time to leading” the branch in re-organizing itself. Since Lillie Jackson had done a tremendous job chairing the reorganization committee, Carl Murphy encouraged her to run for branch president, which she accepted and was unanimously elected. Murphy was very familiar with Jackson, having graduated a year ahead of her at Baltimore’s Colored High School in 1907. She had also proved herself highly capable and effective as the main adult advisor to the Forum and head of the Citizens Committee during the Buy Where You Can Work Campaign in 1934. Two of her most outstanding qualities were her willingness to lead the branch and having the time to do so. The branch’s previous presidents had all been either lawyers or ministers, who had less time and energy to devote themselves full time to the position. Consequently, the branch suffered from dwindling membership and inconsistent programs and activities. Jackson had a stable real estate business that required little oversight and afforded her a measure of independence and a comfortable living, thus, she was one of a few who could devote themselves to running the branch. These and other qualities made Jackson a fantastic choice, and she was unanimously elected for the next thirty-five years.129

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129 Juanita Mitchell, OH 8095, 4; Jackson and Kiah, OH 8097, 2; Thompson, 233; Skotnes, 383-384. Skotnes notes that in retrospect, there was no assurance that even Jackson would have seemed the logical choice for president. She had only been active in the freedom movement for a short period of time, and prior to 1931, she had devoted her
The branch chose other dedicated veterans to assist Jackson. It was no coincidence that many of them had either been members of the Forum or worked closely with it. Sarah Diggs and Robert McGuinn, two of the six vice-presidents, were two such persons. Katrine White and her assistant Vivian Young were secretaries of both the Forum and the local branch, and Clarence Mitchell handled publicity. The branch’s executive committee was stacked with former and current Forum members and supporters such as Frances Male, Carl Murphy, Florence Snowden (Lillie Jackson’s sister), Rev. C.C. Ferguson, John T. Haywood, Jr., Josiah Diggs, W.A.C. Hughes and his law partner Warren McGuinn. Other important members were Thurgood Marshall, Associate General Counsel of the national NAACP and Enolia Pettigen [McMillan], who headed the Maryland State Colored Teachers’ Association. They all remained dedicated during Jackson’s tenure.\textsuperscript{130}

The torch had now been passed in reverse, from youth to elder, rather than the traditional way from elder to youth. Juanita had led a re-invigorated freedom struggle in Baltimore with the assistance of her mother. It was Lillie Jackson who helped to build and solidify the bond with black churches that undergirded the Forum’s efforts. Juanita’s organizational activities helped her mother blossom, to use the skills she had cultivated as a mother, businesswoman, and church official (Lillie Jackson was on the Board of Trustees of Sharp Street United Methodist Church) in service of the community and the energy and talents to her family, her real estate business, and her church, the Sharp Street Methodist Church. Heavily involved in running the Citizens Committee during the Buy Where You Can Work Campaign, Jackson went back to her role as Forum advisor when the movement ebbed after the injunction against picketing became permanent and occasionally corresponded with the national NAACP to assist in reorganizing the Baltimore branch.\textsuperscript{130} Thompson, 234.
freedom movement. Now that Juanita had moved on to a national position and Jackson now led one of the oldest branches of the most respected civil rights organization, Jackson received the assistance of her daughter as they and other activists made plans to continue the assault on racial discrimination and segregation in their hometown.

The branch leadership now set, Jackson and her colleagues concentrated on planning the 1936 NAACP annual convention. Jackson would receive the assistance of Juanita in organizing the programs and rallying support, and she could always count on the Afro for publicity and the black churches for funds and an audience. Her energies were also focused on continuing to open up the University of Maryland, for Houston and Marshall needed the branch to assist in its continuing efforts to “sue Jim Crow out of Maryland.” The next two decades would validate the black community’s faith in Jackson and the branch to fight relentlessly for their freedom rights.
Chapter 3: “We Will Sue Jim Crow Out of Maryland”: The Legal Campaign Against Racial Segregation and Discrimination, 1935-1941

“That NAACP Lady”

Lillie Mae Carroll Jackson had devoted much of her life to service. Foremost, was her service to God. A devout Methodist, Lillie always credited her mother, Amanda Bowen—who dutifully took her children to Sharp Street Methodist Episcopal Church every Sunday—with filling her with a love for the Lord and she was extremely proud of it. Since she was a child, Lillie used her talents and skills as a pianist, vocalist, and public speaker to proclaim to everyone that they too could find peace and joy in the loving arms of the savior, Jesus Christ, and once they did so, he would guide them into living a full and blessed life. She especially loved lifting her beautiful voice to sing His praises whenever she got the chance.\textsuperscript{131}

Lillie transferred that spirit of giving into her work as a teacher, following again in the footsteps of her mother, who was a teacher as well.\textsuperscript{132} Her mother had always preached

\textsuperscript{131} Mitchell and Kiah, OH 8094, 9, 20; Thompson, 47; Skotnes, “Narratives of Juanita Jackson Mitchell,” 51. Her outward displays of devotion brought her both spiritual and earthly rewards, for her husband, Keiffer Jackson, was drawn to her because of her lilting soprano when he heard her sing “The Holy City” at Sharp Street Methodist Church. See Mitchell and Kiah, OH 8094, 20.

\textsuperscript{132} Because of racial discrimination, Black women had very, very limited employment opportunities during the late nineteenth century that extended well into the first half of the twentieth century. A majority of those who were unable to become teachers were relegated to mainly domestic work, such as housekeepers and laundresses. Lillie’s mother was one of the few who transformed herself into an independent businessperson after moving to Baltimore in the late nineteenth century. See Stephanie J. Shaw, \textit{What a}
that education and good character made a person rich, material wealth did not matter. She made it clear to Lillie that education mattered little if it was used for selfish purposes; those who received it were obligated to use it in service to their people. It was a lesson that Lillie took to heart, and she dove into her work as an educator with missionary zeal. Though she had to deal with a host of “monumental” problems in the segregated school system of the ‘Monumental City’—overcrowding, inadequate buildings and supplies, low pay, long hours and the like—Lillie, like her colleagues, undoubtedly saw herself as a role model, a living personification of hard work, determination, and fortitude who inspired her mentees to strive for excellence and ultimately, freedom.\(^{133}\)

Lillie was on her sojourn for about a year before she captured the eye and heart of Keiffer Albert Jackson, a man six years her senior who was originally from Carrollton, Mississippi. Keiffer was ‘light, bright, and damn near white,’ as they said in the black community, but he was a proud man who needed a wife as race conscious as he.\(^{134}\) Lillie

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\(^{133}\) Historian Adam Fairclough, in his study of African American teachers from the end of Reconstruction to the civil rights movement, makes it clear that a large number of them in the late nineteenth century believed that education “would liberate the black masses from ignorance, degradation and poverty” and that the “colored race would sink or swim according to the education they received.” They also had a strong sense of historical mission. This attitude would be prevalent in the early twentieth century as well. See Fairclough, *A Class of Their Own*, 1-24. The quotes are from pages 7-8. For the particular challenges faced by urban teachers such as those in Baltimore, see chapter seven.

\(^{134}\) Mitchell and Kiah, OH 8094, 13-18. Though he never talked about him, the family believed that Keiffer Jackson’s father was white. In Mississippi, Jackson was exposed to the horrors of racial discrimination and terror at a very early age. At the age of six he witnessed the Ku Klux Klan attack a courthouse where African Americans had gathered to witness the trial of some blacks allegedly accused of murdering white tenant farmers. At age nine, he witnessed the lynching of a woman and her two sons. These episodes, and the sexual exploitation of black women by white men in the South—the Jackson
certainly fit the bill. She was proud of the African blood on her mother’s side, her great-great-grandfather an African chief who came to Maryland a free man and had the gumption to marry an Englishwoman so his children would not be slaves. “Freedom flows through my veins!” Lillie proudly proclaimed.135

Keiffer and Lillie were married in 1910 and hit the road soon afterward, travelling the circuit putting on religious shows in the South; Keiffer showed religious films while Lillie preached the gospel and captivated audiences with her mesmerizing voice. Travelling from place to place was not conducive to starting a family, but the Jacksons somehow managed. Three beautiful little girls were born in a matter of years,136 and Lillie tutored them as they grew older while they continued travelling the highways and back roads. Few ‘respectable’ white establishments would shelter Negroes, so the Jacksons relied on the black communities that they visited for good home cooking and warm beds. Even those without much were willing to give what they had, for which the Jacksons were most certainly grateful. They felt at home amongst them, and Lillie would constantly emphasize to her daughters how connected they were to black folks large and small; to never believe that they were above and beyond their people, no matter how high

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135 Mitchell and Kiah, OH 8094, 3. The quote is paraphrased from Skotnes, “Narrative,” 50.
136 Virginia was born in East St. Louis, Illinois, in 1911, and Juanita and Marion were born in Hot Springs, Arkansas in 1913 and 1916, respectively. Mitchell and Kiah, OH 8094, 23; Skotnes, “Narrative,” 53.
they had climbed, for their talents were to serve the humble, not the haughty. It was a lesson they were mindful to remember, especially Juanita.\textsuperscript{137}

Soon however, Lillie grew weary of the road. It surely was not the best place to raise her children and teach them the values that she received from her mother, especially when the family was constantly subjected to degrading insults, hostile stares, discourtesy, and ‘advice’ to Keiffer from southern sheriffs that pulled the couple over that “a white man shouldn’t be seen with a colored woman in the daylight.” Didn’t Jackson know that the nighttime was the best time to carouse with your colored gal? Obviously not. At any rate, Lillie was adamant that the girls had a higher purpose and life on the road was not helping to fulfill it. They needed constant schooling to nurture and develop their God-given talents to serve their people and help rid the world of the ungodly stain of racial discrimination and segregation. Keiffer reluctantly agreed.\textsuperscript{138}

So, in 1917 the family moved back to Baltimore. Almost as soon as Lillie got back, the advice of her mother rang in her ears: “get bricks and mortar, Lillie, bricks and mortar. Be a taxpayer. Be somebody. Become a citizen.” Her mother had done so. She owned her own boarding house and ice cream parlor where everyone who was anyone came to congregate. No one could tell her what to do with her property. She was, in her mind, her own boss. There was no reason why her daughter could not do the same.

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\textsuperscript{137} Skotnes, “Narrative,” 54. Skotnes notes that Lillie Jackson treated the black communities that they performed in as meta-communities and Juanita attributes her mother’s (along with her own) identification with black people of various classes, social groupings and backgrounds to these experiences.

\textsuperscript{138} Skotnes, ibid, 54-55; Mitchell and Kiah, OH 8094, 15, 24, 34-35; Mitchell, OH 8095, 21.\end{flushright}
So, Lillie set about acquiring ‘bricks and mortar.’ However, she was not looking to “buy and sell, but buy and provide,” to help those who were finding it hard to help themselves. All God’s creatures needed shelter and Lillie sought to provide it, making the homes and apartments she acquired affordable since times were already hard and becoming increasingly so.\footnote{Skotnes, 50-51, 55; Mitchell and Kiah, OH 8094, 26-27.}

Life was good for the Jacksons. Lillie’s real estate properties created a comfortable living for the family—Keiffer still loved the road, but stuck relatively close to home—and all three of the girls were excelling in school because Lillie laid a good foundation as their road tutor. Then, tragedy struck. In 1919, Lillie fell ill with mastoiditis that was excruciatingly painful, the kind that soon brought agonizing days and sleepless nights. In pain, she was rushed to Johns Hopkins University Hospital, where a Dr. Crow operated on her. When she awoke, Dr. Crow said to her, “Lillie, do you believe in God?” “Yes, I do,” she answered. “Good, because only God saved you,” replied Dr. Crow. He told her he took so much decayed bone and infection out of her head that the force that brought her through could only be God. Lillie knew that all too well. Just before the operation she not only prayed to God but also promised Him a lifetime of service if He allowed her to live to raise her three daughters. She fully intended to keep her word.\footnote{Skotnes, 55; Mitchell and Kiah, ibid, 30-32; Mitchell and Kiah, OH 8097, 12. The paraphrased conversation between Jackson and Dr. Crow is found in the latter source. There is some confusion on the date of the actual operation, and subsequently, the exact birth year of the Jackson’s last child and only son, Bowen, who was born in Baltimore. Juanita states in the interview with her sister that the operation was in 1919 or 1918 and that Bowen had not been born yet. However, Skotnes’ narrative purports that Bowen was born soon after the Jacksons moved back to Baltimore in 1917. Lastly, the operation was not without serious consequences. A facial nerve was accidently severed during the.
Lillie threw herself into her church work with renewed vigor. The folks at Sharp Street Church knew that Lillie was a dynamic and dedicated worker, but she definitely took it up a notch. She now took an interest in the welfare of the church itself and moved to become a member of the Trustee Board, which she did. No woman had ever been a trustee before, but Lillie did not let that stand in her way. Sharp Street was commissioned to do the Lord’s work, and Lillie was there to remind those in charge in case they forgot. Her family, church, and businesses became the center of her universe, the places where she could guide people in the right direction, influencing them to live a blessed life through her example, contributing something to the people in her tight-knit, northwest community that gave them a chance to find solace from the hostile and intimidating world outside.\textsuperscript{141}

But there was something else nagging at Lillie that just would not go away. Although she and her husband never witnessed or experienced the racial terror while they travelled through the South that so defined his childhood, that did not mean that they returned to Baltimore unscathed. What she did experience was still ugly and hateful, hurtful and tragic, a complete rejection of God’s love and understanding. Home was little better, where even stores in her own neighborhood refused to employ the very people that patronized them. Never one to rest on her laurels, Lillie sought to do something about it, so she joined the NAACP. She was soon disappointed. It seemed the Baltimore NAACP was too small, too hesitant, and too complacent to do anything about the problems black folks faced in the city. Most of the members were doctors, lawyers, teachers and

\textsuperscript{141} Skotnes, ibid; Mitchell and Kiah, OH 8094, 35.

operation, which was not noticed until after the removal of the bandages. The right side of her face remained permanently disfigured.
preachers; folks who only seemed concerned about themselves and their slice of the pie, leaving the little people to fend for themselves. It was the ‘Roaring 20s’ after all, and everybody was focused on their own needs. Lillie thought that was the wrong way to go about life, wasting God’s blessings to make life better for one and not all.¹⁴²

Thank God for her daughters. They were intelligent, precocious, and loved to study. They also loved the church, and took every opportunity to serve, teaching Sunday school and participating in other church activities as they matriculated through high school. Sadly, the oldest daughters, Virginia and Juanita, would have loved to stay at home close to their mother and continue their education when they both graduated from high school, but the best—i.e. white—schools in Maryland refused to admit them. It had shocked Lillie that her two oldest daughters had to continue their education outside of the state simply because of the color of their skin. It had finally hit home how evil racial discrimination was and how it could discourage even the strongest from bettering themselves. But old Jim Crow was not going to crush her daughters’ dreams and aspirations, so she took her daughters’ future in her own hands and entrusted them to relatives in Philadelphia while she made sacrifices for them to continue to excel.¹⁴³

¹⁴³ Skotnes, ibid; Mitchell and Kiah, OH 8094, 36-38, 39, 40-41; Mitchell, OH 8095, 5.
Lillie was soon rewarded for her efforts. The Great Depression soon came and hit everyone hard; people were in dire straits as never before. When Juanita and Virginia returned home and told her about their idea for the Forum, Lillie was ecstatic. They had obviously listened to her when she told them time and again that it was their divine mission to use their talents and skills in service to the masses during trying times. The community quickly demonstrated that it was willingly to work to make things happen. Lillie worked her magic and got others to support her daughters and the young people they sought to help by using her church connections. She even took on a leadership role herself when the Forum and others eventually initiated a boycott against segregated stores in the neighborhood and kept things running smoothly. Here was the work, and attitude, she thought the NAACP should have adopted a long time ago, so when people decided to get the local branch up and running again, she was more than willing to help. Her reputation for getting things done was well known; no one was surprised when Mr. Murphy of the *Afro* newspaper chose her to head the re-organization committee.¹⁴⁴

As before, she did not disappoint. In fact, she alone brought in over one hundred people. Her example inspired others to work their hardest to make the campaign a rousing success. Lillie had the drive, tenacity and strategic mind of a leader, not to mention the time, resources, and support of the most powerful black leader in the city, Dr. Murphy. There was no question Lillie should be crowned the leader of the new Baltimore NAACP, and the people made it so in December 1935.

¹⁴⁴ Mitchell and Kiah, OH 8094, 40; Mitchell, OH 8183, 55-56. For the activities of the Forum, Jackson’s role in assisting them, and the activities surrounding the revitalization of the Baltimore branch, see chapter above.
Now the head of the oldest civil rights organization in the city, Lillie Jackson could shape the NAACP the way she wanted, making it more an organization of and for the people. No longer would education or social standing be a prerequisite for leadership; Lillie wanted to work with those who were ‘pure of heart,’ and had the passion to work as hard, as long, and as effectively as she did. And this new NAACP was not just concerned with her little corner of the city, but the whole of Baltimore itself. In fact, she saw no reason it could not be the voice of black folks throughout the state. And lastly, Lillie would attack all racial barriers and obstacles, for they were the forces of the devil, and she saw the NAACP as God’s organization, the vessel through which to free all of His children.\(^{145}\)

**The 1936 Annual NAACP Conference**

The first order of business for Jackson and the newly revived branch was making preparations to host the NAACP’s 1936 twenty-seventh annual conference. Carl Murphy and the re-organization committee had sent Juanita Jackson to the 1935 annual convention to stand up and boldly announce to the national leadership, delegates, and other participants that the Baltimore branch would be ready to host next year’s event. The branch now had to deliver. Revived in the latter months of 1935, the branch had a little over six months to plan the convention, which was scheduled from June 26 through July 5, 1936. Springing into action, Lillie Jackson and branch leaders once again relied

\[^{145}\text{Mitchell and Kiah, OH 8094, 47; Mitchell, OH 8095, 22-23; Mitchell and Kiah, OH 8097, 24.}\]
on the black churches and community organizations for support. Her church, Sharp
Street Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church, was to host the convention, and its
Community House was to serve as headquarters. Ministers, choirs, and members from
other churches such as Enon Baptist, Metropolitan Methodist Episcopal, and Bethel
A.M.E. volunteered as ushers and assisted with the invocations, singing, benedictions and
transportation. Since Baltimore hotels were segregated, the NAACP’s Housing
Committee was able to secure private homes to lodge delegates for $1 per night or $1.50
with breakfast. Breakfast and other meals were served in Sharp Street’s Community
House dining room and black restaurants.

The convention was a great success. The Crisis called it the best convention in years.
A ten-year attendance record was set as 523 delegates from across the country and the
District of Columbia were treated to an array of well-orchestrated business sessions, mass
meetings, and social activities, which included a chartered boat ride down the
Chesapeake Bay on the fourth of July. Besides obligatory welcomes from Maryland
governor Harry W. Nice and Baltimore mayor Howard Jackson, the branch was able to
secure the services of Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes, who spoke on the evening of
June 29 on “The Negro as a Citizen.” The address received national exposure as NBC
carried it over the radio. Other notable attendees were U.S. senators Robert Wagner and

146 Thompson, 235. It should also be noted that Lillie Jackson was also a trustee of the
Sharp Street Community House, a meeting place that provided housing and employment
assistance to young women. See Cumberbatch, “‘What ‘the Cause’ Needs Is a ‘Brainy
and Energetic Woman,’” 67, n. 30.
147 Thompson, ibid; Clarence Mitchell, “N.A.A.C.P.—Welcome to Baltimore!” Crisis 43
(July 1936): 200-201; “NAACP Delegates Prefer Ham-and-Egg Breakfast,” Afro, 4 July
1936, 6; Mitchell, OH 8095, 28. Baltimore did have black hotels, but Juanita Jackson
said that was in name only as they were really “houses[s] of prostitution.”
Edward Costigan, sponsors of the Wagner-Costigan anti-lynching bill, E. Franklin Frazier, Ralph Bunche, and, of course, the top NAACP brass. Local NAACP leaders such as Lillie Jackson, Thurgood Marshall, and Enolia Pettigen, a teacher and president of the Maryland State Colored Teachers Association, also addressed the convention. The delegates discussed and debated pressing issues affecting African Americans across the country, from lynchings, Jim Crow and the New Deal, to economic and labor issues such as organizing domestic workers, tenant farmers, and industrial workers and the benefits of cooperatives.\textsuperscript{148}

Most importantly, the convention marked a turning point in the overall direction of the NAACP, and reflected the fact that the lessons of the early 1930s Baltimore freedom movement were to serve as a model/blueprint for subsequent freedom movements in black communities across the United States. First, the favorable 1935 court decision in \textit{Murray v. Pearson} that opened up the University of Maryland law school convinced the NAACP that it was correct in going on the offensive against educational inequalities. Henceforth, according to Dr. Louis T. Wright, the chairperson of the NAACP national board of directors, the NAACP, with support from African Americans, would remain on the offensive to acquire full citizenship rights. Charles Hamilton Houston, the NAACP’s special counsel, drove this point home three nights later when speaking on the educational campaign. He announced that the Association would take the fight to other southern states, such as Missouri and Tennessee, where suits were already filed. Not

only would universities continue to be targeted, but eventually primary and secondary education as well. Houston cautioned that the fight would be a long one and that it would take the concerted efforts of both the NAACP and the national African American community.149

Second, the convention also marked the first NAACP Youth Conference. The youth conference ran parallel to the regular convention and was organized by Juanita Jackson, the newly appointed assistant to Walter White who was charged with building a national NAACP youth movement. The youth conference was to be the first step in Jackson’s campaign, and she challenged the young people to assist the NAACP in its fight for full citizenship rights for all Americans. The youth conference was scheduled separately from the regular conference during mornings, but Wednesday marked “Youth Night” on the conference program, where young people conducted a session attended by all delegates. Clarence Mitchell chaired the program and Juanita Jackson served as keynote speaker. Juanita emphasized to young people that as American citizens it was their responsibility to end racial segregation and discrimination and bring about a brighter future for themselves and generations to come. She again noted, like Wright and Houston, that the NAACP needed the black communities’ full support. “Youth Night” was the most well attended session of the whole conference. The first National Youth Conference drew 217 delegates from all over, although a majority of them—142—were

149 Thompson, 236-237. Houston made it clear that the NAACP could accomplish nothing without financial support from African Americans, and put the onus of the educational campaign’s success on them: “This is your fight. If you want it continued, you will have to pay the bill. More money than ever before will be needed if the fight is to be won.” Quotation is from “Symposium on Politics Stirs NAACP Meet,” Afro, 11 July 1936, 19.
from the Baltimore area. Later, Jackson embarked on a national tour hoping to create the Baltimore NAACP Youth Council and its forerunner, the Forum, in youth and college chapters across the U.S., helping to stir adults to action as the Forum did during the early 1930s.150

The 1936 conference put Baltimore and the nation on notice that the NAACP was again operating in the city. It also added momentum to the efforts of Jackson and branch leaders to continue to build a working relationship with both the national office and Baltimore’s black community. In Jackson, the NAACP had a leader that would chart a new course for the branch, as it became the vehicle for action not only in Baltimore, but in the state of Maryland as well.

Jackson had her work cut out for her. Before 1935, the branch consisted of one hundred members, the majority of whom were middle-class professionals such as lawyers, ministers, and teachers, who were mainly concerned with discrimination affecting those of similar middle-class status, such as restrictive covenants against African Americans purchasing homes in majority-white neighborhoods. Their activities did not affect the wider African American community in either northwest Baltimore or elsewhere. Consequently, some African Americans believed that NAACP stood for the

150Thompson, 238; Skotnes, “The Black Freedom Movement,” 387. The Crisis reminded the NAACP of the significance of the Forum and the Baltimore freedom movement:

Baltimore was an ideal city for the initiation of this much needed and long awaited youth movement. It was in this city that the work of the now famous City-wide Young People’s Forum came into being and subsequently lent its influence and inspiration to youth of other sections of the country. Most important of the lessons which these young people have taught is the incalculable value of what an organized group can do.


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National Association for the Advancement of Certain People. Jackson believed that the local branch had to not only reach out to the masses, but also had to be concerned with tackling racial discrimination and other issues that affected the larger African American community in Baltimore, and then expand its influence throughout the state.\textsuperscript{151} At age 46, Jackson was the second woman to head the branch\textsuperscript{152}, and from the beginning she did not subscribe to the traditional NAACP philosophy of who should be a member, and broke with their traditional pattern of organizing when building the branch. Her background, religious philosophy, and pre-civil rights activities shaped Jackson’s ideas about the composition, mission, and activities of the newly revitalized branch, and guided her as branch president for the next thirty-five years.

\textbf{The Pre-1935 Life of Lillie Mae Carroll Jackson}

Lillie Mae Carroll Jackson was born in the northwest section of Baltimore City on May 25, 1889. She was the seventh of eight children born to Charles Henry Carroll\textsuperscript{153} and Amanda Bowen Carroll. It was her mother who had the most lasting influence on Lillie, instilling in her a love for education, promoting within her a strong sense of character, and advocating the need to live independently of others. Her mother once taught in Maryland schools, and later became a successful businessperson, owning and

\begin{footnotes}
\item[151] Thompson, 245.
\item[152] Sartain, 48.
\item[153] Jackson claimed that her father was a descendent of Charles Carroll, an early Maryland planter and slaveholder who signed the Declaration of Independence. As relayed by Juanita Jackson in an interview, Lillie Jackson curiously and proudly proclaimed, “freedom is in my blood on both sides!” See Mitchell and Kiah, OH 8094, 2-3, 11 and Skotnes, “Narratives,” 50.
\end{footnotes}
operating a boarding house in northwest Baltimore that had a first floor sweet shop and ice cream parlor. Miss Carroll’s Place was located on Druid Hill Avenue, a street that W.E.B. DuBois described as “one of the best colored streets in the world,” and it became a very popular community gathering place. The desire to own property and live independently was passed down to Amanda Bowen through generations. Her grandfather, John Bowen, was supposedly an African chief who came to North America a free man. He settled in Montgomery County, Maryland and acquired a fair amount of property, advocating property ownership as a means of uplifting the race.154

Jackson was also reared in a deeply religious home which accounted for her faith and her belief in the equality of all people before God. Her parents were deeply involved in Sharp Street United Methodist Episcopal Church, which was built by African Americans a few years after Jackson’s birth in 1896. An example of African American resolve and resourcefulness, it was no surprise that her parents supported such an institution. Jackson was a talented and gifted child, and her mother trained her in piano, voice, and elocution, which she utilized in church. These skills helped her later as a dynamic speaker. Later in life, Jackson would stress to her children that people should use their God-given talents in service to Him and those most in need, and it is likely that she learned this lesson from her mother as well. Juanita always noted that her mother taught her children that the

154 Mitchell and Kiah, OH 8094, 1, 2-8; Skotnes, “Narrative,” 50-51. The Jackson sisters recount a number of maternal relatives who owned land, businesses, or both. Their maternal forebear, John Bowen, married a white, English woman because under Maryland law, the children of a white woman could not be enslaved. The couple subsequently had a number of children. John Bowen acquired a considerable amount of property in Montgomery County, and taught his children the value of education and economic independence. Juanita recounts a number of his Bowen’s sons becoming teachers, tradesmen, and ministers.
color of their skin was a gift from God that humans used to separate people; therefore, racism was ungodly and sinful. In addition, racism continued to exist because people failed to assist God in eradicating it. Therefore, her children should always prepare themselves for the day when God would call on them to utilize what they had learned to help change things.\textsuperscript{155}

Jackson attended school in the city and graduated from the Colored High and Training School in 1908. She then taught in the segregated Baltimore school system. On September 7, 1910, she married Keiffer A. Jackson of Carrollton, Mississippi. For three years they traveled the South, visiting churches where they entertained. Lillie sang while Keiffer showed religious motion pictures. Three of their children (Virginia, Juanita, and Marion) were born on the road while the last child, Bowen, was born in Baltimore, where the Jacksons settled down in order to provide a stable home for their children.\textsuperscript{156}

As the family encountered racial discrimination on public transportation and Southern towns traveling on the road, the experiences fostered Jackson’s growing belief that racial discrimination was ungodly. But it was also where she encountered community support and solidarity and began to identify with African Americans of different social backgrounds and statuses. Since her husband was light complexioned, many Southerners mistook him for white, and on more than one occasion sheriffs stopped them to admonish Keiffer Jackson that it was not wise to be seen with a black woman in the daytime; her parents carried their marriage certificate to quell their concerns. Of course, southern

\textsuperscript{155} Mitchell and Kiah, OH 8094, 1-20, 34-35, 46; Mitchell, OH 8095, 21; Thompson, 47.
\textsuperscript{156} Mitchell and Kiah, OH 8094, 8, 18-20, 23-26.
hotels refused to shelter them so they relied on the black community to provide housing, food, and financial support.\textsuperscript{157}

This community support would engender identification with African Americans as a whole. Juanita maintains that the family travelled through twenty-eight states in seven years. During that time, the Jacksons most certainly conducted religious shows in a variety of black churches, large and small, urban and rural, and Baptist/Methodist and other denominations. In each community they came upon people from different socio-economic conditions that rendered much needed assistance in order for the Jacksons to earn a living. One episode illustrates their dependence on the community’s goodwill. On one trip, Keiffer Jackson broke his leg, and the family was worried about their survival. The local community, particularly the ministers, came to the family’s aid and took care of them until Keiffer was able to travel again. According to Andor Skotnes, although she grew up in a middle class milieu, Lillie Jackson looked at the African American communities in which they travelled as a sort of meta-community and Juanita attributes her mother’s identification with African Americans of different socio-economic backgrounds to these experiences.\textsuperscript{158}

In 1918, Jackson found herself in a life-threatening situation that would forever change her life and subsequently affect the course of the civil rights movement in Baltimore. Suffering from painful mastoiditis,\textsuperscript{159} Jackson underwent a successful operation.

\textsuperscript{157} Skotnes, “Narrative,” 54.
\textsuperscript{158} Ibid, 54. Skotnes notes that Juanita’s identification with African Americans as a whole was an extension of her mother’s experiences.
\textsuperscript{159} Mastoiditis is an infection of the mastoid bone in the skull that is located right behind the outside ear. Symptoms include ear pain or discomfort, ear drainage, fever, headache, hearing loss and redness behind the ear. The infection is treated with antibiotics but...
operation at Johns Hopkins University Hospital and dedicated herself to service as a consequence. She became a devoted member of Sharp Street Methodist Church. She also threw herself into the cause of civil rights, enthusiastically giving her approval and support when her daughters returned to Baltimore and created the City-Wide Young People’s Forum.\(^{160}\)

Jackson was politicized through the activities of her daughters, particularly Juanita. She became the adult advisor to the Forum and organized an adult advisory committee. Although Juanita Mitchell credits her mother with helping to get the churches and black adults to undergird the young people’s efforts during the Buy Where You Can Work boycott in 1933-34, it was Juanita’s leadership of the Forum that facilitated her mother’s active participation in the civil rights struggle and legitimized ‘radical’ protest activities such as mass meetings and direct action tactics like picketing, which Lillie Jackson helped to organize. Before this, Jackson had protested racial discrimination and segregation in indirect and informal ways. She owned property so as to be economically independent of white control; stressed education to her children in order to acquire skills to serve their community; was a member of the NAACP; and wrote a letter with her husband protesting discrimination at a railroad company in the early 1910s. Through her work with the adult advisory committee, Jackson’s actions were now decidedly political and organized, and she became a movement leader in her own right in late 1933. When


\(^{160}\) Mitchell and Kiah, OH 8094, 30-31; Thompson, 47-48. As Thompson notes, this story appears repeatedly in any recollection of Jackson and Mitchell oral histories and family records. See Thompson, 48, n. 14.
Juanita accepted a position with the national NAACP in late 1935, Lillie, as the newly
elected branch president, took her place as leader of the Baltimore freedom movement.\textsuperscript{161}

**Building the Baltimore NAACP**

Realizing immediately that the Baltimore NAACP could accomplish much more with
allies, Jackson moved quickly and worked incessantly to strengthen the bonds between
the branch, the churches, and the *Afro-American* newspaper, a coalition first established
by the Forum. As a devoutly religious woman, Jackson recognized the power within the
church and its role as the focal point of the community. During her tenure as president,
Jackson rarely held a branch or community meeting, organized a campaign, raised needed
funds, or negotiated with business or political officials without the assistance and support
of area ministers and their congregations. Many of the branch’s mass meetings and

\textsuperscript{161} Skotnes, “Narrative,” 60, 65. Skotnes points out that in several interviews about her
family, Juanita stressed the fact that her forebears, including her parents, were not deeply
involved in the black freedom struggle or its organizations before 1931. Their actions
against racism tended to be more subtle, individual, and indirect: her grandmother’s ice
cream parlor serving as a community gathering place; her mother renting nice apartments
to poor and working-class African Americans rather than seeking maximum profits; her
father not allowing his wife and daughters to work in white households; a NAACP
membership card found in her father’s personal effects after his death; her parents
stressing education and economic independence. Even Juanita participated in such
nonpolitical acts as a teenager when she and several friends would don turbans, enter
segregated establishments, and proceed to speak French, which resulted in courteous
service. These acts both defied Jim Crow and exposed its absurdity. Although
nonpolitical, these and other acts were indicative of what Vincent Harding termed a
“culture of resistance” that was deeply embedded in African American traditions and
institutions and manifested itself in both political and nonpolitical ways.
activities were held in the church. In fact, the church was so intimately involved in the work of the branch that Rev. Marion Bascom, pastor of Douglass Memorial Community Church and a member of the Baltimore branch’s executive committee, stated that Jackson felt that the churches were “the bulwark of the NAACP.” Thompson notes that the presence and participation of clergy also reinforced the notion that the NAACP was “God’s organization” that was committed to eradicating segregation and racial discrimination, which Jackson constantly disparaged as “sinful.”

The strong relationship that existed between the branch and the *Afro* was largely built on the personal relationship between Jackson and Carl Murphy. By all accounts, Jackson and Murphy had tremendous respect for one another. Murphy completely supported her election as president and would remain a strong supporter until his death. She conferred with Murphy on many of the most important decisions and activities undertaken by the branch. Murphy, in turn, supported the cause of civil rights through news stories, advertisements, and editorials, and made sure the meetings and activities of the branch were well publicized. But Murphy was also intimately involved in the branch itself, chairing its all-important Administrative and Legal Redress Committee for a number of years. As with the ministers, Jackson also did not go to meetings or conferences without a representative of the *Afro*.

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162 Thompson, 247-248; Shoemaker, 265-270; Mitchell, OH 8095, 22; Rev. Marion Bascom, interview by Richard Richardson, 18 June 1976, OH 8128, MJOHP, 2; Troy Brailey, interview by Michael Louis, 16 July 1976, OH 8147, MJOHP, 18.
163 Thompson, 247; Mitchell, OH 8095, 22. Numerous individuals have commented on the productive and positive relationship between Jackson and Murphy. See Brailey, OH 8147, 17; Margaret Dyer, interview by Leroy Graham, 14 July 1976, OH 8141, 1; Enolia McMillan, OH 8110, 8; Clarence Mitchell, Jr., interview by Leroy Graham, 29 July, 3
The Forum, which first developed the coalition and created the conditions for a revival of the local branch, was soon eclipsed by it. The mission of the newly revived branch was similar to that of the Forum, and although the Forum continued to exist into the 1940s, it lost much of its influence and appeal after Juanita Jackson accepted a position on the national NAACP staff in 1935 and several other leaders, such as Clarence Mitchell, left to pursue other interests. As a tribute to her, Juanita continued to be listed on Forum letterhead as president, but it was in name only since she was busy replicating the Forum across the country under the auspices of the national NAACP’s youth movement. Lillie Jackson also continued to be the Forum’s adult advisor, but of course, all of her energies were now invested in making the local branch a success. Other Forum stalwarts were no longer young people, and some of them made the transition into the local NAACP. Those who remained tried to carry on after the branch’s revival in 1935 by continuing to hold mass meetings every Friday evening from October to May and showcasing local talent at year-end contests, but its civil rights activities were now largely undertaken in conjunction with the local branch, with Forum members assisting in membership drives and civil rights protests and projects. In fact, the Forum essentially served as the de facto youth council of the Baltimore branch, as the Baltimore NAACP assumed leadership of the freedom movement.\footnote{Thompson, 248.}

With support from her allies, Jackson set about making the local branch a true representative of the masses, and one of the ways she did so was by making the branch accessible to all segments of the black community. The branch office was housed on the August 1976, OH 8154, 27-28; and Luther Stuckey, interview by Richard Richardson, 12 August 1976, OH 8160, 39, all in MJOHP.\footnote{Thompson, 248.}
first floor of one of her properties, at 1201 McCullough Street. This location was ideal, since the office was situated at the corner of McCullough Street and Dolphin Street, a major stop for bus lines. To assist the branch in reaching the people, the *Afro* carried advertisements that encouraged them to take their complaints and concerns to the branch office, since it was there for them. Jackson had always admonished her children to “stay close to the people” and believed that very little could be accomplished without the support of the masses.\(^{165}\)

Another way to reach the masses and build up the membership was through aggressive recruitment and membership drives. Here the churches proved crucial. Through her position and activities at Sharp Street Methodist Church and her previous work in the Forum, Jackson had developed strong relationships with churches throughout the city, and she traded on her connections with ministers for access to their congregations to solicit volunteers, raise funds, secure memberships and spread the message of the NAACP. Jackson would visit several churches every Sunday and proclaim that racial discrimination and segregation were immoral and ungodly, and that the NAACP believed that “we’re all equal in God’s sight. The NAACP is God’s organization.” The churches provided a regular weekly audience to preach the NAACP’s mission.\(^{166}\)

Jackson also endeared herself and the branch to the masses by changing the qualification for leadership. Prior to her presidency, the level of education and

\(^{165}\) Ibid, 245-246; Mitchell, OH 8095, 22-23.

\(^{166}\) Cumberbatch, “What “the Cause” Needs,” 58; Mitchell and Kiah, OH 8094, 47; Mitchell, OH 8095, 8-9. In the 1950s and 1960s, Jackson would have her grandsons chauffeur her to several churches. According to Juanita, ministers would let Jackson speak before their congregation but would try to limit the amount of time that she had. They would agree to let Jackson speak for about two minutes, but she would extend the time between five to ten minutes.
occupation determined who sat on the executive board and chaired various committees. Very few poor and working class blacks were encouraged to join because the local NAACP shut them out of the decision-making process. Under Jackson, a person did not have to be educated in order to sit on the branch’s executive board. The only qualification for executive board or chair of a committee was a “pure heart…embracing the whole program of the N.A.C.P. [sic]” and/or working hard as a membership recruiter who could organize people whenever the occasion warranted it. Therefore, it was not unusual to find a housewife who could sign up one hundred members, or a laborer who could mobilize his fellow co-workers to start a picket line, or other “humble people” listed as members of the executive committee or head of important committees on branch letterhead.\footnote{Cumberbatch, 57; Mitchell, OH 8095, 23.}

Jackson used various methods to recruit members and raise donations to fund the branch. The branch would sell NAACP Christmas seals, hold baby contests, and develop other innovative techniques that let the people know that the NAACP was their organization and was ready and willing to work on their behalf, using its considerable resources to find solutions to the problems that affected them all. It was also not unusual to find Jackson walking the streets and meeting people wherever they were in order to spread the word about the NAACP. The results were impressive. In 1936 the branch was able to sell the most NAACP Christmas seals, evidence that it was able to sustain the energy and excitement that followed its revitalization in late 1935; they had previously been able to sell the most Christmas seals six months before the 1936 annual conference in late June. Not only were people willing to support the branch financially, they were
also willing to join. In 1935, the branch had close to one hundred members. By mid-1936 the branch grew to over 2,000 members. The next year, the branch reported 2700 members, second only to Detroit. Baltimore would play second fiddle to Detroit in national membership numbers for the rest of the decade and much of the 1940s. At the end of 1939 the branch had approximately 3500 members, and by the opening of the 1940s the membership exceeded 4000. The rising numbers for the Baltimore branch corresponded with rising numbers for the national NAACP around the country.\footnote{Skotnes, “The Black Freedom Movement,” 387-388; Mitchell, OH 8094, 47; Thompson, 247.} The growth of the Baltimore branch from 1935-1940 was significant. However, Jackson and the national NAACP leadership, particularly Walter White, were not content with just expanding the local branch but using the Baltimore NAACP to spearhead the growth of civil rights activism throughout Maryland. Historian Andor Skotnes says that the growth of the local branch was both “vertical,”—throughout the city and the immediate region, and “horizontal,”—throughout the counties of the state. In 1937, the Baltimore NAACP was conducting dual membership drives in the city and in the surrounding counties, and was receiving one-sixth of its membership from the counties. Lillie Jackson travelled many miles throughout the state spreading the NAACP’s message in the late 1930s and early 1940s. However, the goal was not to extend the reach of the Baltimore branch, but to either help communities revive defunct branches or create new branches where none existed. The NAACP in Baltimore and Maryland was overwhelmingly African American and depended on black institutions for support.\footnote{Skotnes, 388; Thompson, 241, 261.}
Obviously, Jackson and the Baltimore NAACP were able to make the local branch appealing enough to the masses that they joined in large numbers. But that appeal could not simply be based on rhetoric or empty promises; it had to be backed by action. Even the action taken had to benefit the many, not just a privileged few. The Baltimore NAACP had to prove that they represented and worked for all of the people. Some of the action taken to prove that the NAACP was an advocate for the community was on a personal level. There were people who came into the office who needed emergency help and felt that Jackson and the NAACP could assist them. People would call because they were victims of police brutality and the beatings were severe enough to warrant a hospital visit. They would call upon the NAACP to investigate and file a complaint. Others would telephone from jail to get the branch to bail them out. Jackson and the branch even helped those who were convicted and imprisoned. Jackson would contact judges, the governor and parole boards to get young men out on parole and find them employment. Getting in touch with Jackson was not difficult, since she was in the office every day from morning to late evening. Some of those close enough to her were even able to reach her at home. Family members recalled instances of Jackson receiving phone calls in the middle of the night and no matter how tired, she would always answer.  

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170 Mitchell and Kiah, OH 8094, 46; Mitchell, OH 8095, 43; Mitchell and Kiah, OH 8097, 13. Juanita admits in the latter interview that she came to resent the way that people would call on her mother to take care of their various problems. Lillie Jackson was philosophical with her response, reminding her daughter that when she took care of the people, she was performing God’s work. “When the people call,” Jackson said, “It’s God calling and you must go.”
The bulk of the branch’s program and activities were centered on community issues and providing opportunities for its inhabitants. Like the Forum, the branch was concerned with creating equal employment opportunities for those able and willing to work in the midst of the depression. One of the most successful efforts involved hiring black police officers. The *Afro* had long advocated hiring black police officers to patrol black communities since 1900; it was one of the cornerstones of the traditional agenda of the Baltimore black freedom struggle set by the *Afro* and published in every issue. Editorials argued that black police officers had a better understanding of the people in their community than white police officers and were less likely to engage in brutality. Despite the logic and practicality of the argument, there was resistance from the police department. In the early 1930s, the *Afro* worked with the Forum and the Baltimore Urban League to address the issue. To convince the community that positions were not only attainable but did not cause much anxiety in the white community, the Forum would bring in black police officers from Philadelphia, Atlantic City, and Washington, D.C. to speak at their Friday evening meetings.\(^{171}\)

The Baltimore NAACP joined the coalition not long after reorganization. The Baltimore NAACP, like the Forum, held meetings on the benefits of employing black police officers. The campaign picked up momentum when a retiring grand jury recommended that the city hire black police officers to patrol black neighborhoods in April 1936. In a speech before the Forum in the fall of 1936, Republican gubernatorial candidate Harry Nice upped the ante by promising to appoint a new police commissioner

\(^{171}\) Thompson, 248-249; Skotnes, 398. See also “Gaither Say Appointments Not Up to Him,” *Afro*, 5 November 1932, 23; “Colored Get Not One Cent of Four Million Dollars Spent in Police Department,” ibid, 21 January 1933, 23.
to succeed the retiring commissioner who would be willing to hire black police officers. After winning the election, the Baltimore NAACP, the Forum, and others made sure to remind Nice of his campaign promise. To demonstrate that they meant business, the Forum gathered 5,000 signatures of people who supported hiring black police officers. In the meantime, another group took up the task of training qualified black citizens for the positions as soon as they became available. Marse Callaway, a black realtor, and his Maryland Colored Republican Voters’ League opened a free training school in October 1937 to prepare applicants for the police examination. The Baltimore NAACP, the Forum, and the *Afro* supported Callaway’s efforts, despite suspicions that the school was used as a political tool to hold onto black votes. By 1943, the Baltimore NAACP had taken over the police training school.\(^\text{172}\)

Victory came when Violet Whyte was appointed the first black police officer in December 1937. Whyte had the type of social qualifications that the white power structure insisted upon when conceding to such a demand. She was well educated, having graduated college, and worked as a teacher in the public school system. She came from a solidly middle to upper-middle-class family, being the daughter of Rev. Daniel G. Hill, former pastor of Bethel A.M.E. Church, and her husband was a school principal. She was a member of or held a position in a number of community civic and political organizations such as the Negro State Republican League, the School of Christian Education, an advisory board member of the Civic League, the executive secretary of the

\(^{172}\) Ibid, 249-250; ibid, 398-399; *Crisis* 50 (March 1943), 91; “Police School Opens Oct. 26,” *Afro*, 30 October 1937, 16; “144 Answer Police School Call,” ibid, 6 November 1937, 20. In should also be noted that police commissioner Lawlor was also involved in Republican Party politics, adding to the suspicions.
Parent-Teacher Federation, and president of the Intercity Child Study Association. Her assignment was working with black ‘delinquent’ girls in northwest Baltimore. Although Officer Whyte was a police officer, her authority was limited. She was not issued a uniform or firearm, her only symbols of authority being a police-box key and a badge. This demonstrated that the city was still not fully reconciled to the idea of a black police officer with full police powers, despite her exemplary character and background. This deficiency, however, did not prevent Whyte from making an arrest her first day on the job.  

The demands for more black police officers grew as dozens of African Americans matriculated through the training school. In February 1938, 183 men and women graduated in a ceremony where the governor, police commissioner, and several judges gave speeches and the City-Wide Young People’s Forum Trio sang. Three black male graduates were appointed to the force in July 1938. Like Officer Whyte, officers Butler, Gardiner, and Scott were also college graduates, but they too were not given uniforms or firearms, and could only apprehend black perpetrators. It would be four years before a fifth black person was appointed a police officer in September 1942.

While the Baltimore NAACP sought to open up civil service opportunities for African Americans to help prevent criminal activity, it also took on the role of unofficial guardian that sought to halt another nefarious presence in their neighborhoods—liquor taverns. Although protecting the community was not officially under the purview of the NAACP,

173 Ibid, 250; ibid, 399; “100 Give First Policewoman Big Send-off,” Afro, 11 December 1937, 13; “Long Fight Won First Police Badge,” ibid, 18 December 1937, 16; and “Policewoman Gets Prisoner on First Day,” ibid.  
174 Skotnes, 399-400; Mitchell, OH 8095, 33.
it did help the branch build and solidify its mass base. Guardianship of the community was another legacy of the Forum, which initiated the campaign against alcohol vendors in 1934 as an entity that corrupted “the morality of Baltimore’s youth.” Lillie Jackson was intimately involved in this endeavor. As a staunch Methodist, Jackson was totally against drinking, dancing, smoking, and games of chance as behaviors that eroded the moral fabric of the community. But her religious views are only part of the reason for her opposition. As her future son-in-law Clarence Mitchell later explained, Jackson’s stance was part of her efforts to protect residential black neighborhoods from all types of commercial endeavors, though liquor taverns were at the top of the list.175

There were several other reasons why Jackson and the Baltimore NAACP opposed the renewal of liquor licenses or the expansion of liquor outlets in black residential neighborhoods. One was the protection of families and children. Many of these outlets were placed in close proximity (sometimes less than two hundred feet) to churches, schools and other community institutions such as the local office of the YMCA. Jackson strongly believed that these taverns “breed crime of the lowest type.” The NAACP office received frequent complaints of fighting, public urination, loitering, foul language, disorderly conduct, thefts, and harassing of women. These types of activities not only exposed law-abiding citizens and their children to bad behavior and possibly

175 Ibid, 412; Thompson, 251; Clarence Mitchell, OH 8209, 29-30. The quote is from Ralph Matthews, “The Big Parade,” Afro, 20 October 1934, 4. Verda Welcome, a NAACP activist, testified that Jackson “was a teetotaler, she and her children.” See Verda Welcome, interview by Ellen Paul, 8 July 1976, OH 8145, MJOHP, 9. Initially, these associations were opposed to a number of commercial endeavors in black neighborhoods such as barbershops, a rag factory, funeral parlors, horse stables, and a mattress factory. Gradually, liquor outlets became their main target. Skotnes, “The Black Freedom Movement,” 412.
witnessing—or becoming a victim of—physical altercations, but it could also lower property values of surrounding residential homes and other establishments. Finally, Jackson argued, there were already an exceedingly high number of taverns in the community as it were, especially on Pennsylvania Avenue, and she and the NAACP questioned the need for more.\textsuperscript{176}

The proliferation of taverns or saloons in the black community also highlights the racial discrimination that existed in Jim Crow Baltimore. Jackson and others resented what they saw as an “invasion” of their neighborhoods by forces that did not have the community’s best interest at heart, and many of these invaders were white entrepreneurs who would not “sully” white residential areas with such establishments. As a result, there were a disproportionate number of taverns (over 600 in black areas throughout the city) in black residential neighborhoods than in white neighborhoods. Many of the establishments were far from decent and did not employ black bartenders to serve mostly black patrons. Adding insult to injury, many of these white tavern owners would not take the money made from these establishments and put it to good use in the community itself.

\textsuperscript{176} Ibid; Thompson, 252. Juanita further explained in a later interview her mother’s efforts to protect families, particularly children:

\begin{quote}
My mother was later to preach this at NAACP meetings. Protect your family. She crusaded against an aspect of racial discrimination, the bringing in of alcoholic beverage outlets, taverns, in the same area as churches and schools. She fought that and taught the people to fight it because our children are like flowers, and they have to grow up in the sunlight and open spaces and the like. And she organized the people to fight it.
\end{quote}

See Skotnes, 412.
Therefore, Jackson and the NAACP were vehemently opposed to the “invasion of other races that come into our community and demoralize us.”  

At first, Jackson crusaded alone but she soon organized neighborhood protective associations, the first of which was the Northwest Residential Protective Association, established in 1936. Almost immediately, the association opposed a liquor license application by gathering over fifty percent of the signatures of property owners within two hundred feet of a tavern. The tavern owner and his lawyers fought back, possibly using intimidation and coercion, to get some of the signatories to withdraw their names. They were aided by the Liquor License Board, which refused to use its discretionary powers to act against the tavern. The Association then solicited the help of the branch. As a member of the protective association, Jackson, as always, was quick to respond, and though the NAACP technically did not carry out the fight, as president of the branch she used its considerable resources to ally with the northwest association. Soon other neighborhood protective associations were organized.

Although Jackson and her family were against drinking, not everyone shared their views. There were a number of people in the black community who not only consumed alcohol and patronized taverns, but some of them resented Jackson, the NAACP and the

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177 Thompson, 251-252; Letter to Clark S. Hobbs, Editor, Baltimore Evening Sun, n.d. and Lillie Jackson to Clark S. Hobbs, 6 May 1938, NAACP Papers, II-C-76. Ironically, “Little” Willie L. Adams, a black entrepreneur who made a fortune from his own taverns, supported Jackson. He, too, lamented the invasion of white tavern owners who seemed to take from the community and gave nothing in return. See William L. Adams, interview by Charles Wagandt, 4 August 1977, OH 8210, MJOHP, 49-50.

178 Clarence Mitchell, Jr., interview by Charles Wagandt, 12 February 1977, OH 8209, MJOHP, 29-31. In his dissertation, Thompson says that the association was organized in 1936, but Skotnes places the date of the association in 1937. See Thompson, 251 and Skotnes, 413.

179 Ibid, 251.
neighborhood protective associations’ efforts to revoke liquor licenses and halt new applications. Some of those who opposed Jackson were pillars of the community or long-standing institutions. In January 1937, Jackson was involved in a dispute with the Walter Green Post of the American Legion. The Post was a respected institution, and had purchased and improved a property on the 1300 block of McCulloch Street. According to one newspaper, the purchase allegedly brought an air of “dignity” to the block. Jackson, who owned property on McCullough, was not against the Legion for purchasing the property on the block, but she was opposed to them serving alcohol in their clubrooms. She personally led the fight to halt their efforts to sell beer in the hall, arguing that there was a public school across the street. The Liquor License Board sided with Jackson and refused to approve the Legion’s application.180

Linwood Koger, a former president of the Baltimore branch, was livid. He complained to Roy Wilkins, the assistant executive secretary of the national NAACP, and told Wilkins that Jackson’s actions would adversely affect the branch. The Jacksons ignored the threat. Juanita Jackson told Wilkins that they had no fears of losing the Legion’s support because they never had it in the first place. In addition, not all of the Legion’s members were as angry as Koger and that NAACP campaign workers would continue to solicit individual members. Years later, Juanita Jackson noted in an interview that her mother’s crusade against alcohol garnered the support of church members, strengthening its mass base.181

180 Ibid, 253.
181 Roy Wilkins to Juanita Jackson, 22 September 1937, NAACP Papers, I-C-65; Juanita Jackson to Roy Wilkins, 23 September 1937, NAACP Papers, I-G-85; Thompson, 253.
Jackson and the Baltimore NAACP’s relationship with the neighborhood protective associations was beneficial to both organizations—the branch spread its influence to black residents who may not have necessarily supported the NAACP itself and the neighborhood associations gained the NAACP as its sponsor, giving these independent grassroots organizations direction and guidance, while serving as their biggest advocate. Although the national NAACP may not have initially approved of the relationship, one of the cornerstones of Jackson’s growing reputation was her work with the protective associations. In a *Crisis* profile in 1943, one of the accomplishments Jackson received recognition for was the network of neighborhood protective associations throughout Baltimore, in addition to a 5,000-member branch and the Maryland state conference of branches.\(^\text{182}\)

Although guarding the community was important to the Baltimore NAACP, the branch’s first priority was challenging and dismantling racial segregation and discrimination. It was also the program that gained the loyalty, support, and cooperation of the larger African American community, and even some white supporters. This support was crucial since racial discrimination was rampant. One of the most offensive to the black community was the discriminatory policy of downtown department stores. The fight against their exclusionary practices preceded the reorganization of the branch in 1935, but those efforts were sporadic and short-lived, since most African Americans could not afford to shop downtown due to the debilitating effects of the depression. Add to that the fact that the downtown area was not a welcoming environment—the large department stores were symptomatic of the general atmosphere—and African Americans

\(^{182}\) Clarence Mitchell, Jr. OH 8209, 29; *Crisis* (January 1943): 18; Skotnes, 414.
sought to avoid going there as much as possible. Even during the 1935-1940 period, challenging racial discrimination in the department stores was still a minor campaign that would not really blossom until the World War era. Nevertheless it was still a pertinent and sensitive issue to the NAACP and its constituency and would have far-reaching effects on the black freedom movement as well as black-Jewish relations in the coming decades.\footnote{183}

For those African Americans who did venture downtown, attempting to shop at the department stores was an exercise in anger, frustration and humiliation, particularly for black women. Some of the stores did not allow blacks to enter at all, while others refused them service if they were able to get through the front door.\footnote{184} What made the discrimination especially egregious was the fact that seven of the top nine downtown department stores were Jewish-owned, as were most of the stores that were boycotted on

\footnote{183} Skotnes, 402-403. 
\footnote{184} The policies toward African Americans were not static, but evolved over time. Walter Sondheim, one of the management officials of Hothschild-Kohn and Company, explained the evolving discriminatory policies of his and other stores in an interview during the 1970s. According to him, the department stores,

had a policy of actually discouraging Black customers at all, in any sense of the word. Then there was a practice of not discouraging these customers, except in departments where you sold things that were tried on, like dresses, hats and underwear—things of that sort. Then there got to be this incredibly insulting policy of saying that blacks could buy things in stores, but weren’t allowed to return them. So the sales check was marked in some way to indicate that it was a final sale or it couldn’t be returned.

See Walter Sondheim, interview by Ellen Paul, 27 September 1976, OH 8172, MJOHP, 1-2. Sondheim himself had several run-ins with Jackson over this kind of discrimination.
Pennsylvania Avenue during the Buy Where You Can Work Campaign of the early 1930s.  

Anger at the discriminatory policies of the downtown department stores first manifested itself at a Forum Friday mass meeting in 1936. The original presentation centered on a debate entitled “The German’s Treatment of the Jews: Is It Justified?” In its effort to educate the black community about the dangers of fascism, the Forum invited Rabbi Edward L. Israel, a Baltimore social-liberal activist, and a professor from Johns Hopkins University to represent the opposing arguments. Rabbi Israel condemned the German’s treatment of Jews while the professor objectively argued the Nazi position. After the professor finished stating the development of the Nazi’s racial policy, Rabbi Israel seemed to detect a little too much enthusiasm from the predominately black audience.  

He was furthered distressed during the discussion period. Rabbi Israel tried to get the Forum to support a boycott of the 1936 Olympic Berlin Games over Nazi treatment of Jews and Juanita Jackson, as chairperson of the meeting, agreed and introduced a resolution opposing the U.S. team’s participation. However, several notable community members opposed the resolution because this was the first Olympics that included African Americans. This was the opportunity for African Americans to challenge Hitler and other white supremacists’ theories of racial purity and prove them fraudulent. (Of course, Jesse Owens would do just that by winning four gold medals.) For Jackson, a boycott did not make sense because the relationship between the two communities was

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185 Skotnes, 403.
186 Ibid, 406-407; Thompson, 254-255.
not reciprocal, arguing “the Jews don’t help us so why should we help them.” Despite their opposition, the resolution was passed.\textsuperscript{187}

The heated debate over the boycott of the 1936 Olympics was not the only contentious issue concerning black-Jewish relations. Jackson and others also brought up the discriminatory treatment they received in largely Jewish-owned downtown department stores. For them, the policies of Hothschild-Kohn and other department stores were just another glaring example of Jewish exploitation of African Americans. Gentile stores also discriminated against African Americans, but for blacks, the discrimination in downtown stores reflected the racial discrimination they experienced in the all-white, Jewish-owned stores on Pennsylvania Avenue, where the products were shoddier and more expensive. It did not help that these owners were resistant to hiring black employees and secured an injunction against the Buy Where You Can Work boycott in 1933 that effectively ended the campaign. According to Juanita Jackson, the end of the boycott campaign resulted in “intense hatred of Jewish merchants” by black Baltimoreans, but some argued that their dislike was against the policy of the store owner who happened to be Jewish, not because they were Jewish.\textsuperscript{188}

Rabbi Israel took exception to the discussion veering in the direction of racial discrimination practiced by Jewish merchants and seemed to be dismissive of the discrimination African Americans faced, claiming in an article later that one or two Jewish-owned stores may have discriminated, but the majority of Jews were against such discrimination. He also emphasized the fact that the majority of Gentiles accepted and

\textsuperscript{187} Ibid, 407; ibid, 255.
\textsuperscript{188} Ibid, 410; ibid, 255-256.
condoned the color line. Finally, he defended his record of supporting African American civil rights. Israel came away from the meeting—reiterated in his later article—convinced that what he witnessed at the symposium “seems to be a great increase in anti-Semitism among Negroes.” He concluded that the “real solution to the Negro problem lay not with the Jewish minority but with the anti-Negro Gentile majority” and informed the public that his intention was not to defend Jews nor attack Negroes, but that he hoped that “two minority groups who have so many problems in common…will come to understand each other a little better.”

The response was immediate. In letters to the Crisis—which encouraged its readers to respond—several people addressed Rabbi Israel’s charges. In the next few issues of the Crisis, several letter writers claimed that anti-Semitism among African Americans was not an issue in their locales as in Baltimore, while others criticized Israel for downplaying Jewish discrimination against African Americans. However, the strongest responses came from Rev. Jon T. Corbett, the pastor of Grace Presbyterian Church and a member of the executive board of the Baltimore NAACP, and Lillie Jackson. Both of them took issue with Israel’s claim of growing anti-Semitism among African Americans, and countered that African Americans had legitimate grievances against the racial discrimination and economic exploitation practiced by members of the Jewish community. The main grievance was the discriminatory policies of the downtown Jewish-owned department stores, and each suggested that Jewish merchants discriminated in the downtown stores in order to force African Americans to shop the

Jewish-owned stores on Pennsylvania Avenue, where they sold lesser-quality products at exorbitant prices. They highlighted other examples of Jewish exploitation of African Americans, including the exorbitant rents and mortgages charged by Jewish landlords and real estate brokers and the alleged practice of Jews working black domestics harder while paying them less than Gentiles. Jackson ended by reiterating that blacks did not hate Jews, but did hate the injustices perpetrated against them by some Jews and felt that as a fellow minority group, Jews should be more sympathetic toward African Americans.190

Efforts to end racial discrimination in the downtown department stores were initiated in 1938, when the branch publicly announced the opening of a campaign against them. The campaign was personal for many, including Jackson, who was flatly refused service in Hothschild-Kohn, one of the largest department stores, and complained directly to the manager. Hothschild-Kohn was one of four of the largest department stores, and was one of three that had Jewish owners and/or managers. Other black women followed

190 Rev. John T. Corbett, “Letters from Readers,” *Crisis* 43 (March 1936), 80; Lillie Jackson, “Letters from Readers,” *Crisis* 43 (April 1936), 122. Skotnes notes that the points made by Corbett and Jackson of exploitation and oppression of African Americans by some Jews, including the perception that Black domestic workers were made to work harder for substandard wages by Jews than other whites, were substantiated in fact, but there is still a strain of narrow ethnic nationalism in both their letters that borders on anti-Semitism. Skotnes states that Jackson tends to stereotype in her assessment, attributing the discrimination of Jewish merchants and entrepreneurs to their Jewishness alone. Both seem to believe in a Jewish conspiracy when they accuse downtown department stores of refusing African American patronage to force them to shop in Jewish-owned stores in the ghetto. And Corbett constantly refers to “the Jews” without qualifying whom he was speaking of, making distinctions between Jews difficult. However, Skotnes does not accuse the local NAACP leadership of overt anti-Semitism, but that anti-Semitic stereotypes did find their way into critiques of the sometime strained black-Jewish relations. See Skotnes, “The Black Freedom Movement,” 410.
Jackson’s lead and attempted to make purchases. When they were refused, they too complained directly to management.\(^{191}\)

Walter Sondheim managed one of these stores. He found himself in a difficult and precarious situation because he, like some owners and managers, was liberal on race issues, which made his defense of store policy complicated. He served on the executive board of the Baltimore Urban League and had a personal relationship with Walter White. However, he had several run-ins with Jackson and would have an ambiguous relationship with the local branch for some years to come because of his defense of discriminatory policies. He later claimed in interviews that he was working to the best of his abilities behind the scenes to change these racially discriminatory practices.\(^{192}\)

Some storeowners and managers argued that they personally would gladly eliminate Jim Crow policies, but that doing so would cause their white customers to shop elsewhere. Albert Hutzler, owner of the popular Hutzler’s Department Store, frequently used this excuse to justify his discriminatory policies whenever confronted by the local NAACP. To prove that their fears were unjustified, the NAACP recruited a number of wealthy, progressive white women to assist them. A contingent of these women, including Mrs. Waxter, wife of liberal Judge Thomas J.S. Waxter, and Mrs. Jonas Friedenwald, met with Hutzler to discuss the matter. Juanita Jackson recalled that

\(^{191}\) Skotnes, 403; “Anti-Semitism Among Negroes,” *Crisis* 45 (June 1938), 177; Thompson, 257.

\(^{192}\) Walter Sondheim, OH 8172, 3-4; Skotnes, 405. Juanita Jackson tells of her mother directly confronting Sondheim about racial discrimination, and he telling her that he was sorry, but he had to enforce store policy. In a 1977 interview, Clarence Mitchell, Jr. recalls that a white civil rights activist, most likely Sondheim, went to Walter White to rein in Lillie Jackson from challenging department store policy because of fear of its negative effects, but that plan backfired because Jackson then “took on both Walter White and this man.” See Clarence Mitchell, Jr., OH 8209, MJOHP, 33-34.
Hutzler informed them that he would consider changing store policy if these women could gather one thousand signatures of wealthy white women in the northern suburbs of Green Spring and Delaney Valley who promised to patronage his store if the ban against serving blacks was eliminated. The women enthusiastically took up the challenge and were able to secure the one thousand signatures.\textsuperscript{193}

When the committee presented their results to Hutzler, he then expressed concerns over the continued patronage of middle-class women. The committee again rallied into action, secured the necessary signatures from middle-class women, and presented these to Hutzler. Instead of holding up his end of the bargain, Hutzler then told the women that they would have to go and talk to his fellow store owners and competitors. Crestfallen, the women believed themselves deceived by Hutzler. Juanita Jackson remembered several of the women, including Mrs. Waxter, crying because of the betrayal. The issue with the department stores would rage on into the next decades and would not be resolved until the 1960s.\textsuperscript{194}

Jackson and the Baltimore NAACP challenged other bastions of racial discrimination and in these battles they followed the course set by Charles Hamilton Houston. They used the courts to “sue Jim Crow out of Maryland.” They followed this advice on both the local and state level. One of the most challenging and divisive local issues was housing. Despite the Depression, African Americans from rural Maryland and Virginia flocked to the city in search of work and stretched the already bulging seams of segregated black residential communities throughout the city. Although black

\textsuperscript{193} Skotnes, 404; Thompson, 257.
\textsuperscript{194} Ibid, 404; ibid, 257.
Baltimoreans were able to prevent segregated housing ordinances from becoming law in the 1910s, restrictive covenants were still in effect and any black family who dared to move onto majority-white blocks were subjected to threats, vandalism, and violence to enforce those restrictions. The Slingluff Russell family found themselves the victims of such violence in May 1937 when they moved onto a white street. A white mob broke the windows out of their home and splattered it with paint. Unless such practices were challenged, African Americans would continue to find themselves competing for living space in already crowded residential areas.\(^{195}\)

The opportunity to test the legality of such racially restrictive agreements came when Reverend E.D. Meade, a recent transplant from the South, purchased a home on Barclay Street in 1936. Blacks lived nearby, but whites were still hostile to an African American family occupying a home on a “white” residential street. Rev. Meade and his family soon found themselves running for their lives when their white neighbors threw rocks and bottles at their home, forcing him and his wife to flee in the night lest whites follow through on their threat to burn the house down as well. The final insult came when whites received an injunction against Rev. Meade, forcing him to move out of his home. Since the developers of this block had stipulated in the original deeds that no home should be resold to African Americans, Rev. Meade’s purchase was deemed illegal.\(^{196}\)

The Baltimore NAACP and local Baptist ministers were not going down without a fight. W.A.C. Hughes, the branch counsel, filed suit. Initially, the case came before Judge Eli Frank, who was a member of the NAACP. To ward off any conflict of interest,

\(^{195}\) Ibid, 396; ibid, 258.
\(^{196}\) Baltimore Branch NAACP Activities Report, 4 February 1937, NAACP Papers, I-G-86; *Crisis*, 44 (March 1937), 88.
the NAACP was not officially involved in the lower court case. However, Hughes continued to represent the Meades and Thurgood Marshall, now working for the national NAACP, had final oversight, reviewing Hughes’ legal briefs. But, they lost in the lower court.\(^\text{197}\)

Undaunted, the Baptist ministers asked the NAACP to appeal the case to the Maryland Court of Appeals. The ministers promised to raise the $300 necessary to prosecute the case, but they failed to do so, leaving the branch to foot the bill. The branch, however, had little cash on hand. It was already allocating funds for other legal cases, and actually owed the national office $410.00 for unrelated court costs. The national office required any other monies to be sent to the New York headquarters. Determined to see it through, Lillie Jackson wrote the national office asking Walter White if the branch would be allowed to retain all monies, save memberships, to be raised at a mass meeting on May 23 specifically called to raise funds for the Meade case. Jackson was careful to note to White that the funds raised were the “people’s money” and that they owed it to their constituents to follow through on local matters since the Baltimore branch had won the trust of the community as its advocate. Marshall agreed with Jackson, and only asked that some of the money collected go toward the branch’s debt. White was not pleased in granting such a request to one branch, but reluctantly agreed. He did not want a

\(^{197}\) Thurgood Marshall to Walter White, 2 December 1936, NAACP Papers, I-D-88; Marshall to White, 5 December 1936, ibid; and Marshall to White, 6 December 1936, ibid; Thompson, 259.
precedent set where other branches would try to do the same with money that was badly needed by the national office.\(^{198}\)

But, the request was in vain. The Maryland Court of Appeals ruled in 1938 that restrictive covenants did not violate the Constitution. It stated that the Fourteenth Amendment was only concerned with *public* discrimination; racially discriminatory restrictive covenants were a matter of *private* discrimination. The Baltimore NAACP was ready and willing to appeal directly to the U.S. Supreme Court but lacked the necessary funds to do so. Juanita Jackson said that the time might not have been right to win such a case. However, the case was not an entire failure. Ten years later, *Shelley v. Kramer*, which challenged restrictive covenants before the U.S. Supreme Court, raised all of the same arguments as the Baltimore case. The Supreme Court ruled that enforcing racially discriminatory restrictive covenants was unconstitutional.\(^{199}\)

Despite restrictive covenants being upheld in 1938, African Americans continued their efforts to provide families with more favorable living conditions. All attempts to move onto previously all-white blocks, however, were repelled by violence. In December 1939, a white mob of almost 1,000 people assaulted the home of the first black family to move to the 1800 block of Baker Street. Reverend and Mrs. Randall were the victims of vandalism when their furniture was destroyed. Nine of the rioters were arrested when police were called. W.A.C. Hughes, the branch’s legal counsel, noted that the mob rioted

\(^{198}\) Lillie Jackson to Walter White, 10 May 1937; Jackson to White, 21 May 1937; Jackson to White, 27 May 1937; White to Jackson, 22 May 1937; Memorandum to Mr. White from Mr. Marshall, 12 June 1937; and White to Jackson, 18 June 1937, all in NAACP Papers, I-G-86; *Crisis* 44 (March 1937), 88. The quote is from Jackson to White, 27 May 1937.

\(^{199}\) Juanita Jackson Mitchell, OH 8183, MJOHP, 50-55; *Afro*, 15 January 1938; Skotnes, 396-397.
because the police failed to control the situation. Like the Meades, the Randalls were also hit with an injunction to vacate their property. This time the NAACP used an “ancient statute” on the city books that held Baltimore accountable for the actions of rioters and subsequently sued the city for $500 in damages. The effort failed.\(^{200}\)

The branch’s legal committee engaged in other lawsuits that served a dual purpose in assisting individuals while also challenging Jim Crow laws and statues. In late 1939, W.A.C. Hughes challenged miscegenation laws by defending Willoughby Wilson, a black man arrested for marrying Mable Snowacre, a white woman. Both were incarcerated in the Annapolis city jail while awaiting trial. Hughes, assisted by Robert McGuinn, another prominent African American attorney, argued against the statue for four days, and their arguments were so convincing that even the judge admitted that the law was unjust. Nevertheless, the judge ruled against the couple simply because, he argued, the statute had not been attacked before. At the conclusion of the trial, the couple received a 10-year suspended sentence and the statute remained on the books. Hughes wanted Wilson to appeal the ruling to the Maryland Court of Appeals, but Wilson declined for unspecified reasons.\(^{201}\)

Sometimes the branch had only to threaten legal action in order to get results. When Bernard Hemsley,\(^{202}\) a qualified undertaker, was denied the position of city morgue keeper despite passing the city examination and being first in line, the branch filed mandamus proceedings against the superintendent of the Baltimore City Hospital. Before


\(^{202}\) In his report, Hughes refers to him as Hemsley. In her interview with Skotnes, Juanita Mitchell refers to him as Bernard Martin. See Skotnes, ibid.
it could reach court, Hemsley was informed that the position was his. He now had white attendants under his supervision.\textsuperscript{203}

Legal action was also considered against the University of Maryland Law School. In the aftermath of Donald Murray’s successful admission in 1935, other black students applied to the law school and other graduate and professional schools to continue opening up the university. William H. Murphy successfully applied to the law school, but the university’s president, Curley Byrd, refused to allow him entry. The branch held several conferences and wrote several letters to compel Byrd to honor the university’s obligation. When Byrd continued to obstruct their efforts, he was informed that the branch would seek legal action to force compliance with the \textit{Murray} ruling. Byrd eventually relented, and Murphy entered the law school in 1938.\textsuperscript{204}

The willingness of the local branch to go on the offensive and use the courts to both defend individuals and overturn Jim Crow laws and statutes resonated with the local community. Individual community members were now seeking the NAACP’s legal advice on a variety of matters, not just against segregation and racial discrimination. In fact, the effort to seek legal advice from the branch was overwhelming in 1939, so much so that the branch had to open up another office and fix a set number of hours to deal with the influx of people. In his report, Hughes notes that more people had sought the branch out to initiate legal action than at any other time during its existence, and indicates that it began to interfere with the business and personal life of he and Jackson as legal counsel and branch president.

\textsuperscript{203} Hughes, ibid, 2-3.
\textsuperscript{204} Ibid, 2. Murray himself had graduated in 1938.
The Baltimore branch owed much of its direction, purpose, dynamism, and verve to one of the most charismatic leaders in Maryland in the twentieth century: Lillie Mae Jackson. It was Jackson who did much to cultivate the relationship with the *Afro* and the churches, and with the strong support of the other two “generals” of the movement, she led the Baltimore NAACP in what amounted to a holy crusade against the twin evils of segregation and racial discrimination. Her activism was fueled by her belief that justice and equality of opportunity were cornerstones of the Christian Creed; therefore, segregation and racial discrimination were a “sin against God.” Jackson also believed that the Constitution was the highest legal law of the land, and geared the branch’s approach toward working within the parameters of the law in order to change those laws that impeded and/or retarded the efforts of African Americans to realize their full citizenship rights.205

As a leader, Jackson was an aggressive and forceful personality who was able to bring out the best in her workers while at the same time wringing important concessions from her opponents. Jackson never hesitated to confront those persons, black or white, whom she deemed obstacles to progress or who were detrimental to the community. Though middle-class because of her education and occupation, Lillie Jackson was dedicated to serving the black masses and it was the masses that were her biggest supporters. Though Jackson could be demanding and intimidating, “Ma Jackson” or “Miss Lillie” was also tremendously loved because of her commitment and moral authority. According to those

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205 Mitchell, OH 8095, 21, 27; McMillan, OH 8110, 19, Mitchell and Kiah, OH 8097, 10; Skotnes, 426.
close to her, Jackson ate, slept and breathed the NAACP and the struggle, and no amount of money could properly compensate her.\textsuperscript{206}

Jackson was also unique in that she was not only the president of a local branch but also the Baltimore freedom movement. Many of the members of the executive committee of the branch were women and they may have been the majority of the membership as well. Though it was not unusual for women to constitute the majority of the members of civic and community organizations and institutions in the black community, it was for women to hold formal leadership positions in those organizations. Jackson was not the only woman to lead a civil rights organization in the city—Enolia McMillan, who was instrumental in reviving the Baltimore branch in 1935, was the president of the Joint Committee and the Maryland State Conference of Branches. This was a legacy from the Forum, where women also occupied top leadership positions. The Forum of the early 1930s would usher in a tradition of women’s leadership in the Baltimore freedom movement that the Baltimore branch would perpetuate for the next fifty years.\textsuperscript{207}

When she became president in 1935, Jackson made it her mission to gradually and continually gain the trust of the local black community through community advocacy and decisive action. But the local black community was not the only entity that sought help from the local branch. Because of its efforts to create and/or sustain local movements in other parts of the state, the Baltimore branch received requests for help from black communities across the state, and the most immediate request came from black folks in

\textsuperscript{206} Thompson, 245-248, 250-254, 370-375; Mitchell, OH 8095, 4, 22, 44; Mitchell and Kiah, OH 8097, 12-13; Watts, OH 8102, 3-4, 10-15; Brailey, OH 8147, 10-12.
\textsuperscript{207} Skotnes, 425-426.
Baltimore County. It was here that the branch would follow the directives of the national office in beginning a statewide assault on educational inequalities as part of a burgeoning national campaign while simultaneously assisting a local community with a persistent concern. The struggle would also illuminate the tensions that existed between the national office and the local branch as the branch tried to balance national directives and local concerns both in Baltimore and throughout the state.
Chapter 4: Beyond the Boundaries: The Struggle for Equal Education in Maryland

Coming of Age

Thurgood Marshall was relieved. Charles Houston had successfully convinced the NAACP that his top protégé had too much promise as a lawyer to simply serve as their point person in Baltimore; he needed to be in New York where he could help direct the legal campaign from the top. Marshall was excited about the move, for he and Buster could breathe easier knowing that they will not have to move in with Marshall’s relatives. Money was tight. His private practice was suffering and his financial situation was steadily deteriorating. Marshall knew the problem—he was too generous. He should be paid for his services to stay afloat but the depression hit the people most likely to seek his services the hardest. He just could not bring himself to take their hard earned money. It did not help that he was working for the NAACP practically for free as well. Now, it definitely had its advantages. The Murray case put him in the spotlight, and the two current desegregation lawsuits further raised his profile. It seemed his name was printed in the Afro almost every week. Unfortunately, it did not translate into steady income. He

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208 Buster’s actual first name was Vivian. She received the nickname from young boys because of her thin arms and large breasts. She met Thurgood while a student at the University of Pennsylvania and he at Lincoln University in 1928. They were married a year later. See Juan Williams, Thurgood Marshall: American Revolutionary (New York: Random House, 1998), 50.
got a little bit here and there from the branch, but it certainly was not enough to support a family and maintain a home. Marshall was desperate. 209

Houston had tried to warn him. Marshall was the kind of person who threw himself into his work, whether he was paid or not. Houston was well aware of this, and had tried to tell him numerous times that though his work with the NAACP was greatly needed; he could not neglect his private practice because of it. Obviously, Marshall could not help himself because every time they communicated by letter, he seemed to be in dire financial straits. It caused him to consider some interesting career moves, such as seriously running for the U.S. House of Representatives, as he informed Houston in January 1936, or even teaching at Howard Law School when a position opened up later that year. Surprisingly, Houston encouraged him to run, but warned him to stay clear of any left wing associations and run independently. Carl Murphy finally put a stop to Marshall’s political ambitions when he sought his opinion. He agreed with Houston, admonishing him to concentrate on his practice. Marshall did not heed that advice either. With each passing letter, Houston realized that Marshall needed to be rescued immediately. 210

If he was honest with himself, Houston had to help Marshall out because he was partly responsible for his situation. Houston had always told his students that a black lawyer fighting segregation had to be more than just an attorney. He had to be an educator, an “evangelist and a stump speaker,” able to connect with the black community on both a

210 Houston to Marshall, 21 September 1935, NAACP Papers, I-C-84; Marshall to Houston, 21 August 1935, ibid; Marshall to Houston, 25 May 1936, ibid; Williams, 82-83; Tushnet, *The NAACP’s Legal Strategy*, 46.
personal and professional level and serve as its advocate before the courts. He made civil rights litigation— and more specifically the NAACP’s new educational campaign— sound exciting, and Marshall certainly had the personality and temperament to excel in this regard. Naturally affable and gregarious, “Nogood”211 was comfortable in any social setting and calm under pressure, even when dealing with rude and arrogant segregationists. These were traits Houston greatly admired, along with his acumen as a thorough researcher and tenacious litigator. His skills and personality were desperately needed in the national office, and Marshall could devote the time, effort, and commitment necessary to oversee the campaign. Houston hated to admit it, but he increasingly felt like an outsider in the office, and health and personal problems caused him to withdraw even further. Maybe it was fortuitous that Marshall reached out to him now, for nobody was better qualified for the position. And truthfully, it was difficult for Houston to handle all the cases himself while also travelling across the country drumming up support and much needed funds. So, he was happy to recommend Marshall to Walter White to both ease his financial burden and have another brilliant lawyer on board to be the “inside man” as it were.212

For Marshall, leaving Baltimore was bittersweet. He was grateful to Houston and the NAACP for making him Assistant Special Counsel and paying him a handsome salary, for sure. But it took him away from the action, and that is what Marshall craved most.

211 “Nogood” was one of several nicknames for Marshall that fellow lawyers teased him with, based on his penchant for ribald humor and practical jokes. “Turkey” was another. See, for example, Leon A. Ransom to Marshall, 24 October 1935, I-C-84, NAACP Papers (‘Nogood’); “Eddie” [Lovett?] to Marshall, 26 October 1935, ibid (“Turkie”).
212 Houston to Marshall, 28 September 1936, NAACP Papers, I-C-84; Houston to Marshall (draft), 28 September 1936; ibid; Houston to White, 19 October 1936, NAACP Papers, I-D-45; McNeil, Groundwork, 144-145; Tushnet, 46-47.
He enjoyed not only researching and documenting racial inequality, filing briefs, and preparing litigants, but also getting out to various areas of the state and talking to people, getting them excited about the possibilities of continuing to attack Jim Crow little by little, and about joining the NAACP. Whether he went with Juanita, Mrs. Jackson, with others or himself, he loved spreading the good news about the success of the legal campaign thus far and embarking on a new fight to equalize teachers’ salaries.

Other people were not as excited. Mrs. Jackson and other members of the Baltimore branch worried that Marshall will become busy with other matters now that he was going to New York, and they feel that Baltimore should be a top priority, since it is the place where the campaign started. He had to be there to continue the success from the Murray case. There were some bumps along the road, however. He had sincerely hoped that the 1935 Margaret Williams case had gone his way. He thought it was enough to present to the judge the fact that the Baltimore County school system practiced racial discrimination at every level, from the condition of buildings, to the racial disparity in salaries, to the deficient curriculum. This blatant racial inequity was so obvious that the judge had to rule in his favor, forcing the county to build a black high school or admit Williams to the white one. The fact that black students had to take a qualifying exam to attend school in Baltimore City while white children automatically advanced spoke volumes. Unfortunately, he did not think it a hindrance that Williams failed the exam. Big mistake. To the judge, Marshall’s whole argument about racial discrimination was moot simply because Williams was not qualified to attend from the beginning. Houston had warned him about that, too. Marshall had to make certain that there were no flaws whatsoever. They were lucky that the could get a hearing in Maryland, even if they had to sometimes
contend with racist judges and prosecutors, and it was imperative they had a rock solid case when they carried the fight into other states. Hard lesson to learn, but Marshall planned to never make that mistake again.\textsuperscript{213}

\textbf{The Struggle Spreads to Baltimore County}

In Baltimore County, the school system was decidedly separate and unequal. Black and white children attended separate schools from grades 1-7. Whites who continued on had eleven county schools to choose from, while black children had none.\textsuperscript{214} Black students who wanted to further their education had to attend schools in Baltimore City, but only qualified applicants could receive tuition at county expense to do so. Furthermore, they had to pass a comprehensive examination in order to receive this tuition. In effect, black students who wanted to go on to high school had to pass two examinations, a promotion exam and a ‘tuition’ exam; white children had only to take the promotion examination, since they were automatically able to attend the whites-only public county high schools if they received their grammar school diploma.\textsuperscript{215}

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\textsuperscript{213} Tushnet, 66, 67.
\textsuperscript{214} Thompson, 261. In various press releases and correspondence, the NAACP sometimes put the number of white high schools in Baltimore County between five and twelve. However, the correct number is eleven. See for example, “Children Seek to Enter Maryland High School,” 13 September 1935; Marshall to Walter White, 8 October 1935; “Baltimore County Board Flatly Denies Petition for High School,” 11 October 1935; and “Discrimination in High Schools Before Court,” 25 September 1936, all in NAACP Papers, I-D-45.
\textsuperscript{215} “Need for High School Facilities for Education of Negroes in Baltimore County,” 2 March 1936, ibid.
The tuition examination placed significant obstacles in the path of black students looking to receive a high school education. Only students who were deemed by black principals as having a “fair chance” of success were allowed to take the exam, and those who qualified had to receive an average minimum mark of seventy percent in four subjects. Those who failed the exam and were under the age of fourteen could repeat the seventh grade and take the exam again the following year. In 1935, fifty percent of students failed the examination and remained at a seventh grade level.\(^{216}\)

Those few students who were able to pass the examination received free tuition from the county, but that did not fully alleviate the financial burden of black families. The Baltimore County educational system required seven years of grammar school and then four years of high school, totaling eleven years. Baltimore City schools required six years of grammar school, followed by three years each of junior high and high school, totaling twelve years. Those black students who wanted to finish high school in city schools had to provide their own funds to complete this extra year and receive their diploma. Many students, and their parents, found it extremely difficult to do so. To make matters worse, transportation was a major problem for black parents. Some

\(^{216}\) Hershner to the principals of the Colored schools, 10 May 1934, NAACP Papers, I-C-84; Hershner to Walter [no last name given], 24 July 1934, ibid; and Hershner to Marshall, 9 September 1935, ibid. The circumstances that black students had to deal with just to take the exam may account for the failure rate. The examination was given in four locations: Catonsville, Towson, Sparrows Point, and Reisterstown. Some black parents had to travel a significant distance to reach these locations, and the children had to take the exam in a strange environment that was proctored by unfamiliar, and possibly indifferent or hostile, white supervisors, who had no inkling of what lessons these children had received in their own schools. Some observers saw a correlation between these handicaps and the high failure rate. Marshall was one of them. In his preparation for the case, Marshall and his assistants conducted research into the nature and circumstances of the exam and documented these handicaps. See “Need for High School Facilities for Education for Negroes in Baltimore County,” NAACP Papers, I-D-45.
households were located a significant distance from Baltimore City, some as much as twenty-five miles. Some parents had no vehicles and public conveyances to the city were in difficult-to-reach locations in a largely rural county. Those parents lucky enough to have relatives or friends in the city made arrangements for temporary accommodations for their children while they attended city schools.217

Black parents in Baltimore County wanted an end to these blatantly discriminatory practices. For ten years, the United Parents-Teachers’ Association and individual black citizens requested and petitioned the Baltimore County Board of Education to provide a black high school. The Board had always refused, with county officials explaining that the black population and elementary schools were so scattered throughout the county that providing a separate high school for blacks in a central location proved difficult. For years, this excuse had justified the county totally denying a high school education for African Americans—in clear violation of the ‘separate but equal’ ruling of Plessy—and it was only the repeated petitions for redress by the Parent-Teachers’ Association that compelled the Board to even provide tuition to Baltimore City schools.218

218 John T. Hershner to Thurgood Marshall, 9 September 1935, NAACP Papers, I-C-84; “Need for High School Facilities,” NAACP Papers, I-D-45; Thompson, 261. African Americans accounted for about 10 percent of the population, and were scattered throughout the county, mostly concentrated in the Catonsville, Sparrows Points, and Towson districts. See W. Edward Orser, “Neither Separate Nor Equal,” Foreshadowing Brown in Baltimore County, 1935-1937,” Maryland Historical Magazine 92 (Spring 1997): 10. Statewide there were only 26 high schools for African Americans. Those that existed outside of Baltimore City were substandard and only Baltimore City provided a high school education on par with that received by white students. In addition to Baltimore County, Calvert, Carroll, Queen Anne’s, Garrett, Howard, and St. Mary’s Counties did not provide high schools for African Americans in the 1920s and early
Frustrated, the Baltimore County black community turned to the NAACP, and specifically Thurgood Marshall, for help in August 1935. Two months earlier, Marshall had assisted Charles Houston in desegregating the University of Maryland Law School, and the national office as well as the local Baltimore community was looking to carry the fight into other areas. At the same time, Marshall was also looking to get his private law practice off the ground. The opportunity to challenge the constitutionality of the segregated Baltimore County school system came in late August 1935 when Margaret Williams agreed to serve as a plaintiff.219

Margaret Williams had graduated from “Colored School #21” in Cowdenville in 1934, but had failed the tuition examination that same year. She repeated the seventh grade the next year, successfully passed, but again failed the exam in June 1935. Despite this, on the morning of September 12, 1935, Williams and her father, Joshua Williams, tried to register at the all-white Catonsville High School. David Zimmerman, the principal, met them and politely refused to admit her because Baltimore County mandated segregated schools.220

Now representing Williams, Marshall had the plaintiff he wanted to challenge Baltimore County’s discriminatory educational system in order to begin the “second

1930s. By the end of the decade only Baltimore and Howard Counties still did not maintain black high schools. See Wannersten, “The Black School Teacher in Maryland, 1930s,”370, 373.
219 Thompson, 262-263.
220 Thurgood Marshall to Charles Houston, 12 September 1935, NAACP Papers, I-D-45; “Children Seek to Enter Maryland High School,” 30 September 1935 and “Citizens Sue Baltimore County for High Schools,” 20 March 1936, ibid; Orser, “Neither Separate Nor Equal,” 19-20; Thompson, 263. Lucille Scott also tried to register, but according to Marshall, Scott was brought along simply “for the sake of interest.” The quote is from the first source.
assault” in the national NAACP’s campaign against educational inequality. The Baltimore County case was crucial for the national NAACP, for it offset potential criticism that the campaign was only concerned with the educational aspirations of the “talented tenth,” as the Murray case concentrated on the graduate and professional level. Here, the objective was to secure equal high school facilities, which directly affected a much larger portion of the African American community. Houston had always sought to build and sustain a grassroots movement to bolster the legal campaign, and the Baltimore County case was one that could connect the national campaign with “the masses of the people.”

To gain the support of the masses, Marshall and other NAACP leaders like Juanita Jackson held mass meetings throughout the county. There they collected money from Baltimore County residents to purchase NAACP memberships. Thirty-four new members joined the NAACP, and the money was added to that collected in the drive to resurrect the Baltimore branch in early October. Although wanting to create their own branch, Baltimore County residents were persuaded to help revive the Baltimore city branch in exchange for a pledge to assist them in the high school case.

Now that grassroots support for the case was growing, Marshall, with Houston’s advice and counsel, sought to file a mandamus suit to admit Williams to the white high school, “leaving it up to the county whether it will admit Negro children to the white

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222 Marshall to Houston, 24 August 1935, NAACP Papers, I-C-84; Marshall to Houston, 12 September 1935, NAACP Papers, I-D-45; Marshall to Houston, 16 September 1935, ibid; and Thompson, 265.
school or provide separate but equal high school facilities for the Negro child.”

However, both Houston and Marshall were still waiting for a hearing in the Maryland Court of Appeals on the Murray case, which was scheduled in November 1935, and decided not to file a new case before then. The fact that the mandamus suit sought to admit a black student to the white high school could be perceived by whites as too radical, and Houston wanted to make it clear that the “main effort is to secure adequate high school facilities for Negroes.” Houston advised national officers that in publicizing the case it was not “wise to stress the idea that Negroes are trying to get into the white high schools. It may have a bad affect on the Murray case and will unduly alarm the South without attendant benefit.” As Houston’s “legal laboratory,” Maryland was vital to the NAACP’s legal campaign against educational inequalities and any hardening of public sentiment against them could result in unfavorable court decisions, effectively halting the NAACP’s campaign. Therefore, Houston did not want whites to conflate the Murray case—which sought to admit a black student to a previously all-white institution at the graduate level—with the Baltimore County situation, since they may misconstrue their efforts as an overall assault against white educational institutions on all levels.223

In the meantime, Marshall went through the proper administrative channels in Maryland to acquire a black high school. Marshall attended a school board meeting on October 8 and presented a petition signed by county residents and taxpayers requesting that the county build a black high school. Not only did the board refuse to hear Marshall

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223 Houston to Marshall, 14 September 1935, NAACP Papers, I-D-45; Memorandum to Mr. Wilkins from Mr. Houston, 2 October 1935, ibid; Orser, 14. Subsequent NAACP press releases after Houston’s request made sure to emphasize that the goal was the acquisition of a black high school. See for example “Baltimore County Citizens Ask for High Schools,” 4 October 1935, NAACP Papers, I-D-45.
or even consider the petition, but to add insult to injury, Henry M. Warfield, president of the Board and a self-designated “friend of the Negro,” proclaimed that Maryland was a southern state with southern ways, and that Marshall’s efforts to acquire a black high school would “set the Negro race back many years.” Marshall next appealed to the State Board of Education. He presented a petition to the state board in November 1935 and appealed to them to require the “Board of Education of Baltimore County to maintain the educational system of that County in accordance with the law,” and build and maintain equal high school facilities for black students. If the county board failed to do so, then the only resolution was to admit Williams to the white high school. In its response a day later, the state board’s secretary, Albert S. Cook, wrote Marshall that the Board had given “sympathetic consideration to your presentation” for equal educational facilities for black students, but that they have “no authority under the law to take action in the matter.”

With the state board refusing to take action, Marshall now had what he had wanted all along: a chance to file suit. Marshall set about conducting a thorough, comprehensive investigation into the state of the educational system in Baltimore County to prove the extent of educational inequality. Houston advised him to seek financial assistance from the Baltimore NAACP to supplement his own funds, though the terms of the agreement still left Marshall financially strapped.

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225 Houston to Marshall, 20 January 1936, NAACP Papers, I-C-84; Marshall to Houston, 22 January 1936, NAACP Papers, I-D-45; Marshall to Houston, 10 February 1936, ibid. Marshall proposal to the Baltimore NAACP that the branch pay an annual nominal retainer of $25.00 to cover basic office expenses, cover all investigative travel and
investigation as possible in preparation for the upcoming suit. He reviewed all official school board records, and conducted a survey of Baltimore County students and their parents currently attending high school in the city under the tuition program, which asked for information concerning the examination itself, transportation costs and distances, the parents’ occupation, income, and property ownership status, and whether they felt the need for a black high school. Through the research, Marshall and his team demonstrated that 1) the examination and tuition program were unfair; and 2) that there were enough black students currently attending Baltimore City high schools—to say nothing of those ready to graduate from Baltimore County elementary schools—to warrant a separate black high school in Baltimore County.226

Now that plans to file a suit had been laid, Marshall had Clarence Mitchell of the Afro announce the NAACP’s intentions in the newspaper in early February 1936.

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226 [Baltimore County Education Statistics], 28 February 1936, NAACP Papers, I-D-47; Thurgood Marshall to Houston, 5 February 1936, NAACP Papers, I-D-45; Thompson, 272-274; and Orser, 17. Marshall found that African Americans were 9.4 percent of the county population and about 10.4 percent of the elementary school population in 1934. The elementary school expenditures between black and white students were roughly proportional to the county population ratio. In 1935, the county spent $692,421.85 on elementary school education. The white schools received $630,028.09 and the black schools received $62,392.76. The disparity was much greater on the secondary level. $336,594.88 was allocated to the white high schools while only $14,041 was allocated for the tuition program, never paying more than half for any class graduating from elementary school. See Thompson, 272-274. It is also interesting that some of the information gathered had to be obtained through guile and trickery. Bob McGuinn, who Marshall noted “looks enough like our white brethren,” was able to go into white schools and obtain information that they otherwise may not have acquired. See Marshall to Houston, 10 February 1936, NAACP Papers, I-D-45.
With subsequent articles in the *Afro* detailing educational inequities throughout the county over the next month, Marshall finally filed a petition for writ of mandamus on Williams’ behalf in the Baltimore County Circuit Court in Towson on March 14, 1936 to admit her to the white Catonsville High School. The petition argued that Williams had attended one of the county’s public elementary schools and had satisfactorily passed from the seventh to the eighth grade; hence, she was qualified to attend the county high schools. However, since county school officials had wrongfully and arbitrarily denied Williams the opportunity for a high school education in Baltimore County by failing to adhere to the Constitution and Maryland state law by providing a separate black high school, the petition ordered the courts to admit Williams to the white high school.227

The County’s attorneys were quick to challenge Marshall’s petition. Attorneys William L. Rawls and Cornelius V. Coe contended that Williams had failed the county tuition examination twice, and was therefore not qualified for admission to the county high schools; that both black and white students had to pass a seventh-grade examination; and that the number of black high school students was too small to warrant a separate high school, labeling such a request uneconomical and impractical.228 The county

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227 Marshall to Houston, 4 February 1935, NAACP Papers, I-D-45; Marshall to Houston, 5 February 1935, ibid; Ultimatum to County Board Sent by NAACP,” *Afro*, 14 March 1936, 9; “County School Case to Towson Court,” *Afro*, 21 March 1936, 9; Petition for Writ of Mandamus, *Williams v. Zimmerman*, NAACP Papers, I-D-46; Thompson, 277; Orser, 17. On conditions in black schools, see for example, “Rotten Floors, Leaky Roofs in County Schools,” *Afro*, 22 February 1936; and “County Hi Schools Must Go Average of Eight Miles,” *Afro*, 22 February 1936, 21.
228 Answer, *Williams v. Zimmerman*, 28 March 1936, NAACP Papers, I-D-46; Orser, 18. Summaries of the counter arguments can be found in “Education Board Fights NAACP Suit,” *Afro*, 4 April 1936, 6; “Answering Petition for Writ of Mandamus to Force Establishment of High School for Negroes in Baltimore County,” Baltimore Sun, 29 March 1936, 3. The claim that white students also took an examination threatened to
attorneys’ emphasis on Margaret Williams’ failure to pass the county tuition examination, rendering her ineligible to attend the county high school, is exactly what Houston feared would derail the case.\textsuperscript{229} Marshall too, was concerned, but felt that they could prove that the tuition examination was wholly inadequate in providing equal educational opportunities and that county officials themselves were convinced of the inadequacy of the elementary school education that black children received. As Marshall continually asserted, the low percentage of students who received tuition assistance based on the county examination proved that either the education black children received was deficient and inferior, or that the examination itself was discriminatory.\textsuperscript{230}

Marshall never got the chance to prove his theory. In August 1936, Judge Frank Duncan made it clear to the NAACP during preliminary hearings that their whole case was effectively over by restricting the grounds for argument, declaring that the “petition must fail if it is not shown by evidence that the petitioner passed the required examination or tests prescribed by the School Board to enter the County high schools.”

undermine Marshall’s case, so he sent his investigation team to uncover such evidence. Louis Azrael, editor of the Baltimore \textit{News-Post}, also looked for evidence of such an exam, informing Marshall that he ran into difficulties in doing so, claiming that he got “the impression that they’re being very carefully protected.” Marshall to Houston, 8 April, 14 April 1936, NAACP Papers, I-D-45. \textsuperscript{229} Houston to Marshall, 30 March 1936, NAACP Papers, I-D-45. Houston was so unsettled about Williams’ failures that he suggested to Marshall that he prepare to find another plaintiff already attending the Baltimore City high school and file another case. \textsuperscript{230} “Need for High School Facilities for Education of Negroes in Baltimore County,” 2 March 1936, NAACP Papers, I-D-45; Orser, 18. In the above NAACP press release, it states that the “chicanery” of the Board is clearly demonstrated in the fact that black students had to take an examination before being eligible for tuition payments, while white students were simply promoted upon satisfactory completion of the seventh grade, and that the mere fact that Board minutes in July 1931 referred to those black students who passed the exam as “contestants” (which Marshall noted and highlighted within the release) proved that the exam was competitive and only designed to finance a small percentage of students.
The NAACP fully expected a loss when the case went to trial in mid-September and prepared for an appeal. In October 1936, despite Marshall’s evidence of unequal and discriminatory educational opportunities, Judge Duncan, basing his decision solely on the grounds he had set in August 1936, ruled that since Williams did not pass the tuition examination, she had no grounds for redress.231

**Hard Lessons Learned: Marshall Grows As a NAACP Lawyer**

Marshall was ready to take the Williams’ case to the next phase. The Maryland Court of Appeals had ruled in the NAACP’s favor against the University of Maryland Law School not long before, and Marshall hoped that they would again receive a favorable ruling from a case predicated on some of the same legal arguments found in *Murray*. The *Afro* and the Baltimore NAACP, who were determined to force the Baltimore County school board to provide equal educational opportunities and were preparing to finance an appeal, joined him. However, other more personal issues confronted Marshall—he was in dire financial straits. Much of the Williams’ case required extensive legwork and

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231 Marshall to Walter White, 19 September 1936, NAACP Papers, I-D-45; Marshall to Houston, 19 September 1936, ibid; and “Confidential Report: re Baltimore County High School Case,” Leon Ransom to Houston, 20 September 1936, NAACP Papers, ibid. To Leon Ransom, the fact that Judge Duncan missed the principal point that Marshall was trying to make about the racially discriminatory county school system was not Marshall’s fault, for he [Marshall] “is our most valuable field agent” and “his preparation and trial work was a thing of beauty.”
financial resources, and Marshall’s work on behalf of the NAACP caused his private law practice to suffer since he was receiving only modest fees from the national office.\textsuperscript{232}

With Houston’s help, Marshall was hired as his Assistant Special Counsel in the NAACP’s national office in October 1936. He was given an initial six-month stint and paid $200 a month out of the Garland Fund. Marshall soon closed his office in Baltimore and he and his wife moved to New York.\textsuperscript{233}

The move would have far-reaching consequences for the appeal, the prospect of new cases, and Marshall’s relationship with the Baltimore NAACP and the local black communities in the city and the county. However, in the midst of the adjustment to working in the national office in New York with a very busy schedule, Marshall finally filed an appeal in the \textit{Williams} case in November 1936. Despite the technical flaw in Williams’ eligibility, Marshall still believed that the Maryland Court of Appeals would concentrate less on Williams’ inability to pass the examination and more on the educational inequalities of the Baltimore County school system documented by Marshall and testified to in court by several witnesses. He also believed that the Court, ruling in the \textit{Murray} case that sending students out of the state to receive professional training did not constitute equal treatment, would apply the same logic to sending students outside of Baltimore County to receive a high school education.\textsuperscript{234}

\textsuperscript{232} Marshall to Houston, 22 October 1936, NAACP Papers, I-D-45; Orser, 21. Marshall was receiving only $50 for some of the initial work, and $350 for the trial case from the NAACP National Office.

\textsuperscript{233} Houston to Marshall, 17 September 1936; Marshall to Houston, 19 September 1936; and Memorandum for the Joint Committee, N.A.A.C.P. and the American Fund for Public Service, Inc., from Charles Houston, 28 September 1936, NAACP Papers, I-D-45.

\textsuperscript{234} Marshall to Houston, 29 September 1936, NAACP Papers, I-D-45; Thompson, 285.
But, the Court of Appeals did not see the case this way. On May 26, 1937, it affirmed the lower courts ruling that Williams’ eligibility for high school based on county requirements was the main issue. The Court also sided with the lower court in its opinion that the State Board of Education’s requirements for high school eligibility were not binding on the county board of education, making the tuition examination legal; that the examination was uniform; and that there was insufficient evidence to prove that the inequalities in the administration of the examination to black students constituted discrimination.

In the opinion of the Court of Appeals, Marshall had sought the wrong remedy. The petitioners should have either asked for a better eligibility test if it was lawful but flawed or, demanded tuition payments for all qualified students to Baltimore City schools without examination if the test proved unauthorized. For the Court, the petitioners’ argument that black students were denied equal opportunity to qualify for high school because of the inequities in the educational system was an entirely different problem, and the inequities on the primary level would not be resolved by admitting an unqualified black student to the high school. Those problems would have to be resolved with broader, more sweeping remedies. Although the NAACP was encouraged by the fact that the Court admitted, “the allowance of separate treatment at all involves allowances of some incidental differences, and some inequalities, in meeting practical problems presented,” the case was still a failure for Marshall and the Association. Cases with

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235 Opinion, Maryland Court of Appeals, 26 May 1937, NAACP Papers, I-D-45; Thompson, 286.
236 In an NAACP press release, the Association stated:
technical flaws would not bring favorable opinions, and Marshall learned the hard way that having the right plaintiff would have possibly resulted in the Court of Appeals ordering Baltimore County to either build a black high school or admit qualified black students to the white high school. A setback such as this in Maryland did not bode well for similar arguments in the rest of the South, and Marshall was determined not to make the same mistake again. In fact, the Court left the door open to possibly seeking the remedy that the NAACP sought with a plaintiff who had actually passed the tuition examination, but because of the distance now between Marshall and his busy schedule in New York and the local black community in Baltimore, there was no opportunity to bring a new case.\(^ {237}\)

The Baltimore County case also imparted another valuable lesson: it was imperative that the national office and the local branch establish and maintain a healthy working relationship if any future cases were to be successful. Marshall found his relationship with Jackson and the Baltimore NAACP strained when he moved to New York. The tensions revolved around two issues: the physical distance between Marshall and the

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Here for the first time a court has admitted that certain inequalities are inevitable in a separate school system. It is true the court did say those inequalities may or may not be sufficient to constitute denial of equal protection of the law to Negroes, but it is significant and valuable to have a court recognize and state that the mere existence of a separate system in itself imports inequality.”

Baltimore NAACP and the responsibilities of each entity in financing court cases. When Marshall was based in Baltimore, he took on various other responsibilities besides being lead attorney. He not only conducted research on the educational system of Baltimore County but also played a leading role in fund raising and generating publicity to build and maintain grassroots support. He worked closely with the Afro in keeping the case before the public eye and frequently spoke at branch meetings throughout Baltimore City and Baltimore County. When Marshall moved to New York, it threatened to dampen the enthusiasm for the case since Marshall was no longer present to provide direction and guidance. Although initially enthusiastic about the appeal, Marshall’s absence caused Jackson and the branch to feel disassociated from the case, resulting in limited promotion and a steady concentration on other branch issues.238

Marshall’s absence from the local environment and greater responsibilities in the national office also resulted in miscommunication between him and Jackson, and engendered what seemed to be a sense of entitlement to Marshall’s attention and services on the part of the local branch. As Assistant Special Counsel, Marshall was now responsible for a number of NAACP cases, and he was unable to devote exclusive attention to the Baltimore County case, though he did prepare effectively for the appeal in November 1936. When Jackson complained to Marshall and the national office concerning the financing of the appeal, Marshall had to remind her that he was “vitaly interested” in the Baltimore County case, but the case was the NAACP’s, not his, and that

238 “Education Board Fights NAACP Suit,” Afro, 4 April 1936, 6; “Board to Fight Last Ditch in Md. School Case,” Afro, 11 April 1936, 7; Marshall to Houston, 1 April 1936, NAACP Papers, I-D-45; Memorandum to Officers and Members of Executive Committee from Thurgood Marshall, 2 May 1936, NAACP Papers, I-C-84; and Thompson, 290-291.
he had other pressing cases to handle as well. Nevertheless, Jackson and the branch criticized Marshall in a letter to Walter White in April 1937 for not “cooperating with the branch officers of the state,” reminded White that the local branch had given its full cooperation to national NAACP initiatives and campaigns, and two days later, urged Marshall to turn over all local legal matters in his possession to the branch counsel, W.A.C. Hughes. She also insisted that Marshall have Hughes assist him on the Baltimore County school case so as to free Marshall from “all our local problems” by having a person that could directly inform them of upcoming developments and expenses in the high school suit.239

The miscommunication was largely connected to the issue of financial responsibility for the case. As soon as it was reorganized the Baltimore branch promised in October 1935 to finance the case while the national NAACP used the Garland Fund to cover Marshall’s fees. Jackson reiterated Baltimore’s pledge to fund the Baltimore County case in a letter to Walter White in October 1936. However, the Baltimore branch was unaware of and unprepared for all of the expenses necessary to see the case through the appeals process. A number of bills totaling hundreds of dollars began to appear at the Baltimore branch office in November 1936, a majority of them concerning the transcribing and printing of the lower court record to be used in the appeal. These bills caught the branch off-guard, and in one instance they had neither the funds available nor

239 Marshall to Lillie M. Jackson, 29 March 1937, NAACP Papers, I-D-45; Marshall to Jackson, 1 April 1937, ibid; Memorandum to Mr. Walter White from Mr. Thurgood Marshall, 23 April 1937, ibid; Lillie M. Jackson to Walter White, 12 April 1937, ibid; Jackson to Marshall, 14 April, 1937, ibid; and Marshall to Jackson, 23 April 1937, ibid; Thompson, 293-295.
any way to raise them to pay the bill on time. Embarrassed, the branch had to take several loans from the national office, falling far short of their promise. This increased the tensions between Marshall and Jackson, reflected in several terse letters and phone calls exchanged between the two of them and White concerning the issue. Marshall had to gently but firmly remind Jackson several times that the case was a shared responsibility, the branch taking care of the expenses and the national NAACP covering the attorney fees. He insisted that a “spirit of cooperation” was necessary to see the case through.

Although both parties were able to eventually resolve their issues and establish a tense ‘truce’, both learned that future cooperation depended on a reciprocal relationship. Marshall and the national office learned that if they wanted to ensure any possible success of future cases, they had to demonstrate great interest in the concerns of local branches and communities and solicit their active involvement. The Baltimore branch learned a hard lesson about the time, commitment and resources necessary to finance such cases, and pledged to maintain a better working relationship with the national office

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240 Lillie M. Jackson to Walter White, 19 October 1936, NAACP Papers, I-D-45; Marshall to Lillie Jackson, 16 November 1936, ibid; Marshall to Jackson, 10 December 1936, ibid; Thompson, 291. For example, one bill to print the lower court record in the Baltimore County school case cost $364.20, a huge amount for the branch. What made matters worse is that when Marshall sent the bill on March 25, 1937, the branch only had ten days to pay it. Jackson complained in a letter to White that paying that amount would “certainly put our branch under.” Lillie M. Jackson to Walter White, 27 March 1937, NAACP Papers, I-D-45.

241 Lillie M. Jackson to Thurgood Marshall, 27 March 1937, NAACP Papers, I-D-45; Marshall to Jackson with attached bill, 25 March 1936; Lillie M. Jackson to Walter White, 27 March 1937; Marshall to Jackson, 29 March 1937; Marshall to Jackson, 1 April 1937; Jackson to Walter White, 12 April 1937; Marshall to Jackson, 23 April 1937; and Memorandum to Mr. Walter White from Mr. Thurgood Marshall, 23 April 1937, all in NAACP Papers, ibid.
in their efforts to rid Maryland of educational inequities. The Baltimore NAACP would soon become one of the Association’s strongest and financially solvent branches, sending thousands of dollars to the national office in the coming decades. The improved relationship between the Baltimore branch, the national office, and the local and statewide black communities was on full display as the NAACP’s educational campaign embarked on its third assault against educational inequities in Maryland: teachers’ salaries.242

The Equal Pay for Equal Work Educational Campaign

When compared to white schools, black schools in Maryland were deficient in a number of areas—school expenditures, facilities, materials, school terms, transportation, and curriculum. However, black schools were comparatively equal to white schools in one respect—teacher education and training. In fact, on the primary level black teachers were trained better than white teachers, with 97.7 percent of black elementary school teachers holding regular first grade certificates, which was slightly higher than the percentage of white teachers. On the secondary level, the roles were reversed, though the gap between certified white and black high school teachers was relatively small, at 97.5 percent and 93.6 percent, respectively. Black schools could at least claim that their

242 Walter White to Lillie M. Jackson, 9 November 1937, NAACP Papers, I-D-45; Lillie M. Jackson to Walter White, 12 November 1937, ibid; and Walter White to Lillie Jackson, 16 November 1937, ibid; Thompson, 297-298. Eventually the Baltimore branch was able to pay back $410.00 owed to the national office to cover court expenses after its annual membership drive in October 1937.
educators were just as competent and well prepared as the white schools, and many black schools took pride in their teachers.\textsuperscript{243}

Unfortunately for black teachers, the salary gap between them and their white counterparts certainly did not indicate that they had comparable qualifications. According to Maryland law, the minimum salary scale for white teachers should be double that of black teachers, since school superintendents throughout the state erroneously believed that black teachers received an inferior education at black colleges despite their certification and that the cost of living for black teachers was lower than that for whites.\textsuperscript{244} Of course, black teachers protested against this discriminatory practice, but they could not persuade school officials or politicians in Baltimore or Annapolis, the state capital, to equalize salaries. Black teachers in Baltimore decided to sue for equal salaries in 1925, and although the school board finally agreed to equalize salaries after the case was appealed, they could go back to business as usual at any time.\textsuperscript{245}

The Maryland State Colored Teachers’ Association had been fighting for years to equalize teachers’ salaries, but had been stymied at every turn by the state legislature. In 1931, Carl Murphy had strongly suggested that the Association turn to the courts, but

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\item \textsuperscript{243} “Maryland Whites Rob Children of Equal Public School Facilities,” \textit{Afro}, 29 September 1934, 23; Thompson, 306.
\item \textsuperscript{244} Alleghany County was the only Maryland county to pay their black teachers a salary comparably equal to white teachers, having only ten black teachers. The other twenty-two counties followed the Deep South in paying white teachers with the same training and experience as black teachers significantly more. See Thurgood Marshall, “Equal Pay for Colored Teachers in Maryland,” 3 March 1937, NAACP Papers, I-D-89; Maryland State Board of Education, “Education of Colored Children in Maryland Counties,” ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{245} Notes on Baltimore City Teachers’ Salary Case, 5 December 1936, NAACP Papers, I-D-89; Thurgood Marshall to Enolia Pettigen, 13 November 1936, NAACP Papers, I-D-88; Thompson, 308. The teachers’ mandamus suit lost in the lower court, but the school board decided to capitulate instead. Besides being able to void the deal, there is evidence that the school board still maintained differences in salaries.
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teachers feared individual and organizational retaliation if they did. It was not until the
*Murray* case, which highlighted the disparities in education, including teachers’ salaries, in June 1935 that enough people considered looking toward the courts. The teachers’ association just needed a leader willing to work with the NAACP to move in that direction. Enolia Pettigen [McMillan] was that leader. A teacher who had recently arrived in Baltimore after teaching in Charles County, Maryland, Pettigen completed her master’s thesis at Columbia University on educational inequalities. Elected as president of the Colored Teachers’ Association in early 1935, Pettigen was also instrumental in reviving the Baltimore NAACP in October 1935, and served as a vice-president as well. In July 1935, Pettigen met with Marshall and Houston and offered herself as a plaintiff while also promising to assist in finding other plaintiffs. However, while Marshall conducted research in between the *Murray* appeal and the Baltimore County high school case, a plaintiff materialized on his own.246

Howard Pindell initially stepped up as a plaintiff. A native of Baltimore, Pindell was an early member of the City-Wide Young People’s Forum who later taught high school in Annapolis, the county seat of Anne Arundel County. He was also the vice-president of the teachers’ association. Pindell had long advocated integration, but in the meantime, he sought equality within segregation, starting with teachers’ salaries. Now that they had a teacher willing to serve as a plaintiff, the Baltimore NAACP moved ahead with its plans to bring a suit against the Anne Arundel County school system in the spring of 1936. The

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246 “Teachers Paid Less Than Whites But Do Just as Much Work—Huffington,” *Afro*, 3 August 1935, 23; Charles Houston to Walter White, NAACP Papers, I-C-64. Like the *Murray* case, the NAACP wanted to start a campaign to equalize teachers’ salaries in North Carolina in 1933, but it fell through. See NAACP Papers, I-C-281.
Baltimore NAACP, backed by the national office, agreed to finance the case if the Colored Teachers’ Association agreed to raise a fund to cover a teachers’ living expenses for one year should he or she be terminated. The teachers’ association agreed.

Regrettably, Pindell would not continue as plaintiff, since he was presented with the opportunity to serve as a principal in Frederick County in May 1936, a higher position that offered a better salary. Pindell could not pass up the opportunity, so with Marshall’s blessing, he accepted the offer. Suddenly without a plaintiff, the Baltimore branch and the teachers’ association had to start all over.247

Marshall, who had conducted research, interviewed potential plaintiffs, and solicited support for the teachers’ salary case as Baltimore branch counsel, now concentrated on the Baltimore County suit through the summer and early fall of 1936. Promoted to the national office in October 1936, Marshall pledged to remain involved, though the distance presented challenges. Lillie Jackson informed Enolia Pettigen that the Baltimore NAACP was willing to continue with local counsel W.A.C. Hughes as long as the Teachers’ Association—who were ready to assist—financed the suit, but the national office soon intervened. Walter White contacted the Teachers’ Association in November 1936 with a deal: the Teachers’ Association would establish a trust fund for any plaintiff who was terminated from their teaching position, the NAACP would provide free legal counsel, and a committee consisting of four representatives each from the Teachers’ Association and the Baltimore branch would oversee the trust fund and fundraising.

efforts. White presented this arrangement for two purposes—to help finance the NAACP’s educational campaign and build broader grassroots support for the NAACP, and to serve as a model for the development of teacher/branch relationships for future salary equalization cases. The Teachers’ Association jumped at the offer and the Baltimore NAACP and the Colored Teachers’ Association soon formed the Joint Committee on the Teachers’ Salary Case. With the necessary monies already available, the Joint Committee was ready to act immediately.248

Initial Victories

William B. Gibbs, Jr. followed Howard Pindell as the next plaintiff. A principal of a four-room school in Rockville in Montgomery County who had previously taught elementary school in Maryland for four years, Gibbs was anxious to file a suit. The racial salary differentials were blatant in the county. Black elementary school teachers earned $631 per year while white teachers received $1,362 per year; black high school teachers were paid $859 while their white counterparts earned $1,571. As an experienced teacher, Gibbs made $612 per year, $513 less than white teachers. Thinking Gibbs an excellent

248 William B. Gibbs, Jr. to Thurgood Marshall, October 1936, NAACP Papers, I-D-88; Enolia Pettigen to Thurgood Marshall, 5 November 1936; Pettigen to Marshall, 8 November 1936; Walter White to Carl Murphy, 9 November 1936; Marshall to Pettigen, 9 November 1936; Pettigen to Marshall, 16 November 1936; Murphy to White, 18 November 1936, all in NAACP Papers, I-D-88; Thompson, 313-316. Enolia Pettigen served as Chair of the Joint Committee while the other three Teachers’ Association representatives were George B. Murphy, Carl Murphy’s brother, Carrington L. Davis and Jesse Nichols. The trust fund stipulated $1,000 for any plaintiff that was terminated and any other necessary funds would be raised from a campaign that asked teachers to donate five dollars.
plaintiff, Marshall prepared his case and presented a petition to equalize teachers’ salaries before the Montgomery County Board of Education on December 8, 1936. When the Board refused to consider the petition, Marshall filed a mandamus suit on December 31, 1936 in the Montgomery County Circuit Court claiming that racial disparities in teachers’ salaries violated the Fourteenth Amendment and teachers’ salaries should not be based on race but qualifications and experience.\footnote{249}

The case was well publicized, with the \textit{Afro} and the Associated Press providing both extensive local and national coverage. A bill—S. 146—was introduced in the Maryland Senate to equalize teachers’ salaries, but despite their best efforts, the NAACP was unable to garner the support needed to push the bill through. Meanwhile, Marshall generated local grassroots support by having Gibbs revive the moribund Montgomery County branch of the NAACP, inactive since 1924.\footnote{250}

Like the Baltimore County high school case, the lawyers for the Montgomery County Board of Education were swift in challenging the NAACP’s petition. They tried to get the case dismissed, arguing that mandamus suits could not be used to compel school

\footnotetext{249}{Gibbs to Marshall, October 1936, NAACP Papers, I-D-88; Statement for the Press and the Public on Discrimination in Salaries Paid Negro and White Teachers in Separate School Systems, 31 December 1936, NAACP Papers, I-D-90; Petition for Writ of Mandamus, \textit{Gibbs v. Broome et al.}, 31 December 1936, ibid. See also Memorandum to Baltimore Branch NAACP, Maryland State Colored Teachers’ Association, and Joint Committee on Teachers’ Salary Case from Thurgood Marshall, 4 January 1937, ibid.}

\footnotetext{250}{Memorandum to Baltimore Branch NAACP, Maryland State Colored Teachers’ Association, and Joint Committee on Teachers’ Salary Case from Thurgood Marshall, 4 January 1937, NAACP Papers, I-D-90; “Teachers’ Salary Equalization Bill Introduced in Maryland Legislature,” press release, 19 February 1937, ibid; Thurgood Marshall to Lillie M. Jackson, 20 March 1937; ibid; Memorandum to Former Members of Montgomery Branch N.A.A.C.P. from Thurgood Marshall, 11 February 1937, NAACP Papers, I-D-88. See also Thurgood Marshall to William B. Gibbs, Jr., 29 January 1937; Gibbs to Marshall, 9 February 1937; and Marshall to Gibbs, 11 February 1937, all in NAACP Papers, I-D-88.}
boards to equalize salaries. The NAACP attorneys—Marshall, Charles Houston, W.A.C. Hughes, and Edward Lovett—argued otherwise, claiming that the Fourteenth Amendment was broad enough to cover salary inequities based on race by a state government or its agencies, that race had to be the motivating factor in creating separate pay differentials since black teachers had comparable qualifications and experience to white teachers, and that the practice was unconstitutional. Surprisingly, the court ruled in favor of the NAACP and the Montgomery County Board of Education had to answer the NAACP’s petition within ten days. It was a major victory for the NAACP, and rather than fight the NAACP through appeal, the Board agreed to its demands to equalize salaries. According to the terms of the agreement between the NAACP and the Board in July 1937, the county school superintendent, Edwin W. Broome, agreed to pay black teachers fifty percent of the pay differential immediately and the remaining fifty percent in June 1938, thereby equalizing salaries and adding $30,000 to the black teachers’ payroll.²⁵¹

in black businesses and contribute to other community services and institutions. In fact, Marshall saw the increase in teachers’ salaries as a weapon in attacking “the economic foundation for the perpetuation of racial prejudice” and urged other black teachers and NAACP branches to join the fight. Others took heed to the message and carried the fight to Virginia and Florida a year later. However, Marshall wanted to secure Maryland before moving on. Therefore, he urged McMillan and the Colored Teachers’ Association to contact and secure plaintiffs in other counties, an effort that could add almost $500,000 more to teachers’ salaries according to the State Board of Education. McMillan and the Joint Committee tried to convince county teachers’ associations and/or parent-teachers’ associations to press their boards to equalize salaries as well, with the full support of the Joint Committee behind them if they were refused.252

Calvert County was next when, in late August 1937, Elizabeth Brown volunteered to be a plaintiff. Brown was an elementary school teacher who earned a first grade certificate and had seven years of experience, but was paid half of what white teachers of similar qualifications and experience earned. Here, the Teachers’ Association had an unlikely ally in the Board of Education. The Board, and its superintendent H.R. Hughes, wanted to equalize salaries but were opposed by the county commissioners. Again, Marshall petitioned the Board for equalization, was refused, and then brought suit in

November 1937.\textsuperscript{253} Calvert County followed Montgomery County’s example and negotiated an agreement before the case went to court. The terms were similar to Montgomery County as well, except black teachers would receive one-third of the pay differential of white teachers for 1938, and then establish equal salary schedules for 1939 and thereafter. The Board and the commissioners soon approved the agreement and added more than $16,000 to the salaries of black teachers.\textsuperscript{254}

With another county capitulating, the NAACP reaped the rewards in membership and support. The Baltimore NAACP was pro-active in soliciting memberships within the county to support the teachers’ salary fight by canvassing incessantly. McMillan, Marshall, and Lillie Jackson, with help from Juanita Jackson, made their presence known throughout the county, and the community rewarded their efforts by establishing the Calvert County NAACP in November 1937. As an added bonus, black teachers in the county showed their appreciation for the NAACP with their pledge to continue to contribute to the Joint Committee’s trust fund. As if the black community’s recognition of the growing prominence of the NAACP was not enough, their victories even caused Annapolis to take notice. Governor Harry W. Nice proclaimed that he would support salary equalization legislation by state statute in the wake of the Calvert County


\textsuperscript{254} Resolution of the Board of Education of Calvert County Relative to Salaries to Be Paid Colored Teachers in Its Employ during the School Year 1938-1939, 27 December 1937, NAACP Papers, I-D-89; Resolutions of the Board of Education of Calvert County Establishing Uniform Minimum Salary Schedules, 27 December 1937, ibid; Thompson, 324.
settlement, publicly acknowledging what school board officials and other politicians had recognized privately—that unequal salaries based on race were unconstitutional. The successful settlements and growing attention led Marshall and the NAACP to believe that the goals of the campaign would be easily achieved if African Americans would simply stand up and demand school boards equalize salaries and threat to file suit if they failed to do so, so he implored the Joint Committee to advise county teachers’ association to follow this course of action.255

It was not unreasonable for Marshall to believe that the campaign’s success would come easily, since the victories in Montgomery and Calvert counties caused a domino effect among other Maryland counties in early 1938, with several school boards readily conceding to teachers’ demands rather than face a lawsuit. Baltimore County gave in immediately and Washington County did so without even being asked. Not all counties immediately saw the writing on the wall. Some needed a little ‘motivation’ from Marshall to concede the point. Cecil County school board officials were initially hesitant to bow to teachers’ demands since they only employed sixteen black teachers until Marshall appeared before them; they got the message and reconsidered the petition. Marshall also had to visit the Kent County school board and was able to negotiate a

255 H. Elizabeth Brown to Thurgood Marshall, 11 January 1938, NAACP Papers, I-C-198; Thurgood Marshall to H. Elizabeth Brown, ibid; Memorandum on Teachers Salary Cases to Enolia McMillan, Lillie M. Jackson, Carl Murphy, and George B. Murphy from Thurgood Marshall, 13 December 1937, NAACP Papers, II-L-40; “Nice Seeks to Equalize Teachers’ Pay,” Baltimore Sun, 29 December 1937, NAACP Papers, I-D-90; “Along the N.A.A.C.P. Battlefront,” Crisis 45 (February 1938): 56; Thompson 325-326. To encourage county teachers’ associations to develop cases, Marshall provided an outline of procedures and a sample petition for submission to the school board. See Thurgood Marshall to Enolia McMillan, 23 December 1937, NAACP Papers, I-C-198; Memorandum to County Teachers’ Associations, [December 1937], ibid; and [Sample Petition to Boards of Education, December 1937], ibid.
settlement where the school board paid black teachers one-third of the differential in 1938, and the other two-thirds for 1938-1939. Marshall was less than pleased with Queen Anne’s County’s proposal to equalize salaries over three years, but the teachers themselves agreed to these terms. The campaign initially seemed to be well on its way to success, with nine of twenty-three counties agreeing to equalize teachers’ salaries.\footnote{Enolia P. McMillan to Thurgood Marshall, 31 January 1938, NAACP Papers, I-D-89; Memorandum to Joint Committee Concerning Last Trip to Maryland, 11 April 1938, ibid; Copy of Agreement—Queen Anne’s County Teacher’s Salary Case, 8 March 1938, NAACP Papers, I-C-201; “Along the N.A.A.C.P. Battlefront,” \textit{Crisis} 46 (December 1939): 72; and Thompson, 327-328.}

**The Remaining Counties Fight Back**

The hope that the rest of the counties would fall in line based on the ease with which the first nine negotiated to equalize teachers’ salaries was soon stifled. Not all of the remaining counties were willing to submit to the teachers’ demands for equal pay. Harford County bullied teachers into accepting $100 more per year with no commitment to future pay raises or equalization. Dorchester County on the Eastern Shore promised to add one month to the school year when presented with a petition, but when the teachers persisted, president of the board, J.S. Joy, announced that the Board would equalize salaries during graduation exercises at Cambridge High School in June 1939. Marshall and Lillie Jackson had heard all of this before last year with nothing materializing, so they pressed Joy to make it a reality that year.\footnote{Lillie M. Jackson to Thurgood Marshall, 13 June 1939, NAACP Papers, I-C-281; Thompson, 328-329. See also Percy Williams to Thurgood Marshall, 21 March 1938, NAACP Papers, I-C-201; James B. Noble to Parlett L. Moore, 13 April 1938, ibid;} In southern Maryland, the Charles
County Board of Education not only rebuffed the teachers’ petition but also dared the NAACP to bring them to court. It was probably because of their hard stance that teachers decided to see how the other counties reacted before acting, even though the events in other counties had nothing to do with what was happening in Charles. This hesitancy and timidity clearly frustrated the NAACP, but they realized that they could not push ahead of the teachers; they needed the local community to be fully invested and committed to the fight.²⁵⁸

Other counties made a more serious effort to ward off salary equalization—they fired teachers and principals. Somerset County did not renew the contract of Namon Allen, the black principal of Greenwood High School in Princess Anne. Allen had led the teachers’ salary fight by getting thirty-eight teachers to present a petition before the Board, but because he bypassed W. Stewart Fitzgerald, the school superintendent, Fitzgerald took offense. When the teachers met with the Board, they were rejected. By May 1938, it seemed five teachers were ready to file suit to break the standstill, but before they could take action, Allen was informed that he was terminated.²⁵⁹

Frederick County took a page

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²⁵⁸ Elnora M. Pinkney to Thurgood Marshall, 26 April 1938, NAACP Papers, I-C-201; Elnora M. Pinkney to Marshall, 15 May 1938, ibid; Thurgood Marshall to Elnora M. Pinkney, 20 May 1938, ibid, Thompson, 329. The NAACP’s dependency on the local community is exemplified by Marshall’s statement to Edith Throckmorton of Dorchester County when he told her that the NAACP could “move no faster that the teachers of your county.” See Thurgood Marshall to Edith Throckmorton, 21 April 1938, NAACP Papers, I-C-201.
²⁵⁹ Enolia McMillan to Thurgood Marshall, 31 January 1938, NAACP Papers, I-D-89; Minutes of Meeting with Board of Education of Somerset County, 12 April 1938, NAACP Papers, I-C-201; Namon Allen to Thurgood Marshall, 14 May 1938, ibid; Namon Allen to Thurgood Marshall, 24 May 1938, ibid; Thompson, 331-332.
out of Somerset County’s book by also firing a leader of the teachers’ campaign.

Frederick County seemed an ideal place for Marshall to file suit because Judge Hammond Urner was one of the three judges on the panel in the Montgomery County case. Although confident of a victory, Marshall had trouble finding a willing plaintiff. Dr. U.G. Bourne, president of the Frederick County NAACP finally convinced the teachers to file a petition and they were promised a fifty percent salary increase beginning the next school year. The teachers delayed responding to this offer and sought full equalization. The Board responded by terminating Howard Pindell, the untenured principal of Lincoln High School who had initially been the first plaintiff in a salary equalization suit. Pindell was doing a tremendous job as Lincoln’s principal, but because he left Anne Arundel County to accept the position, he lost tenure. He was close to receiving his principal’s certificate, but he was also vocal in his support of teachers’ salary equalization. By not renewing his contract, school board officials hoped to discourage teachers from continuing and there was nothing the NAACP could do.  

No county was as recalcitrant and vengeful as Prince George’s County in southern Maryland. The school superintendent, Nicholas Orem, did not believe that black teachers were as qualified as white teachers and therefore did not deserve equal salaries. The salaries of black and white teachers clearly demonstrated this attitude. The Board

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affirmed Orem’s stance and rejected the teachers’ petition in January 1938. When teachers later filed a suit in March 1938 in the name of Evelyn Elsie Cook, Orem continually used subterfuge, deceit, coercion and dismissals to deny black teachers their fair share. His tactics included denying using a salary schedule for teachers’ pay and claiming to use a number of criteria to determine teachers’ salaries; trying to prevent Marshall from examining the minutes of school board meetings; using politicians and other school officials to try to seek a compromise that offered far less than what the teachers’ demanded; publicly insulting black teachers; and dismissing all probationary teachers. The NAACP had to warn all probationary teachers and all teachers who had transferred from other counties—which results in a loss of tenure—to refrain from being part of the campaign to protect the most vulnerable educators. They also advised black teachers who met with the Board of Education to register the complaints of the black community concerning Orem’s machinations.

261 “Nice’s Equal Pay to Teachers Plan Coldly Received,” Washington *Evening Star*, 30 December 1937, sec. B, p. 1, NAACP Papers, II-L-40; Memorandum re: Petition to Board of Education of Prince George’s County, Maryland[,] to Equalize Teachers’ Salaries, 25 January 1938, NAACP Papers, I-D-90; Thurgood Marshall to Enolia P. McMillan, 17 January 1938, NAACP Papers, I-D-89; Thurgood Marshall to Carl Murphy, 13 June 1938, NAACP Papers, I-D-90; and Thompson, 332. Black elementary school teachers received $711 per year while white teachers made $1,169 per year. Black high school teachers received $858 while white high school teachers made $1,396.

Orem’s tactics almost broke the will of the teachers. In early June 1938, Edward P. Lovett, a black attorney out of Washington, D.C., notified Marshall that “teachers are much disturbed [sic], anxious, and in a state of apparent unrest and fright,” especially when only five teachers, who were openly willing to accept a compromise instead of supporting a court case, received their questionnaires about re-employment in June but others had not. Those who had not were particularly worried because they had received these questionnaires in previous years by mid-April and knew their jobs hung in the balance. Marshall had to constantly remind them that the Colored Teachers’ Association, the national NAACP, and NAACP branches throughout the state were behind them and doing everything they could to assist them in equalizing their salaries. Marshall understood that it was imperative that teachers in Prince George’s County stand strong; he knew that political and educational leaders were watching and waiting to see whether the teachers and the Joint Committee folded under the pressure. In the end, the teachers held firm, but there were continual delays in the case in late 1938. By June 1939, there were further delays when the presiding judge suggested that the case needed to be heard by the whole panel, which meant synchronizing the three judges’ schedules, and the defendants wanted a jury trial. The delays allowed the focus to shift to the events taking place in Anne Arundel County.²⁶³

²⁶³ The quote is from Edward P. Lovett to Thurgood Marshall, 6 June 1938, NAACP Papers, I-D-90; Memorandum to Joint Committee on Teachers’ Salaries in Maryland from Thurgood Marshall, 13 May 1938, NAACP Papers, I-D-89; Memorandum Concerning Proposed Meeting with Board of Education of Prince George’s County from Thurgood Marshall, 24 June 1938, NAACP Papers, I-D-90; Memorandum to Charles H. Houston from Thurgood Marshall, 6 October 1938, ibid; Edward P. Lovett to Thurgood
Setting the Legal Precedent in Anne Arundel County

The black teachers in Anne Arundel County, like teachers in other counties, pressed their Board of Education to equalize salaries in early January 1938. In Anne Arundel County, all the black teachers were on board. Energized, when the Board suggested equalizing salaries by one-third over the next three years, the teachers rejected this and presented a petition to equalize salaries immediately! Claiming that they sympathized with the teachers but the money to equalize salaries was unavailable, the superintendent of the Board, George Fox, suggested that they seek to change the state minimum salary schedule, which the State Board used to distribute the amount of money for black teachers’ salaries to each county. Marshall’s attention was soon diverted to other counties while the situation in Anne Arundel County remained at an impasse.264

The firings that took place in Prince George’s and Frederick Counties upped the ante for Marshall and the NAACP, and he decided that they needed a new strategy. With Walter Mills, an elementary school principal with nine years of experience as a plaintiff, Marshall decided to sue the State Board of Education, whose equalization fund, which distributed money that helped to pay teachers’ salaries in most counties, was based on the state minimum salary schedule. Since the state minimum salary schedule was responsible for the unequal salaries between black and white teachers, the State Board clearly violated the Fourteenth Amendment. Marshall then had Enolia McMillan, as

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Marshall, 10 October 1938, ibid; Memorandum to Joint Committee on Teachers’ Salaries in Maryland from Mr. [Thurgood] Marshall, 5 June 1939, ibid; and Thompson, 337-338. 264 Enolia P. McMillan to Thurgood Marshall, 12 January 1938, NAACP Papers, I-D-89; George Fox to the Colored Teachers of Anne Arundel County, 17 March 1938, ibid; Thompson, 339.
president of the Maryland Educational Association, petition the State Board for equal distribution of salaries to the counties. When the Board responded that state law affirmed the salaries for black and white teachers, Marshall decided to find relief in federal court and brought suit against the State Board.  

Judge W. Calvin Chestnut heard the case. Immediately, the attorneys for the State Board sought a dismissal, arguing that despite comparative experience and qualifications, the state was not obligated to give black and white teachers the same pay. The NAACP legal team of Marshall, Charles Houston, and Leon Ransom countered that the recent Supreme Court decision in the *Gaines* case declared that states actually had to provide equal educational opportunities and treatment in all facets and that statutes mandating salary differentials based on race were unconstitutional. Chestnut had his own misgivings about the motivations of the plaintiff—he thought he was only stirring up trouble—and believed that county boards were squeezed because of high taxes, making

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265 Thurgood Marshall to Walter S. Mills, 23 June 1938, NAACP Papers, I-D-89; Thurgood Marshall to Enolia McMillan, 8 November 1938; ibid; Memorandum from Mr. Marshall to Mr. Murphy, 16 January 1939, ibid; Thompson, 339-341. In its response to the Maryland Educational Association petition, the State Board responded with the following:

The Board admits that the allowances for colored teachers’ salaries in the Equalization Fund are distributed to the several counties on the basis of the minimum salaries prescribed in Article 77, Sections 202 and 203 of the Annotated Code of the Public General Laws of Maryland, and to the white teachers, on the basis of Article 77, Sections 90 and 195 of the Annotated Code.

The Board desires to inform you that the foregoing sections of Article 77 of Code of Public General Laws of Maryland are the only legal basis upon which the Board may distribute funds for the payment of salaries to the teachers of the white and colored schools in the several counties of Maryland.

See Albert S. Cook to Enolia McMillan, 23 November 1938, NAACP Papers, I-D-89.
salary equalization an added burden. Chestnut granted the dismissal, proclaiming that the
State Board was beholden to the terms of the state code, but that Mills could seek relief
from the state legislature or the county board of education, a situation Marshall was
trying to avoid.  

Although he dismissed the case, Chestnut did believe that Mills was a valid plaintiff
that could file suit to challenge discriminatory pay, declaring that state laws that
mandated pay differentials based on race unconstitutional. Marshall and the NAACP
immediately filed suit in federal court, pitting Mills against the Anne Arundel County
Board of Education. Mills was clearly discriminated against when it came to salary, but the Board believed that it could not equalize salaries without the available funds from
the state or the county, and it further tried to justify unequal salaries for black teachers by
claiming their students consistently received lower test grades.  

266 W.A.C. Hughes, Jr., to Thurgood Marshall, 9 February 1939, NAACP Papers, I-D-89; Thurgood Marshall to W.A.C. Hughes, Jr., 23 March 1939, ibid; Memorandum to County Organization of the Maryland Educational Association from Enolia P. McMillan and George B. Murphy, 29 April 1939, NAACP Papers, I-C-201; Thompson, 341-342.  

267 As a principal with nine years of experience, Mills’ salary was $900 per year according to the Anne Arundel County salary schedule; his white counterparts with comparable qualifications and experience made $1800 per year. Though still
discriminatory, the county schedule paid more than the state schedule, which paid black principals a salary of $680 per year while white principals made $1,300 per year. See
Thompson, 342.  

268 Thurgood Marshall to Charles Thompson, 21 June 1939, NAACP Papers, I-D-89; Charles Thompson to Thurgood Marshall, 6 July 1939, ibid; Civil Complaint, Answer, and Motion for Leave to Bring in Third Party Defendants, Mills v. Board of Education of Anne Arundel County, ibid; Thompson, 343. When the Board claimed that lower test grades were the reason for unequal salaries, Marshall asked Charles Thompson, the editor of the Journal of Negro Education, his professional opinion. Thompson responded that “this appears to be the one of the most absurd rationalizations I have come across in some time.”
Although Marshall filed the suit in federal court in mid-1939, the trial was not heard until November. During the delay, the wall of solidarity amongst the teachers began to show some cracks. They became more willing to compromise and entered into discussions with the Board. The Board’s offer to raise salaries by ten percent that year and increase them by that percentage over the next four or five years until it reached the state minimum salary schedule for white teachers in exchange for dropping the suit was tempting, but Marshall, members of the Joint Committee, and other black lawyers stepped in immediately. They implored Mills and the teachers to stand strong, emphasizing that a legal precedent was at stake that could benefit all black teachers in the state. Mills and the teachers refused to drop the suit or accept the Board’s offer, promising instead to see the case to the end. When the case finally went to trial in November 1939, Judge Chestnut ruled in Mills’ favor by declaring that the Anne Arundel County Board of Education could establish pay differentials based on individual merits but not on race and that Mills was entitled to an injunction against the Board for discriminatory salaries.269

The Board accepted the Court’s decision but could not implement salary equalization in September 1940 because of a new budget law in Anne Arundel County, so the teachers agreed to begin implementing salary equalization in January 1941 and continue thereafter until level with white teachers. To make up for the difference in pay from September 1940 through December 1940, the teachers received monthly installments from January 1940.

1941 through June 1941. The case resulted in $45,000 added to their collective salaries. The NAACP finally received the legal precedent that it had sought, and even though the decision had initially applied to Anne Arundel County, the NAACP believed the ramifications of the case would be felt not only in the other twenty-two counties of Maryland but throughout the entire South. Teachers now had a legal precedent on which to constitutionally challenge racially discriminatory pay differentials in their particular areas, and as long as their communities provided moral and financial support, they too, could find success like the teachers in Maryland.270

The effect in Maryland was immediate. With the case in Prince George’s County still pending, Marshall immediately contacted the Board in January 1940 with the decision, and the Board agreed in their meeting of January 25 to begin equalizing salaries on September 1, 1940. Other southern counties, such as St. Mary’s County, met with the NAACP in early 1940 to negotiate a settlement to also equalize salaries. Seeing the writing on the wall, the Maryland legislature not only passed a bill in spring 1941 that equalized salaries throughout the state but provided the funds to immediately do so. The Mills decision would reverberate throughout Maryland and the rest of the South.271


271 Thurgood Marshall to Board of Education of Prince George’s County, 13 January 1940, NAACP Papers, I-D-90; Thompson, 345-346.
State and National Impact

For the second time, Maryland served as the “experimental station” where the NAACP waged a successful legal campaign against educational inequalities by making pay differentials based on race unconstitutional. The NAACP now added the injunction to its legal arsenal, since injunctions from federal courts seemed to have a broader effect than mandamus cases from state courts. The Mills decision technically affected only Anne Arundel County, but other Maryland counties quickly realized that continued opposition was futile and immediately conformed. The NAACP had made it clear that discriminatory salaries violated the equal protection and due process clauses of the Fourteenth Amendment. Unfortunately, the Mills decision reinforced segregation by upholding the separate-but-equal doctrine of Plessy v. Ferguson (1896). Nevertheless, segregated school systems throughout the South were now put on notice that they either had to equalize salaries or face legal action. The NAACP soon initiated teachers’ salary cases in Virginia and Florida, and by 1942, the NAACP’s campaign had spread to six other states.272

Establishing a legal precedent was certainly important but there were other tangible benefits for the NAACP and black communities throughout the state and beyond. Black

272 [Untitled document that begins “Maryland is the experimental station”], [1938?], NAACP Papers, I-C-281; Benjamin Kaplan, “The Legal Front: Highlights from the Past Year,” Crisis 47 (July 1940): 210; “Along the N.A.A.C.P. Battlefront,” Crisis 47 (September 1940): 290; “Along the N.A.A.C.P. Battlefront,” Crisis 47 (December 1940): 390. The Crisis predicted that the higher courts would uphold the Mills decision. This was confirmed in a case in Norfolk, Virginia when the U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals of the fourth district reversed a lower court’s decision to dismiss the salary case of Melvin Alston when it ruled that constitutional rights were not waived when signing a contract; the U.S. Supreme Court agreed when it refused to hear the subsequent appeal.
communities benefitted economically because increased teachers’ salaries generated more disposable income that was funneled back into the community. Through the NAACP, community leaders learned the skills necessary to conduct successful campaigns by holding mass meetings, raising funds, generating publicity, writing reports, coordinating activities, creating petitions, researching public records, and organizing protests. They could also rely on the advice and resources of the local and national NAACP in supporting their efforts. One of the most valuable lessons that local communities throughout the state learned from the campaign was that the community could rely on its own resources to effectively challenge segregation and discrimination. In addition, the skills that they obtained could be transferred to fight other vestiges of racial discrimination. It was a lesson that communities in other localities would learn as the campaign spread.273

For the NAACP, the campaign was an unqualified success. As the salary equalization fight progressed from county to county, Lillie Jackson, Enolia McMillan, Thurgood Marshall, Juanita Jackson and other local and national NAACP members were able to establish new branches and revive old ones, leaving a network of local branches throughout the state that linked these disparate communities together. Enough branches were established or revived in the wake of the campaign that the Maryland State Conference of NAACP Branches was formed in May 1941. Enolia McMillan, who was instrumental in the success of the campaign, was elected as the first president of the state

273 [Untitled document that begins “Maryland is the experimental station”], [1938?], NAACP Papers, I-C-281; Fight for Equal Teachers Salary, [1937], ibid. 183
conference. It was her reward for her tireless efforts. Lillie Jackson was elected vice president.274

The NAACP also fulfilled the vision of Charles Houston in developing a network of black lawyers who could handle local civil rights cases. Houston mentored Marshall as his protégé, and Marshall passed the baton to fellow lawyers in the Baltimore-Washington, D.C. metropolitan area when he moved to the national office. For example, during the campaign Marshall had the assistance of attorneys W.A.C. Hughes, the Baltimore NAACP’s legal counsel, Leon Ransom, Edward Lovett, and William Hastie, who could legally protect and defend black Marylanders in their quest for first class citizenship.275

The Baltimore NAACP: Advocates for the Black Community in Maryland

By the end of the 1930s, the Baltimore NAACP had evolved into the leading African American protest organization of the black freedom struggle throughout the state. In only five years since its re-vitalization in late 1935, the Baltimore NAACP had grown into one of the largest and most active branches of the Association. It had forged a strong


relationship with a number of powerful, respected, and mass-based institutions within the black community of Baltimore—particularly the Afro-American and the churches—and it was with their assistance that the local branch built a grassroots organization that had a broad constituency. Skotnes also notes that the local branch was at the center of a number of mass organizations such as the NAACP state conference of branches and the neighborhood protective leagues. It was its position as the dominant organization of the Baltimore black freedom movement that the branch became the ultimate advocate of the statewide African American community. As the voice and protector of the community, it fought for equal employment opportunities, vigorously challenged racial discrimination and segregation, and sought to protect the community from what it saw as negative influences.  

The Baltimore NAACP accomplished this in several ways. The branch opened a fully staffed office that was accessible to the community. Its activities were constantly reported in the Afro and several churches regularly allowed Jackson unfettered access to their congregations on Sundays to make announcements or speeches that kept them abreast of new or recurring developments. In addition, the branch itself held mass meetings at Sharp Street Methodist, Jackson’s home church and one of the largest in the black community, every third Sunday at 3 p.m., which were often addressed by outside speakers. During the 1950s these speakers included Rosa Parks, Medgar Evers, and Fred Shuttlesworth. It also tried to keep the membership active, holding several membership and Christmas seal drives throughout the year that combined community mobilization with political education. Local leaders learned how to organize workers and volunteers.

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276 Skotnes, 420; Thompson, 298.
into regional and block committees, and those who were able to sign up one hundred members were rewarded with a position on the branch’s executive committee. This was instituted by Jackson and allowed people who were not generally seen as leaders a seat at the table. Other committees were formed to keep members engaged in community issues and mobilize human and financial resources when necessary.277

The new organizational structure and activities developed and reinforced the mass character and cross-class base of the branch. Although Jackson herself and other top branch officials were from the black middle class, the membership consisted of black folks from various socio-economic backgrounds, from black professionals and domestic workers to laborers, ministers, and youth. Of course, teachers joined before and after the salary equalization campaign of 1936-1941, but domestic workers with “run over shoes” also paid the $1 membership along with black longshoremen on Baltimore’s docks. Even more significant were organizations such as the International Longshoremen’s Association local 878, which took out a $500 organizational life membership in the late 1930s or early 1940s. The effort to seek members from all segments of the black community was not by accident. Juanita Jackson recalled that her mother “kept preaching about the masses—the NAACP has got to get away from just the classes, the teachers and doctors and lawyers; we’ve got to have the masses.” This was clearly a break with the pre-1935 Baltimore branch and reflected what was happening in Detroit, Baltimore’s closest competitor, and elsewhere.278

277 Skotnes, 420-421; Thompson, ibid.
278 Skotnes, 422-423. Skotnes does note that having a largely working-class base did not necessarily mean that the branch engaged in activities and programs that spoke to working class interests. Though the branch did tackle some economic issues—such as
From the beginning, the Baltimore NAACP envisioned extending the black freedom movement beyond the boundaries of the city into Baltimore County and other parts of the state. Juanita Jackson made it known in September 1935 that leaders of the Baltimore NAACP hoped to build a network of NAACP branches that would link and unite African Americans throughout the state in a coordinated effort to fight for first class citizenship. The Margaret Williams case in Baltimore County and the teachers’ salary equalization campaign served to strengthen the bonds between the Baltimore branch and the wider African American community, with these communities willing to find plaintiffs, raise funds, mobilize support, and generate publicity in support of local and national initiatives. The Baltimore NAACP served as the platform for the national NAACP to build a statewide network of branches that launched the campaign against educational inequalities in the late 1930s and would continue to attack racial discrimination and segregation.279

The bond between the Baltimore branch and its parent body was also developing into a fruitful partnership, though the Baltimore County case did briefly strain the relationship. As the administrator of the legal campaign, Charles Houston had repeatedly emphasized the importance of the national office and local communities working hand-in-hand. The impetus had to come from the local communities, who were tasked with finding plaintiffs, mobilizing human and financial resources, generating publicity, and

\[\text{footnotetext}{279 Juanita Jackson to Walter White, 9 September 1935, NAACP Papers, I-C-65; Thompson, 355.}\]
seeing the case through to the end. Therefore, their cooperation and support was essential for the NAACP’s program, for Houston knew that the national NAACP could move no faster than the people themselves. Developing a cadre of black lawyers who could handle cases in his absence was another of Houston’s top priorities. Houston could not litigate every case, so he trained and depended on Marshall and a battery of other brilliant, young lawyers to handle the legal responsibilities among other important duties. Having other lawyers who could run successful campaigns was a huge relief to Houston, for it allowed him to “let go and the colleagues carry on as well, if not better, than I can.” This was all the more satisfying when Marshall joined the national office and helped administer the campaign even after Houston left the NAACP, which assured that the campaign would continue without him. ²⁸⁰

The campaign in Maryland imparted some hard but valuable lessons for the NAACP. Although a border state, Maryland proved to be more difficult in using the courts to rectify blatant educational discrimination than Marshall and the NAACP had anticipated. They had to be more selective in choosing plaintiffs and making sure that they had more iron-clad arguments because technical errors or flaws could derail all of their efforts and possibly strain or sever their relationship with local black communities. These issues would have to be rectified before they could proceed to take the campaign to the rest of the South. However, Marshall’s position on the national staff did ensure that Maryland

²⁸⁰ Thompson, 300-301. The Houston quote is from Memorandum to Ransom, Looby, and Cowen; to Redmond and to Marshall from Charles H. Houston, 17 September 1936, NAACP Papers, I-D-45.
would continue to be the foundation for the NAACP’s legal experiments. And of course it helped that the courts were open to hearing racially discriminatory cases.\textsuperscript{281}

The new decade opened with the Baltimore NAACP having experienced tremendous growth and development as it bonded with Baltimore’s black citizens and quickly became the ultimate tribune of the African American community. As the freedom movement grew in the city, the Baltimore branch consciously extended it beyond city limits into other parts of Maryland, building a vast network of NAACP branches in the process. The Baltimore branch would continue to attack racial discrimination and segregation in the city and the state as the United States entered World War II.

\textsuperscript{281} Thompson, ibid.
Standing on the Frontlines of Freedom

It had been a long time coming. It was only six years ago that the Baltimore branch was in danger of never getting back on its feet, despite the desires of the National Office. The second chapter created by the Association had seen far better times, particularly in the 1920s, but by the 1930s was practically dead in the water. Now, at the start of 1941, Lillie Jackson could look back at the last six years and rightly pat herself on the back for leading the Baltimore branch back to a position of respectability, both in the city and within the organization. She had taken over the branch with much fanfare and rising expectations from the black community, and she delivered. She had the name of the Association on the lips of almost every black person not only in the city but the state within a year of her reign. The Afro constantly praised her work, and ‘Ma’ Jackson certainly received her share of well wishers in the meeting rooms, pulpits, and on the streets. Jackson, of course, was not one who committed herself to something just to receive accolades, though she welcomed the appreciation for the long, hard work that she and the other members had put in.²⁸² And work they did. They had built a branch that

²⁸² Jackson and Enolia McMillan, who, as president of the Colored Teachers Maryland State Colored Teachers Association had done much to make the teachers’ salaries cases successful, and served as a vice-president of the Baltimore branch, would later be honored with other black women across the country in the Crisis as ‘First Ladies of Colored America’ in 1943. See ‘First Ladies of Colored America—No. 5,” Crisis
barely had five members at the start of 1935 to one with over 3,000; they sent thousands of dollars to the National Office; and, most importantly, they had put the city on notice that racial discrimination and segregation would no longer be tolerated.

Several racist institutions had to learn that the hard way. Obviously, they did not think that Negroes could compel them to change years of tradition and force them to do things they had never dreamed of doing, but they did not know whom they were dealing with. The University of Maryland thought that by subterfuge and sheer stubbornness they could prevent their precious law school from being ‘invaded’; they were wrong. Hell hath no fury like a rejected student scorned, for Thurgood Marshall and the branch were determined to open the opportunity for future generations, accomplishing their objective in 1935 with the full weight of the national office behind them. It truly was sweet revenge! The Maryland Board of Education was next, with their despicable practice of paying black teachers less pay for equal work. It took years to pull it off, but eventually they too had to concede that the NAACP was in it for the long haul, and the justness of

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(January 1943), 18 and ‘First Ladies of Colored America—No. 11,’ Crisis (July 1943), 208, respectively.

283 It is widely speculated that Thurgood Marshall had applied to the University of Maryland’s Law School but was rejected, causing him to attend Howard University’s Law School instead. Michael Davis and Hunter Clark, in their biography of Marshall, claim that Marshall characterized his victory against the University as “sweet revenge” since they had rejected his application based on his race. See Davis and Clark, Thurgood Marshall, 11. However, in interviews with Richard Kluger and Juan Williams, Marshall admitted that he never applied because he knew that the school would never accept him; however, the bitterness of this fact did not stop Marshall from seeking to get even with the university for denying him admission. Ironically, the rejection was a blessing in disguise, since Marshall would become the apprentice of Charles Hamilton Houston, the dean of the Howard law school, and build a relationship with a number of classmates, colleagues and professors that would form a coterie of notable NAACP lawyers. See Williams, Thurgood Marshall, 52-53, 408, n. 1.
their position could not be denied. The results were a record that the NAACP—and the people it represented—could be proud of.

If only the national office were as appreciative. It seemed that the bosses in New York were reluctant to give Baltimore the respect it felt it rightly deserved. In their correspondence and in the Crisis, it seemed that White, Wilkins, and others were only willing to tell half of the story, giving the branch just enough press to acknowledge its accomplishments, but not enough to show that their full efforts were valued. They never seemed to give the branch the full credit for the members they procured, the money they had raised and sent to New York, the things that they had done to raise the status of the NAACP in the city. It was more galling because other cities seemed to get their full credit. The Crisis had no problem letting the public know that Detroit had the most members or that Chicago raised a significant amount of money—why not Baltimore?

Some people may not have found Charm City to their liking, but that should not prevent them from reporting the truth about the city’s progress.284

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284 Lillie Jackson to Roy Wilkins, 24 January 1941, NAACP Papers, I-C-76. In a letter that apparently responds to a previous letter sent by Wilkins, Jackson berates him for several reasons. First, from the content of her response, she seems to think that Wilkins believes that the Baltimore branch was asking for more recognition by the National Office simply for personal gain rather than giving the branch the proper respect for its work. Second, as editor of the Crisis, he fails to report the activities of the NAACP nationwide by individual branches in the section “Along the N.A.A.C.P. Battlefront” and instead does so by state, obscuring the accomplishments of the largest branch that served as the nerve center of Maryland. Third, she believes that Wilkins is unwilling to give Baltimore its credit because of his supposed personal dislike for the city, which she argues should not prevent him from giving it its full recognition. The overall tone of the letter suggest a parent scolding a child, and is in some instances very condescending and bitingly sarcastic, a tone that would be prevalent in some of her correspondence to the national staff throughout Jackson’s tenure as president.
The truth, to Jackson, was that Baltimore was a frontline city in the war against racial segregation and discrimination. It was right on the border of Jim Crow, a city that sat just under the Mason-Dixon line, but was close enough to the north that its black citizens understood that better race relations were possible and there were places close enough to acquire the knowledge and skills to bring back to their community and put to tremendous use. Some of them, like her daughter Juanita, had done so, and the NAACP and the city were better for it. Obviously, the national office thought Baltimore was key, or else it would not have been so persistent in re-activating the branch in 1935 and chosen it as the place to launch its new offensive legal strategy against segregated education. So, it was unfathomable to Jackson that they now seemed to want to keep them at arms-length; it made absolutely no sense whatsoever. They should want to pay more attention to Baltimore and Maryland, not less. In fact, she was willing to bet that her branch was doing way more than those in New York. So why is there no Baltimore representative on the Board of Directors yet New York has several? It seemed highly unfair, and looked like White and his cronies were playing political favoritism simply because the headquarters was in New York. What did the founding fathers say, ‘taxation without representation?’ Seemed like the case to her, nothing but organizational tyranny. That had to end, and end soon.

285 Ibid. Jackson had also stated to Wilkins in a previous letter in July 1940 that Baltimore was on the borderline of racial discrimination and that is “where the real fighting should be.” To Jackson, Maryland’s location warranted greater attention from the national office than that of other states. See Lillie Jackson to Roy Wilkins, 19 July 1940, NAACP Papers, I-C-76.

286 Jackson to Wilkins, 24 January 1941, NAACP Papers, I-C-76.
Jackson, however, could not be too pre-occupied with what the national office did or did not do because she had a branch to run. Membership campaigns had to be conducted, letters to powerful local, state, and federal officials had to be written, injustices had to be exposed and confronted, and Baltimore—and the nation—had to be constantly reminded that it was a democracy, not a dictatorship. As for the top spot in the Association, Detroit could have that—for now. But watch out! Baltimore is certainly coming for that crown and any other city had better be prepared as well. Besides, a little friendly competition is what the Association, and her branch, needed, and Baltimore was going to look and feel a lot different in the coming years, of that Jackson was certain.

**Baltimore and the Double V Campaign**

By the time Thurgood Marshall and the Baltimore NAACP were able to equalize teachers’ salaries throughout Maryland in early 1941, Europe had been consumed by war for almost two years. Though the United States did not immediately enter the war, it did engage in wartime production and mobilization soon after its outbreak. The industrial boom and greater federal interventionism lifted the nation out of the Great Depression and expanded President Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal coalition. Roosevelt also prepared the nation to accept its eventual entry into the war by arguing that the Allies were fighting to make the world “safe for democracy” from fascist tyranny, and that the United States had to do its part in ensuring that human rights and freedom would be respected and protected the world over, exemplified in his “Four Freedoms” speech before Congress in January 1941. No longer isolated after entering on the side of the
Allies in late 1941, the United States would emerge in the war’s aftermath as the self-proclaimed “leader of the free world,” taking on the mantle of international leadership in the post-war period and beyond.  

The war boom created lots of new jobs, particularly in the defense industries. As Maryland’s largest industrial center and a vital port city, Baltimore’s proximity to the nation’s capital made it ideal as a war center, since the city served as the epicenter of a region that had a number of industries stretching forty miles from the Chesapeake Bay. Its location, diversified economy, and low rail rates to the West caused Baltimore’s war-related expansion to begin much earlier than other industrial centers such as Detroit. Beginning in June 1940, Baltimore’s defense industries received lucrative government contracts to produce steel, aircraft, and warships. Located just outside the city, the Glenn L. Martin Aircraft Company, which had already received $70 million in British aircraft orders during the late 1930s, was able to employ about half of the fifty thousand people that were working in the defense industries in Maryland, thanks to nearly $600 million received in government contracts by August 1941. Once the U.S. entered the war, Martin’s employees jumped to thirty-seven thousand. Other industries also put large numbers of people to work. Bethlehem Steel employed the same number as Martin, Western Electric reached nine thousand, Maryland Drydock employed forty-five hundred, and smaller industries had around two to three thousand workers. As expected, the expansion of the defense industries lowered the number of people on relief or

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employed in WPA projects. By the end of the war, Baltimore’s population had increased by 20 percent and its labor force increased by 32 percent.289

Because of racial discrimination and segregation, African Americans were the hardest hit by the Depression and suffered longer than any other group. Now that the country was engaged in wartime production and mobilization, African Americans sought to capitalize on these new employment opportunities to meet both the demands of labor and raise their standard of living. World War II, like the previous world war, saw African Americans migrating to the North and West to take advantage of the situation. As a result, Baltimore saw a large influx of African Americans enter the city looking to acquire employment in these growing and prosperous defense industries. Most were from other parts of the state, with half of them coming from the southern counties and the Eastern Shore, and others from states of the Upper South, such as Virginia and North Carolina, desperately seeking to improve their station in life. Though Baltimore did not receive anywhere near the number of African American migrants as Detroit, Chicago, or Los Angeles, it is estimated that between 1940 and 1942, an average of three hundred African Americans per week flooded its borders, which strained the already bulging boundaries of segregated black communities. The housing crisis was compounded by the fact that the city did not construct new dwellings to accommodate the growing population and angry whites opposed the expansion of segregated areas. However, the increased numbers did add to the grassroots base of the Baltimore NAACP.290

290 Callcott, *Maryland and America*, 148. According to a 1942 survey, African Americans accounted for 20 percent of the city population, but were confined into 2
To add insult to injury, the jobs that black Baltimoreans hoped would improve their circumstances were still menial or unskilled—94 percent in 1942—or completely closed to them due to discrimination. Even as late as April 1943, only about 25,000 African Americans—2,000-3,000 of them black women—worked in the defense industries, accounting for about 11 percent of the workforce even though they made up 20 percent of the city’s population. Companies like the Martin Company, which had received $600 million dollars in government contracts, refused to hire black workers despite the government regulations. Martin’s attitude reflected that of both the public and private sector in Baltimore. Despite labor shortages and prodding from federal officials, many industries and local government offices in Baltimore stubbornly resisted hiring African Americans. According to the Office of Community War Services report in 1943, Baltimore had a reputation for recalcitrant behavior when it came to following the advice or directives of “outsiders” and was continually hostile and discourteous to federal authorities.  

This situation was unacceptable to the NAACP and the Afro. As noted by Maryland historian George Callcott, although the NAACP had won important victories in the courts such as the Murray case, it was World War II that provided African Americans the best opportunities to initiate changes in their condition. For African Americans, the experiences of the war both domestically and internationally lay bare the fact that while

percent of the existing shelter space. The results were exorbitant rents, crowded dwellings, and sanitation problems.

291 Anderson, 18-19. P.N. Binford, the OCWS recreation advisor in Baltimore, complained constantly about the hostility and discourteous behavior he and other federal authorities received from Baltimore officials.

292 Callcott, 147.
the United States called for the rest of the world to respect and protect its citizens from oppression and ensure freedom and equality based on democratic ideals encompassed in the U.S. Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, its actions clearly contradicted its rhetoric. Blacks across the nation resolved that World War II was not going to impede the momentum toward civil rights and social reform as it had during the previous world war. Therefore, it was imperative that African Americans demand equal employment opportunities and economic equality in the continuing fight to achieve first-class citizenship while meeting the new challenges caused by a rapidly changing society.

Black labor leader, A. Philip Randolph, head of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, was fully aware that labor shortages made the federal government vulnerable and particularly open to demands for fair and equitable employment, since the country needed every available able-bodied person to assist the war effort. His threatened March on Washington Movement (MOWM) in July 1941 prompted Roosevelt to pass Executive Order 8802 in late June 1941, which banned racial discrimination in government and defense industry employment and created the Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC) for enforcement. However, African Americans still had to remain vigilant, and Randolph’s MOWM continued to make sure that Roosevelt’s administration made a concerted effort to implement and enforce the Order.²⁹³

²⁹³ Berg, 94; Hayward Farrar, The Baltimore Afro-American, 1892-1950, Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1998), 95; Neil A. Wynn, “War and Racial Progress: The African American Experience during World War II,” Peace and Change 20 (July 1995): 350. Randolph, the NAACP, the Urban League and others found that the FEPC was a paper tiger. The government, not wanting to interfere with production by alienating defense contractors or white labor, did little to give the Committee any real enforcement power should contractors and defense companies disregard or violate the order. In
Vigilance was certainly required in Baltimore. It was because the local FEPC had little to no power to compel companies such as Martin to adhere to the guidelines of Executive Order 8802 that the NAACP and the *Afro* enthusiastically supported the MOWM. In fact, both entities had already had the Martin Company in their sights prior to Randolph’s call for a march. As part of its fall 1940 national recruitment campaign, the National NAACP placed emphasis on gaining employment for African Americans in defense plants that received government contracts, and had advised the Baltimore branch to investigate both the status of black employment and the attitude of the management toward black employment at the Martin Company. Obviously, the attitude was less than complementary, since the *Afro* announced in an editorial in March 1941 that the NAACP either sue the Martin Company in federal court or a lobbying effort be instigated to get Congress to investigate Martin’s hiring practices. When Executive Order 8802 was issued, the *Afro* had hoped that federal mandates would force the Martin Company and others to begin hiring African Americans but they were soon disabused of this sentiment when the Martin Company still refused to do so. It would be an uphill battle to get Baltimore defense industries to get rid of their racially discriminatory policies and realize the benefits of hiring African Americans, even if the ‘experiment’ proved temporary.\(^{294}\)

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The Baltimore NAACP Builds Its Base

In order to adequately address the myriad challenges brought on by the war, the Baltimore branch sought to capitalize on the enthusiasm and success generated by the teachers’ salary cases by constantly increasing its membership during its annual membership campaigns. The branch had already done a tremendous job in the five years since its reorganization in 1935, going from a branch that had practically no members to one that had nearly 3,000 dues-paying members on its rolls in June 1940. This was due to several factors. First, Jackson’s force of personality, work ethic, and tireless energy gave the branch direction, purpose, and a highly effective recruiter and organizer. Second, the NAACP’s close relationship with the Afro and the local churches kept the branch from being racked by internal bickering and petty squabbles that had previously torn the branch asunder. Third, the branch was more than willing to cooperate with the national office in not only its campaigns against racial discrimination and Jim Crow segregation, but in selling NAACP Christmas seals, lynch buttons, and other fund-raising items. The branch’s effectiveness in fund-raising for the NAACP was reflected in the money sent to the National Office — $1,359.00 and $1,907.68 in 1938 and 1939, respectively. In fact, correspondence between Jackson and the national office in the fall of 1940 seemed to indicate that Baltimore was second only to Detroit in terms of membership and monetary contributions to the national office.  

295 “Financial Statement for the Year Ending December 31, 1939 of the Baltimore Branch,” n.d., NAACP Papers, II-C-76; Lillie Jackson to Walter White, 14 June 1940, ibid; Memorandum to Frederic Morrow from Walter White, 26 June 1940, ibid; Lillie
1941, the Baltimore branch had a full-time office located on Dolphin Street, a main artery in the northwest Black community. By the next year, the branch had grown large enough to warrant requesting that the national office fund an executive secretary to oversee the day-to-day operations. Randall L. Tyus, a national field secretary, assumed the duty in December 1942.296

The increased membership of the Baltimore branch reflected the growth of the organization overall, as the NAACP, just as in World War I, saw its membership increase over the course of the war, standing at around 50,000 members in 1939 and reaching its peak of approximately 540,000 by 1946.297 The growing politicization of the national African American community, particularly the urban black working class, expanded the NAACP’s reach beyond its traditional black middle-class constituency, and Baltimore was a prime example of the Association’s growing mass following. The Baltimore branch increased its reach during the war years under the direction of Jackson’s eldest daughter, Virginia Jackson Kiah, who began her tenure as membership and promotional secretary after her husband entered the U.S. Army in 1941. With her mother’s encouragement and backing, Mrs. Kiah declared “every day a membership day,” and

Jackson to Walter White, 3 October 1940, ibid; and Walter White to Lillie Jackson, 9 October 1940, ibid..
296 Lillie Jackson to Roy Wilkins, 24 January 1941; “New Executive Secretary of Baltimore Branch N.A.A.C.P. Honored at Reception,” Baltimore Branch press release, 4 December 1942, all in NAACP Papers, II-C-76. Earlier that year, Tyus had conducted NAACP membership drives in Texas and Oklahoma, having particular success in Houston and Galveston, Texas. See “Along the N.A.A.C.P. Battlefront,” Crisis May 1942, 168.
297 Berg, 109-110. Immediately after the war, it was estimated that the NAACP had approximately 400,000 dues-paying members; the NAACP’s representatives even placed that number at 600,000. Lucille Black, the Association’s membership secretary, placed the peak of numerical strength at roughly 540,000 by 1946.
began a vigorous campaign to double the branch’s membership. Conducting door-to-door canvassing, bringing prominent, nationally-known speakers such as the First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt and Mrs. Mary McLeod Bethune to speak before monthly mass meetings, and creating “salesmanship clinics” that solicited residents such as those in the new housing projects built during the war, allowed the Baltimore branch to achieve its goal of reaching beyond the black elite and middle class and connecting with the working masses. This is exemplified by the Baltimore NAACP’s budding relationship with organized labor at the beginning of the decade.298

Because of the potential increase in employment opportunities for African Americans in the defense industries and efforts to attain economic equality, the Baltimore NAACP had been trying to cultivate a relationship with local black unions. Even before World War II, the branch had been trying unsuccessfully to establish a relationship since 1935 with the International Longshoremen’s Union Local #858, an all-black affiliate of the American Federation of Labor. Due to the efforts of Rev. Junius Gray of Psalmist Baptist Church, Edward Lewis, the executive director of the Baltimore Urban League, and several black labor leaders, Juanita Mitchell, the director of the Baltimore branch’s fall 1940 membership campaign, finally gained an audience with the longshoremen at their annual Sunday service in mid-September 1940. Enthused by her speech, they invited her to speak before their evening meeting at the Odd Fellow’s Hall on September 23. To ensure their participation, Mitchell spent that same morning at the union headquarters on the waterfront talking with the stevedores about the NAACP. The results was a pledge at the evening meeting of $500 to the local branch and an open invitation to

298 Kiah and Mitchell, OH 8094, 49-50.
Mitchell and Jackson to address the stevedores at their morning assemblies before they received their work assignments at the various piers for that day. Mitchell was very excited at the prospect of a burgeoning relationship between the Baltimore branch and Local #858 and hoped it was the entrée that the branch needed to convince other local unions to support the NAACP. It further led Mitchell to envision a national relationship between the NAACP and organized labor to support the NAACP in combating lynching and police brutality.

Both Jackson and the national office, particularly Executive Secretary Walter White, were well aware of how important Baltimore—and Maryland—was to the overall programmatic success of the Association. However, Jackson’s assessment of the importance of the Baltimore branch was conceived in negative terms, specifically the perceived neglect of the National Office in reciprocating the support of the local branch for its parent body. She also had a more inflated sense of just how important Baltimore was to the work of the Association. This was exemplified by the difficulties the national office faced in assigning a field secretary to assist the Baltimore branch with its annual membership campaign in 1940.

Daisy Lampkin, a highly effective national field secretary, was instrumental in conducting the fall campaign that helped re-organize the branch in 1935. Lampkin obviously made quite an impression on Lillie Jackson, for Jackson made frequent

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299 Juanita Mitchell to Walter White, 24 September 1940, NAACP Papers, I-D-89; “Longshoremen Contribute $500 to N.A.A.C.P. Drive,” NAACP press release, 27 September 1940, ibid. Lewis also worked to gain Mitchell an audience with the Teamsters and truck drivers union, and unions at Bethlehem Steel, the Amalgamated Clothing workers, and other plants.

300 Mitchell to White, 24 September 1940, NAACP Papers, I-D-89.
requests over the years to have Lampkin assist the branch in its annual membership campaigns, and 1940 was no exception. In a June 1940 letter to White, Jackson requested that Lampkin direct their campaign from late September to mid-October. In order to make it clear to White how important this was, Jackson reminded him that Baltimore had fought for years to achieve and maintain its membership and momentum, fully cooperated with the National Office in its endeavors, and sent the National Office its fair share in money. She felt that the national office did not reciprocate that support. Jackson went further and stated that the branch had hosted a very successful Annual Conference a year after being re-organized—a Conference that several delegates claimed was the best in years. Jackson insisted she was not looking for personal praise but instead wanted the work of the branch recognized. It seems apparent that Jackson sought to guilt White into granting her request. If White refused, it would just confirm her suspicions that the national office did not value the Baltimore branch as much as they should.301

Unfortunately, Lampkin had committed to work with another branch and could not come to Baltimore. She tried to arrange for other field secretaries to take her place. Jackson, however, rejected them all, believing they were not as exemplary as Lampkin. White felt that the situation needed to be resolved quickly because the potentialities in

301 “Along the N.A.A.C.P. Battlefront,” The Crisis October 1935, 312; Lillie Jackson to Walter White, 14 June 1940, NAACP Papers, I-D-89. Just in case Lampkin could not come, Jackson requested George B. Murphy, Jr., Carl Murphy’s nephew, conduct the membership campaign. However, it was soon learned that George Murphy had a falling out with his uncle, and since Carl Murphy was a vital member of the branch, it was suggested by Jackson that Lampkin conduct the drive. See Lillie Jackson to Roy Wilkins, 5 July 1940, NAACP Papers, I-D-89; Roy Wilkins to Daisy Lampkin, 8 July 1940, ibid; and Daisy Lampkin to Roy Wilkins, 11 July 1940, ibid.
Baltimore were greater “than any other city holding its drive in the fall,” especially in the midst of the successful teachers’ salary equalization case and other previous NAACP victories.\textsuperscript{302}

At an impasse, Jackson wrote to Assistant Secretary Roy Wilkins, informing him that she felt that it was the national office’s responsibility to see that the Baltimore branch was successful, since Maryland, in her estimation, was on the “border line,” (meaning the frontline) in the battle against racial discrimination and Jim Crow segregation, and therefore required more attention from the national office than any other state. In his reply, Wilkins readily acknowledged that Maryland was a very important battleground, but emphasized that the Association was a national organization and that other states were just as worthy of attention from the national office. In fact, he argued that other places needed more attention because they may have been facing even more dire situations and circumstances than in Maryland, and that Baltimore was self-sufficient enough to not need as much oversight.\textsuperscript{303} Eventually, the situation was resolved when

\textsuperscript{302} Memorandum to Walter White from Frederic Morrow, 24 June 1940, NAACP Papers, I-D-89; Memorandum to Frederic Morrow from Walter White, 26 June 1940, ibid; Jackson to Wilkins, 5 July 1940, ibid; Wilkins to Lampkin, 8 July 1940, ibid; Lampkin to Wilkins, 11 July 1940, ibid; and Wilkins to Morrow, 16 July 1940, ibid. In her letter to Wilkins, Jackson made it clear that Morrow would not be welcomed. Morrow himself was not looking forward to possibly going there. When asked by Lampkin to go to Baltimore, Morrow replied, “he could not contend with that crazy woman.” Lampkin shot back that she had been dealing with Jackson for several years and that it was now somebody else’s turn! See Lampkin to Wilkins, 11 July 1940, NAACP Papers, I-D-89.

\textsuperscript{303} Lillie Jackson to Roy Wilkins, 19 July 1940, NAACP Papers, I-D-89; Memorandum from Roy Wilkins to Walter White, 23 July 1940, ibid; Wilkins to Jackson, 24 July 1940, ibid; Lillie Jackson to Walter White, 16 August 1940, ibid. In fact, the NAACP had just lost a case to open up the Democratic primary in Texas and was also dealing with a volatile situation in Brownsville, Tennessee while still trying to pass an anti-lynching bill through Congress.
Juanita Mitchell agreed to come back to Baltimore to conduct the campaign, which was successful.\textsuperscript{304}

By the end of the 1930s, the Baltimore NAACP had accomplished some very significant victories. The teachers’ salary cases had successfully equalized salaries between black and white teachers in a majority of Maryland’s counties; the Baltimore County Board of Education, in the wake of the NAACP’s unsuccessful attempt to admit Margaret Williams to a white high school in 1937, had by this time not only supplied transportation for black students to high schools in the city, but also furnished textbooks to black elementary schools and built a black high school within the county, some of which it had previously refused to do; and Bernard Hemsley, a qualified undertaker who had been denied the position of City Morgue Keeper because of his race, was appointed to the position after the Baltimore NAACP had filed mandamus proceedings against the superintendent of the City Hospital. The Baltimore branch had reason to be proud, but its leaders did not want to rest on their laurels. They continued the fight against educational, employment, and housing discrimination, and continued to work with black organized labor and other civic and civil rights organizations. But another issue soon drew much of its attention and resources.\textsuperscript{305}

\textsuperscript{304}Walter White to Juanita Mitchell, 26 August 1940, ibid; Juanita Mitchell to Walter White, 27 August 1940; Mitchell to White, 11 September 1940, ibid; and White to Mitchell, 16 September 1940. By this time, Mitchell was married to Clarence Mitchell and based in St. Paul, Minnesota, where Clarence was head of the St. Paul Urban League. No longer on the NAACP’s staff, and with their first child, Clarence III, Juanita requested monetary compensation, including daycare, in order to conduct the campaign. White agreed.

\textsuperscript{305}‘What the N.A.A.C.P. Has Done in Maryland, 1935-1940,’ n.d., NAACP Papers, I-D-89.
Baltimore Police Policy: Shoot First, Ask Questions Later

Just as African Americans in Baltimore refused to sacrifice their material and economic well being in order to support the war effort, they made it clear that they refused to sacrifice their physical well being as well. This meant confronting the rise in police brutality, particularly police shootings. African Americans in Baltimore did not have to fear lynchings like those on the rural Eastern Shore, but that did not mean that they could be complacent, whether in public or private. An article in the Afro in April 1942 reported that Baltimore police were operating a “shoot first, ask questions later” policy, resulting in the killing of ten African Americans since 1939, the same year that Hitler formally declared war on Europe. It was a domestic ‘war’ that saw police officers exonerated in every instance, which bolstered police officers’ practice of treating African Americans anyway they saw fit, since an increasing number of police beatings, false arrests, abuse and harassment were also committed over the same period. The black community throughout the city and the surrounding areas was in a state of siege. The Afro faithfully reported instances of police brutality, and made a point to identify by name the victims, officers, witnesses, and circumstances.306

306 Thompson, 358. For instances of continued police brutality, shootings, and harassment, see “2,000 Join in March on Md. Capitol,” Afro, 2 May 1942, 1-2; “Here’s Victim of Baltimore Policeman’s Bullet,” photograph, Afro, 23 August 1941, 6; “Cop Freed in Slaying of Youth,” ibid, 20; “Eight Witnesses Support Grocer Against Cops,” ibid, 27 September 1941, 10; “Woman Beaten by Policeman in E. Baltimore,” ibid; “W.A.C. Hughes, Robert P. McGuinn, ‘Disturbing the Peace,’ ibid, 20 December 1941, 24; “NAACP Pushes Probe of Police Brutality Case,” ibid, 3 January 1942, 6; “NAACP Probes Cop’s Abuse of Clerk,” ibid, 10; “Expectant Mother Barely Escapes Cop’s Gunfire,” ibid, 18 April 1942, 10. The Baltimore branch also reported on a large number of alleged cases of police brutality in their annual reports to the national office, and one report for the year 1941, under the section “Activities of the Legal Redress Committee”
The case that best illustrates the degree to which any African American, no matter how successful, esteemed, or well connected, could be subjected to police abuse was that of Carl Murphy, the owner and editor of the *Afro*.\(^{307}\) Murphy was highly esteemed by African Americans—and even some whites—nationwide because of his education, position, and political and social activism. Mayors, governors and even U.S. Presidents sought Murphy’s counsel and appointed him to several committees. Despite this, Murphy was subjected to police harassment due to a car accident between his wife, Vashti, and a white woman in May 1941. When Officer Horace Heinze questioned Mrs. Murphy later at her home, Carl Murphy, overhearing the exchange, advised his wife to decline answering further questions until they consulted with an attorney.\(^{308}\)

When questioned alone by Heinze at his home the next day, Murphy, who had no first-hand knowledge of the incident, refused to answer. Frustrated and angered, Heinze manhandled Murphy, arrested him for resisting arrest, and threw him in the back of a squad car without Murphy being able to inform anyone of his whereabouts. Murphy was booked and thrown into a cell, but was soon released to his counsel and the charges chaired by Carl Murphy, had three pages of alleged instances of police brutality and misconduct. As a note on the bottom of the third page indicates, the above listed cases are not even all that have been reported and that “there is not a day that complaints do not come to our office for us to solve.” See “Report of Branch Activities, 1941, for NAACP Annual Report,” Baltimore Branch Files, NAACP Papers, II-C-76.\(^{307}\) Murphy was far from the only successful and “respectable” African American who was subjected to police harassment. Two months after the settlement of the Murphy incident in October 1941, attorneys W.A.C. Hughes, who served as the Baltimore Branch’s legal counsel, and Robert P. McGuinn were arrested for “disturbing the peace.” Their ‘crime’ was the audacity to walk to their car after leaving a restaurant on Pennsylvania Avenue. They were later released and charges dropped. See “W.A.C. Hughes and Robert P. McGuinn ‘Disturbing Peace,’” *Afro*, 20 December 1941, 24.\(^{308}\) Terry, “‘Tramping for Justice’: The Dismantling of Jim Crow Baltimore, 1942-1954” (Ph.D. diss., Howard University, 2001), 84-85.

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\(^{308}\) Terry, “‘Tramping for Justice’: The Dismantling of Jim Crow Baltimore, 1942-1954” (Ph.D. diss., Howard University, 2001), 84-85.
subsequently dropped. Determined to fight back, Murphy filed a civil suit against Officer Heinze for $25,000 that was heard before Judge Eugene O’Dunne, the same judge that ruled in favor of the NAACP in the Murray case in 1935. Heinze was found guilty of false arrest, assault, and battery, but was only fined $1,000, which was later reduced to $25 when Heinze appealed. Although nowhere near the compensation he was seeking, Murphy claimed to be “satisfied” with the outcome. Several people felt that Police Commissioner Robert Stanton should take punitive action against Heinze by firing him, but Stanton, as in all of the other alleged abuses filed against police officers, refused to take action and reprimand Heinze.\(^{309}\)

Cases of alleged and actual police brutality and killings, and the refusal of the police commissioner to reprimand and/or terminate those officers involved, had been standard practice throughout the Depression years, with several African Americans killed by police since 1930. Some of the most egregious cases were those of Roosevelt Yates, an unarmed African American who was shot down by Officer Herman Trantner in March 1930, and Jefferson Mackey, who on August 8, 1932, was beaten to death with a blackjack by Officer John Erdman for simply picketing a former employer over an unjust termination. To clearly demonstrate the lack of respect for black life, all three officers were cleared of any wrongdoing; in fact, Erdman received a commendation from his captain.\(^{310}\)

\(^{309}\) Ibid, 85-86; Thompson, 359; “Editor Wins $1,000 Suit, Afro, 18 October 1941, 1-2. Murphy received widespread support because the incident was reported nationwide by the Associated Negro Press wire service, and well-wishers not only congratulated Murphy for his courage in filing a civil suit, but also pressed Commissioner Stanton to take appropriate action and fire Heinze.

\(^{310}\) Terry, “Tramping for Justice,” 88.
The African American community’s relationship with the police was already poisoned by the end of the decade; the appointment of Robert Stanton as police commissioner in 1939 rendered the relationship even more toxic. Under his administration, the police killed more African Americans in his first three years than those killed during the last decade, with an average of three per year.\[^{311}\] These killings corresponded with an alarming increase in the number of police beatings and other instances of police brutality. His power seemed absolute, as state officials were unable or unwilling to compel Stanton to thoroughly investigate and reprimand those found guilty of police misconduct or outright murder. Although a ‘friend’ of Murphy, even Governor Herbert O’Conor refused to intervene publicly on his behalf during his ordeal when requested by the Baltimore NAACP and Urban League. In the midst of his own troubles with the police, Murphy sensed that circumstances would soon reach a boiling point, writing to a friend in October 1941 that the community needed to prepare for a “fight to make police more careful of the rights of colored citizens.”\[^{312}\]

The spark that lit the fuse was not long in coming. On February 1, 1942, Private Thomas Broadus and several companions were attempting to hail an unlicensed cab (‘jitney’) on Pennsylvania Avenue. Broadus, a twenty-six year old husband and father, was stationed at Fort Meade, an army base located several miles south of the city in Howard County. Like black servicemen assigned to military bases throughout the state, on March 11, 1939, a twenty-five year old black man was fatally shot in the back by Officer Edward Humphreys while fleeing a stolen car. Humphreys was never punished. In September 1939, two black teenagers, Laurence Harvey and Eugene Duvall, were gunned down by several police officers in an incident that came to be known as the ‘schoolyard slayings.’ All officers were exonerated. See “Police Brutalities: State, Baltimore, Md., 1940-1942,” folder, NAACP Papers, II-B-116.\[^{312}\] Terry, 87, 88.
Broadus and his friends had to travel to Baltimore for relaxation and entertainment, since facilities on the base or in the surrounding areas either barred black servicemen from using them or were hostile to their presence. Thus, ‘the Strip’ was their favorite destination, where they could take in a show at one of several theaters, the most famous being the Royal, or drown their troubles and let loose in the numerous bars and nightclubs along the avenue.\textsuperscript{313}

Observing Broadus and his friends about to get into the unlicensed cab around midnight, Officer Edward Bender, according to eyewitnesses, prevented them from doing so, ordering them to procure a Sun Cab instead. Angered, Private Broadus allegedly exchanged harsh words with Bender as he and his party crossed Pennsylvania Avenue. Bender then approached Broadus and a fight ensued which lasted for several minutes and attracted a sizable crowd. During the fight, Broadus managed to take away Bender’s nightstick and proceeded to use it against him, striking Bender about the head and upper body. Coming to his senses, Broadus made a break for it, running in the direction of Pitcher Street. Bender, recovering from his wounds, pulled his pistol and first fired into the air to compel other officers to come to his rescue, then took aim at Broadus and fired two shots into the fleeing soldier’s back. According to some, Bender then approached Broadus’ body and supposedly fired again. The impact of the bullets caused Broadus’ unconscious form to roll under an automobile, and Bender allegedly raised his weapon and threatened to fire on anyone who tried to retrieve his body from under the vehicle. When the patrol car arrived, Broadus was taken to Providence Hospital, the only one that

\textsuperscript{313} “Cop Kills Fort Meade Soldier,” \textit{Afro}, 7 February 1942, 1-2; “2 Sets of Twins Survive Slain Ft. Meade Soldier,” ibid, 14 February 1942, 14; Terry, 89; and Thompson, 360.
admitted black patients. He was pronounced dead on arrival. Suffering from a concussion along with various cuts and bruises, Officer Bender had taken the life of his second African American victim. In February 1940, he had killed Charles Parker.\textsuperscript{314}

Outraged at this latest travesty, the black community was intent on seeking justice. The irony of this latest episode was not lost on them. Here was a soldier, denied the privileges that were afforded to whites who donned the same uniform yet still ready to give his life on distant battlefields to defeat fascist tyranny against enemies he had never seen before. Instead, he was killed at home by a fellow citizen simply for the color of his skin. This latest killing was just the exclamation point for a number of injustices that were constantly being perpetrated against them. Still denied access to decent housing and equal employment opportunities, it was only a matter of time before tensions boiled over.\textsuperscript{315}

The Baltimore NAACP took the lead and called for a criminal investigation, and it initially looked as if the black community had finally found a judicial body that was willing to address their grievances, since a grand jury had found sufficient evidence to actually charge Bender with murder. He was also relieved of duty while the grand jury deliberated. Unfortunately, the grand jury did not follow through. A week later, they dropped all charges against Bender and he was reinstated but transferred out of the Northwest police district. Once again, the justice system was not willing to prosecute Bender for killing a black man. Finally, the NAACP and other black civil rights leader focused on state officials. It was obvious that neither the criminal justice system nor

\textsuperscript{314} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{315} Thompson, 361.
Baltimore mayor Howard Jackson would punish the perpetrators, so the next step was to confront Governor O’Conor. Black civil rights leaders contacted the governor to meet with him immediately. If not, they promised a repeat of the racial conflagration that had already occurred in other major cities. It was an offer Governor O’Conor could not refuse.  

The 1942 March on Annapolis

If Governor O’Conor had any idea what was to come next, he probably would not have agreed to meet. The Baltimore NAACP and other black civil rights leaders decided that the governor needed to hear from the community itself, not just a handful of select leaders. In addition, the NAACP needed to give African Americans a viable outlet to express their frustrations and concerns that would hopefully result in some tangible reforms, or Baltimore could very well experience racial revolts that occurred in cities like Detroit during World War II. The signs that citizens were willing to deal with police brutality themselves were evident when several African Americans attacked Officer Bender after shooting Broadus.  

Not long after the Broadus shooting, the *Afro* editorialized that African Americans were “taking matters into their own hands” and that the attack on Bender seemed a forewarning that other incidents could take place. It was

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316 “5 Agencies Probe Death of Soldier,” *Afro*, 14 February 1942, 14; “Grand Jury Present Cop in Killing,” ibid, 7 March 1942, 20; “2 Accused By Bender Acquitted,” ibid, 21 March 1942, 10; and Thompson, 361.
317 Ironically, the grand jury dropped the charges against Bender, but sought to charge the two African Americans who allegedly attacked him, Domily Polk and William Boykin. Eventually, these charges were also dropped. See *Afro*, 7 March 1942.
not long before this prediction came true. In mid-May 1942, two African American soldiers “soundly thrashed” Officer Fred Rembold as he attempted to arrest a third soldier again on Pennsylvania Avenue, which was described as a “powder keg.” This atmosphere could very well lend itself to even more violence and on a larger scale, since those in the community seemed to share and condone the actions taken by these black soldiers. During an interview years later, Juanita Mitchell remembered, “people were all in an uproar. [However] instead of rioting, we marched…we did something constructive. I think we would have had a riot, if we hadn’t had a march.”

The march Juanita Mitchell referred to above was the 1942 March on Annapolis. When Roosevelt finally succumbed to pressure from Randolph to issue Executive Order 8802, black citizens of Baltimore changed their focus from Washington to Annapolis to address local concerns. Owing to the spirit of the aborted March on Washington a year ago, the March on Annapolis sought to bring a cross-section of black organizations to the state capital, to impress upon the governor that the NAACP and civil rights leaders not only spoke for the black masses, but could also organize their constituencies to attempt to compel those in authority to effect real and lasting changes. Spurred by the Baltimore NAACP, the Citizens’ Committee for Justice (CCJ), an umbrella group that represented 150 organizations, including labor unions, churches, fraternities, civic and social clubs, and political groups, was organized to plan and coordinate the March. Carl Murphy served as the president of the CCJ, with Rev. E.W. White as secretary and Juanita

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318 “Pa. Avenue Powder Keg Smolders,” *Afro*, 14 April 1942, 1; Mitchell, OH 8183, 43; Terry, 91-92. There were significant race rebellions in Harlem and Detroit in 1943. In another interview, Juanita Mitchell again credits the March on Annapolis in preventing a similar rebellion in Baltimore. See Juanita Mitchell, OH 8095, 32.
[Jackson] Mitchell as director. Other Baltimore NAACP leaders were heavily involved in planning the March. Lillie Jackson and her sister, Florence Snowden, secured speakers and solicited organizational support, and Dr. J.E.T. Camper, a staunch NAACP officer, coordinated transportation to Annapolis. It seems clear that although the Citizens Committee was the parent body under which 150 organizations participated, the Baltimore NAACP was the driving force behind organizing and coordinating the March.319

Having never attempted such a large demonstration before, black leaders sought guidance and advice from local and national leaders. Organizers from A. Philip Randolph’s March on Washington Movement (MOWM) were invited to speak before the NAACP’s mass meetings. Over 1,200 enthusiastic supporters heard B.F. McLaurin, the executive secretary of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and a member of the MOWM, speak at the Sharp Street Memorial Methodist Episcopal Church in April 1942. The final mass meeting before the March, held on April 23, included speakers Carl Murphy and Rev. Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., the flamboyant and charismatic pastor of Abyssinian Baptist Church and a New York City councilman, who fired up the crowd by

319 Carl Murphy to Walter White and Roy Wilkins, 20 March 1942, II-C-76, NAACP Papers; Leon Ransom to Carl Murphy, ibid; “Plan March on Annapolis,” Afro, 31 March 1942, 1; Mitchell, OH 8183, 42; Thompson, 368-369 and Terry, 92. David Terry states in his dissertation that Carl Murphy served as chairman of the CCJ, but both Dr. Camper and Juanita Mitchell state in their interviews that Dr. Camper served as chair of the Committee. However, Dr. Camper does give credit to Lillie Jackson and Carl Murphy for being the driving forces behind the CCJ. See Terry, “Tramping for Justice,” 92; Mitchell, OH 8183, 43; and Dr. J.E.T. Camper, interview by Leroy Graham, 2 July 1976, OH 8134, MJOHP, 18-19.
exhorting them to stand and fight enemies at home rather than continue to acquiesce to Jim Crow.\textsuperscript{320}

Sufficiently motivated and enthused, Governor O’Conor was greeted by approximately 2,000 African Americans at the March the next day, April 24. They came down in chartered buses, automobiles and by railroad, in part financed by the more than $800 in voluntary contributions. They were a sight for those who witnessed the event. They were enthusiastic and orderly, just as the organizers had hoped, and mainly consisted of middle and upper working-class African Americans who could afford to take off from work, although those who could attend represented the concerns of those who could not. These representatives spoke for impressive numbers of absent black supporters statewide. Lillie Jackson claimed to Governor O’Conor to represent 6,000 Baltimore NAACP members—with the tacit support of NAACP chapters throughout the state—Carl Murphy stood up for thousands of loyal Afro readers, and ministers embodied hundreds of church members. The Citizens’ Committee for Justice met with Governor O’Conor and other white state officials for two hours in the House of Delegates Chamber and presented him with their various grievances.\textsuperscript{321}

The Citizens Committee’s number one priority for the governor was to thoroughly investigate the ten police shootings of African Americans since 1939 and to put an end to the wave of police brutality. The CCJ also sought to increase the number of African

\textsuperscript{320}“Porters’ Union Head to Talk at NAACP Meet,” Afro, 18 April 1942, 12; “We Won’t Stand Abuse Any Longer, Powell Tells 1,200,” ibid, 2 May 1942, 10; Thompson, 362.\textsuperscript{321}“2,000 Join March on Md. Capitol,” Afro, 2 May 1942, 1-2. For more on the March on Annapolis, see “Let Freedom Ring! editorial, ibid, 4; “Negroes Make Demands on Governor,” Baltimore Evening Sun, 24 April 1942, 44, 50; “Negroes Assault City Policemen,” Baltimore Sun, 25 April 1942, 6, 22; and Juanita Mitchell, OH 8095, 25, 32-33.
Americans on the force, believing that more black police assigned to patrol their neighborhood would establish better relations with the police department and severely lessen the number of police shootings of black citizens. Therefore, the Committee requested that the governor put black police officers in uniform, hire another black policewoman, and name a black police magistrate. Finally, the Committee requested that Robert Stanton be removed as police commissioner, since he was an obvious hindrance to any attempt to better relations between the police and the black community. To express the gravity of the situation concerning Stanton’s removal, the CCJ presented O’Conor will a petition bearing 4,000 signatures. Mayor Howard Jackson had refused to act, and O’Conor himself had previously been reluctant to handle the situation. In fact, Lillie Jackson informed him at the meeting that the March was the “direct result of your refusal to answer the letters of the NAACP asking for a conference on police killings in Baltimore.”

Others reiterated the fact that positive steps needed to be taken to resolve

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322 A pamphlet, entitled Speed Morale for War Work in Maryland: A Partnership Is One for All, All for One, was produced and distributed prior to the March and outlined the various reforms sought by the CCJ. It implored Mayor Howard Jackson to appoint more uniformed black police officers. It noted that there were only three black police officers to patrol a black community that numbered more than 150,000 and those three officers were prevented from wearing uniforms because the police commissioners claimed that whites would not tolerate black officers arresting them. The CCJ was able to prove the fallacy of this claim by investigating the number of uniformed black policemen in other cities. It found that St. Louis and Pittsburgh each had 23 uniformed black police officers, Washington, D.C. had 63, Chicago had 150, New York City had 220, and Philadelphia had 250. See Juanita Mitchell, OH 8095, 33 and Terry, 95-96.

323 “2,000 Join in March on Md. Capitol,” 1-2; “Let Freedom Ring! editorial, Afro, 28 April 1942, 4; and Thompson, 362-363.
the situation before it truly got out of hand and deteriorated into a physical racial conflict.\textsuperscript{324}

Though police brutality was the main concern, the CCJ’s demands were much broader and included the lack of employment opportunities and black political representation on state and local boards. The CCJ called on the governor to compel the defense industries to respect Executive Order 8802 and cease discriminatory hiring, and to appoint African American representatives on those boards or staffs that offered services in, or directly affected, the black community, such as the Baltimore Board of School Commissioners, which administered a school system that was one-third black but was devoid of a single black representation. Other examples included the state institution for the insane at Crownsville, where 200 white staffers supervised 400 black patients, and black beauticians, who constituted a significant proportion of the industry statewide but who lacked a voice on regulating and licensing boards. As Juanita Mitchell recalled years later in an interview, the March on Annapolis was also organized to protest African-Americans’ “total exclusion from the policy-making structure of our state government.”\textsuperscript{325}

Though impressed, Governor O’Conor did not commit to any concrete measures to alleviate the racial situation in his thirty-minute response to the protestors. He did, however, announce plans to create an interracial commission with legislative status that would investigate the issues brought by the CCJ as well as the thorny problem of wartime housing. Lillie Jackson would be appointed to the Commission to Study Problems

\textsuperscript{324} “What Spokesmen Demanded at the Epochal March on Annapolis,” \textit{Afro}, 28 April 1942.

\textsuperscript{325} Mitchell, OH 8095, 44; Terry, 95, n. 46.
Affecting the Colored Population, known as the Healy Commission after its chairperson, industrialist Joseph P. Healy, as would Dr. Camper.\textsuperscript{326}

Although the immediate results of the March was the creation of the Healy Commission, the formation of the CCJ, the financial contributions, the coordination of the transportation to Annapolis, the list of reasonable demands, and the conduct of the participants reflected the maturity of the Baltimore NAACP and the grassroots civil rights movement that it led. Lillie Jackson and other NAACP activists had taken the lessons they had learned from the Forum and the Buy Where You Can Work Campaign in the early 1930s and effectively applied them to the local branch after its revitalization in 1935. It had built a mass following by establishing close relationships with several black churches and the \textit{Afro}, using the churches as the foundation for a mass organization that was church-based but not church-led, making it a potential vehicle for activism for all black Baltimoreans, and using the \textit{Afro} to articulate, publicize, and proselytize its philosophy, strategies, tactics, and activities and support it on a local, state, and regional level. Finally, as the local branch of a national organization, the Baltimore NAACP could partner with the national office as it attacked local issues—some of which had national implications such as the \textit{Murray} case—while its members simultaneously supported the fight for civil and human rights for African Americans nationwide. By the time of the March on Annapolis, the Baltimore NAACP was one of the largest and most

\textsuperscript{326} Judge Morris Soper of the Federal District Court was also a member. Juanita Mitchell remembers African-Americans constituting about one-third of the Commission. See Mitchell, OH 8095, 26.
effective branches of the Association and at the forefront of the burgeoning national civil
rights movement.\textsuperscript{327}

The Healy Commission began to be organized almost immediately after the March.
For some activists, a bi-racial commission was sorely needed and long overdue. In a
letter to Mayor Jackson in March 1942, Marie Bauerschmidt, a white civic activist and a
member of the Public School Administration, Inc., stated that “the fact is apparent that
the complaints of many of our Negro citizens are so justifiable that unless the situation
about which they complain is studied and relieved there may be created a type of trouble
in our State which both groups of citizens would have cause to regret.” Although the
impetus for the commission came from problems in Baltimore City, the commission was
to operate on a statewide level. On May 18, 1942, Governor O’Conor originally
appointed five African Americans and thirteen whites, and the new appointees met with
O’Conor and Mayor Jackson on May 27. Although not appointed as commissioners, Carl
Murphy and Marie Bauerschmidt were also present. The first order of business was to
conduct a study of the problems concerning African Americans and present that study to
the Governor’s office.\textsuperscript{328}

\textsuperscript{327} Thompson, 369-370.
\textsuperscript{328} Terry, 101-102. The five original African Americans appointees were Lillie Jackson,
Civic Leader; Bishop M.H. Davis, Clergy; Edward Lewis, Urban League (Commission
Secretary); Linwood Koger, Attorney; and Mrs. W.L. Fitzgerald, Civic Leader. The
white members were Judge Morris A. Soper, Federal Judge; Albert Hutzler, Merchant
(Commission Vice-Chair); Glen D. Brown, Educator; David S. Jenkins, Educator; Dr. E.
Paul Knotts, Physician; J.C. Mattingly, Retired Judge; Joseph Healy, Industrialist; James
Drury, Labor Executive; Charles A. Piper, Banker; John N. Scarff, Architect; Frank Ober,
Attorney; Dr. R.H. Riley, State Director of Health; and Daniel W. Siemon, Personnel
Director. Two additional black members, J.E.T. Camper, Physician, and Willard Allen,
Realtor, would soon be added to the Commission.
Delivered on March 23, 1943, almost a year after the March, The Healy Commission’s report substantiated all of the concerns articulated by the CCJ to Governor O’Conor at the March. It reiterated the appointment of African Americans to pertinent state boards, particularly the Board of School Commissioners, the eradication of racial barriers in government employment in the post-war era, and uniformed black police officers. The report made further recommendations, including making funds available to achieve accreditation for the two historically black teacher-training state institutions, Coppin College in Baltimore and Bowie State College in Prince George’s County; applying increased pressure to compel employers to eliminate racial and ethnic discrimination in hiring practices; and increasing state funding to the newly-acquired Morgan College to increase its liberal arts, teacher training, and institution of graduate and professional programs for the foreseeable future. The Healy Commission dealt with the explosive issue of housing in Baltimore, from the conditions of existing black dwellings to the obstacles to the expansion of residential opportunities in previously segregated areas. The increasing migration had stretched the already bulging segregated black neighborhoods to their limits, and the report suggested that the city Health Department hire additional staff to conduct a thorough survey of existing structures for violations, needed rehabilitation, and potential sites for additional housing. Finally, the Healy Commission suggested that the Bender case be reopened, since the Afro believed that its reopening would suggest that the justice system was truly colorblind.\textsuperscript{329}

The Healy Commission continued its work of seeking to improve race relations, reporting its findings to the Governor and suggesting necessary courses of action after the

\textsuperscript{329} Ibid, 102-104; Afro, 27 March 1943, 4.
report. Unfortunately, both Jackson and Camper felt that Healy and other members of the Commission, both black and white, had either no intention of seriously addressing the issues and concerns of the black community or were hesitant to take bold steps in hopes of maintaining “racial harmony.” For instance, Healy, Ober, and Hutzler attempted to prevent the FEPC from investigating Baltimore industries like the Glenn Martin Company. Surprisingly, they were backed by Bishop Davis of Bethel A.M.E. Church, who bolstered existing stereotypes of African American complacency with the economic status quo by arguing that FEPC investigations were unnecessary because “we colored people were satisfied to do domestic work.” Davis and black realtor Willard Allen both felt that FEPC investigations would cause a serious rift between liberal of both races and wanted to avoid a white backlash. It was too much for several black members, like Father Cedric Mills of St. James Protestant Episcopal Church, who believed the Commission was “a farce” and resigned in protest. Jackson herself labeled it a “do-nothing Commission.” She and Camper did not resign but were simply not reappointed.330

330 “Let Freedom Ring!” 4; Juanita Mitchell, OH 8095, 25; J.E.T. Camper, OH 8134, 20-21; Thompson, 365; Terry, 104-105. Jackson was a very vocal member of the Commission and pressed it to seriously address the black community’s concerns, but felt the commission was moving too slow. The minutes of the Commission seem to indicate that Jackson was a “thorn in their flesh” according to Juanita. This was the second time a governor would appoint Jackson to an interracial commission. Previously, Governor Harry W. Nice, a Republican, had appointed Jackson to an interracial commission in 1936, but Juanita Mitchell stated in an interview that the commission was supposed to be advisory, and “had no real effect on making a dent in the widespread discrimination and segregation in the State.” Juanita Mitchell, OH 8183, 40. In his interview, Dr. Camper claims that Jackson was not re-appointed because she was “controversial.” He also suggested that Healy attempted to bribe him to see things his way by offering Camper positions of influence in the black community, but Camper vehemently rejected such offers. See J.E.T. Camper, OH 8134, 20-21.
“A Voteless People Is a Hopeless People”: The NAACP’s Voter Registration Campaign

Through their experiences with state elected officials during the 1942 March on Annapolis and the frustration with the Healy Commission, it was obvious to Jackson, Murphy and other members of the Baltimore black community that in order to move politicians to enact substantial changes that would positively improve the lives of African Americans in the city, there had to be elected officials placed in office that would be more willing to listen to their grievances and act in good conscience to address them. During the WWII period, the Baltimore NAACP was politically astute enough to realize that organizing among the black masses not only brought numerical strength that would back its civil rights agenda, but that the large number of NAACP members meant a potentially large and significant voting bloc that could elect officials that catered to their interests. African Americans were never denied the franchise in Baltimore, as were their brethren further south. Therefore, the *Afro* had always exhorted African Americans in Baltimore and throughout the state that it was imperative that they not squander that cornerstone of citizenship and exercise their right to vote. Unfortunately, the *Afro* was fighting an uphill battle, since growing numbers of registered black voters did not translate into black political strength. Throughout the 1930s, African Americans, exhorted by the *Afro*, had been unsuccessful in electing black officials on both the state and local level. Gerrymandering of the Fourth District, which contained the largest number of black voters in the city, corrupt machine politics, and black voter apathy were just some of the reasons that prevented the *Afro* from creating a politically powerful black
community, locally and statewide. In fact, an African American would not be elected to the Baltimore city council until 1955.331

Generally encouraging voting for Republican candidates prior to the 1930s, the racial and/or conservative policies of several presidents such as Democrat Woodrow Wilson and Republican Calvin Coolidge in the 1910s and 1920s caused the Afro to demonstrate its independence from either political party during the Great Depression, by endorsing Democrat Franklin Roosevelt for president in the 1932 and 1936 presidential elections. The Afro’s endorsement of Roosevelt, supported by Jackson, helped him win over 40% of the local black vote in the 1932 election. Roosevelt’s New Deal policies and programs and his appointment of African Americans such as Mary McLeod Bethune and Robert Weaver to significant positions in his administration earned him the respect of the black community. The black community demonstrated their fealty to Roosevelt in the 1936 election, where for the first time since the days of Lincoln, African Americans in

331 Farrar, *The Baltimore Afro-American*, 64-65. Farrar attributes other reasons for this failure. First, Northwest Baltimore, where a majority of African Americans in the city lived, was dominated by the all-white Democratic Party machine run by James A. “Jack” Pollack, which used graft, petty patronage and bribes of “walking around money” to persuade blacks to either vote or not vote for certain candidates. The Pollack machine had counterparts in South and East Baltimore as well. Second, the Afro sometimes was too elitist and out of touch with the masses, endorsing black candidates that were lackluster at best and did not have a mass following. Finally, it endorsed losing candidates in mayoral contests, which may have contributed to its impotence in electing black candidates to city offices. The Afro tended to endorse candidates who they deemed more desirable to advance black interests on the local, state, and national level, regardless of political affiliation, and Farrar contends that this practice may have confused and/or alienated black voters, who were prone to identify with one party or the other. An endorsement of the main candidate on a ticket may have compelled blacks to vote for candidates on that ticket across the board, creating a difficult situation for African American candidates that may have been on the opposing ticket, but were endorsed by the Afro. See Farrar, “Failure, Futility, and Frustration: The Afro-American As a Political Force,” in *The Baltimore Afro-American*, 57-85.
Baltimore—and nationwide—overwhelmingly voted for the Democratic Party, a trend that holds to the present day.332

Although giving Democrats their vote for the first time in national elections, African Americans in Baltimore demonstrated in the 1943 mayoral election that they were willing to vote for a candidate’s character and record regardless of his political affiliation when they overwhelmingly voted for dynamic Republican candidate Theodore McKeldin, despite the Afro’s endorsement of Democratic incumbent mayor Howard Jackson. Theodore Roosevelt McKeldin, born in 1900 in south Baltimore, grew up in poverty, and learned early in life to respect a person’s character regardless of their color. An aspiring minister and dynamic orator who graduated from the University of Maryland Law School, McKeldin entered politics as the personal secretary to Mayor William F. Broenning in 1927, and it was Broenning that McKeldin credited with teaching him to build a political career based on a respect for all people. It was not long after taking office that McKeldin began to place African Americans in important positions in his administration, beginning with the appointment of George W. F. McMechen to a vacant seat on the city school board in March 1944. McKeldin’s two predecessors, William Broenning and Howard Jackson, both had intentions to do so, but ultimately failed to appoint an African American to the school board. It should be recalled that a significant demand of the Citizens Committee for Justice during the 1942 March on Annapolis was

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332 Farrar, 72-73. The Afro encouraged African Americans to vote for Roosevelt in the 1936 election despite the fact that it was growing disillusioned with Roosevelt’s unwillingness to challenge the racism in administering New Deal programs on the local, state, and national level, his tepid support for anti-lynching legislation, and his reluctance to appoint African Americans to prominent federal offices.
to request that Governor O’Conor appoint African Americans to local and state boards that directly affected the black community.\footnote{Nancy Ann Krieger, “‘We Are Going to Walk Together”: Theodore R. McKeldin and His Role in the Civil Rights Movement,” unpublished paper, OH 8212, MJOHP, 3-4; Farrar, 37-38. McKeldin received 74% of the black vote in 1943.}

Despite not receiving the *Afro’s* endorsement, or perhaps because of it, McKeldin made a concerted effort to reward the black community’s faith in his potential leadership. Fueled by both personal convictions and good politics, during his first tenure as mayor of Baltimore from 1943-1947 McKeldin appointed African Americans to other city boards, such as recreation, health, and planning. He also made it a priority to see more African Americans employed as city workers such as police officers, nurses, and librarians. He worked with both the Baltimore branches of the NAACP and the Urban League to expand black housing, open up employment opportunities in private enterprises, and compel unions to accept more African American members. Although McKeldin made honest attempts to open up doors to African Americans that were previously closed or very difficult to get through, it should be noted that many of the changes that McKeldin made were prompted by the persistent requests and demands of the black community, particularly from Jackson and the *Afro*. Despite his racial liberalism, George Callcott notes that most of McKeldin’s efforts were largely rhetorical and symbolic. He was less interested in integration, and more interested in expanding opportunities.\footnote{Callcott, 149-150. In spite of the title in her assessment of McKeldin’s civil rights records that implies that he cooperated with others to make the changes that were necessary, and evidence within the manuscript that in some instances outside forces spurred McKeldin to become involved rather than acting on his own initiative, Krieger fails more often than not to explicitly mention Jackson and the NAACP, the Urban League, and other civic and civil rights organizations as the driving force behind some of McKeldin’s decisions and actions in confronting racial discrimination and segregation.}
Flushed with their success in helping to elect McKeldin to the highest office in the city, and knowing that they could elect politicians to positions of power who seemed to be willing to listen and work toward some of the same goals, the Baltimore NAACP concentrated a considerable amount of energy in registering large numbers of African Americans. Under the slogan, “A Voteless People Is A Hopeless People,” the branch initiated a vigorous voter registration campaign in mid-1943 that sought to register one thousand people each month. To offset the difficulties in getting to the courthouse, the branch provided transportation every Thursday for two hours for those who were serious about exercising their rights as productive citizens. Understanding the power of the ballot in the wake of the mayoral campaign, the branch tried to extend the campaign beyond Baltimore, designating the power of the ballot as a main topic to be discussed at the Maryland State Conference of NAACP Branches on May 22 on a panel conducted by Tyus and Juanita Mitchell, director of the Citizens Committee for Justice.335

The branch also instituted a drive geared toward African American newcomers to the city. Despite the lack of available and adequate housing and continued employment discrimination, African Americans continued to pour into the city to work in the war industries. According to Maryland law, potential voters had to declare their intentions to do so a year before they were eligible to register. Although the branch would request that the Maryland legislature repeal the Declaration of Intentions Law because it believed that the mechanics involved in declaring intentions and then registering to vote is what

and tearing down racial barriers on the local and state level. See Krieger, “We Are Going To Walk Together,” MJOHP.

335 “News from Baltimore Branch N.A.A.C.P., April 1943,” “News from Baltimore Branch N.A.A.C.P., June 1943,” and “News from the Baltimore Branch of the N.A.A.C.P., August 1943” all in NAACP Papers, I-C-76.
hindered a number of eligible voters from doing so, the branch made a concerted effort to reach newcomers through institutions such as churches, which formed committees and sent the branch the names and addresses of those willing to declare their intentions and/or register.336

Once it initiated its voter registration campaign, the numbers of registered black voters grew tremendously, as the branch continued to transport potential voters to the courthouse for the rest of the year. To assist African Americans with the potentially overwhelming registration process, the branch announced in September that it would create a “Citizenship School” at the branch office. The purpose of the school was to demonstrate the importance of the franchise and the duties and responsibilities of citizenship and urge African Americans to not only register but also to cast their ballots for those candidates who would deal fairly with all people regardless of their color, creed, or race. In addition, Executive Secretary Tyus recommended that a model of a voting machine be placed in the office as well and that the Citizenship School instruct potential voters on how to properly use it once a week. The results of these efforts were demonstrated in October when the Board of Elections proclaimed that more than 50% of the new registered voters showed up with cards provided by the NAACP directing them to the proper location to register. Many of the cards identified several pastors as the person responsible for sending the potential voter to the courthouse, and the increase once again demonstrated the close working relationship the branch had with several black

churches around the city. Between 1940 and 1952, the number of registered black voters almost doubled.

African Americans in Baltimore used their growing numbers to make their voices heard on the national level as well, switching party affiliation back to the Democrats in voting for Vice-President Harry Truman in the 1948 presidential election, despite the *Afro*’s endorsement of his Republican opponent, New York Governor Thomas E. Dewey.  

Truman may have taken lessons from politicians like McKeldin, for he also catered to the black vote by supporting the Democratic Party’s civil rights platform which called for creating a permanent Fair Employment Practices Committee (FEPC) that would ensure fair, non-discriminatory employment, eliminating the poll tax, and endorsing anti-lynching legislation. Truman’s rhetorical promises to improve the lives of 

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337 Farrar, 76-77. The Afro also supported Dewey in his bid against FDR in 1944. By the end of WWII, the *Afro* heavily criticized Roosevelt for the subordinate and debased role African Americans played in the New Deal welfare state, his insipid support of anti-lynching legislation, his failure to desegregate the armed forces, his attempts to placate the South by removing the liberal Henry Wallace as his vice-president in favor of the more conservative Harry Truman, and his efforts to appease southern Democrats in Congress who were opposed to any disturbance to the racial status quo in order to have them support other significant federal legislation and programs. The Pittsburgh *Courier* and the New York *Amsterdam News*, among other major black newspapers, joined the *Afro* in its endorsement of Dewey. See *Afro*, 28 October 1944; Pittsburgh *Courier*, 28 October 1944; and New York *Amsterdam News*, 4 November 1944.

The *Afro* supported Dewey against Truman for many of the same reasons. As in 1944, Dewey promised in 1948 to end racial segregation in the U.S. Army, extend Social Security benefits to agricultural and domestic workers, which contained half of the black workforce in 1944, and extend New York’s anti-discrimination program nationwide. The *Afro* believed that Truman supported the Democratic Party’s civil rights platform because he had to, not because he had a real belief in racial equality. It did acknowledge that Truman had come a long way from his support for racial segregation. See *Afro*, 9 October 1948.
African Americans proved to be crucial, for the black vote in northern and Border South cities made up for the loss of much support in the South.\footnote{338}{Callcott, 150. Truman received 56 percent of the black vote in Baltimore’s fifth, fourteenth and seventeenth wards.}

Like the *Afro*, the Baltimore NAACP believed that their efforts to register qualified black voters served a much greater purpose than simply to elect sympathetic politicians to office. They believed that a steady growth of registered black voters in northern and Upper South cities would inspire the efforts of African Americans to fight for the right to the franchise. This was especially the case against the discriminatory white Democratic primary in Texas, a case the national NAACP was fighting in the courts.\footnote{339}{“The Importance of the Ballot,” n.d., Baltimore Branch Files, NAACP Papers, II-C-76; Berg, *The Ticket to Freedom*, 77-83. For more on the fight against the Texas Democratic primary, see Darlene C. Hine, *Black Victory: The Rise and Fall of the White Primary in Texas* (New York: KTO Press, 1979).}

The Baltimore NAACP was not the only entity that recognized the power of politics and the need to register potential black voters. Other civic organizations were also heavily involved in registering eligible black voters, the most prominent being the powerful Colored Democratic Women, headed by Victorine Adams. Adams was the wife of William A. “Little Willie” Adams, a prominent businessperson,\footnote{340}{Willie Adams owned several taverns in Baltimore and also allegedly ran numbers games as well. He was a member of the NAACP but ran into conflict with Jackson because of his taverns and his supposedly illegal activities, which Jackson felt were helping to erode the moral and physical fabric of the northwest black community. See J.E.T. Camper, OH 8134, 10-13.} and she herself would later serve on the Baltimore city council. Although both organizations had occasion to work together, there is a dispute on who exactly initiated the register and vote campaign.
Virginia Jackson Kiah, Lillie Jackson’s daughter, who served as membership secretary, and J.E.T. Camper claim that Jackson and the NAACP initiated the Register and Vote Campaign. Camper also contends that it was unique in the way that it organized itself. 341 However, Willie Adams insists that his wife was the first to initiate a voter registration campaign in the city in approximately 1946 and that the NAACP followed her example. Adams claims that it was his wife’s organization that persuaded the registration offices to stay open late to register eligible voters and also organized transportation to the courthouse for those who found it difficult to make the trip. Adams claims that neither the NAACP nor the churches were involved in politics or political organizing at the time, and the NAACP did not become involved until the late 1950s or early 1960s. 342 Kiah contends that the NAACP’s voter registration campaigns were actually conducted in the late 1940s, although she makes no mention of exactly when the campaign was initiated. No matter who started the campaign, both organizations were instrumental in doubling the number of registered black voters by the end of the 1940s and laid the groundwork for the number of clubs that would elect African Americans to elected office both locally and statewide in the mid-to-late 1950s and beyond. 343

The Housing Crisis

Baltimore, like other cities, was woefully unprepared to house the massive influx of migrants, both black and white, from rural areas of Maryland and other parts of the Upper

342 William Adams, OH 8210, MJOHP, 33-34.
343 Mitchell and Kiah, OH 8094, 52-53.
South who hoped to find employment in the numerous war-production industries.\textsuperscript{344} This was especially true of black migrants. In the first two years of the 1940s, the Charm City saw approximately 33,000 African Americans enter its borders, averaging about 300 weekly, with almost no housing available to accommodate them. This is not surprising considering that Baltimore had a severe problem in housing its own homegrown citizens. Racial segregation reinforced by restrictive covenants and redlining by banks and real estate developers already circumscribed where all African Americans, regardless of economic status, could live. Within those segregated neighborhoods, very few habitable residency units existed, with African Americans already occupying 99.8 percent of them. That left those looking for suitable housing a 0.02 percent chance of finding it, which was far below the 4 percent that the local Citizens’ Planning and Housing Commission, headed by housing activist Frances Morton, considered the minimum for a healthy housing market in its annual report for 1941-1942.\textsuperscript{345}

The problem was further compounded by the deplorable condition of the housing stock. By the 1940s, much of the housing, particularly in the older sections near the harbor, was already a century old and originally constructed with modest materials. This made them structurally hazardous and potentially flammable residences. Many also lacked basic indoor plumbing. This resulted in clogged and unsightly outdoor drainage

\textsuperscript{344} Rhonda Williams, \textit{The Politics of Public Housing: Black Women’s Struggles Against Urban Inequality} (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 57. Williams notes that despite government intervention, housing shortages for black workers existed in Chicago; Lorain, Ohio; Detroit and Willow Run, Michigan; Buffalo, New York; and Chester, Pennsylvania, among other cities. Much of this was due to the federal government’s reluctance to tackle “racial patterns” in existing neighborhoods.

\textsuperscript{345} Callcott, \textit{Maryland and America}, 148; Terry, “Trampling for Justice,” 158. Terry points out that although white occupancy rates were nearly maxed out as well, the available units were more habitable.
systems, garbage-strewn streets and alleyways, and polluted air that added to the crime and disease that was already present and that no African American could escape, middle-class or not. The situation was so bad that as the 1940s opened, no other large American city had more substandard housing than Baltimore.346

Black migrants hoping to take advantage of employment opportunities in Baltimore were startled to find that there were virtually no efforts made to house them, as were their white counterparts. As the United States moved closer to becoming more involved in the war, the federal government had to address its “biggest headache” immediately or it could stymie morale and hurt the war effort. The New Deal had increased the duties of the federal government and the war empowered it to control food prices, ration important materials such as oil, and intercede in housing. The 1940 Lanham Act gave the government the authority to divert money from slum clearance to defense housing and created the National Housing Agency (NHA) in 1942 to finance and construct both temporary and permanent housing.347

Even with the federal government’s intervention and oversight, African Americans in Baltimore and the surrounding areas still could find no housing relief. The majority of the housing that the federal government developed or bought accommodated white workers.348 Federal officials, as they did in cities such as Los Angeles and Philadelphia,

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346 Brugger, *Maryland*, 557. This was according to a 1940 national census, which revealed that among the seven largest cities in the U.S., Baltimore had the highest percentage of homes that were without a private flush toilet (15.4%), without a bath or shower (11.2%), in need of major repair (9.2%), with outside toilets (11.5%), and overcrowded (3.4%).


348 Even when black and white families had to be relocated due to wartime industrial or commercial expansion, the white families received first consideration. In December
tried their best not to disrupt local “racial patterns,” i.e. racially segregated neighborhoods. Local and federal housing agencies such as the Baltimore Housing Authority (BHA) and the NHA were further stymied by municipal officials who either denied that there was a problem and/or resented the federal government intervening in local affairs and usurping their authority, racial bigotry from a number of city and state officials and business and civic leaders, and the threat of white working-class protests, which occasionally took place.

Several local civil rights and civic organizations were naturally concerned about the lack of available housing and found it disturbing that they as citizens were denied the right to decent shelter. African Americans had long considered acquiring better homes a central freedom goal since Emancipation, and securing a decent home and healthy environment was essential for not only their health and well being, but the fulfillment of their democratic rights as citizens. The Afro declared the home and its environment “the mudsill of the democratic system of existence” in 1937, and for African Americans to continue to be poorly housed in unhealthy environments only served to make clear their status as second-class citizens. The lack of decent housing was particularly galling since

1942, Harry B. Weiss, a Special Field Assistant for the Federal Public Housing Authority (FPHA) wrote to his regional director, Oliver C. Winston, about a housing crisis that had developed due to the expansion of a shipyard, which would affect 84 families—54 black, 30 white. “Although housing is rare in Baltimore,” Weiss noted, “arrangements can be made for the whites. However, there are no vacancies of even the most unlivable sort for Negros.” See Harry B. Weiss to Oliver C. Winston, 17 December 1942, NAACP Papers, II-C-76.

349 Williams, 57.

the creation of the welfare state in the 1930s, where the federal government actively ensured that its citizens were entitled to certain rights and privileges—decent housing being one of them—but its two-tier racially discriminatory system sanctioned policies and practices that limited African American advancement. African Americans were expected to do their part to maintain democracy at home, but were not entitled to enjoy the fruits of their labor.\textsuperscript{351}

Despite its concern for and, advocacy of, public housing for working-class African-Americans and its working relationship with other organizations such as the Urban League and the Citizens’ Planning and Housing Commission to compel municipal and federal officials to construction permanent low-rent dwellings, the Baltimore NAACP let the Urban League take the lead when it came to fighting for public housing. The branch seemed to focus more of its energy on opening up the private housing market and making homes in previously all-white neighborhoods available to mostly middle-class African Americans to relieve some of the congestion in the black community, particularly in northwest Baltimore.\textsuperscript{352} Although they fought for all African Americans and made a concerted effort to include blacks of various socio-economic statuses within the body of the local branch, the leadership was still, for the most part, decidedly middle-class. Jackson and Murphy were both well-educated, independent businesspeople who occupied homes on the main avenues within their segregated black neighborhood such as McCullough Street and Druid Hill Avenue. Jackson also owned real estate, so she may

\textsuperscript{351} Williams, 30-31. Black sociologist Ira De A. Reid, in his study of the Baltimore black community, wrote that when overcrowded housing was located in “areas where street cleaning and lighting, paving, sewerage, and police protection are substandard, the inhabitants do not have a fair chance for full citizenship.”

\textsuperscript{352} Williams, 35.
have had a more vested interest in expanding the number of properties she could potentially acquire. Racially restrictive housing covenants, which the Baltimore branch had legally challenged in court in 1936 to no avail, were designed to prevent Jackson or any other black Baltimorean from crossing the artificial barriers of their segregated neighborhoods. But that did not stop African Americans from challenging them. One black family decided the time had come to cross Fulton Avenue during the Christmas holiday of 1944.

Fulton Avenue had served as the ‘great divide’ between the far west end of the black neighborhood district of Jackson and Murphy and the extensive rowhouses of white families since 1910. African Americans stayed on their side of the neatly maintained median strip that divided the avenue until a Jewish real estate agent brokered a deal that sold a home to a black family on the white side. The sale was helped by the fact that the restrictive covenant that prohibited African Americans from occupying homes had lapsed two years before. That did not prevent whites from raising the alarm once they found out. The white Fulton Avenue Improvement Association held two ugly meetings in churches in January 1945 in which residents expressed anti-Semitic as well as anti-black sentiments, took out numerous advertisements in the Baltimore Sun and Evening Sun addressed “to real estate dealers, speculators, property-owners and their agents, building associations—and all others concerned” that they would not be intimidated and would resist blockbusting efforts by “all legal, moral and persuasive means,” and demanded that Mayor McKeldin declare a sixty-day moratorium on further home sales and rentals to African Americans. All of their solutions to the problem were not legal or moral, as one
man suggested at the second church meeting that the Ku Klux Klan “take matters into their own hands.”

McKeldin resisted the moratorium, despite the influx of letters from white residents from around the city that solicited his help in stopping the sale or renting of homes to blacks. He understood that the constant influx of black migrants to the city had swelled the already overcrowded black neighborhoods to their utmost capacity, and that those neighborhoods needed relief so it was natural that black residents would seek to move into adjoining communities. In his letters to constituents McKeldin counseled calm, but did mildly scold them by reminding 250 Fulton Avenue protestors that he had previously asked them for solutions but “none of them had any suggestions, not even the members of the State Legislature and City Councilmen who brought them there.” Unsurprisingly, this is not what whites wanted to hear from their mayor.

Whites not only had to battle African Americans and real estate agents from purchasing homes in their community, but their fellow neighbors. The members of the Fulton Avenue Improvement Association found it difficult to collect the required signatures to reactivate the restrictive covenants that had lapsed and could not prevent white homeowners from selling to blacks due to financial difficulties. During the depression, homes began to deteriorate rapidly, experiencing serious plumbing and

353 Pietila, Not in My Neighborhood, 89-91. Leon Sachs, the executive director of the Baltimore Jewish Council, upon hearing of the sale on the morning of New Year’s Day 1945, immediately feared that anti-Semitism would raise its ugly head during the dispute and wrote letters to nineteen Jewish real estate developers that operated along Fulton Avenue to apprise him of the situations. His fears were realized at the first meeting when the chairperson told the crowd that Jewish real estate agents were taking advantage of their blue-collar neighborhood.

heating issues, and these problems were exacerbated by the war because of the restrictions on building materials and the lack of skilled labor and materials to correct them. Therefore, some white homeowners on Fulton found it more expedient to move on and sell their homes at public auctions, where speculators bought up the properties and then flipped them at enormous profits to mostly African American elites, who in some instances flipped the homes themselves. Fulton Avenue would attract some of the most unscrupulous real estate dealers and speculators—nicknamed “blockbusters” after the Allied bombs that destroyed blocks of German property in World War II—who saw the writing on the wall when it came to the housing market in the post-war era, helping to forever change the makeup of Baltimore neighborhoods in the coming decades. The Baltimore NAACP would come to support blockbusting in the aftermath of the *Shelly v. Kraemer* Supreme Court decision in 1948 declaring restrictive covenants unconstitutional.355

**Opening Up Municipal Employment in the Monument City**

The Baltimore NAACP had largely organized the March on Annapolis to gain much needed attention from the governor and other state officials to address their immediate concerns, particularly rampant police brutality, but also the lack of employment opportunities, and it was not about to let government officials off the hook in rectifying those issues. However, the branch was also not willing to leave the matter entirely in their hands and refrain from developing its own solutions. When it came to the blatant

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355 Ibid, 95-96.
racism in the police department, the Baltimore NAACP felt it could kill two birds with one stone, proposing a solution that both reduced police brutality while also expanding employment opportunities. For the Baltimore NAACP and the black community that it represented, the only answer was to hire additional black police officers to bolster the four that had been hired by the police department the previous decade.

Although decidedly against segregation, the branch did operate on the premise that black police officers were more invested in the black community since they lived there, would treat its citizens fairly and justly, and were more sensitive to its needs. There was no question as to where these new officers would be assigned if hired by the department, since Jim Crow dictated that their authority to uphold the law and arrest those who violated it would not be tolerated against white citizens. Therefore, the influx of more black police officers in the community would hopefully cause white officers who were already assigned there to be transferred to other areas and prevent new white officers from coming in, thus reducing the number of potential incidents of police brutality and harassment.

To counter the usual racist argument that African Americans were not employed because there was a failure to find enough who were “qualified” to fill vacant positions, the Baltimore NAACP officially opened a police training school in January 1943 to prepare applicants to take the Baltimore City Police examinations the next month. Edward Wilson, a registrar at Morgan State College and a member of the NAACP, supervised the police school. He continued in this position after the school was
transferred from Marse Callaway, a prominent local black Republican leader, to the
NAACP in 1939.356

The police school offered courses in arithmetic, law, civics, spelling, and location
[knowing the streets/areas of the city] that were taught by volunteer faculty from Morgan
State College, Douglass High School and Coppin Teachers College, as well as
independent lawyers and businesspersons. W.A.C. Hughes, the branch’s legal counsel,
conducted the law classes and Wilson himself conducted the class on “Location.”
Classes were held three nights a week. It is interesting to note that in press
announcements the stated purpose of the school was to prepare men to take the
examinations, but several women took part as well. In fact, out of the twelve people who
registered, at least three of them were women. The students themselves were organized
and had elected officers. Three women held leadership positions but they were decidedly
gendered, with Olga Clarke as recording secretary357, Catherine Satterfield as financial
secretary-treasurer, and Rosalie Gilbert as publicity agent. The school concluded its
training session on February 24, and five of the students took the exam the next day.

356 Edward Wilson, interview by Leroy Graham, 25 June 1976, OH 8127, MJOHP, 8, 9;
“Police School Opened by Baltimore Branch N.A.A.C.P.,” Baltimore NAACP press
release, 29 January 1943, NAACP Papers, I-C-76; “Along the N.A.A.C.P. Battlefront,”
Crisis (March 1943), 91. Wilson relates in his interview that Callaway began the school
in 1935, and that the four African American police officers were all graduates before
being appointed to the police force in 1937. Two of them reached the rank of lieutenant
and the other two of sergeant. Wilson further explains that it was Callaway who was able
to use his connections to Republican Governor Harry Nice and other prominent
Republicans to open the opportunity for the four black police officers to be hired.
Hearing about his success, Jackson came to Wilson to discuss having the training school
conducted under the auspices of the NAACP, to which Callaway gave his blessing.
357 The press release announcing the school specifically states that Mrs. Clarke was
“desirous of becoming a police woman.” “Police School Opened By Baltimore Branch
N.A.A.C.P.,” NAACP Papers, I-C-76.
Those who had passed would be announced in April, and the president of the student organization, Lloyd G. Johnson, expressed confidence that he and his fellow colleagues would pass. In April, it was announced that all five men passed the exam and were placed on the eligible list for appointment. The Baltimore branch immediately contacted Gov. O’Conor and urged that all five of them be placed on the force, since the police department was under the purview of the state. Meanwhile, the branch took a different tack in opening up municipal employment in other areas, as African Americans still lagged far behind in employment opportunities because of continued racial discrimination. Now that they were making some headway into the police department, the next target was the library system.

The Case of Kerr v. Pratt

Louise Kerr was a shining reflection of her father, T. Henderson Kerr. A Baltimore native, the elder Kerr graduated from Howard University, owned his own pharmacy in West Baltimore and was a role model of civic activism for his precocious daughter. Louise, also born in Baltimore, attended the segregated Frederick Douglass Senior High

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358 “Report of the Executive Secretary for the March Meeting of the Executive Board, Baltimore Branch N.A.A.C.P.,” NAACP Papers, I-C-76. Copies of this report were sent to Walter White, Roy Wilkins, and Thurgood Marshall in the National Office. See Walter White to Randall Tyus, 9 March 1943, ibid.

359 “News from the Baltimore N.A.A.C.P., April 1943,” 11 May 1943, NAACP Papers, I-C-76; “Along the N.A.A.C.P. Battlefront,” Crisis (June 1943), 183. The five men were Lloyd G. Johnson, Leon King, Clarence J. Stevenson, Queener E. Willis, and Clifton H. James.
School from 1931 to 1934. There she received excellent marks,\textsuperscript{360} enough to qualify for admission to Coppin Teachers College,\textsuperscript{361} a historically black institution on Baltimore’s west side that trained African American educators. Kerr was also involved in political activism against segregation, serving as Juanita Jackson Mitchell’s secretary in the City-Wide Young People’s Forum, the youth activist organization founded by Mitchell that conducted direct action campaigns against segregated businesses and institutions in Baltimore. The two women developed a lifelong friendship.\textsuperscript{362}

Kerr continued her stellar academic career at Coppin, graduated in 1937 and began her career as a teacher in the Baltimore school system, teaching second and third grade from 1937-1942 at Pimlico Elementary School. To strengthen her credentials, Kerr attended the University of Pennsylvania during the summer months from 1939 to 1942. Kerr attended out of necessity, since she, like other black Baltimoreans who wanted to further their education, had to go outside of Maryland’s racially segregated higher institutions, with the state ‘compensating’ for its discrimination by paying Kerr’s tuition. In 1943,

\textsuperscript{360} Kerr was an excellent student whose grades rose as she matriculated through Douglass. Damian Jackson, “Discrimination Deferred: How the Kerr v. Pratt (1945) Case Contributed to the End of Segregation,” (M.A. thesis, Morgan State University, 2008), 50. For her grades, see Report Card of Louise Kerr from Frederick Douglass High School, February 1934, Moorland-Spingarn Special Collections, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Founder’s Library, Howard University, Washington, D.C. (hereafter MSSC-HU).

\textsuperscript{361} Coppin was established in 1900 as the Colored Training School by the Baltimore Board of School Commissioners to train African Americans as teachers. In 1926, it was renamed in honor of Fannie Jackson Coppin, a formerly enslaved woman who bought her freedom and became the first black woman to graduate from the institution. 1950 saw the public and collegiate institution become Coppin State Teachers’ College, Coppin State College in 1963 when the administration broadened the curriculum, and Coppin State University in 2004. See www.coppin.edu/info/200737/csu_history.

\textsuperscript{362} Jackson, “Discrimination Deferred,” 38, 50; Terry, 137.
Kerr shifted career gears and decided to apply to the librarian training course of Enoch Pratt Free Library, the largest and most prestigious library in the city.\textsuperscript{363}

Enoch Pratt was born in Middleboro, Massachusetts in 1808, and moved to Baltimore in 1931, finding work as a merchant. Pratt soon parlayed his economic success into several prestigious positions, including serving as director and president of the Philadelphia, Wilmington, and Baltimore Railroad Company, director of the Savings Bank of Baltimore, and by 1877, election to Finance Commissioner of Baltimore. A charitable philanthropist, Pratt’s varied interest in education, reform, religion, and the public were all realized when he proposed making a charitable donation to the city of Baltimore to build a public library. Pratt envisioned a truly public library, and proclaimed that the library “shall be open for all, rich and poor without distinction of race or color,” so long as the public, when properly accredited, promised to handle the books with care and return them.\textsuperscript{364}

Governed by a board of ten trustees, with himself at the head, Pratt’s library was incorporated by the Maryland State Legislature in 1882. The initial library was built on Mulberry Street, near the business district, with four branches, in 1896 and, in a unique arrangement, was financed by both Pratt, who initially donated $1, 333,333.33, and a permanent 6\% city endowment of $50,000 paid for by Baltimore for as long as the library existed, thereby making it a private institution partly financed and maintained by public taxpayer money. The library was immediately successful, with 26,000 Baltimoreans utilizing its services. After Pratt’s death in 1896, the library expanded to two more

\textsuperscript{363} Jackson, 49, 51-52.
\textsuperscript{364} Ibid, 26.
branches under its board president, James A. Gary, who was able to finance such expansion with help from famed philanthropist Andrew Carnegie, who donated $5,000,000 for expansion in 1907, and the city of Baltimore, which gave $50,000 annually for maintenance and operating expenses. The library’s prestige grew substantially as a result, and soon became a venerable Baltimore institution that enjoyed wide support from the public, which enthusiastically used its resources and attended its functions.  

Pratt would have been proud of his contribution to the intellectual, economic, social and historical life of the city in every aspect except one—the library was not open to all, at least not in employment. African Americans may have been able to utilize the library’s resources like everyone else, but they were denied employment opportunities as librarians since its inception. The library’s racially discriminatory employment policies became more entrenched with the establishment of a librarian training course in 1928. Joseph Wheeler, a trained librarian, became board president in 1926, and was responsible for instituting a number of innovations that made the library a popular institution, including designing and implementing the librarian training course.

The librarian-training course was designed to prepare its graduates to better serve the library’s patrons, and potential trainees were required to have a high school diploma, be a

365 Ibid, 26-28. The board of trustees approved general policies, secured operating funds, controlled expenditures within the budget, appointed librarians and staff members, and was responsible for all library activities and services, among other duties.

366 Under Wheeler’s stewardship, the Pratt Library created a Young People’s Center for those between the ages of fourteen and twenty, revitalized the library’s primary source department by adopting, collecting, and preserving the multivolume Archives of Maryland, used to construct a state history, and used a $3 million public bond acquired in 1927 to build a central building in 1933. Circulation doubled after four years as board president. See Jackson, 28-29.
resident of Baltimore, and be of sound health, among other qualifications. A college education was preferred, but not required, and Wheeler personally interviewed each applicant. The training course was strenuous. It met Monday through Friday for eight months. It consisted of instruction, study, preparation and practical work under the supervision of a superior in the central library or an affiliated branch, and was free of charge to students—though they paid for their own supplies—while paying them a $30 monthly stipend. Though employment was not guaranteed at the training’s conclusion, those who graduated in the top percentile of the class had an excellent chance of joining the library’s staff.\textsuperscript{367}

The African American community was rightfully angry. Louise Kerr stated that the black community viewed the library as a vehicle for educational, occupational and social success and advancement, since in the public’s mind, the library’s growth, development, popularity, and prestige closely connected it to education that resulted in wealth and upward mobility into Baltimore’s high society. As a community, African Americans wanted their piece of the public pie, and since the librarian-training course was the only means to obtain professional employment in the library system, they sought to enter the program for years, but to no avail. This denial amounted to educational and economic discrimination, and several activists and concerned citizens sought to tear down the walls of access in Enoch Pratt.\textsuperscript{368}

W.A.C. Hughes was one of those activists who made a commitment to change the library’s way of doing things. W.A.C., or ‘Al’ as he was also known, served as the

\textsuperscript{367} Ibid, 29-30; Terry, 138.
\textsuperscript{368} Jackson, 30, 39.
Forum’s lead counsel during the early 1930s and transitioned to legal counsel of the Baltimore branch when it was re-activated in 1935, serving on a number of cases on behalf of the branch for the next 31 years. Hughes was another native Baltimorean who moved between Baltimore and Washington, D.C. for his formal education. Hughes was a classmate of Thurgood Marshall, Langston Hughes, and Kwame Nkrumah at Lincoln University, a historically black institution in Pennsylvania, graduating in 1926 and then moving on to Boston University, where he received his degree in 1930. Hughes returned home to practice law and earned such an outstanding reputation that Warner T. McGuinn, a distinguished veteran attorney, invited Hughes to join his law office in 1931. Hughes was highly respected by those who knew him, and though he was an outstanding criminal lawyer, Hughes excelled in civil rights cases, earning the title “dean of Civil Rights.” Hughes gave generously of his services, causing Jackson, president of the Baltimore branch, to remark that “at no time did he put a price on his work…[and if he did] we could never pay him the amount he deserved and he never complained.”

Hughes had been attempting to address employment discrimination at Enoch Pratt since 1933 when he sent a letter to Mayor Howard Jackson concerning African American exclusion from the library-training course. Mayor Jackson replied to Hughes in January 1934 that African Americans would continue to be denied admittance, and this held true for the rest of the decade. In the 1940s, Hughes and other African Americans saw the

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369 Hughes was similarly generous in giving an aspiring lawyer a chance to practice his craft by extended his hand to Thurgood Marshall to join he and McGuinn in 1933. See Terry, 193.
370 Jackson, 38; Terry, 193. The “dean of Civil Rights” quote is from Editor, “Civil Rights Leader passes,” Baltimore Sun, 27 September 1966, and the Jackson quote is from Afro, 27 September 1966.
opportunity to challenge the racial status quo due to the changes wrought by World War II, and continued the fight to open up the training course. By this time, the Enoch Pratt Free Library had three branches in predominately black neighborhoods, the Pitcher Street branch being the oldest of the library.\textsuperscript{371}

Many African Americans probably hoped—or at least thought—that the library would surely hire a qualified African American librarian in branches that catered to predominately African American patrons despite the overall exclusionary policy of the librarian training course. Hughes and the Baltimore NAACP had already been successful in getting Iona W. Collins hired as an assistant librarian at the Pitcher Street branch in September 1942 when it threatened to file a mandamus suit against the library in the spring of 1942 if it did not hire qualified African Americans. Thelma L. Thomas was hired at the same branch in April 1943. Emboldened, the Baltimore branch pushed the library board to admit qualified African Americans to the training course in the future, but was rebuffed by Assistant Head Librarian Harry Hamill. The branch sought official verification of Hamill’s response from the board of trustees, and planned to file suit if that was the case.\textsuperscript{372}

Meanwhile, a number of qualified African Americans wanted to go beyond the assistant level and continued to apply to the training course. They were summarily rejected. In early September 1942, Elsie Adams and P. Harrod Elerby both sought admittance to the course and were interviewed personally by Wheeler. They certainly

\textsuperscript{371} Jackson, 39-40, 45; Terry, 138.
\textsuperscript{372} “N.A.A.C.P. Asks Baltimore Librarian If Qualified Negroes Would Be Admitted to Take Future Library Training Course—Answer “No,” News from Baltimore Branch N.A.A.C.P., April 1943, NAACP Papers, II-C-76; Terry, 139. Both Collins and Thomas were trained out of state, Collins at Howard and Thomas in Hartford, Connecticut.
met the qualifications for the course, especially Adams; she possessed a Bachelor of Science degree with honors in Elementary Education from Florida A&M College in Tallahassee and had a year of experience directing the children’s library there. Wheeler let both women know in no uncertain terms that African Americans were not welcome to apply to the training course and warned any future applicants not to waste their time if they were not applying for menial positions. Angered and frustrated over the “ridiculous discrimination of public officials in regard to the Negro’s opportunities for advancement,” both women eventually contacted Hughes.373

Hughes jumped into action, firing off a letter to Wheeler accusing the library of denying employment of the women based solely on their race and demanding that he admit qualified African Americans to the course. He also contacted Charles Houston on September 8, 1942 and apprised him of the situation, informing Houston that African Americans had long been denied admittance to the course despite the fact that as taxpaying citizens they helped to fund the library. He also notified him of the city’s position, which argued that though City Hall helped to fund the library, it was bound by the decision of the Maryland Court of Appeals ruling in Clark v. Maryland Institute, which stated that the library cannot be beholden to the equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution despite being aided by the State. The city claimed that they could not compel the board of trustees to cease discriminating against blacks,

373 Letter from P. Harrod Elerby to W.A.C. Hughes, Jr., attorney for the City-Wide Young People’s Forum, 11 September 1942, MSSC-HU; Jackson, 40-41. The quote is from a letter Elsie Adams sent to Betty Moore of the Afro on September 4, 1942. See Elsie Adams to Betty Moore of the Afro, 4 September 1942, MSSC-HU. In all over 200 black women applied to the library training course over the years before Louise Kerr filed suit, but obviously, none were accepted. See Terry, 139.
but Hughes believed that the library and Baltimore municipal authorities were and should be held responsible.\textsuperscript{374}

Houston advised that Hughes and other black leaders keep a close watch on the situation in case any official notice appeared that explicitly excluded African Americans from the training course; such a proclamation could be used as evidence in a potential civil suit. That evidence appeared on September 17, 1942 when the board of trustees of the Pratt Library formally issued a resolution denying African Americans admittance to the librarian training course, calling it “unnecessary and impractical.” It further stated that if the trustees became aware of any qualified African American with prior library training, the Head Librarian had the authority to appoint that person to a position in any of the branches that catered to a predominately African American clientele, such as the Pitcher Street branch. This announcement was what Houston and Hughes had been waiting for, giving them a basis on which to challenge the library’s racially discriminatory policy. Houston, Hughes and the Baltimore NAACP next waited for a qualified applicant to formally bring suit against the library and challenge their denial to the training course in a court of law.\textsuperscript{375}

They did not have long to wait. Louise Kerr applied for the librarian training course on April 23, 1943, handing her application to a stunned assistant librarian. The librarian informed Kerr that African Americans were barred from the course and she could not meet with Mr. Wheeler about the matter. Kerr, who was genuinely interested in the position, had specifically applied to the course because it was racially discriminatory.

\textsuperscript{374} Jackson, 41-42.
\textsuperscript{375} Ibid, 46.
Denied admittance based on her race, the Baltimore NAACP, under Hughes and Houston, filed suit on behalf of Louise Kerr and her father, T. Henderson Kerr, against Enoch Pratt Free Library, its board of trustees, Mayor Howard Jackson and the City Council of Baltimore (both entities represented the “City” in the complaint) on October 5, 1943—the last two added because of their relationship with the library—seeking relief in federal court for damages, a declaratory judgment, and an injunction against all parties. The suit claimed that the library’s policy infringed upon Kerr’s 14th Amendment rights and sought $5,000 in damages from each entity, totaling $60,000.376

Hughes and Houston believed that they had a strong case. Kerr was denied admission to the library training course based solely on race, and this denial violated the equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment both educationally and occupationally, since the library training course not only denied her the opportunity to be educated in the Library Sciences, but it was also the only one available to residents in the city and librarians could not be employed by the library without taking and passing the course; it thus barred her from employment. City Solicitor and Attorney for the Mayor and the City Council, Simon E. Sabaluff, submitted a request to the District Court of Maryland on October 28, 1943 that his clients should be dismissed from the case, arguing they had no control over the policies of the library and denied a direct connection to the money received from

376 “NAACP Sues Pratt Library, City, for $5,000 Damages,” Afro, 5 October 1943; “Enoch Pratt Library Sued,” Baltimore Sun, 6 October 1943; “Attacks Bias in City-Supported Training Class,” Afro, 9 October 1943; Jackson, 56; Terry 138. Kerr’s father was added to the suit because he was a citizen of the United States, Maryland and Baltimore, and the owner of real and personal property in the city, which were taxed, by the Mayor and the City Council. Since some of those municipal taxes supported the library, Kerr sued the Mayor, City Council and library Board of Trustees as a taxpayer. Jackson, 53.
taxes on the elder Kerr’s property and the operation of the library. Therefore, they were not in violation of the equal protection clause.\textsuperscript{377}

Unable to extricate the Mayor and City Council from the suit, the *Kerr v. Enoch Pratt Free Library of Baltimore City* trial began on February 24, 1944 before Judge W. Calvin Chesnut. Houston and Hughes sought to prove that the City had enough control over the Pratt Library to make their discriminatory policy an act of the State. After two days of testimony from Joseph Wheeler, members of the board of trustees, and employees of the library, Judge Chestnut delivered his ruling on March 7, 1944. To Chestnut, the Enoch Pratt Free Library was acting as a private institution and not a public governmental agency—despite the fact that the library admitted that it could not operate without the $500,000 it received from the city—that the librarian training course was “a function of its internal management for the instruction of prospective employees,” and that Kerr’s application was rejected not because of her race, but because the library had no vacancies at the time that she applied.\textsuperscript{378}

Kerr’s defense team immediately appealed the case to the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals, and it was heard before Judge Morris Ames Soper, Chair of the Board of Trustees of Morgan State University. In a decision delivered in April 1945, Judge Soper, 

\textsuperscript{377} Legal Brief for the District Court of the United States, District of Maryland (October 7, 1943) filed by Charles Hamilton Houston. (MSSC-HU); Jackson, 56-57.

\textsuperscript{378} “Hearing Opens Library Suit,” *Afro*, 26 February 1944; “Judge Dismisses Library Suit,” *Baltimore Sun*, 8 March 1944; Jackson 60-68. According to Jackson, Chestnut did not believe the $500,000 appropriation from the city compromised the autonomy of the board of trustees regarding personnel matters; that Kerr’s defense failed to prove conclusively that the library had a direct relationship with the city government; that the appointment of two black women as librarians in the predominately black Pitcher Street branch proved that Kerr was not discriminated against because of her race; and that the library had a right to its whites-only policy based on the fact that a large number of its patrons were white, and therefore its segregationist policy best served the public interest.
who wrote the opinion, overturned Judge Chestnut’s ruling and declared that it was evident that Kerr was not admitted because of her race. Soper also disagreed with Chestnut on the relationship between the library and the State, determining that the private institution was almost wholly dependent on public funds to operate, thus it violated Kerr’s equal protection rights under the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Pratt Library asked for a hearing before the U.S. Supreme Court, but the Court declined *writ of certiorari.*\(^{379}\) Ironically, Louise Kerr herself was unable to ever take advantage of the favorable ruling and, for reasons that are still unclear, never entered the librarian training course. She instead took a job offered by family friend Carl Murphy as a reporter for the *Afro*, where she covered police stories and special events. After black men returned from the war, Kerr was superseded and spent the rest of her career as an insurance claims examiner.\(^{380}\)

*Kerr’s Impact*

Once again, the Baltimore NAACP was able to use the courts to successfully eliminate racial discrimination and several individuals and entities recognized immediately the importance of the courts in dismantling Jim Crow. A delighted Louise Kerr proclaimed “the winning of the library case proves once again the effectiveness of the courts as a weapon in the fight for constitutional rights.” The Baltimore *Sun* also noted that the courts were becoming the favored arena of African Americans in which to attack racial

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\(^{379}\) “Pratt to Ask for Supreme Court Ruling,” Baltimore *Sun*, 24 April 1945; “Library Case Declined by High Tribunal,” Baltimore *Sun*, 9 October 1945; Jackson, 71-75.

\(^{380}\) Jackson, 75.
segregation and discrimination, and largely because the courts were not as prone to cater to public opinion: “The courts are playing a large part in the elimination of racial segregation than legislatures” since “legislators give more weight than the courts to public prejudice and bow to what they believe to be political expediency.” Though far from totally objective, the Sun did note that judges were not as beholden to public opinion.\(^{381}\)

Black Baltimoreans were jubilant. They were able to remove another barrier to educational and economic advancement, and as noted by Damian Jackson, the Kerr case was part and parcel of the overall struggle of black Baltimoreans to end Jim Crow in other public arenas and institutions. Juanita Jackson Mitchell was quoted years later saying that “this suit would revitalize the branch.”\(^{382}\) Houston adhered to this view as well, seeing Kerr as a continuation of the legal campaign that he and Thurgood Marshall began with Murray v. Pearson in 1935. It not only assisted in the slow but steady march toward equality in Baltimore and Maryland, but also would be a key case in eliminating

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\(^{381}\) “Courts and Segregation,” Baltimore Sun, 18 April 1945; Terry, 141.

\(^{382}\) “Three Women Freed Pratt Library,” Afro, 11 March 1986. I find two problems with the article and Mitchell’s statement. First, the article erroneously states that Mitchell was the president of the Baltimore branch when it was actually her mother, Lillie Jackson. Second, the branch was one of the largest and most successful of the NAACP branches and did not have to be “revitalized”; the branch had a very active leadership and membership, and had its hand in a number of desegregation activities too numerous to count throughout the city and the state. So far as ‘revitalize’ meant that the NAACP and the black community resolved to press even harder to totally eliminate Jim Crow from their midst, than I can agree that the Kerr case did so.
Jim Crow from the education and employment fields in the burgeoning national civil rights movement.\textsuperscript{383}

Finally, Larry Gibson, an activist and law professor at the University of Maryland, contends that the \textit{Kerr} case was crucial to the overall civil rights movement because it answered once and for all the right of citizens to use on a non-discriminatory basis public or governmental entities that were administered by private individuals or parties: “If the Enoch Pratt Free Library were allowed to keep its course segregated, then other governmental entities that were controlled by independent bodies could do the same. Essentially, parks, hospitals, swimming pools, recreational centers and other facilities that were economically supported by the government but controlled by non-government employees would have the power to stay segregated.” Don Herzog, in the \textit{Michigan Law Review}, substantiates Gibson’s claim, stating that the \textit{Kerr} case proved that “private parties doing governmental work may be bound by constitutional norms” and another author in a law review article noted that the library, which was considered public property in Soper’s ruling, could potentially be used for recreation and therefore could not be segregated, or else it violated the equal protection clause of the 14\textsuperscript{th} Amendment. The \textit{Kerr} victory removed one more brick in the crumbling wall of Jim Crow segregation and discrimination.\textsuperscript{384}

\textsuperscript{383} “Pratt Library Courses Open to All Races,” \textit{Afro}, 13 October 1945; “Library Case Victory Seen as Avenue for Opportunity,” ibid, 13 October 1945; Jackson, 74; Terry, 141.

By the end of World War II, the Baltimore NAACP was one of the top five branches of the Association and could proudly claim a number of significant victories in their battle to open up Baltimore and force the city and the state to live up to the democratic principles that the nation espoused both domestically and internationally. They had forthrightly addressed police brutality through the 1942 March on Annapolis, and opened up a police training school for black applicants that resulted in six more African Americans added to the force; registered 12,000 new voters during their annual voter registration campaigns; took decisive action to prevent race riots like those in Detroit; assisted other organizations in securing better housing for black war workers; established two war training schools to train qualified African Americans for semi-skilled and skilled positions in war industries; joined in a budding coalition with black union members to eliminate racial discrimination in the war industries; and opened up the Enoch Pratt Free Library for employment opportunities and economic advancement, among other achievements.\(^{385}\)

However, Jackson and the dedicated workers in the branch did not have time to celebrate. The downtown department stores still either refused to serve African American patrons at the lunch counters or in the dressing rooms; parks, swimming pools, and schools were still segregated; several municipal institutions still refused to hire blacks or only accepted token numbers, such as the fire department and the telephone companies; and the University of Maryland seemed to stubbornly allow African Americans to only enter the law school but no other department or program. Jackson and

\(^{385}\) “Some of the Accomplishments of the Baltimore Branch NAACP,” n.d. [though it indicates it was produced in late 1945], NAACP Papers, II-C-76.
the Baltimore black community prepared to use their substantial numbers and growing influence to continue to push forward as a new decade with its own set of challenges inched closer and closer.
School Daze

Keiffer Mitchell’s role was cast before he even auditioned for it.\(^{386}\) It was hard to be a part of the Jackson-Mitchell clan and not think of yourself as a freedom fighter. How could you not? All Keiffer had to do was look at the example of his parents, Clarence and Juanita Mitchell, and his grandmother, Lillie M. Jackson, to know that that is what he and his three brothers were expected to be. As the second oldest, Keiffer knew that in the fight for freedom, dignity, and equality, sacrifices had to be made and met with strength, determination, faith, and perseverance; his family had gladly done so on numerous occasions. His mother was the first African American woman to graduate from the University of Maryland Law School in 1950, and was determined to put her legal skills fully behind the NAACP’s efforts to “sue Jim Crow out of Maryland.” His father was the head of the NAACP’s Washington Bureau, and would be instrumental in getting pioneering legislation such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964 passed. When they were young activists in the 1930s, both Juanita and Clarence put themselves on the line as leaders of the City-Wide Young People’s Forum. Simply put, Keiffer and his brothers had no excuses. When your mother constantly says, “you are a freedom fighter,” you’d better believe it, for when the opportunity to plant your flag as “the first Negro” to break

\(^{386}\) The inspiration for the opening comes from a line from Phonte, an MC from North Carolina that stated the line in a song by The Roots entitled “Now Or Never” from their album, \textit{How I Got Over} (2010).
down a formidable racial barrier and open doors for others of the race came up, you had to act.\textsuperscript{387} Therefore, when the Supreme Court declared school segregation unconstitutional in May 1954, Keiffer and his brothers knew that when the school year opened in September of that year, they would be first in line to step through those cracked and possibly unwelcoming doors.

Unfortunately, being a racial pioneer can be a harrowing and lonely experience for an adult, much less a fourteen-year-old teenager. It’s even more frightening when you are “the first” rather than “one of the first.”\textsuperscript{388} You have no backup, no other individual or group to hold your hand or put a hand on your shoulder and help straighten your spine as you walk through hostile territory. It’s bad enough worrying about students and their reactions, but Keiffer had to endure hostility from teachers and parents as well. Even the principal made it known that blacks were not welcome. It takes courage to stand alone, meeting hostile stares with a steady, determined gaze, turning a deaf ear to the insults you know are coming. After all, Gwynn Falls High School was on the east side of Edmondson Village, an all-white neighborhood that whites guarded jealously, alerting

\textsuperscript{387} The quote is from Terry, 348.
\textsuperscript{388} There are conflicting scholarly accounts concerning Keiffer’s age and whether he stood alone or as part of a group. In his biography of Keiffer’s father, Clarence Mitchell, Jr., Denton Watson states that Keiffer was nine when his father accompanied him to Gwynn Falls Junior High School. See Watson, \textit{Lion in the Lobby}, 269. In his dissertation cited in the footnote above, David Terry puts Keiffer’s age at fourteen, which is within the age range of students attending school on the junior high school level. In addition, Terry says that Keiffer integrated the school alone, but Howell Baum, in his study of school desegregation in Baltimore, states that Keiffer was one of eight black students that integrated Gwynn Falls, although it does not state explicitly whether they all came in together or that Keiffer was first and was soon joined by the others. See Baum, \textit{Brown in Baltimore}, 87.
everyone to an intrusion by outsiders. If trouble came, there was no place to run or hide. Keiffer later recalled that there was “no haven in that whole neighborhood.”

The situation was so tense that Keiffer’s father accompanied him to school for the first six weeks. Clarence had been bold enough to investigate the lynching of George Armwood on the Eastern Shore as a young reporter for the *Afro* in October 1933, even interviewing whites in the aftermath. But that was when he had only himself to look out for; he now had a family and a responsibility as a father to protect his progeny. His worst fears were realized when Keiffer was attacked on the last day of September by two grown white men during lunch, who struck him in the face after one of them asked him for the time. The cowards fled afterwards, but Clarence was determined not to let such acts go unpunished. He reported the incident to the press and the police. Sadly, Keiffer was unable to identify the culprits in a police lineup. The Mitchells soon had to deal with white parents picketing the school, carrying crudely worded signs that demanded that “NIGGERS, GO BACK TO AFRICA,” and called on the school board to “GIVE US OUR SCHOOL BACK.” Clarence had to laugh at the irony, amused that the white mothers of Keiffer’s new classmates would demand that black people return to a place that they had been separated from for hundreds of years, when many of these women’s own parents had gotten off the boat themselves not too long ago.

Since they were standing up for their children, Clarence resolved to stand up for his. While Keiffer was cursed at and ridiculed as he made his way into school, Clarence staged a one-man protest outside that declared on the front, “I AM AN AMERICAN,

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390 Watson, 270.
“TOO,” and to make the point that he had as much right to live there and enjoy all the benefits of an American citizen, the back stated, “THIS IS MY COUNTRY, TOO!” The gall that a Negro would stand up and proclaim that he had the same rights as they did, brought the protestors to a boil, and their anger intensified. Eventually, the protests subsided when the police commissioner finally decided to do his job and protect all American citizens from harm, threatened to arrest the frenzied white demonstrators. Keiffer would have no more trouble from those outside the school.391

Too bad that police could not quiet the “protestors” on the inside. His father may have averted trouble on the outside, but Keiffer was on his own within the walls. He received cold stares from his white classmates, taunts and jeers from those who at least acknowledged his presence, or was made to feel invisible, a non-entity. Some were bold enough to attack him, like the gang of thugs who assaulted him on the playground, or engaged in cruel and deadly pranks, such as placing lighted cigarettes in the hood of his clothing on the school bus during the winter. After a year, such acts lost their ability to ‘entertain,’ but whites continued to treat him like the plague for the next two years. The majority of his teachers, who feared possible ridicule from their colleagues if they reached out to him, also made Keiffer an outcast.392

Keiffer found solace in two things: art and his mother’s admonition that he was a freedom fighter and these are the kind of things that one goes through. At least his art teachers recognized his creative talents and allowed him some normalcy and participation in the life of the institution. The cover art for the Christmas edition of the school

391 Watson, 270-271; Baum, 87-88.
392 Baum, 88.
newspaper was his design, made with materials that he never would have been exposed to at Booker T. Washington Junior High, his old school. Eventually, seven other black students joined Keiffer, but in a student body of 2,109, it was not enough to make much impact on Keiffer’s existence. Although they socialized, Keiffer never connected with them, so he continued to find comfort in painting and his daily routine. Despite the loneliness and anxiety, Keiffer endured because he kept his eyes on the prize.393

The prize was the opportunity that Brown afforded him and others who wanted to take advantage. For Keiffer, Gwynn Falls was strikingly different from Booker T. Washington—“like night and day.” Booker T. Washington was overcrowded—the school day was divided into two shifts—the cafeteria was bereft of adequate food, the building was old and decrepit, and gangs roamed the halls and classrooms demanding ‘protection’ money. The results were children who had shortened lessons from overworked teachers, were fed less than nutritious food, and lived in fear of youthful predators who demanded what little money they had to remain ‘safe’ from other potential predators in a building that was decidedly unsafe for them all. Keiffer’s parents and other black folks like them wanted better for him, his brothers, and other children who suffered under segregation’s weight, and they wanted choices and options available to them as they were for other citizens. The fight was long and hard, but freedom fighters certainly knew that freedom was not free, and they accepted the sacrifices necessary to create opportunities.394

393 Ibid.
394 Ibid.
Trials and Triumphs of a Leader

1946 marked Lillie Jackson’s tenth anniversary as president of the Baltimore NAACP. Ten years as the head of a civil rights organization was significant for any male leader, but was extraordinary for a woman. Women had primarily served as organizers in the freedom movement while men assumed the public role, having ascended to the position largely through the social networks built by female workers. If women did assume the office, it may have resulted from the absence of a qualified man or the resignation of one, and more often than not proved to be a temporary position. However, Jackson was purposely chosen as president and decidedly out front, unlike the previous female president, Lottie Lottier, who only served one year in 1924 and seemingly preferred to work behind the scenes. Jackson flourished in the spotlight and would do so for the next two decades.\textsuperscript{395}

Revitalized in 1935, Jackson really got the branch in motion in order to host the NAACP’s 27\textsuperscript{th} annual convention. Since then, she had worked tirelessly to develop Baltimore into one of the largest and most effective branches of the Association, competing at times with Detroit and Chicago for the number one ranking, but always within the top five. Its accomplishments were certainly impressive. It had desegregated the University of Maryland Law School in \textit{Murray v. Pearson} in 1935; equalized teachers’ salaries throughout the state by 1941; chartered and/or revitalized branches across the state, resulting in the establishment of a state conference in 1941; marched on Annapolis, the state capital, in 1942 and forced state officials to address the issue of

\textsuperscript{395} Sartain, 76.
police brutality; desegregated the library training program of the Enoch Pratt Free Library in *Kerr v. Pratt* in 1943; registered thousands of voting-age African Americans; secured high schools for black students where none previously existed, such as those in Catonsville, Towson, and Sparrows Point; and created training schools that enabled African Americans to successfully take the police examinations or acquire the skills to be employed in war industries, among numerous other accomplishments.  

Jackson rightly deserved much of the credit for the branch’s success, for it was she who set much of its agenda, direction, and goals, and mapped out its strategy and methods, backed by her family, members of the executive board, Carl Murphy, and many of the black churches in the northwest Baltimore neighborhood. She had also assumed the presidency of the Maryland State Conference of NAACP Branches following Enolia McMillan’s resignation in July 1944 and ran that organization in much the same manner. Although her style of leadership could certainly be considered autocratic, McMillan, a former vice-president and long-time member of the executive board, characterized it as efficient and effective, noting that since Jackson’s methods and goals had been successful in the past, she was generally given the benefit of the doubt when it came to undertaking new challenges or addressing recurring issues. 

A devoutly religious woman, Jackson’s activism was fueled by her belief that justice and equality of opportunity were cornerstones of the Christian Creed; therefore, segregation and racial discrimination were a “sin against God” and only constant and

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396 Ibid, 76; “Some of the Accomplishments of the Baltimore Branch NAACP,” n.d., NAACP Papers, I-C-77. The dates given for some of the accomplishments indicate that it was written in 1945.
397 McMillan, OH 8110, MJOHP, 6.
consistent action could eradicate them. Her Christian beliefs also dictated that she follow a non-violent course of action. A highly active member of Sharp Street Methodist Church since 1918, the church served as the model for both her leadership style and approach. Like ministers, Jackson was a very charismatic and dominating personality that was able to persuade crowds to support various NAACP and community causes. Like many theologians who stood at the head of their congregation, Jackson did so in the branch, and although there was an executive committee that was charged with policy-making, she arbitrarily made decisions that reflected more her ideals and was willing to eschew NAACP beaucratic procedures when they clashed with her purpose and methods of organizing.\textsuperscript{398}

Jackson valued family as well, and as president made a conscious effort to depend on familial and social networks to build the branch. She valued loyalty and made every effort to bring in people whom she trusted to carry out her objectives. Therefore, she placed trusted family and friends in leadership positions and depended on a core group of people tied together through intimate social bonds and local knowledge of the city to build and sustain NAACP membership. Two daughters, Juanita and Virginia, and her son, Bowen, were all involved in the branch at various times, with Juanita serving the longest tenure, and all held important office. Jackson’s sister, Florence Snowden, was also a prominent member, and she maintained close personal relationships with Carl Murphy and a number of other ministers to assist her, placing many of them on the

\textsuperscript{398} Mitchell, OH 8095, 21, 27; Mitchell and Kiah, OH 8097, 10; Sartain, 77, 78.
executive committee and as head of important sub-committees for the remainder of her tenure.\textsuperscript{399}

Jackson’s economic independence allowed her to focus full time on her presidency, which she believed was crucial in staying on top of local civil rights issues. She had criticized previous presidents for having too many other obligations that deterred them from gaining an intimate knowledge of the city, its residents and the various challenges and holding sporadic meetings that failed to inform and convince the masses to carry out any concrete plan of action. Therefore, she devoted an inordinate amount of time to the position and held regular, executive, and mass meetings on a monthly basis.\textsuperscript{400}

Membership drives were valuable in gaining an intimate knowledge of the city and Jackson held them annually, sometimes twice a year toward the end of her presidency. Here again, the church served as the epicenter of her organizing efforts for she or Juanita would frequently spend Sundays visiting numerous churches to ask ministers permission to address their congregations during regular service. Drives were also organized professionally using Daisy Lampkin’s model. Lampkin, a national field secretary who conducted their first membership drive, trained volunteers in organizational structure, division of labor, use of publicity, and organizational protocol, and her methods resulted in very successful membership drives that brought in substantial finances for the national office. Jackson would use this organizational method for her entire tenure.\textsuperscript{401}

\textsuperscript{399} Kiah and Mitchell, OH 8094, 49; Sartain, 79, 95. Juanita was a branch attorney, Virginia Jackson Kiah served as promotional secretary during the early 1940s, and Bowen as branch coordinator in 1952.

\textsuperscript{400} Sartain, 79.

\textsuperscript{401} Lillie Jackson to Roy Wilkins, 30 July 1965, NAACP Papers, III-C-57; Sartain, 81.
Despite Jackson’s effective leadership, there were a number of critics and detractors who were becoming more concerned not only with her leadership of the Baltimore branch, but her personality and behavior as well. Several of them, both within the NAACP and without, became increasingly more vocal in their opposition to her personally and professionally during the 1940s, and Jackson had to continuously address charges ranging from dictatorial behavior to shameless nepotism to outright subterfuge and deceit. Several local activists, black and white, accused the branch of being the Jackson family’s fiefdom because several of them held important administrative positions and/or allegedly received special privileges. Some branch members withdrew from engaging in decision-making because they disapproved of her leadership style in setting the agenda. Her clashes with national NAACP officials are well documented. Now, in the late 1940s, more local activists in Baltimore and the surrounding areas challenged Jackson, and strongly suggested—some demanded—that the national office remove her from office.

Jackson had long been accused of anti-Semitism when it came to the discriminatory policies of the large department stores, some of them owned by prominent Jewish merchants. Because the situation with them remained largely unchanged since the Baltimore NAACP and other members of the black community had first challenged them in the 1930s, the ugly accusations reappeared in the aftermath of World War II when the NAACP challenged them once again. Hutzler’s, one of three large department stores, refused to allow African American patronage, but was the only one of the three that was Jewish owned. Hutzler relied on the stale argument that his customers would object to an African American clientele and that blacks would lower the “tone” of his establishment.
Since Hutzler was so influential, other stores looked to him when making decisions about their own policies, and continued to discriminate as well. There were several Jewish activists who believed that Jackson constantly spoke out against Hutzler’s discriminatory policy at the exclusion of the other stores and seemed to “have completely overlooked the fact that the problem is broader in scope than just that of a Negro-Jewish problem.”

Walter Zand, the executive director of the B’nai B’rith Council of Baltimore, in a letter to his brother, Herman Zand, believed this supposed stance by Jackson “has placed tremendous obstacles in the working relationship between the Jewish and Negro groups” in Baltimore.402

Other Jewish activists used Jackson’s alleged anti-Semitism as a barometer for her leadership and personality. Sidney Hollander, the president of the Baltimore Urban League and a member of the NAACP, and Leon Sachs, executive director of the Baltimore Jewish Council, both believed that Jackson held an “anti-Jewish bias.” Hollander sympathized with Jackson’s frustration with the department store situation and believed there would not be an issue if Hutzler had simply done away with discrimination in his store long ago. Still, Hollander, in a letter to Walter White, believed as Zand that Jackson focused too narrowly on the Jewish department stores as opposed to the overall problem of discrimination against blacks in several department stores owned by Jews and gentiles.403

402 Walter P. Zand to H. Herman Zand, 6 August 1947, NAACP Papers, II-C-77.
403 See Sidney Hollander to Walter White, 22 August 1947, NAACP Papers, II-C-77 and Leon Sachs, OH 8136, MJOHP, 17. Hollander also criticizes Jackson for not recognizing that Hutzler and other Jewish merchants who discriminated against African Americans were not typical of the Jewish community and constituted a small minority.
It is obvious from their criticism that Hollander and Sachs did not think too much of Jackson’s leadership or her personality. They readily acknowledged that Jackson was largely responsible for the branch’s growth and success in desegregating significant areas and institutions in the city, and this accounted for its popularity within the black community. But, Hollander felt that Jackson had worn out her welcome as branch president by alienating potential allies such as the Baltimore Urban League and B’nai B’rith who would support the NAACP if not for her prejudices, tactlessness, irresponsibility, and egotism. He further accused her of being dictatorial, engaged in nepotism, and was self-centered. Sachs, for his part, “never had high regard for her abilities” and disparaged Jackson’s intelligence and educational level, contending that her esteemed position in the black community was due to Carl Murphy, who was the real power broker. Hollander characterized Jackson as a “highly emotional woman—not too responsible; a natural crusader, completely carried away by her own oratory,” and Sachs characterized her oratorical style as laughable because it was highly dramatic and also noted that she and Juanita could be “erratic” at times.\footnote{Hollander to White, ibid; Sachs, OH 8136, 17-18.}

White took Hollander’s assessment seriously, and passed his response onto other national officers such as Roy Wilkins, Thurgood Marshall, and Gloster Current, the new director of branches. Wilkins and Gloster reached similar conclusions on several issues in their replies to White.\footnote{I was unable to ascertain how Marshall directly felt about the situation because there is no record of his reply within the Baltimore branch files. However, in a letter to Spingarn, White declares that Marshall agreed with Wilkins and Current. See Walter White to Arthur Spingarn, 10 September 1947, NAACP Papers, II-C-77.} They both agreed that Jackson could be more tactful in her public stances and pronouncements, but they put the onus of the tensions between the
black and Jewish communities squarely on the shoulders of Hutzler and the other discriminatory department stores. Wilkins made it clear that though he condemned prejudice in any form, he nonetheless insisted that the continued discrimination experienced by African Americans in the two large Jewish department stores and several other Gentile stores was “an intolerable affront to the Negro population” and that any level-headed person could recognize that the situation had reached such a point because “the stubbornness of Albert Hutzler goes beyond anything in the experience of the NAACP.”

Current also claimed that Hutzler was largely responsible for the acrimony between the two communities and tensions would remain so even if Jackson were removed from office, since he had managed to offend the black community as a whole. He disagreed with Hollander’s assessment of Jackson’s leadership and personality, conceding that Jackson was highly emotional but far from irresponsible, as she was one of the few people in Baltimore that had happily taken on the responsibility of desegregating the city when others had failed to turn their rhetoric into concrete action.

Hollander and Sachs’ assessment of Jackson’s—and by extension Juanita—personality and behavior clearly illustrates the gendered ways that they, and others, evaluated her as a leader. They both characterized her and her oratorical style as “highly emotional” and “dramatic,” traits that were supposedly more feminine than masculine, though the same assessment could be made of black male ministers—particularly those in the Baptist and Methodist denominations—speaking before their congregations. Even

406 Memorandum to Mr. White from Mr. Wilkins, 28 August 1947, NAACP Papers, II-C-77; Memorandum to Mr. White, Mr. Wilkins, and Mr. Marshall from Gloster B. Current, 28 August 1947, ibid.
407 Memorandum to White, Wilkins and Marshall from Current, ibid.
later assessments of her legacy called her the “emotional” leader of the freedom movement in Baltimore. However, Jackson’s style seemed to be more of an asset than a liability, and her public speeches inspired and motivated audiences to action using humor, common sense, and, at times, moral indignation on more than one occasion. It is also noteworthy that Sachs believed that Murphy was the real power behind Jackson, and was only popular among black Baltimoreans because of him, rather than on her own merits. True, Jackson did benefit tremendously from the support of the *Afro*, but from all accounts Jackson and Murphy had great respect for each other and Murphy never imposed his views on her or demanded that she comport herself more like a “lady” and cease to be the outstanding leader that she was.\footnote{Sartain, 79. For the positive and productive relationship between Jackson and Murphy, see Thompson, 247; Troy Brailey, OH 8147, 17; Margaret Dyer, OH 8141, 1; McMillan, OH 8110, 8; Clarence Mitchell, Jr., OH 8154, 27-28; Luther Stuckey, OH 8160, 39, all in MJOHP; Smith, *Here Lies Jim Crow*, 241.}

Jackson was constantly criticized for her outspokenness, and several people outside of the branch seemed uncomfortable with her tendency to speak her mind no matter one’s race, gender, social status or political rank. Famously quoted as saying that “God opened my mouth and no man can shut it,” Jackson was forthright with her opinions and Theodore McKeldin, twice mayor of Baltimore and governor of Maryland, once remarked that he would “rather have the devil after me than Mrs. Jackson.” However, Jackson’s outspokenness and forthrightness in drawing attention to racial discrimination and injustices was denigrated as “hollering,” as Willie Adams, a black business owner and NAACP supporter, characterized it. This makes it appear that Jackson went on uncontrollable rants rather than calmly articulating her concerns. It also appears that
several persons, in an effort to quiet her, called on the national NAACP to remove her from office because they believed that she was not politically savvy and sophisticated in her interactions with potential allies and critics.\textsuperscript{409}

Jackson not only had to deal with criticism from outside the NAACP, but within as well. The testimony of Baltimore NAACP members and national NAACP officials confirmed many of the accusations of Hollander, Zand, and others. Her infamous row with Ella Baker in the early 1940s was illustrative of the contentious relationship she had with several national officers and her shortcomings and deficiencies as a leader. Ella Baker was a national field secretary when she arrived in Baltimore to conduct the annual membership campaign in September 1941. Both women were fiercely independent but were polar opposites in personality, organizational philosophy, and class orientations. Jackson was a domineering leader who expected deference to her authority and position when dealing with national staff in her hometown, while Baker, though new to the position, was not about to submit to such a role. Baker insisted on meeting with rank-and-file members directly, in Baltimore and throughout Maryland, some of who were critical of Jackson’s leadership. Baker herself criticized Jackson’s reliance on charismatic, undemocratic leadership, charged her with nepotism and favoritism in recognizing members’ contributions and hard work, accused her of micromanaging, and lamented her narrow focus on community organizing in the church rather than other arenas, such as labor unions and business associations, which failed to broaden the

\textsuperscript{409} Adams, OH 8210, 16; Hollander to Walter White, 22 August 1947, NAACP Papers, II-C-77; Kitty Mueller to Roy Wilkins, 21 September 1959, NAACP Papers, III-C-56; Wilkins to Mueller, 23 November 1959, ibid; Carl Murphy to Wilkins, 24 November 1959, ibid; Jackson to Wilkins, 3 November 1959, ibid; Smith, 111.
branch’s membership on any significant level and prevented potential members from joining. Other national field secretaries and campaign directors after Baker had the same complaint. In 1958, Dorothea Merchant believed the NAACP should solicit memberships in labor unions and entertainment venues, “yet neither is considered here.”

Jackson, for her part, believed that Baker was fomenting dissension in the Baltimore branch because she would not defer to her, and in a letter to Walter White accused Baker of having a “bad attitude” that “has been discourteous and contemptible and is not conducive to the best interests of all involved.” When Baker insisted on visiting newly formed branches under the umbrella of the Maryland State Conference of Branches without her approval, Jackson interpreted this as interfering with her organizing efforts and undermining her authority. Although Jackson framed their differences as a personality conflict, Sartain claims that it actually was a conflict of organizational philosophy. In this conflict between two strong personalities, Baker received support from Roy Wilkins and Walter White. Wilkins, like Baker, wondered why Jackson’s relatives kept repeatedly “winning” trips to the annual conference over other members and believed that no national officer would find favor with Jackson if they did not share her ideas of leadership and organizational philosophy, methods, and ideals. White could

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not understand how Baker received glowing reviews from other communities, but was harshly assailed in Baltimore.411

Enolia McMillan, despite her earlier praise for Jackson’s overall leadership, agreed with some of Baker’s assessment. She implied that Jackson ran the branch with an iron fist and that differing opinions were not tolerated. McMillan relayed that many executive board members simply stopped coming to board meetings during the early-to-mid forties because their ideas and suggestions were not taken into consideration. In fact, those who did express different opinions and ideas seemed to be accused of being “bad fellows,” meaning that they somehow caused discord and confusion, hindering Jackson’s ability to effectively run the branch as she saw fit. McMillan, as one who apparently expressed oppositional ideas, was told that when she was absent from board meetings, the atmosphere was more congenial, a characterization she found insulting. She felt that as a staunchly loyal and consistent member she had earned the right to express her opinions and ideas, and that she should not be labeled as a malcontent because of it, nor should anyone else, and she refused to tolerate such an atmosphere. She believed such an attitude defeated the purpose of the NAACP because as the leading organization of a minority group, voices within that group should be heard and respected no matter what.412

411 Lillie Jackson to Walter White, 19 October 1941, NAACP Papers, II-C-76; Roy Wilkins to Walter White, 21 October 1941, ibid; Walter White to Lillie Jackson, 21 October 1941, ibid; Sartain, 89-90.
412 McMillan, OH 8110, 29-31. In his initial letter to White about the department store matter, Hollander claims that “members of Mrs. Jackson’s own board tell me of their distrust of her and her manner of riding rough-shod over all opposing views.” See Hollander to White, 22 August 1947, NAACP Papers, II-C-77.
As a consequence, McMillan concentrated her energies elsewhere, particularly in the membership campaigns. She began attending board meetings only in the later years of Jackson’s tenure, claiming that Jackson was “not as aggressive as she had been.” McMillan says part of the reason could be that Jackson “aged some,” implying she either matured enough to realize the error of her ways, was too physically and emotionally tired to fight as much as she had before, or a combination of these. She also contends that again, disenchanted board members were not willing to make such a big deal of the issue because they recognized that Jackson was the only one willing to take on the huge responsibility of running the branch and that their opposition was not based on personality clashes or the goals that they sought to achieve, only on the methods to achieve them.413

One other criticism that McMillan had of Jackson’s leadership style was the fact that building and maintaining an organization centered around a charismatic leader stifled its ability to function effectively once that person retired, died, or was forced out of office. McMillan had personal experience with this. When Jackson retired as president in 1970, McMillan was voted in as her successor. Because Baltimore branch members were so accustomed to Jackson developing their goals, the methods and tactics used to achieve them, and directing their actions, members looked to McMillan to do the same and she found it difficult to get them to present their own ideas of what the branch should be doing. McMillan considered this a serious handicap.414

413 McMillan, OH 8110, 31.
414 Ibid.
Others continued to level charges of dictatorial behavior and nepotism against Jackson, but she believed—and in some instances, rightly so—that some of the charges were vindictive in nature and were from disgruntled individuals whom Jackson had had personal and/or professional conflicts with before. These charges certainly did not prevent the Association from recognizing her accomplishments and rewarding her for it. The branch achieved first prize in the Class II region and was awarded the Thalheimer Award of $100. She soon achieved national positions, first elected to the National Nominations Committee in July 1947, and then to the National Board of Directors, the highest policy-making body, in 1948. These accolades did not mean that Jackson was completely innocent of such charges. She was a strong-willed individual who did have a certain sense of entitlement and demanded respect, whether due to her age or experience, or because she was fully aware that there was no one else as willing as she to put the time, energy, and commitment into running the branch. Knowing this sometimes made her difficult to work with, but she did command grudging respect from even her strongest detractors. Besides, in Jackson’s estimation, she had more important issues to attend to, and one of the most pressing was the continued intransigence of the University of Maryland in refusing to further open its doors to qualified African American students.

Suing the University of Maryland…Again and Again and Again

Since the Murray v. Pearson case of 1935, the University of Maryland Law School, located in Baltimore, had continuously accepted African Americans into the program, graduating one or two in each class. Graduates included Robert Watts, a native of
Baltimore and an active member of the Baltimore branch, who later became one of a number of local lawyers working on behalf of the branch to desegregate schools, parks, and other public accommodations. Juanita Mitchell herself was a graduate, entering the program in 1946. Inspired by Charles Hamilton Houston, Mitchell attended law school at night, supported by her husband, Clarence Mitchell, Jr., who was then working in the NAACP’s Washington Bureau office. Mitchell was a trailblazer, becoming the first black student elected to the editorial board of the law review, where she served with distinction. She was not only the first black woman to graduate from the law school when she completed the program in June 1950, but was also the first to practice law in the state, passing the bar in October 1950.\footnote{Judge Robert Watts, OH 8102, MJOHP, 3-4; Mitchell, OH 8095, MJOHP, 45; Juanita Jackson Mitchell, 1913-1992 \textit{The Daily Record}, 25 September 2000. Other graduates of the law school included Calvin Douglass and Ernest Perkins, who with Donald Murray, established the law firm Murray, Douglas, and Perkins; Harry Cole and Milton Allen, who both became Associate Judges on the Supreme Bench of Baltimore City; and Linwood Koger, Jr., an attorney who helped to desegregate Baltimore’s public parks and beaches.}

Esther McCready had the same dreams of attending the University of Maryland but she did not want to enter the law school—she wanted to break down the barrier in the university’s nursing program. An aspiring nurse, McCready wanted to attend a school within her home state but only the law school was open to black admission; all other graduate programs barred black applicants. As in Donald Murray’s case, none of the black institutions in the state offered such a program, much less one that was equivalent to that of the university.\footnote{Farrar, \textit{The Baltimore Afro-American}, 50.}
There were certainly efforts to improve black educational institutions after Murray’s admission to the law school in 1935 on the part of both African Americans and some white legislators and educators such as University of Maryland president Harry Clifton “Curley” Byrd, though they were on opposite ends of the spectrum in terms of motivation, goals, and outcomes. After the Murray decision, Carl Murphy, through the Afro, had continuously advocated a dual action program—calling on its readers to demand the desegregation of the rest of the University of Maryland while also calling for black control of racially segregated colleges such as Morgan College.\(^{417}\) The state legislature, fearful that their negligence in making segregated education certainly “separate” but nowhere near “equal” would compel African Americans to call for the further desegregation of the University of Maryland, purchased Morgan College in 1939, renaming it Morgan State College. Murphy immediately believed that the state was motivated more by a desire to stop the further desegregation of the University rather than improving black higher education. Nevertheless, he called for a black board of trustees to oversee Morgan, which the governor refused to do, appointing a majority white board of regents, though Murphy himself was one of the few African Americans on it.\(^{418}\)

Throughout the 1940s, Murphy and the Afro sought to upgrade and expand Morgan State College’s curriculum, facilities, and budget, and advocated placing the other black institutions of higher learning under its control.\(^{419}\) Murphy, now a member of the Maryland Commission for Higher Education while remaining a Morgan State trustee,

\(^{417}\) Ibid, 49.
\(^{418}\) Ibid.
\(^{419}\) These colleges were Bowie State Teachers College in Bowie, Maryland, Coppin State Teachers College in Baltimore, and Princess Anne Academy on the Eastern Shore.
understood very well that even if all of this were accomplished, Morgan’s program would
still not be equivalent to the University of Maryland. Thus, in 1947, as part of the
Commission, which was tasked with making recommendations to the governor
concerning higher education for black Marylanders, Murphy proposed that the
University’s graduate and professional programs be opened to African Americans,
particularly those programs not offered by black institutions. Undaunted when his
proposal was rejected, Murphy continued to assault the University’s racially
discriminatory policies, writing in an October 1948 editorial that the University’s board
of regents should admit black graduate students.420

Curley Byrd also worked to improve black educational opportunities but his reason
was vastly different from that of Murphy and other African Americans. The Maryland
Legislature purchased Princess Anne Academy, a black institute of higher learning on the
eastern shore, from Morgan College in 1935 and made it a part of the University of
Maryland. Byrd made a concerted effort to build up Princess Anne, but his motivation
for doing speaks to that most feared bugaboo of all segregationists—so-called social
equality, or black men and white women occupying the same social spaces. During the
1930s, Byrd announced, “If we don’t do something about Princess Anne we’re going to
have to accept Negroes at College Park, where our girls are.”421

To prevent such a thing from happening, Byrd pleaded with the state to make a
significant investment in improving Princess Anne, which the state refused to do. It

420 Afro, 1 February 1947; 30 October 1948. The 1948 editorial also stated that “we can
begin work on smashing the remaining undergraduate barriers.”
421 George Callcott, A History of the University of Maryland (Baltimore: Maryland
Historical Society, 1966), 351. Byrd was quoted in the Baltimore Sun, 5 February 1937.
continued to pour money into out-of-state scholarships for African Americans who wanted to go elsewhere. When prosperity from the war and pressure from African Americans to desegregate the University grew stronger in the 1940s, Byrd made Princess Anne, and black education, a top priority. He changed Princess Anne Academy to Maryland State College, a land-grant institution, in 1948, quadrupled the state’s investment through a grant of $3,755,000 before the state could fully react, and advertised for potential black applicants in black newspapers from Baltimore to Philadelphia.422

The Baltimore NAACP, the Afro, and officials at Morgan State College, including retired former president Dr. Dwight O. Holmes, assailed Byrd and the state as an “attempt to bypass pending lawsuits to gain entrance for Negro graduate students into the university.” In his defense, Byrd, according to reporter George Streator, denied that he was attempting to circumvent the Murray decision that opened up the university to the possibility of accepting more African American graduate and professional students, and instead declared that the improvements at Princess Anne Academy were “recognition of the duty of the state to its Negro citizens.” He was compelled to make such improvements because he was fully aware that the state had not dealt fairly and equally with African Americans and that he was proposing steps that would grant black Marylanders privileges that were on par with those enjoyed by African Americans in the average southern state but not in Maryland. In his most revealing admission, Byrd admitted that the state could not afford to build separate graduate and professional facilities for African Americans that were “parallel” to those at white schools, and he

422 Callcott, A History of the University of Maryland, 352.
therefore agreed with the plan by southern governors to create regional schools for
African Americans to attend when their home state could not meet their educational
needs.\textsuperscript{423}

Byrd’s attempts to find “a solution to the problems of Negro education,” however
altruistic they may have appeared to be,\textsuperscript{424} did not stop demands to integrate the
university. It certainly did not prevent Esther McCready, in February 1949, from
applying to the university’s School of Nursing, which, like the Law School, was located
in Baltimore. McCready, one of four children from East Baltimore, wanted to be a nurse
since childhood.\textsuperscript{425} While at Dunbar High School, one of only two high schools in the
city for African Americans, she gained experience as a nurse’s aid by working part-time
at Sinai Hospital. When she graduated she made a list of every nursing school in
Baltimore and requested nursing applications and course catalogs, making it clear that
she was black. The University of Maryland was the only institution to respond to her
request. However, they sought to remain segregated and offered her an out-of-state
scholarship to the ‘regional’ program at Meharry Medical College, a historically black
institution, in Nashville, Tennessee, instead. McCready refused the offer.\textsuperscript{426}

\textsuperscript{423} George Streator, “Negroes Criticize Maryland School; Making College of Academy at
Princess Anne Is Called By-Passing of Equal Rights,” New York \textit{Times}, 5 December
1948, 96.
\textsuperscript{424} His African American critics accused him of proposing “a system of limited
segregation and limited integration.” Both quotes from Streator, “Negroes Criticize
Maryland School,” 96.
\textsuperscript{425} Quoted in Smith, \textit{Here Lies Jim Crow}, 132.
\textsuperscript{426} Farrar, 50; Anna Kaplan, “Sharing Tale of Triumph from ‘Trying Time’; First Black
Student at UM Nursing Marks Anniversary” \textit{Baltimore Sun}, 18 March 2003; Esther
McCready, MSA SC 3520-14290, Maryland State Archives (Biographical Series),
Maryland, along with ten other southern states, had introduced a compact under the Southern Regional Education Board in 1948 to create racially discriminatory ‘regional’ graduate and professional schools, which the Maryland State Legislature approved of in 1949. The participating southern states would pool their resources and provide out-of-state scholarships to assist prospective black graduate and professional students in attending segregated African American institutions within the region if they chose to do so. The goal was to provide black students a regionally based education that was equivalent to that provided by white students on a state basis. African American institutions such as Meharry Medical College, Atlanta University, and Tuskegee Institute were a part of this regional plan, and all such schools were attacked by the Afro as selling African American students “down the river educationally.” The Afro reminded its readers that such a pact was already considered unconstitutional since the Supreme Court had ruled in the Gaines case in 1938 that a state could not deny any of its citizens an equal educational opportunity within its borders.

McCready did not broadcast her plans to very many people. However, Charles Houston, who had gotten word of her plans from a representative of the Baltimore NAACP after hearing about it from McCready’s doctor, initially phoned and then met with her to inquire about her intentions. Realizing that McCready was determined to go through with it, he agreed to let her continue unaided. Hoping to enter the university in the fall of 1949, she began questioning the university about her application’s status and

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428 McCready says that Houston grilled her as to who put her up to applying, and she answered that no one had. When he realized she planned to follow through, he told her, “You’re very brave.” Quoted in Smith, 133.
was told that the school “was reviewing your credits,” but heard nothing else besides this whenever she contacted them over the next few months. Tiring of the deliberate delays, McCready decided to initiate legal action, so she contacted the NAACP.429

This was fortuitous, because the NAACP was already involved in several cases that challenged the constitutionality of segregated education in graduate and professional schools. In 1938, the NAACP had successfully argued Gaines ex rel. Canada v. Missouri. Lloyd Gaines, a graduate of all-black Lincoln University in Missouri in 1935, desired to go to law school. In 1936, he applied to the University of Missouri Law School, since there was no equivalent program at his alma mater, the only historically black institution of higher learning in the state. The University of Missouri refused to admit Gaines based on his race, but like Maryland, offered to provide an out-of-state scholarship to fund his education elsewhere. Gaines refused the offer, and with the help of Houston, Marshall, and the NAACP, sued the state, arguing that the state violated the equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment. After winding its way through the state courts, the case reached the Supreme Court in November 1938. There the justices ruled in December 1938 that the state had to provide equal protection of the law for its citizens within its borders and that Missouri either had to provide equal facilities at Lincoln University or admit Gaines to the University’s Law School. The state hastily built a law school at Lincoln, which remained in effect until 1955. Although it did not directly challenge Plessy v. Ferguson, the Gaines case was significant because it was the first case in which the Supreme Court reconsidered “separate but equal” because of the

429 Smith, 133; ‘McCready Fought for the Right to Be Trained As a Nurse,” Baltimore Sun, 22 June 2005.
difficulty of maintaining two separate educational systems that could never achieve true equality.\textsuperscript{430}

Other cases followed, including \textit{Sipuel v. Oklahoma} (1948). In this case, Ada Sipuel successfully sued to enter the University of Oklahoma’s Law School because she was denied admission based on race. She graduated in 1951. At the time of McCready’s application, the NAACP already had before the courts two cases that also concerned graduate and professional schools: \textit{McLaurin v. Oklahoma} (1950), in which George McLaurin sued to enter the University of Oklahoma’s School of Education, and \textit{Sweatt v. Painter} (1950), in which Heman Sweatt sued to enter the University of Texas’ Law School. To circumvent \textit{Gaines}, the state either attempted to hastily provide equal facilities at the all-black institutions to comply with \textit{Plessy}, or, in McLaurin’s case, segregate him within the white institution. Oklahoma lost in the \textit{Sipuel} case, but was attempting to hold on against George McLaurin, while Texas did the same against Sweatt.\textsuperscript{431}

The Baltimore NAACP decided to take on McCready’s case, and ironically one of her attorneys was Donald Murray, the person who had successfully won his own fight against the university fourteen years earlier. Murray as lead counsel, assisted by Houston and Marshall, and backed by the Baltimore NAACP, was eager to once and for all eliminate Maryland’s practice of sending African Americans out of the state to be educated, and brought suit in Baltimore City Court against the university on October 9, 1949. The state’s attorneys argued that McCready’s suit did not comply with the recent Southern

\textsuperscript{430} For more on the \textit{Gaines} case, see Tushnet, \textit{The NAACP’s Legal Strategy}, 70-77.
\textsuperscript{431} Ibid, 120-137.
Regional Education Board pact, where McCready’s traveling expenses would have been paid for and tuition would have cost no more than if she had attended Maryland, but her attorneys countered that the pact was evidence of a “direct refusal of the State of Maryland to assume clear and constitutional obligations” in admitting her to the University of Maryland. McCready was not the only African American ready to sue the university. Five other cases were pending—Richard Tyson in the School of Pharmacy, Donald Stewart and Richard Williams in the School of Dentistry, and Hiram Whittle in the School of Engineering.  

Murray and the NAACP did not wait long for a ‘prompt hearing.’ Chief Justice W. Conwell Smith immediately dismissed McCready’s mandamus suit the next afternoon. Although acknowledging that McCready was denied admission based on her race, Judge Smith, concurring with the argument of Attorney General Hall Hammond, ruled that the state had not violated her constitutional rights because it had offered her an equal educational opportunity at Meharry, whose program was judged equivalent to, if not better than, the program at the University of Maryland. Houston argued vociferously that the Supreme Court had already settled such a question with the Gaines case in 1938 when it was decided that Missouri could not send Gaines out-of-state, but had to provide for his education within the state, and announced that the judge’s decision would immediately be appealed. As an answer to Houston, Smith made a distinction between a law education and that of other professions such as nursing, dentistry and medicine by claiming that it

432 “Negro Test Suit Opens Today,” Washington Post, 6. The last pending case could not be ascertained from the NAACP records.
was more advantageous for a law student to be educated within the state in which he or she planned to practice.433

The case was appealed to the Maryland Court of Appeals in March 1950, but the legal team suffered a serious blow when Houston suffered a heart attack and could not continue. Marshall and Murray pushed on without him, and prepared to counter the same argument in the appeals court as in the lower court—the state’s contention that the regional compact did not sidestep the Constitution nor state laws by offering McCready educational opportunities elsewhere. Hammond again argued Smith’s point that legal training required applied knowledge of local practices and laws of a particular state, but that did not hold true for other professions. McCready’s defense team countered by arguing that the question rested on whether African Americans could be excluded from state schools and sent out-of-state solely based on their race. They concluded that they could not, and bolstered their argument by citing the Supreme Court’s decision in Murray and those in Missouri and Oklahoma.434

The Appeals Court cited those same Supreme Court decisions in Missouri and Oklahoma when they ruled that the University of Maryland Nursing School must accept McCready to its program in April 1950. Judge Charles Markell, in issuing the ruling, stated, “We cannot subtract anything from what the Supreme Court has said.” Judge Markell also made clear that the state’s argument that law training was more specific and other professional training more universal was answered by the Missouri and Oklahoma

cases, which “permits no distinction between the study of law and the study of nursing.” President Byrd responded to the decision by saying that Maryland had to make preparations to provide equal facilities. The Afro, of course, hailed the victory and said that the decision had a three-fold affect: it prohibited the University of Maryland from continuing its ban against the admission of prospective black students to its graduate and professional programs; it nullified the Southern Regional Education Compact; and it outlawed the out-of-state scholarships. While the state appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court, McCready entered the program in a class of more than fifty later that year. Although she encountered some hostility and was placed by herself in a separate dorm room, she did receive welcome smiles from the African American dietary workers in the school cafeteria. The Baltimore NAACP paid McCready’s nursing expenses when she entered the program, and she diligently pursued her studies, doing her best to justify their faith and confidence in her. Graduating in 1953, she first became a public health nurse, and then moved to New York City to join the staff of the New York Hospital-Cornell Medical Center.

The Baltimore NAACP had been successful in admitting McCready to the university, and the National NAACP was rewarded in June 1950 when the Supreme Court ruled in its favor in the McLaughlin and Sweatt cases. Unfortunately, Charles Houston was not able to witness the fruits of his labor, passing away from a heart attack in April 1950. The

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436 Smith, Here Lies Jim Crow, 134; Jacques Kelly, “A Maryland Pioneer: At 78, Esther McCready Serves As a Volunteer at the University Where She Broke Down Racial Barriers 60 Years Ago,” Baltimore Sun, 20 April 2009; Esther McCready to Lillie Jackson, 16 October 1950, University of Maryland School of Nursing Folder, Clarence Mitchell Papers, Library of Congress (hereafter Mitchell Papers, LOC).
victories in the Supreme Court cases helped to convince Marshall, now head of the NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund (NAACP-LDF), that the time was right to attack segregation head on. He believed, as expressed in a letter he wrote to one of the law school expert witnesses a week after the decision, “all three of the decisions [including Henderson, which was a case of segregated dining car service on an Interstate Commerce Commission regulated railroad] are replete with road markings telling us where to go next.” Toward that end, Marshall called a conference of lawyers to map out future strategies, and their resolution “to insist on nonsegregation [sic] in American public education from top to bottom—from law school to kindergarten” was adopted by the NAACP Board of Directors in July 1950. From then on, all future cases would seek to eliminate segregated education from the American landscape. The NAACP would soon begin attacking segregated education on the primary level in Clarendon County, South Carolina.\textsuperscript{437}

Those African Americans who sought to enter the University of Maryland after McCready were largely successful in their efforts. Almost four months after McCready won her case, in August 1950, Parren Mitchell, a 27-year-old student, brought a suit against the University of Maryland to enter its graduate program in sociology at the main campus in College Park, the seventh against the university. Mitchell, the younger brother of Clarence Mitchell, Jr. and Juanita Mitchell’s brother-in-law, accused the university of denying his admission because of his race and contended that the denial violated the Federal and State Constitutions. To stave off the suit, the University of Maryland agreed

\textsuperscript{437} Tushnet, 130-136. The quotes are from page 136. For the announcement of Houston’s death, see “Heart Attack Fatal to Charles Houston,” \textit{Afro}, 29 April 1950.
to admit Mitchell to a special sociology program located in Baltimore, claiming that the students there were offered the same courses by the same faculty as those on the main campus in College Park, which was all-white. This was expressly done so that Mitchell would not intermingle with students in College Park, “where our girls are,” according to Byrd’s earlier statement. It also asked the court to dismiss the case.\footnote{438 “Negro Sues To Get Into Maryland U.,” Washington Post, August 16 1950, B9; “Another Negro Sues to Enter Maryland U.,” Baltimore Sun, 16 August 1950; “Negro Admitted to Baltimore Unit of Maryland U.,” Washington Post, 31 August 1950; and “Accept Negro Student: University of Maryland Offers Its Baltimore Facilities,” New York Times, 31 August 1950, 31.}

Mitchell’s attorneys, which included Donald Murray and Robert Carter from the national office, rejected this offer, arguing that Mitchell, desiring to be a full-time student, wanted to attend classes in College Park, where the graduate office was located. Two University of Maryland professors, before a hearing on Mitchell’s application before the Court in late September 1950, testified that Dr. Byrd had claimed that it was “inadvisable” for Mitchell to attend the College Park campus and that the special courses in Baltimore were specifically designed to keep him off the campus. In October 1950, Mitchell received a favorable ruling from Judge John T. Tucker of the Baltimore City Court when he won admission to the graduate program in sociology in College Park. Tucker ruled that the special courses in Baltimore were a violation of Mitchell’s constitutional rights because he was denied the opportunity to interact with his fellow students and was unable to participate in seminars and other campus activities. Mitchell was the first African American to attend classes on the main campus. The university board of regents would decide whether to appeal the decision when they met in mid-October, but State’s Attorney General Hammond advised against it, claiming that “the
law is pretty well settled in that respect.” Like McCready, Mitchell wrote to the
Baltimore branch expressing his thanks for their support and that he could adequately pay
them back by achieving academic excellence.439

Once the wall of segregation was breached with the McCready case, and cracks made
wider by admitting Parren Mitchell to the main campus, the rest of the edifice came
crumbling down. President Byrd announced in April 1951 that henceforth all
applications to the graduate and professional schools in Baltimore would be considered
“without regard to race, color, or creed,” a decision made by the Board of Regents not
long before.440 Although Richard Tyson was unsuccessful in his bid to enter the
university’s School of Pharmacy, Donald Stewart, now interested in entering the Medical
School rather than the School of Dentistry, entered that program along with Roderick
Charles in September 1951.441

Hiram Whittle, who also brought suit in 1949 against the School of Engineering, was
admitted in January 1951 when the University’s Board of Regents voted to admit him as

439 “Baltimore Court Ruling in Case Would Establish Campus Precedent,” Washington
Post, 4 October 1950, B1; Parren J. Mitchell to Baltimore Branch of the N.A.A.C.P., 5
October 1950, Clarence Mitchell Papers, LOC. That same month the U.S. Supreme
Court denied the University of Maryland a review of the Maryland Courts of Appeals’
decision in the McCready case. See Lewis Wood, “Maryland School Must Admit
440 “Color Bar Ended At Professional Md. U. Schools,” Washington Post, 27 April 1951,
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441 “Third Student Will Enter U. of Md. Medical School,” Afro, 2 February 1952. Tyson
attended Columbia University instead, completing graduate studies in science and
education. He later attended Howard University’s Medical School, graduating in 1963.
See Donald Murray to Robert L. Carter, 24 October 1950, Mitchell Papers, LOC and
Jacques Kelly, “Dr. Richard Fowler Tyson [Age 79], Family Practitioner Sued UM in
1949 Over Segregation,” Baltimore Sun, 7 December 2007, accessed through
maryland-baltimore-county-tyson.
the first black undergraduate of the university after the attorney general advised them that they could not win their case. He also lived in one of the dormitories on the College Park campus. Whittle had graduated from Baltimore’s Dunbar High in 1949 and had applied to the University of Maryland’s engineering program, but had to attend Morgan State College because Maryland refused his application. Since the NAACP was looking to open up the university beyond the graduate and professional programs, Whittle answered the NAACP’s call and brought suit in Baltimore City Court along with the six other cases, including the McCready case. After the success of his suit, Whittle, like his predecessors, thanked the Baltimore NAACP for its assistance, among other supporters, and pledged to comport himself well while matriculating through the program. However, it would take the 1954 Brown decision to open up the university to accept African American students on a large scale.

Making a Bid for Power: The Baltimore NAACP’s Initial Efforts to Make ‘Separate but Equal’ A Reality in Public Schools

The Baltimore NAACP, the Afro, and black Baltimoreans certainly did not accept Jim Crow segregation and the indignities imposed on those who lived under it, but while it existed they made a concerted effort to establish and maintain some black autonomy and press local politicians and school board officials to truly equalize black educational


\[443\] Hiram Whittle to Lillie Jackson, 8 February 1951, Mitchell Papers, LOC. Although Whittle did not experience any racial incidents while at Maryland, he never completed the program but instead withdrew in 1952 and soon moved out-of-state. See Chakraborty, “Hiram Whittle.”
facilities so that they equaled those for white students. Their objectives during this period seemed to be threefold: 1) to equalize existing black institutions; 2) to create equivalent black institutions where none had previously existed; and 3) to appoint a black administrator to the school board to supervise black schools, whether liberal arts or vocational. This included Baltimore County as well as Baltimore City.

The fight to equalize black schools had begun even before the revitalization of the Baltimore NAACP in 1935 and was spearheaded by the *Afro* from the very beginning of its existence in 1892. From the late nineteenth century until the Depression, the *Afro* highlighted the overcrowded conditions within colored schools that forced students to attend in staggered shifts, the decidedly unequal comparisons to white schools in terms of curricula, resources, and facilities, and the decrepit physical conditions of the buildings. By the end of the 1930s, some black schools had so deteriorated that they would be designated as condemned, yet were still in use.

Conditions improved somewhat during the war years, but the results were negligible. By 1945, schools were extremely overcrowded that some students had to attend class in the hallways, the two black high schools, Paul Laurence Dunbar Senior High and Booker T. Washington Junior High, had double the designed building capacity, and some elementary schools had to have temporary structures built to handle the overflow. The buildings that black students were educated in were also way undervalued, to the tune of $6 million, according to the *Afro*. The Baltimore NAACP and the *Afro* made these facts publicly known in an open letter to Mayor Howard Jackson during the 1942 March on

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444 Farrar, 41.
445 Ibid, 41-42.
Annapolis and again in November 1945 in an editorial to Elmer Henderson, new assistant superintendent for Colored Schools, but their demands seemed to fall on deaf ears. This situation was all the more appalling because no white school experienced such overcrowding, segregation creating a situation where there were vacant seats in white schools. The Afro went so far as to claim “the greatest crime in the Baltimore community is the overcrowding in the Colored Schools.”

The lack of adequate physical facilities was bad enough, but black schools also suffered a curriculum that placed them at a severe disadvantage when compared to their white counterparts, exacerbated by inferior or nonexistent amenities such laboratories, auditoriums, and gymnasiums. Even materials such as books were hand-me-down leftovers from the white schools, and were generally out-of-date. Not provided with a curriculum that was “vitally connected with every day activity,” students were stuck in the past and unprepared for the here and now, much less the future. For example, during the war, black students at both civilian and government defense-training centers were not instructed in courses such as electricity, printing, radio electronics, and welding like white students, and advanced courses in shipbuilding and shipfitting at the Vocational Defense Training Center for Negroes were nonexistent. This made it nearly impossible for African Americans to qualify for good-paying skilled positions at Martin Aircraft Company or Bethlehem Steel, two of the largest defense contractors. Those few centers that did offer such courses lacked the instructors, restrooms, space and equipment, further

handicapping African Americans after the war. As a result, the black community suffered from the lack of a highly skilled laboring class that provided a market for black professionals and businesspeople, stifling the black community’s upward mobility. The same was true for liberal arts training, as “it is generally known that the curriculum in Negro schools is a year behind.”

Of course, as David Terry notes, black students lagged behind their white counterparts not because of any deficiencies within them, but rather because of the undemocratic conditions under which they were forced to learn. White schools sometimes suffered these same deficiencies, but every black school was severely underfunded and sometimes lacked even basic materials and equipment such as blackboards, desks, and chalk. Those that were acquired were in many instances hand-me-downs from the white schools, out-of-date, and often worn and damaged. Students at School No. 115 were warmed in winter by a potbelly coal stove and they and fellow students at several other schools were without a cafeteria, requiring them to leave school and walk home for lunch.

Luckily, one of the most important things that black schools had in abundance was dedicated and caring teachers and administrators. Education was one of the few middle-class occupations afforded African Americans in the Jim Crow era, and many took advantage of the training to create a nurturing learning environment that sought in many ways to make up for the lack of material resources and physical surroundings. Though they demanded much, black students greatly appreciated their teachers and administrators.

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447 Farrar, 39; Baum, Brown in Baltimore, 44. The first quote is taken from Farrar and the latter quote by Juanita Jackson Mitchell, is taken from “Negroes Request School Control,” Baltimore Sun, 16 February 1945.

448 Terry, 294-295.
because they were intimately involved in developing well-rounded individuals who not only excelled academically, but were also able to negotiate a world that was at best indifferent and at worse, decidedly hostile. In fact, some teachers and administrators, bolstered by the household and the community at large, were so effective in creating a nurturing environment that many students found it hard to believe that the world looked on them as second-class citizens, since they were treated like they were first-class and were expected to act as such.  

Alas, Jim Crow took its toll on teachers as well. Teachers sometimes grew increasingly frustrated with the conditions that they taught under, and the 17,000 black teachers who earned a living in segregated schools near the end of the war were seeking opportunities elsewhere. The Afro pointed out in the beginning of the fall 1944 school year that 108 teachers had left the school system since the previous year, with most earning better pay in better facilities and under better conditions in other places. The Afro blamed school officials, who were fully aware of the conditions that teachers faced but did nothing to rectify the situation and went so far as to threaten the livelihood of those who complained.

The unequal disparities in the Baltimore City educational system were not lost on Board president Roszel Thomsen. Appointed by Mayor McKeldin in March 1944, Thomsen declared in February 1945 “no one would pretend that colored and white schools are on an equal level.” However, he and the Board of School Commissioners certainly did not operate with the same sense of urgency in correcting the many problems

449 Ibid, 296-298.
450 “Why Teachers Resign,” Afro, 30 September 1944; Baum, 43.
that the NAACP, the *Afro*, and concerned parents would have liked. Instead, they counseled patience in the face of increasingly desperate circumstances; parents should wait until new facilities were built for white students so that their children could once again “inherit” the hand-me-down buildings. He announced that the board was doing its best to address the disparities, but that it would take a number of years, since the war had brought on conditions that made it impossible at that time to construct new facilities. The board intended to build a new colored vocational school, but had not yet chosen an adequate site to do so. The board obviously had some unfinished items on its agenda, because seven years later, in 1952, Superintendent William Lemmel was still counseling patience, telling one parent that “we shall have to do the best we can under crowded conditions.”

As far as curriculum went, Thomsen was very blunt in admitting that the school system would find it too expensive to equalize curricula. He said that too few black students would sign up for courses that were standard in white schools. This line of thinking may have stemmed from a situation in 1942 when the school board met with Carl Murphy and other members of the Citizens Committee on Defense Training to provide African Americans those training courses that had previously been available only to whites. The school board agreed to train African Americans in plumbing, electricity, and other advanced vocational courses at the Colored Vocational School, with the caveat that enough African Americans had to enroll in them (thirty per class) before they were

451.“Thomsen Admits Schools Inferior,” *Afro*, 17 February 1945; Baum, 44; Terry, 295.
implemented. Unfortunately, black student enrollment was low. This may have made
the school board wary of making future concessions.452

Despite their perceived misgivings, curriculum improvement in some black schools
was one of the items on the board’s agenda for the upcoming school year. In February
1945, Thomsen said he and the board believed that the differences in curricula, courses,
and programs “should be eliminated as soon as possible.” In May 1945, Thomsen told an
audience of the black Frontiers’ Club that the board received a $10 million postwar
construction loan would pay to replace three elementary schools that were condemned in
the 1920s, and other funds would go to improving other black facilities. However, one
important announcement was bittersweet. Next fall, more courses would be added to the
curriculum at Carver Vocational School to become a black vocational high school, but
that the program would still reside in the overcrowded old building for at least another
two years before it could move to its new, still undecided, site.453

By the mid-1940s, the Baltimore NAACP had made significant progress on the second
objective, at least as far as Baltimore County was concerned. As noted in Chapter Two,
no black high schools existed in Baltimore County in the early 1930s; African Americans
had to travel to Baltimore City to attend high school after passing a qualifying exam.
When Thurgood Marshall and the NAACP were unsuccessful in their legal efforts to
admit Margaret Williams to all-white Catonsville High School in 1935 because of the
lack of equal facilities, the Baltimore NAACP concentrated on having the Baltimore
County Board of Education build black high schools. They were successful in having

452 “Thomsen Admits Schools Are Inferior,” Afro; Baum, 44; Farrar, 40, 54, n. 38.
453 “Negroes Request School Control,” Baltimore Sun, 16 February 1945; “A Vocational
High School,” Afro, 19 May 1945; Baum, 44.
black high schools built in Catonsville and Towson, which is approximately 7 miles north of Baltimore. ⁴⁵⁴

Getting the Baltimore County school board to build the high schools was just the first step; the NAACP had to force them to equalize the schools, especially in terms of the curriculum, salary scale, and vocational facilities. The county was either too slow or reluctant in doing so, since the Baltimore branch had to threaten court action. The threat worked, for foreign language, art, and physical education were added during the 1945 school term. In addition, the salary scale between black and white teachers was balanced, the NAACP having won equalization of salaries through the Maryland state courts back in 1941. The only issue that seemed unresolved was the lack of comparable vocational training, though the county school assured the NAACP that such training would be established in the new high school at Turner Station. In what may have been a ripple effect from the threatened action against the Baltimore County board, the NAACP also received a report from the superintendent in St. Mary’s County that the colored schools there would also be improved. ⁴⁵⁵

As far as the third objective was concerned, the Baltimore NAACP and the Afro believed that many of these problems would not exist or would have been addressed if African Americans were represented on the school board. In fact, this was a major concern during the 1942 March on Annapolis, when the Citizens Committee for Justice, which prioritized placing African Americans on the boards of several state and local

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⁴⁵⁴ “Some of the Accomplishments of the Baltimore Branch NAACP,” n.d. [1945], NAACP Papers, II-C-77. There was a third black high school built in Sparrows Point in southeast Baltimore.
⁴⁵⁵ “Some of the Accomplishments of the Baltimore Branch NAACP,” [1945]; “Report of the Executive Secretary for One Year In Office, July 1946,” NAACP Papers, II-C-77.
policy-making and/or governing bodies and commissions, called it “essential justice” for Mayor Jackson to place an African American on the school board, particularly since black Baltimoreans were taxed to support the system as well. Unfortunately, justice was apparently not something that Mayor Jackson was interested in establishing, as he appointed three white members—two of them incumbents—to the school board in the immediate aftermath of the march, justifying his decision by arguing that the last position was filled, ironically, by following the city charter, which allowed for nominees to be appointed to municipal entities “without regard to political, racial, or religious consideration.”

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It took Jackson’s successor, Theodore R. McKeldin, who was more sympathetic to the black concerns, to rectify the situation as he appointed George W.F. McMechen to one of three vacant seats in March 1944. McMechen, a product of Morgan State College and Yale Law School, had been a practicing attorney in the city for forty years.

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McMechen’s appointment was welcome news to the NAACP and the Afro, and temporarily staved off an idea that they were both contemplating at that moment. While waiting for McKeldin to make his decision, they were considering taking legal action to enact equalization just as the national NAACP had with its current legal campaign. The

456 “Open Letter to Mayor Jackson,” Afro, 16 May 1942; “No Discriminations Made in Selections, Mayor Says,” Baltimore Sun, 29 May 1942; Terry, 289, 292; Baum, 41-42.

457 “The Mayor’s Appointment,” Afro, 25 March 1944; Baum, 43. McMechen, it may be remembered, had made his own history by attempting to purchase a home on a white block in 1910. His home and life were threatened, and the City Council passed a residential segregation ordinance, the first of its kind in the United States. His troubles prompted the formation of the Baltimore NAACP. See Power, “Apartheid Baltimore Style” and Gretchen Boger, “The Meaning of Neighborhood in the Modern City: Baltimore’s Residential Segregation Ordinances, 1910-1913,” Journal of Urban History, 35, no. 2 (2009).
Afro reported in March 1944 that a black parent in Washington, D.C., whose child was turned away from a school close to home because of race, was planning to put the legality of segregation on trial. Carl Murphy considered doing the same, asking whether the Baltimore branch’s legal committee could study ways “to compel the city with its Jim Crow system to provide the equal accommodations which the law guarantees.” The NAACP and the Afro expected too much from McMechen. His power to affect any substantial changes was limited, considering his was only one of nine voices on the school board. He and the other administrators of the Colored Division did not have much success in making the system “equal” as much as it was already “separate.”

Far from discouraged, the NAACP and the Afro saw another chance to place an African American in a position with the authority and power to supervise colored schools within the Jim Crow system when assistant superintendent William Flowers passed in January 1945. Arguing that only a black administrator would be most responsive to black needs, black leaders hoped to replicate the system in place in Washington, D.C., where a black assistant superintendent held authority over the staff of the colored schools. Asking for authority over a decidedly unequal system was not ideal, but at that time, the black community had no choice, as Juanita Jackson Mitchell made clear at one school board meeting when she exclaimed that “we [African Americans] as Americans do not accept segregation but it is forced on us.” However, she also made clear that black

458 “Legality of Dual School System to Get Court Test,” Afro, 19 February 1944; “Jim Crow Robs School Children,” ibid, 4 March 1944. Nothing came of the Washington, D.C. incident, since it would be six years before a suit was brought to court by lead plaintiff Spottwood Thomas Bolling, Jr., who sought to desegregate the district’s schools in 1950. This case would become one of five decided before the Supreme Court under Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka in 1954).
459 Terry, 290, 292.
Baltimoreans would not tolerate such a system for long, as “we are determined not to stop until segregation is no more,” since it was decidedly harmful to black students.\textsuperscript{460}

The board did not share black leaders’ concerns about black board representatives and administrators. Thomsen did not subscribe to the notion that an autonomous black administration would be best in managing the colored schools and stated that the current structure was sufficient. He pointed out that Elmer Henderson, who had succeeded Francis Wood after his death as colored school director, was privy to superintendent and assistant superintendent meetings. Later in November 1945, Henderson was promoted to assistant superintendent of colored schools, but Thomsen was quick to point out that the NAACP’s request was not a factor in the decision, though the \textit{Afro} certainly saw it that way, labeling Henderson “superintendent” in an article that pressed him to immediately address overcrowding in black schools.\textsuperscript{461}

\textbf{“Until Segregation Is No More”: The NAACP Moves from Equalization to Integration}

Baltimore’s black leadership intensified its campaign to relieve overcrowding in the immediate post-war years. As January 1946 opened, the Baltimore NAACP attempted the same strategy that the national NAACP had used in the Murray and Gaines cases in 1936 and 1938: getting black students admitted to specialized white schools because

\textsuperscript{460}“Negroes Request School Control,” Baltimore \textit{Sun}, 16 February 1945; Baum, 44.
\textsuperscript{461}“An Assistant Superintendent,” \textit{Afro}, 27 January 1945; “Name School Superintendent,” \textit{Afro}, 3 November 1945; “What the School Appointment Means,” ibid, 10 November 1945; “The No. 1 School Problem,” ibid, 17 November, 1945; Baum, 44-45.
there were no equivalent black facilities. Toward that end, the NAACP targeted the Mergenthaler High School, where white students were trained in special printing courses, and Robert E. Lee School, which had an accelerated junior high curriculum. The NAACP presented the names of three black youths for admittance to Mergenthaler, but the board rejected them and instead tried to equalize facilities at Douglass High School, promising to place linotype machines there. To stave off entrance to Lee, the black community was told the board approved a similar school to be opened during the spring semester.

At the same time, the Afro did a series of exposes on the terrible conditions in Booker T. Washington High, admittedly one of the worst schools in the system. It was not only overcrowded, requiring students to attend on staggered schedules, but the building itself was in total disarray. The auditorium was filled with broken seats and torn curtains, the bathrooms were filthy, there were holes in the roof, the windows were filthy and had not been cleaned in years, and the whole place sorely needed a paint job. The cafeteria was too small to hold all the students so they had to eat in shifts from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., and the shop and athletic facilities were practically useless because of outdated equipment. Science laboratories and physical education facilities were lacking. If that

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462 January 1946 was also the same month when Ada Sipuel sought admission to the University of Oklahoma but was denied because of race; her case went to the Supreme Court as Sipuel v. Board of Regents of University of Oklahoma in 1948.
463 “Negroes Will Attempt to Enroll in School,” Baltimore Sun, 4 January 1946; “Speedup Schools for Negroes Set,” Baltimore Evening Sun, 16 January 1946; “NAACP Objects to New Class,” Afro, 26 January 1946; Baum, 45. The Afro would have welcomed more linotype machines, for the paper had to compensate for the lack of adequate training of its apprentice printers by training them themselves. The Afro exposed the sore lack of modern printer equipment at the Colored Vocational High School in an editorial entitled “One Linotype Is Not Enough” on January 19. It also gave a warning that it could seek legal action.
were not enough, books and desks were in such short supply that students had to share them, or trade off using them every other day. The list of deficiencies went on and on, and the *Afro* did its best to document them all. On top of all this, the building was a certified firetrap.464

The *Afro*, along with black leaders and parents representing one thousand PTA members, presented their case to the school board on January 17, 1946, petitioning them to take immediate action, asking for an end to overcrowding and staggered shifts, to renovate the building, and find another location for a new junior high school. Thomsen had to admit that Washington High was one of the worst, and put a committee of board members and administrators on the case. The black community raised such a stink that Mayor McKeldin was compelled to intervene. He toured the high school and was greatly appalled, vowing to have Thomsen and the school board make immediate improvements. McKeldin not only wanted improvements made, but he also believed that the colored school headquarters should be moved “where it belongs,” from Washington High’s back lot to the system’s main office.465

All of the damning exposes seemed to have the desired effect. The board made finding solutions its “highest priority” by earmarking $12,500 to renovate Washington High while planning to construct a new colored vocational school, to be named Carver Vocational School, along with five new elementary schools. But if Thomsen and the board believed that these actions would pacify the NAACP and the *Afro*, they were sorely

465 “Mayor to View School Inequalities,” *Afro*, 9 March 1946; “Mayor Inspects Junior High,” ibid, 16 March 1946; Baum, 46.
mistaken. The *Afro* kept up the assault, continuously publicizing the bleak conditions at Washington and other black schools through graphic and illustrated articles and editorials for the rest of the year, impressing on their readership that the conditions of and in the schools demonstrated how disinterested school officials were in improving black education. That was made clear when the *Afro* reported later in the year that though black children comprised only 34% of the total school population in Baltimore, they occupied 49% of the schools that the George Strayer Survey had condemned as severely substandard in 1922.\(^{466}\)

In the midst of all of this, the board hired William Lemmel, from Wilmington, Delaware, as superintendent. Lemmel brought a liberal perspective on social and educational issues to the board. In fact, his appointment only added to the board’s already liberal perspective. Walter Sondheim, an executive in a large, Jewish-owned downtown department store, joined the city school board in 1948. In a 1971 interview, Sondheim stated that “any opportunity to encourage, or to lessen the impact of a segregated system, was something that was welcomed by the board.” As an example, he noted that the board superintendent initiated integrated teacher meetings, hardly a revolutionary act from today’s perspective, but in the post-WWII Jim Crow era, such

meetings were unheard of.\textsuperscript{467} However, though most school board members may have found segregation personally abhorrent, they, unlike civil rights activists, believed that they had to uphold the state law and city ordinance, both of which mandated segregated education. Therefore, their vote on desegregation matters conformed to the law rather than their principles. Lemmel, whatever his personal feelings, felt he had to abide by the law, and though the black community accepted him, it would take him some time to enact a permanent solution to the overcrowding in Washington High, and that did not include letting black students occupy empty seats in white schools.\textsuperscript{468}

Instead, Lemmel transformed a formerly white elementary school into a temporary black junior high school renamed the Harvey Johnson Junior High School, after a prominent African American pastor and civil rights leader during the late 19th century. Of course, the NAACP and the \textit{Afro} wanted a more permanent solution and raised the call again for a new facility. The NAACP also wanted construction of the new centralized Carver Vocational School immediately and grew increasingly frustrated as the board delayed doing so.\textsuperscript{469}

At the present, the Colored Vocational School was divided between five unsuitable, ill-equipped buildings that were spread throughout the city. The sites were overcrowded and as always, the equipment was insufficient or outmoded, helping to contribute to the future destitution of its graduates. As a specialized school, the Colored Vocational

\textsuperscript{467} Walter Sondheim, interview by Francis Collette, 19 October 1971, OH 8044, MJOHP, 12-13. Lemmel also introduced intercultural relations to the curriculum of city schools for the first time. See “Annual Report of Branch Activities-1947,” NAACP Papers, II-C-77, 4.

\textsuperscript{468} Baum, 46.

\textsuperscript{469} Baum, ibid.
School attracted students from around the city, and according to the NAACP, they had suffered long enough, so the city owed them the opportunity to rise to the level of the Edison Vocational School, which was situated on land distant from congestion. In February 1947, the NAACP wrote Thomsen protesting the proposed site of Carver, accusing the board of discrimination in its choice, since the acreage of the proposed site was far below the board’s acceptable standards. For example, Carver would sit on 8.34 acres, with 18%, or 1.50 acres, for the actual school. In contrast, the Edison Vocational School for whites sat on 12.88 acres. Other complaints included the heavy traffic congestion around the proposed site, the number of taverns, clubs, and other after-hours businesses within the vicinity, the lack of open space, which the NAACP said contributed to the “high and dangerous mortality rate from tuberculosis,” and the lack of outdoor recreational space, which they believed contributed to high delinquency rates. To possibly shame the board into changing their minds, the NAACP pointed out that the new Towson Colored High School in Baltimore County would sit on 18 acres. The NAACP requested an audience with the school board so as to “negate the necessity of making this issue so grave a matter,” that further action needed to be taken.470

The gentle chiding apparently was not enough to move the board, for the issue was still unresolved in March 1950. The NAACP wrote the Board of School Commissioners asking them to retain the Bentalou-Presstman Site rather than St. Mary’s Seminary site for some of the same reasons as above, namely that the St. Mary’s site was burdened with heavy automotive traffic, which made pedestrian traffic dangerous, caused disruptive

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470 Addison Pinkney, Executive Secretary, to Roszel Thomsen, 11 February 1947, Mitchell Papers, LOC.
noises, emitted smoke and other pollutants, and lacked sufficient space. And the black community still had to deal with the pressing issue of overcrowding and black students attending schools on staggered schedules, with the Baltimore Sun now documenting such terrible conditions in a number of articles and editorials in March 1950.471

One of the main reasons for the vacillation of the board in definitively choosing a site was its inability to satisfy both black activists, like those in the NAACP and the Urban League, and white residents around Presstman Street. The board had begun buying property for Carver around Presstman during the summer of 1949. Fearful and anxious about the recent influx of black families moving into that area of West Baltimore, white area residents—and even some who lived nowhere near Presstman—circulated a petition that garnered fifteen hundred signatures in September of that year. The demands of both sides seemingly paralyzed Lemmel, the board, and Mayor Thomas D’Alesandro, Jr., who had replaced McKeldin in 1947, and the situation was at a standstill. Thomsen let it be known that Carver, or another black school, was going to occupy the space. Hoping to break the stalemate, Mayor D’Alesandro brought all parties before the Board of Estimates, a body that approved capital budget proposals and was composed of the mayor, city council president, and comptroller, where the Presstman site finally won approval.472

472 “1500 Residents in Protest Against New Carver School,” Afro, 24 September 1949; “Thomsen Insists on School There,” ibid, 18 March 1950; “Bentalou Area Site Opposed,” ibid, 18 March 1950; “NAACP’s Strong Plea for Carver Site Published,” ibid,
Although the NAACP and the *Afro* were pressing for equalization, they were also looking into the possibility of initiating legal action to either create equitable systems or, barring that, integration of the white schools. Murphy, as head of the Baltimore branch’s Legal Redress Committee, had suggested in September 1948 that the branch look into possibly suing the school board to equalize facilities if it failed to allocate funds in the forthcoming school budget to do so. The first public call for an assault on segregation itself came in late 1947 when Harry O. Levin, who along with his son Marshall, were Carl Murphy’s personal and corporate attorneys, wrote an eight-part series in the *Afro* titled “Segregated Educational Facilities Are Legally Indefensible.” According to Levin, Maryland laws permitted segregation but did not require it. Furthermore, the state code stated that racially segregated schools within any district had to be equal, and if there were no comparable facilities for African Americans within those districts, then blacks could enter white facilities. In essence, Baltimore could choose to integrate. The *Afro* made the case that integration was not as disruptive as thought when it ran a number of articles depicting peaceful race relations in residential neighborhoods. By the time of the Carver school dispute in 1950, Murphy had basically given up hope that the school board would ever seriously tackle the issues affecting black children’s educational needs, and wanted to initiate legal action to eliminate segregation altogether.473

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473 “Harry O. Levin, “Segregated Facilities are Legally Indefensible,” *Afro*, 30 August, 6 September, 13 September, 20 September, 27 September, 4 October, 11 October, and 18 October, 1947; “Both Races Can Live Together in Harmony,” ibid, 8 November 1947, M-3; “Residents of Mixed Areas Like Situation,” ibid, 3 April 1948, 1, 20; Baum, 47.
Two factors account for the Baltimore NAACP’s desire to directly challenge segregation itself. First, Marshall and the national NAACP had been encouraging local branches in 1949 to challenge segregated education on the primary and secondary level. The national NAACP itself was assisting the local movement in Clarendon County, South Carolina, where black parents were legally challenging segregated conditions, the first case in the former confederate states. Murphy and Lillie Jackson were aware of this, for they both were members of the national NAACP’s Board of Directors. Second, the Baltimore Urban League had reported in April 1949 that segregation stifled black students’ educational aspirations and opportunities, exemplified by the fact that three prestigious educational institutions in the city only catered to white students. Baltimore Polytechnic Institute (Poly), the Mergenthaler School of Printing, and Baltimore City College were nationally recognized institutions. The successful completion of Poly’s “A” Course allowed its graduates to enter college engineering programs as sophomores. Baltimore City College offered its students two years of junior college level courses, and Mergenthaler graduated skilled printers. When the Urban League petitioned the board to accept black students into these schools because there were no comparable black institutions, the board not only refused, but also failed to create black alternatives in keeping with the city code of separate but equal programs. Once again, the school year opened in August 1949 with crowded black schools operating on staggered schedules and white schools with empty seats. For Murphy, the time had come for the NAACP to strike a blow against segregation in Baltimore.474

474 “Equal Educational Opportunities Asked”; “Inequalities Retard Students”; and “Baltimore Public School Inequality At a Glance,” all in Afro, 16 April 1949; Baum, 47-308
A Crack in the Wall: Opening Up Poly

Ironically, the organization to put the first crack in the wall of segregation in Baltimore schools was not the NAACP. The Baltimore Urban League (BUL), under its executive director Furman Templeton, was the first to open up segregated white schools without taking legal action, though the NAACP was one of a number of organizations that assisted them in doing so. Templeton had assumed the office in September of 1950, the same year that the school board had finally settled the Carver controversy.

Templeton had worked for the BUL for one year in the 1940s as industrial director, but left to take a position in civil defense work. He came back to Baltimore and worked with Carl Murphy for seven years as an administrative assistant, so he was well aware of Murphy and the NAACP’s intentions and goals for desegregating the city. The BUL decided to do its part in desegregating educational institutions, and Baltimore’s Polytechnic Institute was chosen first when Templeton appeared before the Baltimore chapter of Americans for Democratic Action (ADA), an organization largely consisting of white liberals, in June 1952 and delivered a speech that called for integrating white schools. Templeton’s presentation was so effective that the ADA enthusiastically took on the issue as one of their major projects, deciding that Poly should be opened first.⁴⁷⁵

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Baltimore’s Polytechnic Institute (known widely as Poly), was a prestigious, all-boys secondary level public school that specialized in mathematics and the natural sciences. Although a public school, it had a private school atmosphere, and this was due to its “A” curriculum, a nationally recognized, four-year college preparatory program that allowed its graduates to enter college-engineering programs at the sophomore level. The course existed in no other school in Baltimore, black or white, but black Baltimoreans were particularly affected because there was no program anywhere near Poly’s in any black school and they were certainly not allowed to attend Poly even if they qualified.476

With Poly now chosen, the Urban League gathered a coalition of organizations including the NAACP, the ADA, and the Council of Human Rights, along with interested individuals, to form the Coordinated Committee on Poly Admissions (CCPA) at a June 16, 1952 meeting. Almost immediately, and working secretly, the CCPA prepared to get African American boys admitted to Poly that fall. They initiated a three-part strategy: 1) to prepare the legal argument, based on Harry Levin’s articles, for integration should they go to court; 2) to contact select members of the school board to solicit their support; and 3) to recruit, interview, and prepare qualified black students, both academically and emotionally, to enter the program. Marshall Levin, an BUL member, was asked to prepare the legal arguments, Dr. Lemmel, superintendent of schools, was a “sympathetic supporter,” and black teachers and counselors were asked to submit the names of qualified black students, who along with their parents, would be interviewed to see if they

Desegregation of Baltimore City Public Schools, 1952-1966” (Ph.D. diss., University of Maryland, College Park, 1970), 16-17; Baum, 48, 51.
were truly qualified, if they were willing to participate, and if so, to prepare them for what to expect. Juanita Jackson Mitchell assisted by conducting interviews in the NAACP office, with Thurgood Marshall attending some of them.  

Sixteen young men were finally selected and applied for admission to Poly before the July 12 school board meeting. The applications caught the board by surprise, so it sat on them while it sought legal advice from the city solicitor and charged Superintendent Lemmel and J. Carey Taylor, assistant superintendent for secondary instruction, with designing and implementing an “A” course equivalent in a colored school, which was slated to be Frederick Douglass High School in West Baltimore. Meanwhile, Templeton contacted Mayor D’Alesandro, Jr. and now-Governor McKeldin for their support. D’Alesandro declined and deferred to McKeldin, who enthusiastically supported the endeavor and actually sent a copy of his letter to Templeton to the Maryland Commission on Interracial Problems and Relations, which cautiously advised the board to admit the students if facilities were unequal and unavailable. City Solicitor Thomas Biddison replied to the board in late July. He emphasized that facilities had to be equal in order for the city to maintain racially separate schools, citing the 1935 Murray v. Pearson case and alluding to the Briggs v. Elliott case from South Carolina currently before the Supreme Court. In his opinion, if the newly designed course did not conform to the Fourth

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477 Templeton, 23-24; Carrington, 16-17; Baum, 52; Aaron M. Glazer, “Course Correction; Two Years Before Desegregation Became the Law of the Land, a Baltimore High School Opened Its Doors to 13 Black Students—Very Quietly,” Baltimore City Paper, 5 September 2001. In the previous month of May, at its Annual Maryland State Conference, the NAACP resolved to make a more concerted effort to integrate Baltimore schools. See “NAACP Sets School Goals,” Baltimore Sun, 25 May 1952.
Amendment’s requirement of “substantially equal treatment” in publicly funded institutions, then the students had to be admitted to Poly.  

When the board met in August, they announced that they would consider the applications in the September meeting. To prepare themselves to testify, the CCPA set about gathering witnesses and planning its next move in case the board rejected the applications. At this point, there was some jockeying for position between the BUL and the NAACP. The BUL had initiated the action, and wanted Marshall Levin, as a representative of the Urban League, to testify before the board, but the NAACP had resolved a month earlier to integrate schools and Murphy had asked Marshall, as the representative for the NAACP, to also testify, which the BUL tried to prevent. However, the school board announced that anyone, but certainly Marshall, could address the board, so Marshall was slated to do so after the BUL made its case.

When the board met in a special meeting in September to a packed house of black and white spectators, the question before them, based on Biddison’s legal assessment, was whether the new program at Douglass was equal to that of Poly. If so, then under the Baltimore City Code, Article 32, section 22 (1950), the Board could maintain racially separate schools. If not, then under the “equal protection” clause of the 14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, the boys had to be admitted to Poly, or the “A” Course had to be abolished. The debates were serious and dignified throughout, a monumental feat.

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478 Templeton, 24; Carrington, 17-18; Glazer, “Course Correction,” “Let Negroes Enter Poly, McKeldin Asks,” Baltimore Sun, 23 August 1952; “Governor for Mixing Polytechnic Students,” Afro, 26 August 1952; Baum, 52-53. The school board wrote to the parents of the boys to persuade them to enroll the boys in the newly designed course at Douglass, but the BUL urged them to decline the offer, arguing that an equivalent program could not be set up in a month.

479 Templeton, 26; Glazer, “Course Correction”; Sondheim, OH 8171, MJOHP, 20-21.
considering the meeting was four hours. Of the sixteen applicants, the superintendent announced that ten were deemed qualified, three probably qualified and three ineligible because they had already completed the ninth and tenth grades. Thomsen then gave his assessment of the equivalent course designed by Lemmel and Taylor. In his estimation, there was no reason to believe that the course at Douglass, in terms of the quality of instruction and the “approximately equal” facilities, could not reach the level of Poly’s, though Thomsen did admit that since the applicants were all entering the ninth grade, they would not implement the full course curriculum into Douglass, only the first year, and implement each grade level course subjects as the boys matriculated through the program. The only question that concerned the superintendent’s staff was whether Douglass’ graduates would receive the same recognition and consideration as Poly graduates from colleges and local employers.480

In the initial testimony, there were a number of people who supported the Douglass Plan. Dr. Wilmer DeHuff, principal of Poly, after recounting the history of Poly’s “A” Course, believed that it could be introduced into a school as long as the students and faculty were diligent and willing to put in the work. Dr. Taylor, who helped design the Douglass Plan, tried to lay to rest any anxieties over whether Douglass graduates would receive the same sophomore standing on the college level by alleging that admissions directors at Cornell, the University of Maryland, Johns Hopkins and Lehigh were willing to give full recognition to Douglass graduates, though they qualified it by saying that they would like to review their college performance first. Lastly, Deputy Superintendent Dr. John Fischer, assured the audience that the intangibles—reputation and acceptability of

480 Thomsen, 236; Baum, 54.
graduates—would fall into place if all other elements, such as quality of instruction, physical equipment, and curricula, were equal.\footnote{Baum, 54-55; Carrington, 19-20.}

The opponents of the Douglass Plan were far more numerous. After Templeton introduced Marshall Levin to give the Urban League’s position, Levin made the case that tangible resources of the Douglass Plan were certainly not equal and never would be, which clearly affected the intangible elements of such a program. As of that moment, the program did not exist; no teachers had been selected, and those who would be did not have the experience of the Poly faculty; Douglass had neither a library nor librarian that could store and care for “A” Course books; overcrowding at Douglass limited the space necessary for such a program; and future funding for the program could not be guaranteed. Because of these variables, the Douglass Plan could never hope to match Poly’s in terms of its tradition and prestige, the national reputation of its faculty, the position and influence of alumni, and its national ranking. In an exchange between Levin and Thomsen, who himself was a attorney, the crux of the argument again revolved not around the question of segregation itself, which was before the Supreme Court with \textit{Brown}, but whether the state could make the Douglass Plan “substantially equal” to Poly; if it could not, Poly had to admit the black students, which would adhere to the law.\footnote{“Board Rules Negroes Can Enter Poly,” and “Poly to Admit Negro Pupils,” Baltimore \textit{Sun}, 3 September 1952; “City School Board Opens Polytechnic Institute to 12,” \textit{Afro}, 6 September 1952; Thomsen, 237-238; Carrington, 20-21.}

Other witnesses concurred with Levin. Houston Jackson, who had replaced Elmer Henderson as assistant superintendent of colored schools, like Juanita Mitchell and Marshall, argued that a racially separated program inflicted academic and emotional harm
on black students and justice could only be served if the boys were admitted. Templeton, J. Percy Bond, Director of Admissions at Morgan State College, and Robert Roy, Assistant Dean of the Johns Hopkins University School of Engineering, all agreed with Levin. Surprisingly, Superintendent Lemmel himself questioned whether Douglass graduates would receive equal treatment from colleges and employers. Lastly, Marshall spoke and testified that the chance of the Douglass Plan being equal to Poly was “at best a gamble. A gamble is not what I consider equality.” He strongly encouraged them to vote their conscience rather than stick to conformity.483

After the testimony, Thomsen took the board into executive session in an anteroom, where they first voted whether the Douglass Plan would equal Poly’s, and if the majority believed that it would not, then the boys would be admitted to Poly. When they appeared again before the public, Thomsen announced that in a 5-3 vote, the board had approved the admission of the boys to Poly. Thomsen stated on record that if the vote had been a tie, he, as president of the board who held the tie-breaking vote, would have sided with the majority.484

The BUL, the NAACP, the parents, and the black community were ecstatic. The *Afro* lauded the school board. Lester Granger, executive director of the Urban League, wired his congratulations to the school board. Edward Lewis, former executive director of the BUL and now executive director of the New York Urban League, sent congratulations to Carl Murphy. The letters to the editor of the Baltimore *Sun* favored the decision by three to one. When the school year opened in September 1952, thirteen boys—Carl Clark,
William Clark, Milton Cornish, Everett Sherman, Robert Young, Silas Young, Alvin Giles, Albert ‘Bucky’ Hawkins, Leonard Cephas, Clarence Daly, Linwood Jones and Victor Dates—entered Poly. They and their parents had previously received instructions from the Coordinating Committee on September 4 on how to handle the adjustment to the higher average required for a passing mark and the increased homework load. They were also warned to concentrate on their academics and not engage in extracurricular activities, though some chose to do so. Principal DeHuff, realizing that the boys were entering a new world, did his best to make them feel comfortable, calling together Poly’s student leaders a few days before school opened and having them serve as chaperones so that they blended into the student body. Years later, many of the boys, either in interviews or reminiscences, recalled the student body making them feel at least comfortable, if not totally welcomed.485

Two years before segregation itself was ruled unconstitutional, Baltimore had integrated one of its previously all-white institutions, making it the first city below the Mason-Dixon line to do so. Although significant, it should be remembered that this only involved one particular course at one school; as Carrington notes, Poly was a desegregated oasis in a desert of segregation. Yet the board’s willingness to concede that the inequities that existed in the curricula of a racially separated school necessitated integration encouraged the NAACP to widen its purview beyond just specialized institutions and document universal inequities, forcing the opening of the whole school system. Toward that end, Lillie Jackson contacted Lemmel in the aftermath of the Poly

485 “The Polytechnic Issue and the School Board,” Afro, 6 September 1952; Carrington, 21-22; Baum, 57; Glazer, “Course Correction.” For more in-depth treatment of the black students’ experience at Poly, see Terry, 317-326.
decision to seek permission to make an investigative assessment of black and white schools, in terms of facilities, curricula, resources, etc. Lemmel denied such permission, so the NAACP continued to attack segregated schools on a case-by-case basis as they had with graduate and professional schools.\textsuperscript{486}

The desegregation of Poly also reflected the continuing ambiguity over race that characterized the city. Years later, Walter Sondheim noted that the school board was more of a forward-thinking entity because its members were more educated, more community-oriented, more politically engaged, than the average citizen. Although many felt uncomfortable during the school board meeting with adjudicating on the question of segregation itself—that was a task better left to the Supreme Court—they were more willing to adhere to Constitutional mandates rather than the local and statewide de facto segregation. Even those who opposed desegregation of Poly did so on legal rather than moral grounds. This set the stage for future events that would change the course of the educational system in Baltimore—indeed the nation—in less than two years.\textsuperscript{487}

\textbf{Toppling Bricks Two and Three: Mergenthaler and Western}

Almost immediately after desegregating Poly, the black community set its sights on two more prestigious, all-white city institutions—the Mergenthaler Vocational High School of Printing and the all-girls Western High School. Although happy with victory at Poly, Carl Murphy, in his response to Edward Lewis, lamented the fact that since

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{486} Carrington, 9; Terry, 328.
\item \textsuperscript{487} Carrington, 8; Glazer, “Course Correction.”
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segregation was still legally sanctioned, the NAACP would have to desegregate schools one-by-one. Some parents had already picked their target. As soon as the thirteen boys entered Poly, black parents of the Park View Improvement Association tried to enroll five black girls in Western, which they argued was closer to their home. Of course, the girls were rejected because of their race. At the same time, Murphy was looking toward the Mergenthaler School, since he would very much like to hire highly skilled black printers. Opening up Mergenthaler had long been on the NAACP’s agenda. In 1946, the NAACP’s Education Committee had attempted to gauge the attitude of the board on a black student entering Mergenthaler, as well as entering School #49, which was an accelerated school. In response to these requests, the school board had created an accelerated program at a black school for the first time and placed one linotype machine in the printing department at Douglass High.488

In January 1953, the NAACP, representing four black boys, requested the board admit them to Mergenthaler, since the institution was clearly more advanced and offered better training. In fact, one of the boys hoped to be trained in linotyping, a program exclusive to Mergenthaler. At a meeting held on February 5, the school board considered and then rejected the NAACP’s request. First, Thomsen questioned whether the four applicants were qualified to enter the program since they had not taken the entrance examination. John Fischer, now acting superintendent after the sudden death of William Lemmel, and Thomsen then argued that the programs at Dunbar and Douglass, though not exactly equal, were in some instances equivalent to Mergenthaler, which was being merged with

488 “Parents Make Effort to Enroll Pupils at Western,” Afro, 27 September 1952; “Report of the Executive Secretary for One Year in Office, July 6, 1946,” NAACP Papers, Il-C-77; Baum, 57-58.
two other all-white vocational schools to create the Mergenthaler Vocational-Technical High School. Like the Poly meeting, they proposed that a similar program could be created at a black school, such as the still yet to be built Carver Vocational School. Again, Juanita Mitchell and Donald Murray, representing the boys, argued that the inequality of these specialty curricula not only stunted black students’ academic and emotional growth, but that the programs at Dunbar and Douglass could not be considered vocational training and were nowhere near equivalent. Thus, they pressed for admission as a constitutional right. Clarence Mitchell, Juanita’s husband, and the head of the NAACP’s Washington Bureau office, testified on more practical terms—maintaining dual programs wasted taxpayer’s dollars. Thomsen responded that whatever board members felt personally about segregation, their judgment rested on whether separate facilities and/or programs were truly equal; without a definitive ruling by the Supreme Court on the legality of segregation, which was currently before them, they had no power to eliminate it.

After the meeting, the NAACP considered suing the school board. Concurrently, Martha Pulley, president of the Park View Improvement Association and aware of the NAACP’s plans to sue Mergenthaler, contacted Juanita Mitchell about doing the same at Western. Mitchell advised her to meet with Murphy, where Pulley proposed that the NAACP initiate a suit against Western as well, combining the two cases. Murphy, as chair of the branch’s Legal Redress Committee, contacted the national office, where Jack Greenberg, an attorney with the NAACP-LDF, encouraged suing the schools, claiming 489

that no program developed at black schools would ever equal those already established. Murphy and the committee proceeded with their plans to initiate legal action, though they chose to separate the two cases.490

In a private meeting with Fischer and Thomsen, Carl Murphy admitted that three of the four applicants were unqualified, but the fourth candidate, a high school graduate, was highly qualified. Asking Thomsen to reject the applicants so that the NAACP could bring it to court, Thomsen promised to do so and expedite filing the case quickly, though he pleaded with Murphy not to create an unnecessary situation at Mergenthaler. In his response, Murphy suggested that the Mergenthaler case would be a referendum on segregation in Baltimore city schools itself, advancing beyond previous efforts to address inequality of opportunity. Toward that end, Murphy and the Legal Redress Committee began to recruit applicants in early April. By this time, two other black applicants had been denied admission to Mergenthaler. On April 22, Lillie Jackson forwarded the names of James Grove and Carl Smith to Thomsen, with a reminder of his promise to handle things quickly. These two applicants were added to the original four, with Juanita Mitchell and Donald Murray representing all six applicants. They also looked to recruit applicants to sue Western.491

On the Western front, there was the potential for continued organizational conflict between the NAACP and the BUL because the BUL was also looking to integrate Western, and set about creating a committee similar to the one for Poly. However, after

490 “NAACP Action Plans Slated,” Afro, 7 March 1953; Baum, 59;
consultation with Murphy, Templeton decided to let the NAACP handle the work that they knew best—litigation—and support them in any way possible. The NAACP was able to recruit twenty-four applicants for Western, most of whom wanted to enter its own accelerated program, the Advanced College Preparatory Program, which was geared more toward the humanities and whose graduates usually achieved sophomore standing in America’s liberal arts colleges. Many of the parents thought the girls would benefit from a single-sex educational environment. Like Poly’s program, no equivalent program existed anywhere in colored schools.⁴⁹²

In June 1953, the NAACP, while in the midst of the school board considering the applications of the twenty-four girls to Western, filed suit in Baltimore City Court against the Board of School Commissioners, Superintendent Fischer, the vocational education assistant superintendent, and the Mergenthaler principal. Marshall and Greenberg of the NAACP-LDF were now assisting Mitchell and Murray. They argued that Mergenthaler, the only institution in the city that had a three-year advanced high school vocational program in printing that could be not equaled by a racially separate program, violated the Fourteenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution and Articles 23 and 24 of the Maryland Constitution. They further argued that the Baltimore City Code mandating racially separate schools also violated the Constitution and therefore should be deemed unconstitutional.⁴⁹³

⁴⁹² Baum, 60; Carrington, 23. Western first had to maintain its status as a single-sex school, which was also challenged in 1953. For more on that fight, see Carrington, 23-25.
⁴⁹³ “Mergenthaler Printing School Case In Court,” Afro, 6 June 1953; Baum, 61.
The school board had decided to meet over the Western applications on June 23. Prior to this, Thomsen had asked Superintendent Fischer to prepare a report at a June 4 board meeting. Thomsen had hoped during the intermission the Supreme Court would rule on the school segregation cases presently before it, making such a decision on Western self-evident; unfortunately, the Court had not, and had requested that all parties prepare for reargument. Two days before the June 23 meeting, Thomsen had released Fischer’s report to the press. It emphasized that the City code had required racially separate schools and stated that an accelerated program similar to Western’s was planned for Douglass in the fall. Finally, the press release pointed out that “there is no evidence that enrollment in a co-educational school constitutes denial of equal educational opportunity,” giving the impression that the twenty-four black girls were simply trying to gain admission to a single-sex school, which Thomsen argued had no advantages over a co-educational institution, (clearly contradicting the reason for a school like Western in the first place) and therefore the board would deny the girls’ application and recommend they enroll in Douglass’ program.494

At the June 23 meeting, which lasted for three and a half hours, the NAACP once again presented its case before the Board. Juanita Mitchell, asked to present the applicants’ case, deferred to Carl Murphy, who introduced several speakers. Jack Greenberg of the LDF, Marshall Levin of the BUL, Morgan College president emeritus Dwight Holmes, and others testified that the question, as in the Poly case, was not one of segregation itself, but whether the proposed Douglass program—or any racially separate program—was equal to the Western program based on facilities, faculty, curriculum,

494 “Negro Girls to Enter Western High,” Baltimore Sun, 21 June 1953; Baum, 61. 322
resources, and intangibles. They all contended that it was not. Douglass was overcrowded, its facilities were inferior to Western’s, and they highly doubted that graduates from Douglass’s program would receive the same recognition and sophomore standing as Western graduates from institutions of higher learning. In addition, they argued that the board obviously placed value on single-sex institutions for whites, of which Western was one of two. Furthermore, Western was distinctive because it was one of three high schools that had “A” courses. Since black Baltimoreans were denied such institutions, the girls should be admitted to Western.495

The school board then met in executive session to consider the question. Several members, John Curlett and Trueman Thompson, were absent, and Thomsen asked Mitchell if they wanted to wait until the board was at full strength. Mitchell replied that any unfavorable decision was to be immediately taken to court in order for a decision to be rendered in time for the fall semester, so they wanted an immediate response. Granting them their request, Thomsen and the board voted. First, they voted on the advantages of an all-girls school over that of a co-educational school; only Bernard Harris, the sole black member, believed that such advantages existed. Then they voted on the merits of the Douglass program compared to Western’s. Unlike Poly, where a majority of members acknowledged the inequities and voted for admission of black students to Poly, Harris was again the only one voting for admission of the girls to Western, with Sondheim abstaining. After the vote, the board announced in the public session that the applications were denied. Sondheim explained later to Margaret

Neustadt of the ADA, who was involved in both cases, that the school board preferred to wait on the decision of the Supreme Court, who had delayed ruling on school segregation until the next term, which was October 1953.496

Armed with the school board’s decision, Mitchell and the NAACP filed a class action suit for all black girls denied equal educational facilities as those afforded for whites against the board, Fischer, the secondary education assistant superintendent, and the Western principal, but this time in federal court. Greenberg and W.A.C. Hughes, the Baltimore NAACP’s legal counsel, worked alongside Mitchell and Murray. Although filed in another venue, the parameters of the suit were similar to those in the Mergenthaler case—Western denied the girls admission based solely on race; Western was the only high school for girls with an accelerated program that afforded them sophomore standing in college; the board violated the Fourteenth Amendment by not offering the girls an equivalent program at Douglass; and the section of the city code mandating school segregation also violated the Fourteenth Amendment and was therefore unconstitutional.497

Although filed in 1953, the NAACP did not proceed with its suits at the request of City Solicitor Thomas N. Biddison. While the Baltimore branch was filing its case, the Supreme Court was almost ready to rehear arguments in the federal case until U.S. Attorney General Herbert Brownell, Jr. requested in August that the Court postpone the hearing scheduled for October until December so as to give the government enough time

to prepare its case. In the meantime, Chief Justice Fred Vinson, considered possibly the biggest impediment to a favorable decision against school segregation, died in September of a heart attack. President Eisenhower then appointed California Governor Earl Warren as Chief Justice, who was sworn in on October 5, and the Court heard rearguments on December 7. Biddison asked Mitchell and the NAACP to postpone its case until the Supreme Court issued its ruling. If the ruling was favorable, then their cases would be moot. If unfavorable, then they could proceed with their cases, to which Mitchell and the NAACP agreed to wait.\footnote{Mitchell, OH 8095, 56.}

While the NAACP—and the nation—waited for the Supreme Court, others either moved forward with their plans that seemingly anticipated a favorable decision against school segregation, or the city made substantial changes in personnel. Quietly, in mid-October 1953, two black men were admitted to a night course at Mergenthaler. The school board witnessed a change in leadership as President Eisenhower appointed Roszel Thomsen to the U.S. District Court of Maryland in February 1954. Walter Sondheim was appointed by Mayor D’Alesandro to succeed Thomsen. And in March, Houston Jackson, assistant superintendent of colored schools, held a meeting at Booker T. Washington High that sought to prepare for the integration of schools pending a favorable outcome, as African Americans were doing across the nation.\footnote{“Two Admitted to Mergenthaler,” \textit{Afro}, 10 October 1953; “Public Meeting Set to Study Integration in Public Schools,” ibid, 6 March 1954; Baum, 64.}
The Hammer Drops: Baltimore and the 1954 *Brown* Decision

On May 17, 1954, Chief Justice Earl Warren announced that the Supreme Court had reached a unanimous decision concerning *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*. It had found that school segregation was unconstitutional, declaring that no matter how ‘equal’ physical facilities and other ‘tangible’ factors were, segregation still deprived children of color equal educational opportunities. The Court stated in no uncertain terms “in the field of public education the doctrine of “separate but equal” has no place” since “separate educational facilities are inherently unequal” and deprive affected citizens of the equal protection of the laws guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. The ruling validated the NAACP’s contention that segregation, even with all material things being equal, was still psychologically harmful to black children, the Court proclaiming that segregation “generates a feeling of inferiority as to [black children’s] status in the community that may affect their hearts and minds in a way unlikely ever to be undone” and “has a tendency to [retard] the educational and mental development of negro children.” What the Court left unsaid was how and when desegregation was to proceed and what timetable should be set in order to determine compliance, a decision that would not be rendered until 1955 with *Brown II*, and even then, the ruling was ambiguous enough to cause confusion and delay.500

The black community marked the day as a momentous milestone in race relations, and those with an actively vested interest in the fight to eliminate segregation made clear their

500 The quotes are taken from Baum, 65 and Carrington, 26. For more on the *Brown* and *Brown II*, see Kluger, *Simple Justice*. 326
elation. By the end of the day, the *Afro* had printed banner headlines about the ruling. It proclaimed “Unanimous Verdict Most Important In This Generation,” counseled the city to “MIX SCHOOLS,” and reveled in the fact that “THURGOOD WINS.” Lillie Jackson declared, “This is the day for which our fathers prayed, and for which we, their children have suffered and toiled.” Furman Templeton considered the ruling “marvelous in its unanimity and significance” and “the most effective answer since the Emancipation Proclamation to those who would deny full American citizenship to minority group members.” He also offered the BUL’s assistance to the school board in planning and implementing integration.\(^{501}\)

As for the city itself, The *Sun* declared “High Tribunal Bans Race Segregation in Schools,” and an editorial believed that though the state had resisted integration, time and patience would help Marylanders, and all Americans, comply with such a reasonable decision. Governor McKeldin expressed positive compliance with the law, citing Maryland’s pride in being a “law-abiding state.” City Council president Arthur Price, in his capacity as acting mayor due to Mayor D’Alesandro’s hospitalization, stated that the city administration, “as good citizens,” would follow the Court’s edict. To Fischer, Baltimore’s superintendent, the Court’s decision presented “no special problems” for his administration since most staff activities were already integrated and Houston Jackson and Bernard Harris, the two black members of the superintendent’s staff and the school board, respectively, issued reports that the school system was already anticipating a favorable decision and formulating desegregation plans. Dr. Thomas Pullen, State

\(^{501}\) “Mix Schools,” *Afro*, 18 May 1954, 1; “Leaders Comment on Supreme Court School Decision,” ibid, 18 May 1954, 5-7; Baum, 66.
Superintendent, said that the state had a lawful obligation to address the problems with implementing desegregation. Walter Sondheim, the new school board president, was one of the few who was cautious in his response, noting that he had yet to be confirmed by the City Council, and was not too sure of what the Court’s ruling meant, therefore he would consult with Fischer.  

The NAACP, like the school board and superintendent’s staff, had decided to prepare for desegregation and formulate a plan while the Court was deliberating should it find in its favor. Lillie Jackson, Carl Murphy, Juanita Mitchell, W.A.C. Hughes, Thurgood Marshall, Morgan State College president Martin Jenkins, and Morgan president emeritus Dwight Holmes, held a number of meetings in the Afro offices, where they strategized on what desegregation should look like, and how they could work with school officials to bring about these changes. As indicated earlier, there were school board members who disdained segregation and preferred to do away with it, but had felt obligated to uphold it because of city and state laws. Knowing this sentiment existed, but that these individuals needed to be gently encouraged to follow their heart rather than their head, the NAACP and other black community leaders had a number of interactions with school officials, particularly Superintendent Fischer, where they presented detailed plans, supportive data, and persuasive arguments to assist them in going forward in developing a school system that benefitted all children in the city.  

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502 “Leaders Comment on Supreme Court School Decision,” Afro; Carrington, 28; Baum, 66-67.
503 Elizabeth Murphy Moss, interview by Leroy Graham, 13 July 1976, OH 8140, MJOHP, 23-25; Baum, 68.
A week after the Court’s decision, on May 24, Carl Murphy and Juanita Mitchell, as chair and secretary of the NAACP’s Legal Redress Committee respectively, met again with Fischer to urge him to present the school board with the following recommendations to be promptly implemented by the upcoming school year—1) that elementary school children attend the school nearest to them; 2) that accelerated classes throughout the city be available to all children; 3) that there is only one list for all teachers; 4) that city high schools and special schools be opened to all qualified children; 5) that the present summer adult education classes be no longer segregated; and 6) that the school board issue a statement of general policy it proposes to follow.\(^{504}\)

Both the NAACP and Sondheim wanted Biddison to weigh in with his opinion of the ruling and contacted him before the school board’s regular meeting in early June. The NAACP wanted to know if they should still proceed with the pending Mergenthaler and Western cases,\(^{505}\) and Sondheim wanted to know its implications so that the board could finally act to desegregate. At the board’s regular meeting on June 3, Sondheim read Biddison’s letter that declared that *Brown* totally nullified the city code that sanctioned racially separate schools. A motion was initiated by John Sherwood on the question of desegregating Baltimore’s schools, and Sondheim, knowing how each member would vote because he contacted them beforehand, accepted the motion, and the board voted unanimously for schools to open on a non-segregated basis that September. The plans to build Carver Vocational were abandoned because of the new Mergenthaler complex, and

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\(^{504}\) Mitchell, OH 8095, 57; Clarence Mitchell, “Separate But Equal Has No Place,” *Sun*, 18 May 1974; Carrington, 29; Baum, 70.

\(^{505}\) The Mergenthaler case was dropped by both parties in 1956, Western in 1958, Baum, 71.
the next meeting was moved up to June 10, where Fischer would announce his staff’s plans. The meeting lasted about thirty minutes. Baltimore was the first city below the Mason-Dixon to desegregate schools immediately after *Brown*. Washington, D.C., Wilmington, Delaware, St. Louis and Kansas City, Missouri soon followed.  

On June 10, the school board adopted a “free choice” or open enrollment policy when it came to desegregating city schools. As far as students were concerned, Fischer announced that “all of the standards and criteria which are now in force with respect to the admission of pupils to school, grades, and curricula shall continue in force except that the race of the pupil shall not be a consideration…” In addition, no child was required to attend a particular school, but when it came to overcrowding, which was a major problem in colored schools, Fischer proposed that schools be “districted” and would not allow students who lived beyond that line to enroll in that school. Finally, when it concerned teachers and staff, assignments, promotions, and transfers would now be based on merit rather than race. The school board approved the recommendations. On June 14, Fischer had the one and only meeting with all teachers to prepare them for such changes. It was focused on policy and said very little about integration, which was intentional, since openly discussing the matter could make it seem as if the transition would not be as smooth as planned.  

The NAACP heralded the vote to desegregate as a step in the right direction in African Americans’ long march to first-class citizenship and was thrilled that Baltimore was

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506 Mitchell, OH 8095, 57; Sondheim, OH 8044, 6; “Board Votes Unanimously To End School Segregation,” *Afro*, 5 June 1954; Baum, 70.
507 “School Board Adopts Policy Erasing Racial Basis for Registration,” *Sun*, 11 June 1954; Baum, 71.
leading the way. Lillie Jackson proclaimed “This puts Baltimore in the forefront of those cities which are on the road to true democracy,” and praised the school board for their efforts. However, the Baltimore NAACP, as alluded to earlier, did feel that they had to gently push the board to make such a decision, and believed that they should share in the credit, claiming, “the policy statements of the Board issued on June 3rd and June 10th embodied the requests made by the [Baltimore] branch.” Although the Baltimore NAACP recognized that some African American parents were as apprehensive as whites about the new policies—after all, despite their many challenges, some black schools were cherished community institutions that educated their children very well—and some black teachers and administrators were fearful of losing their positions in an integrated system, the NAACP thought that the open enrollment policy would allow black children to develop and grow as individuals as they had access to better resources and thus more opportunities.508

*Brown on the Ground: The New School Year Begins*

Before the school year began, the NAACP and the black community had to prepare some of their children to be racial pioneers, able to handle a new environment, new classmates, and the possibility of hostile students, parents, teachers, and administrators. The NAACP began to visit black schools and recruit black students and their parents to take the leap and enter white schools, since the school board took little action in

508 “We Must Learn To Live With It,” and “Residents of Both Races Happy about School Ruling,” *Afro*, 5 June 1954; Baum, 75.
encouraging or even publicizing transfer appointments. Some African American teachers were not ready for such changes because they feared losing their jobs, which Clarence and Juanita Mitchell found out when they visited Booker T. Washington High School on a recruiting mission; they were met by jeers rather than cheers. Most middle-class and elite black families sent their children to previously all-white schools. Since some of the schools they would be attending were more advanced in terms of curriculum and pace, some students also received extra tutoring to get them up to speed once they entered. When the school year started, the city held its breath as it wondered how many schools would receive black students and teachers and whether that process would be peaceful. The first day seemed to go smoothly, with both the *Afro* and *Sun* reporting that some mixing did take place, though not as much as anticipated, and that there seemed to be no major complaints or incidents.509

Just because the initial ‘experiment’ proved to be fairly successful did not mean that trouble was not on the horizon. Anxious that integration meant race mixing, among other worries, some white parents began to resist desegregation in mid-September, with most of the backlash occurring in the white working-class areas in south and southwest Baltimore. The picketers, consisting mostly of white women and children and carrying signs that read “Segregation Is Our Heritage,” and “We Want Our Rights,” protested at several elementary schools such as Charles Carroll Barrister Elementary on September 30, which soon spread to other schools. The most intense picketing took place at

Southern High School on Friday, October 1, which now had 39 black students in a student body numbering 1,788. There, white students and parents vigorously picketed outside while conducting a phone campaign, anonymously urging parents to take their children out of school and keep them away, using fear of alleged violence and pandemonium in and around the school to convince them. It grew so intense that Baltimore school officials requested that the police under Police Commissioner Beverly Ober intervene. They did and they arrested some unruly picketers. Meanwhile, Fischer and Sondheim conferred with the city solicitor, state attorney general, and civic leaders to help quell continued protest on Monday. Ober announced in a statement that police would keep order while Mayor D’Alesandro called for peace and calm and civic organizations worked over the weekend to bring order.  

510 “Integration at Southern Stirs Unrest: Six Arrested in Disorders over Desegregation of the School,” *Sun*, 2 October 1954; Baum, 85. It is ironic that the black community had to rely on Ober to protect their children when they had been trying to get him dismissed for years, with the *Afro* repeatedly attacking Ober as a ‘dictator’ and demanding that McKeldin fire him. The NAACP and the *Afro* considered Ober a “terrible choice as a police commissioner,” calling him corrupt, incompetent, and dangerous. In September 1951, Ober was accused by a Grand Jury with failing to investigate charges of police officers taking bribes and tipping off vice squad raid targets. The most egregious charge made by the NAACP against Ober was that he protected trigger-happy police officers such as Jerome Glass, who allegedly took bribes and shot six African Americans, two of them fatally. When Glass killed his second black victim in late 1950, the NAACP was horrified when Ober defended Glass, even seeming to justify Glass’ actions when he proclaimed that Glass’ victims were “disreputable characters” who somehow deserved to be killed because of what they were accused of doing (Glass’s second victim was accused of being a gambler who was shot in the back while fleeing). To Ober, the NAACP should “wait until he [Glass] kills one of your good colored persons, then maybe I’ll change my mind about him.” The NAACP was horrified and the *Afro* mounted a public campaign against him. See “Grand Jury Says In Effect that Col. Ober Should Resign,” *Afro*, 15 September 1951; “Is Commissioner Ober Protecting Officer Glass?” and “How Does Commissioner Ober Measure An Officer’s Guilt?” ibid, 20 October 1951; “History Repeats Itself and Ober Ought to Step Down,” ibid, 24 November 1951; “Police Have Black Record Under Ober,” ibid, 1 December 1952; “The Title of Dictator Applied to
One of the reasons why white protests occurred later in the month may have been due to whites outside the state. In Milford, Delaware, dissident groups such as the National Association for the Advancement of White People (NAAWP) led protests on September 30 that caused the school board to abandon its integration plans. Several leaders of the NAAWP travelled to Baltimore to encourage whites to protest there, and several hoped to help whites in Baltimore prevent the integration of its schools. In the protests at Gwynn Falls Park Junior High School in the white working class neighborhood of Edmondson Village, Clarence Mitchell noticed out-of-state license plates and concluded that this demonstration was organized from outside.  

Unlike Milford, desegregation in Baltimore would not be halted. The NAACP, city and school board officials, the police, religious, business, and civic leaders, and civic organizations such as the Coordinating Council for Civic Unity, all worked together over that October weekend to make sure that desegregation was not derailed. State law strengthened their position, since sections 92 and 223c of Article 77 of the Laws of Maryland banned school building picketing that sought to discourage student attendance. After being informed about the statute, Ober delivered a public statement that promised to arrest anyone who violated the statutes. This, along with a promise from Fischer that any student who intentionally failed to attend school would be suspended or expelled, discouraged further action and most students returned to school by that Wednesday, October 6. The rest of the school year was relatively calm and the Baltimore NAACP

Colonel Ober,” and “Will Ober Punish Glass This Time?” ibid, 17 October 1953; “Broken Glass, ibid, 7 November 1953; Mitchell, OH 8095, 32.  
511 Clarence Mitchell, “Foes of Integration in Baltimore and Washington,” Crisis (November 1954), 533-537; Watson, 270-271; Baum, 87; Durr, Behind the Backlash, 95.
recognized the efforts of the school board to make this first year as smooth a transition as was possible. Lillie Jackson, in a letter to Fischer, thanked him on behalf of the NAACP for his leadership, commitment and dedication, telling him that he deserved every accolade that he received. The National NAACP, which kept close watch on the situation on Baltimore, praised all of those responsible. Executive Secretary Roy Wilkins stated the “we feel that the desegregation process in Baltimore has been of very great significance” because of its open enrollment policy, where despite the few protests, “no exodus of white students occurred when Negro students enrolled in the former all-white schools.” Once again, Baltimore proved to be an important battleground in the NAACP’s campaign for educational equality, and like the Murray case of 1935 and the teachers’ salary equalization campaign of the late 1930s and early 1940s, those in the NAACP believed “that Baltimore could be a model for the South.” It would not be long after that Baltimore would achieve another first that put them in the forefront in breaking down Jim Crow segregation. 512

This Generation Rules the Nation

It seemed as if the telephone would never stop ringing. In fact, it rang so much that Juanita felt less like an attorney and more like the “hello girls” that operated the switchboards. Almost as soon as she hung up one call, another came in. They were mostly parents or fellow students calling her to get their child or roommate out of jail. Five had been arrested protesting at Northwood near campus; four at Hutzler’s downtown; six more at a protest at Stewart’s, which was also downtown; and three were still waiting for bail to be posted from demonstrations two days ago. She almost did not have the time to write down the message and then call those who had the means to get them out. She also had to get the word to her fellow attorneys—Robert, Tucker, and Archie—and let them know that there would be more cases on their desks by day’s end, as if they did not already have enough to deal with. Such was the life of an NAACP lawyer.

It had been almost two months since the South had been set on fire by the Greensboro, North Carolina sit-ins in early February 1960. Since then, it seemed that every community, large and small, had experienced some form of protest. In less than two weeks, the fire had spread from Greensboro to Durham, Winston-Salem, Elizabeth City and Charlotte, North Carolina; then to Hampton and Norfolk, Virginia; moved over to Nashville, Tennessee; and then descended on Rock Hill, South Carolina. Within a
month, black students from Georgia to Texas to Oklahoma were boldly entering places where they knew they would not receive a bright smile and a kind greeting before being asked what they would like for lunch today, but they refused to leave until they were served or arrested. Things were happening fast. Luckily, some folks were on top of it. All one had to do to keep up was pick up the Afro, since reporting a new battleground where young people were confronting Jim Crow head on was a daily occurrence.513

The rapid spread of the sit-ins caught some people by surprise. Almost all of the old guard in the national office was unsure what to make of the students’ actions or how to deal with the deluge of calls for help. In fact, Juanita and some of the others had met with Thurgood, attorneys in the LDF, and attorneys from across the country for a three-day conference in Washington about a week earlier to try to get a handle on the situation and map out a legal game plan. It would be a great relief to the students—and their weary parents and communities—to know that some of the best legal minds in the country were working diligently to make sure that their stay in jail was a short one and that they would be found innocent of any charges against them.514

Of course, to NAACP veterans in Baltimore, direct action protest was nothing new; some of them still reminiscenced about walking the picket line against discriminatory stores on Pennsylvania Avenue back in the 1930s.515 However, these protests were different from the ones they had participated in. They were concerned that the young

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515 For more on the Buy Where You Can Work Campaign, see Chapter One.
people were not only being arrested for trespassing but were putting themselves in harm’s way. Elsewhere, thugs decided after they showed up to have a little ‘fun’ by putting cigarettes out on the back of the protestors’ necks. Worse, a furious store manager decided that screaming at the top of his lungs that they leave the premises or else was not enough, like the one at Northwood Plaza who actually put his hands on Bernice Evans and shoved her.\textsuperscript{516} Some of them thought that the students were too impatient and wanted things too quickly, instead of working things out through negotiations or appeals. They were too ‘militant’ and their actions too ‘radical.’ It was best to let the NAACP handle it and do what they did best—take the matter to court.

Personally, Juanita commended the students for being ‘militant.’ She was certainly not afraid of the label. She herself had been accused—or praised, depending on one’s perspective—of being militant when she was a young woman leading the Young People’s Forum against Jim Crow in the 1930s and 1940s, and she wore it as a badge of honor.\textsuperscript{517} In fact, some people still saw her, her mother, and the whole Baltimore branch as ‘radical’ because they were too impatient. The higher-ups in the national office certainly

\textsuperscript{516} “First Incident,” \textit{Afro}, 22 March 1960. On the front page there is a photo of student demonstrators leaving the Northeastern Police Department after being released on charges of trespassing while protesting at the Hecht Roof Top Restaurant at Northwood Plaza near Morgan’s campus. In the photo was Joseph Daschbach, the manager of the restaurant, who was accused of shoving Ms. Evans, who was also pictured.

\textsuperscript{517} Mitchell and Kiah, OH 8097, 2, 4. Mitchell contended that the revitalization of the Baltimore NAACP in 1935 grew directly “out of the militant activity of the northwest Baltimore black young people [the Forum] who had come out of school and had no jobs” and that the Forum initiated a “new militancy” because of their activities. Later in the interview her sister, Virginia, claimed that more militant groups and organizations that formed in the city during the Black Power era, such as the Baltimore chapter of the Black Panther Party, could not accuse Jackson, Mitchell, and the Baltimore NAACP of “Uncle Tomism” because of their tenacity and persistence in breaking down racial barriers and demanding full equality under the law.
recognized their militancy, for they were constantly bombarded with letters, telegrams, and phone calls demanding that someone rein them in and remove Jackson because she was overstepping her bounds and pushing too hard too fast. If wanting to live as first-class citizens and reap its benefits in a democratic society was considered radical, then Juanita and her family wore the label with pride.

The students certainly did not care whether their actions were considered radical or not. All they knew was that they wanted to be treated as fairly as anyone else who patronized a public place, especially those businesses that were near their campus. Truth be told, it seemed counterproductive to them that a business that would be patronized by college students and turned a very nice profit because of it would have the audacity to treat them as if they were less than human or did not exist at all. It made no sense whatsoever. This is not what they expected from their hometown. They were well aware that white folks could, and would, treat them differently; their parents had explained that to them in one way or another. But to experience it firsthand was deeply unsettling and bothered them to no end. They could not let this continue, certainly not this close to home. The time was ripe again for the Civic Interest Group, or CIG, to jump back into action and do something about it.

In fact, they had been doing something about it for quite awhile; with the continued help of CORE and the NAACP, CIG would triumph over this as well, whether at Northwood, downtown, or anywhere else. Were they not successful in desegregating Read’s Drugstore near campus back in 1955, forcing them to open up all of their stores in the city? Did they not do the same thing at Arundel’s Ice Cream at Northwood just the
year before? Of course, they did. Things had slowed down after Arundel’s—a holiday break could do that—but the New Year brought renewed vigor and determination, and they no longer felt alone. They knew that other students around the country felt the same way they did and were doing something about it, too, just like they had for the past five years. They did not doubt the whole Northwood Plaza would be opened to them before long. All they had to do was keep pushing.

A City in Transition

The relative “ease” with which Baltimore accepted and readily complied with the Brown decision characterized desegregation within the city and the state. It stemmed from a “climate of compliance” that had been slowly but steadily developing from the end of World War II to the eve of Brown. One of the major victories involved Ford’s Theater, one of the premier theaters in the city, which was forced to abandon its policy of relegating African Americans to the second balcony—known as the “pit”—in 1952 after a protracted seven-year battle by the Baltimore branch. The branch maintained a picket line outside for three years while successfully reaching out to the Actor’s Guild to persuade its members to refuse to perform before segregated audiences. Ford’s actions caused other theaters to abolish segregated seating as well. In terms of other public

518 Debra Newman Ham, “…And We Pay Homage As We Sing:” Fair Morgan’s Frontal Attack on Segregation,” Morgan Magazine (2011): 4-10; “Morgan State’s Sit-Down Strikers Win Fight,” Afro, 28 March 1959.
520 Toward Equality, 27; Mitchell and Kiah, OH 8097, 3-4; Carrington, 10.
accommodations and recreational facilities, baseball diamonds, tennis courts, and municipal golf courses were also desegregated after a long fight with the Park Board, though swimming pools remained separate and decidedly unequal.\(^\text{521}\)

African Americans also found themselves breaking barriers in employment or rising through the ranks in their present positions. The Baltimore Transit Company and the Yellow Cab Company began to employ black operators and drivers in 1951, causing other transportation companies to do the same. Black policemen began to be promoted, and Gov. McKeldin appointed the first black police magistrate in 1951. The Fire Department, which had long been closed to African-Americans, began to accept black applicants in 1947 and finally started hiring them in 1953. Some African-Americans achieved white collar and supervisory positions as office managers, foremen, and technicians in city and state public offices, the Housing Bureau hired black inspectors, and a few black doctors were assigned to local hospitals.\(^\text{522}\)

Desegregation coincided with shifting demographics within the city. The 1950 census counted Baltimore as the sixth largest city in the country, with a population of 949,708. During the previous decade, 1940-1950, Baltimore grew eleven per cent while the whole Baltimore Metropolitan Area—Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Anne Arundel County—grew twenty four per cent. Suburbanization accounted for the decline of whites within the city, but an influx of African Americans and other immigrants of color took

\(^{521}\) *Toward Equality*, 23, 58-59; Sara Schuster, “The City In A Swing Set,” 89; David Terry, 259; Carrington, 10.  
\(^{522}\) *Toward Equality*, 24-25; 62-63; Carrington, 10.
their place. Between 1940 and 1950, the nonwhite population of Baltimore city rose from nineteen per cent to twenty-four per cent.\textsuperscript{523}

Despite these advances, Baltimore was still largely segregated in 1954 and African Americans still lived “an almost totally separate existence bounded on all sides by racial discrimination.”\textsuperscript{524} Those few gains that African Americans did achieve were certainly not due to altruism on the part of city officials or private entrepreneurs. The Baltimore branches of the NAACP and the Urban League, along with community and civic allies, had to press, pressure, threaten, sue, persuade, and picket to further the movement toward full equality. They were helped by the ambiguity that existed in race relations in Baltimore and the state. Whites made every attempt to maintain racial segregation and discrimination, but when desegregation did occur, though initially reluctant to cater to the new social order, they gradually accepted the circumstances and obeyed the law.\textsuperscript{525}

Although whites were leaving the city for the suburbs in increasing numbers during the 1950s, and nonwhites were slowly taking their place, whites still sought to maintain and strengthen the boundaries of racial control. In fact, those whites who remained may have sought to do so because of the continued influx of people of color. This was most apparent when it came to public accommodations. In 1955, the Maryland Commission on Interracial Problems and Relations, in conjunction with the Baltimore Commission on Human Relations, published a community self-survey project entitled \textit{An American City In Transition}. Charged with investigating and presenting an accurate picture of the extent to which economic, social, educational, and political prejudice and discrimination

\textsuperscript{523} Carrington, 11.  
\textsuperscript{524} \textit{Toward Equality}, 8.  
\textsuperscript{525} Ibid, 9; Carrington, 10.
inhibited several social groups—mainly African Americans—and prevented Baltimore from becoming the ideal American community, nearly 500 volunteers of various color, creed, and social status, beginning in 1953, reached about 100,000 Baltimoreans either through direct interviews or correspondence.\textsuperscript{526}

Recognizing that Baltimoreans were definitely “going through a period of great change in their attitudes and actions affecting intergroup relations,”\textsuperscript{527} a change surely evident with the desegregation of Poly Tech in 1952 before the self-survey was initiated, the Commission report found that in public accommodations, specifically limited to hotels, theaters and amusement centers, restaurants and taverns, and department stores, attitudes were either slow to change or did not change at all. In three of the areas, 75 percent or more of the establishments surveyed either segregated or excluded African Americans altogether. Hotels were the worst. One hundred percent of them discriminated, while twenty percent of department stores did so. The largest department stores, though, particularly the ones downtown, had racially discriminatory policies. Several of these areas would soon become targets of nonviolent direct action, and would remain centers of attention for both student and civil rights organizations over the next ten years.\textsuperscript{528}

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\textsuperscript{526} Maryland Commission on Interracial Problems and Relations, \textit{An American City In Transition: The Baltimore Community Self-Survey of Inter-Group Relations} (Baltimore, 1955), 9-10.\textsuperscript{527} Maryland Commission, \textit{An American City in Transition}, 10.\textsuperscript{528} Ibid, 207-208.
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Doing It in the Park…Or At Least Trying To

Although not included in the survey, public recreational areas and facilities were also racially segregated. The segregation of public parks, public playgrounds, and other recreational facilities was intricately linked to the racial segregation of the city, which resulted from decades of redlining, blockbusting, and restrictive covenants since the early twentieth century. The racial makeup of the particular neighborhood determined who had access to the nearby public recreational facilities, so those designated for black or white use reflected the racial composition of the neighborhood that surrounded it or was closest to it. However, when both black and white residential neighborhoods existed near a public park or facility, the recreational area was designated exclusively for whites only.  

The Baltimore NAACP, the Urban League, and several other local and civic organizations, made a concerted effort to desegregate public recreational spaces and facilities starting in the 1940s. The fight usually consisted of a two-pronged approach—grassroots, direct action protests and demonstrations in the form of sit-ins, boycotts, and picketing by local groups, and the Baltimore NAACP challenging the legality of segregation through the court system. More often than not, local citizens and/or groups would initiate public protests, and when the Board of Recreation and Parks proved

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529 Mitchell, OH 8095, 14-15; Schuster, 21. For an example of how public facilities were designated for whites only, though bounded by both black and white neighborhoods, Mitchell recalls that a black playground was built in Druid Hill Park in 1942 because black parents were arrested for taking their children to the playground supposedly for whites. In the late forties, she says that children were actually arrested for playing on the playgrounds of white schools and the parents would take their complaints to the NAACP.
obdurate, the local organizations would call in the NAACP to initiate legal proceedings. This was particularly the case with the city golf courses, where local protests eventually pulled the NAACP in, despite the fact that the branch originally left that fight to black Baltimoreans who could afford to play golf and were simply denied access, or, as what happened later, were relegated to using the golf courses on days exclusively designated for black use. Eventually, these golf courses, along with several other public recreational facilities, were either desegregated or permitted blacks and whites to compete in athletic games and contests.530

State parks, public beaches, and public swimming pools did not follow the desegregation of golf courses and the limited degree of interracial interaction on tennis courts, athletic fields, and gymnasiums, and the Baltimore Department of Recreation and Parks did not have any foreseeable plans to do so. The use of recreational space was of particularly importance to African Americans. These spaces allowed for a respite from both the normal demands and constraints of work and the racial discrimination encountered there, provided children with modes of social interaction with not only members of their own community but potentially those of other races, ethnicities, and backgrounds, and served as community gathering places for information, community action, and entertainment. Public recreational spaces had been heavily contested “theaters” since emancipation, for many African Americans believed that access to public spaces was one of the tenets of true emancipation and would open the door to access in other areas of more consequence in their lives.531

530 Schuster, 1-2, 50-88; Terry, 226-245.
531 Schuster, 41-42.
Thus, it was imperative that the Baltimore NAACP address racial segregation at public facilities such as Fort Smallwood Municipal Beach. Ironically, it was white allies of the Baltimore NAACP who informed local leaders of the racial segregation practiced at Fort Smallwood and Sandy Point State Park. In an interview during her later years, Juanita Mitchell recalled that the NAACP received an anonymous letter from a white supporter lamenting the fact that Fort Smallwood was reserved for whites only. The same method was used to expose racial discrimination at Sandy Point, as her mother received a letter in the mail, supposedly from a state employee, informing her that state funds were being used to maintain a racially segregated beach at Sandy Point.\textsuperscript{532}

One of the reasons it may have taken whites to point out to the NAACP the racial discrimination practiced at these two state beaches was because of their location. Both Fort Smallwood and Sandy Point were located in Anne Arundel County, directly below Baltimore City and Baltimore County. Fort Smallwood was located in northeastern Anne Arundel County, where the outer Patapsco River meets the Chesapeake Bay, about an hour from the city, and Sandy Point was at the northwestern end of the Chesapeake Bay.\textsuperscript{533} Though located in another county, Fort Smallwood and Sandy Point were owned

\textsuperscript{532} Mitchell, OH 8095, 55; Kiah and Mitchell, OH 8097, 21-22. From her tone and choice of words in both interviews, Mitchell seemed to be letting the interviewer in on a secret, finally revealing that there were whites that strongly supported the branch, though very few initially did so publicly. The secret that there were white supporters was more revealing because of white attitudes toward her mother. Lillie Jackson was a headstrong, outspoken and tenacious leader whose virtual holy crusade against racial segregation and discrimination and impatience with slow progress antagonized a number of whites, including some fellow activists. Therefore, to have white supporters may seem an anomaly. However, Mitchell notes that the NAACP “have always had white friends of freedom and justice who supported us” and “this has always kept the NAACP going.”

\textsuperscript{533} Fort Smallwood was the older of the two, serving as a city park of Baltimore City from 1928 to 2006. Sandy Point opened in June 1952.

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and operated by Baltimore City, with the Bureau of Recreation and Parks responsible for
administering both parks through its Board of Commissioners.\footnote{Schuster, 95; Terry, 260.}
Because of the distance from the city, it took a special effort, in terms of transportation and available funds, for
African Americans to reach both destinations.

The other reason was the conscious effort by Baltimore’s Board of Recreation and Parks to initially keep Fort Smallwood all-white. According to Sara Schuster, the Board had considered developing an all-black waterfront park to keep African Americans from venturing into Fort Smallwood since 1937. However, the city really did not have to worry because Fort Smallwood, which opened in 1928, was not patronized by African Americans, and so had never formally instituted Jim Crow segregation at its facilities. Location may have played a part in the lack of African Americans at Fort Smallwood, but it could have also been the fact that African Americans had two other beaches to enjoy the sun and relax—Carr’s Beach and Sparrow’s Beach. Their appeal may have stemmed from their location, which was a little closer to the city, situated on the Chesapeake between the city’s outer harbors and Annapolis, the state capital. But the greatest appeal was most certainly the fact that both were black-owned and privately operated.\footnote{Terry, 260.}

Fort Smallwood might have remained a well-kept secret from African Americans for quite some time were it not for the letters to the NAACP or the Dawsons, who decided that they would bypass their usual trip to Annapolis and spend Independence Day weekend at Fort Smallwood. Robert Dawson and his four children enjoyed sunning and swimming, and Fort Smallwood fit the bill. The first African Americans to play on Fort

\footnote{Terry, 260.}
Smallwood’s beaches, they were allowed to enjoy themselves for approximately forty-five minutes before the ugliness of segregation ruined the day. Again, because African Americans had never attended Fort Smallwood, there was no segregated beach set aside for their use, and thus no explicit Jim Crow policy mandating such. So, when the Dawsons initially entered the beach, there was some confusion as to what to do by park employees until park authorities were contacted and appraised of the situation. Receiving their answer, the park attendant informed the elder Dawson that because of their skin color, he and his children were not welcome and would have to leave. Dawson protested, but left in the end. Based on the letters that they received, the NAACP decided to investigate and test the validity of Fort Smallwood’s unstated Jim Crow policy.536

Meanwhile, black children were conducting their own investigation of why they were denied use of the white public swimming pool at Druid Hill Park, which was so much better than the designated ‘colored’ one—Druid Hill’s No. 2 pool—on a particularly hot day. Forced to stand on the outside while white children enjoyed themselves, the children wrote to the Afro about the discrimination they faced, which, of course, it published. Always vigilant in exposing Jim Crow, the Afro also publicized the poor recreational facilities designated for blacks only. Druid Hill Park’s No. 2 pool was one of them. Opened in 1921, the pool’s popularity was evident immediately, seeing between 600 and 1,000 patrons every day. This is not surprising, considering that it was the only outdoor pool for African Americans to use for the next several decades.537

536 Mitchell, OH 8095, 55; Terry, 259-260.
537 Mitchell, OH 8095, 56; “New Swimming Pool Popular,” Afro, 8 July 1921; ibid, May 21, 28 May 1949, 2, 9 July 1949; Terry, 259; Schuster, 93-94.
Though there was not a general outcry against segregated pools during the 1940s, the Board, based on unfounded rumors of black Baltimoreans’ planned efforts to integrate the city pools, decided in 1944 to make improvements at Druid Hill No. 2 pool. Its popularity as the only outdoor pool available drew record crowds, the Board noting that the previous summer saw an all-time high of 34,000 patrons. The Board also noted in its minutes that some African Americans, aggravated by the overcrowding, threatened to take over the white pool to relieve the situation. African Americans had already initiated legal action against the Board to open the golf courses on a desegregated basis, so the Board did not want them to go after pools as well. The Board commissioned an architect to design improvements in 1944, but there is no evidence that the Board went beyond this stage, and there were certainly no physical improvements made to the pool, despite seeing even more visitors over the next two years.\textsuperscript{538}

The NAACP’s decision to initiate legal action against segregated public parks, beaches, and pools was based on its own investigations and the actions of individuals and/or groups, particularly young people. In the case of Fort Smallwood, the incident that prompted a lawsuit against the Park Board occurred over a month after the Dawsons were rejected, when James Wood, Frances Murphy Wood, Lacy Hayes, Edith Bryant, Vashti Murphy Smith, and their children sought to purchase tickets to enter the public beach in August 1950. A cashier initially denied them entry, stating simply that they did not sell tickets to African Americans. A second person, Kenneth Cook, reinforced the message, informing the party that the beach was white-only. Superintendent of Parks

\textsuperscript{538} Schuster, 94.
Charles A. Hook later explained to an incredulous *Afro* that the park was open to all, in compliance with Park Rule #1, but the beach and bathhouse would remain segregated.539

In the case of the swimming pools, a number of tragic events demonstrated the potentially life-threatening effects of Jim Crow. Denied entrance to whites-only pools that were sometimes much closer to their homes than Druid Hill Park, even when they were part of mixed groups, which was also prohibited, some youth chose to swim in rivers, man-made holes, drainage ditches, and other bodies of water. These, of course, were unsupervised and decidedly more dangerous, as proven by several drownings that occurred in August 1953. While swimming with a mixed group of two other black boys and two white boys in the Patapsco River because they were denied use of a whites-only pool near their homes, 13-year-old Tommy Cummings drowned when he suffered a cramp and was unable to reach the shore. Later that month, four black boys, again unable to attend the pool closest to them, decided to swim in a man-made hole on a construction site. Two of the boys drowned in the muddy water. The deaths of the boys illustrated the urgent need for opening up additional pools for black youth.540

The incidents at Fort Smallwood and the swimming pools needed to be addressed immediately, though Fort Smallwood initially took precedent. Attorney Linwood G. Koger, Jr. of the NAACP represented the interests of Dawson and the other adults before

539 “Group May Sue to Open Park,” *Afro*, 19 August 1950; Terry, 261; Schuster, 98-99.  
540 Buddy Lonesome, “Boy, 13, Drowns for Lack of Pool,” *Afro*, 8 August 1953; “Lack of Swimming Pool Causes 2 More Deaths,” ibid, 29 August 1953. In the story on August 8, Tommy Cummings’ mother informed the *Afro* that “I told Tommy to never go swimming unless there were lifeguards around. But he loved the water and I guess there was no place else for him to go. It’s a shame about my boy, but they ought to give our children some place to swim before more of them die like Tommy.”
a Park Board hearing on the matter in the summer of 1950 to protest their treatment, and when the Board refused to concede to the logic of Koger’s argument, the case went to court. Arguing before Judge W. Calvin Chesnut in March 1951, Koger and Robert L. Carter of the national office contended that Fort Smallwood’s policies violated the Fourteenth Amendment rights of its black clients. The Board countered that the park, save the beach, had always been open to African Americans, though no African Americans had sought to enter the park before last August. Chestnut ruled in the NAACP’s favor, mandating that Fort Smallwood had to admit black patrons since no other equal facilities were available, though he did leave it up to the Board to determine how to implement his judgment. Moving backwards, the Board chose to revive a staggered segregated schedule similar to the one that once existed on municipal golf courses before they were finally desegregated. For the first 20 days in June, July, and August, the beach was for whites only, with the remaining days of each month reserved for African-Americans.

A spotlight was placed on the segregation at Sandy Point State Park as well. Alerted about Sandy Point by concerned white citizens, the NAACP, accompanied by the Afro, investigated the situation, finding that the beaches there were separate and definitely unequal. According to Juanita Mitchell, East Beach, the whites-only beach, was beautiful, but described the colored beach as nothing more than a “mud hole on the side of the bay.” Hearing that there were plans to fund the ‘development’ of the Jim Crow

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541 According to Terry, Koger’s brother, Earl Koger, represented black plaintiffs protesting their exclusion from Easterwood Park. Terry, 261, n. 90.
542 “City Opens Smallwood to Negroes,” Baltimore Sun, 25 May 1951; Toward Equality, 23; Terry, 262; Schuster, 99.
beach, the NAACP and the *Afro* hoped to stave off such plans so that there would only be the whites-only beach at Sandy Point by the time they received a hearing in court, forcing the judge to admit them to the whites-only beach if the ruling was in their favor.\textsuperscript{543}

Deciding to get then-Governor Theodore McKeldin to withhold state funds, Carl Murphy and Lillie Jackson met with him at the National Newspaper Publishers’ Association, the black newspaper publishers’ organization of which Murphy was president, where McKeldin was scheduled to speak. Asking for his assistance in withholding funding, McKeldin refused to do so. Political reasons may have accounted for his stance, since Juanita Mitchell notes that the black community had raised such an outcry that McKeldin worried about re-election if he were to side with them. Mitchell says that this was one of the few times where McKeldin “didn’t have the courage” to follow his heart rather than his political aims.\textsuperscript{544}

As the NAACP and the Urban League were attempting to address segregated schools in 1952 and 1953, the Baltimore NAACP with the assistance of the national office, filed cases in court—called the Recreation Suits by Mitchell—in order to desegregate public recreational facilities. *Robert Dawson, Jr. et al. v. Mayor and City Council of Baltimore, et. al.*, which concerned Fort Smallwood, was filed in May 1952, claiming that the city of Baltimore, the Board of Recreation and Parks, the Director of the Bureau of Recreation and Parks, and Sun and Sand, Inc., the company responsible for managing Fort Smallwood for the city, maintained segregated facilities that were blatantly unequal and were further guilty of violating their Fourteenth Amendment rights when they were

\textsuperscript{543} Mitchell and Kiah, OH 8097, 22.
\textsuperscript{544} Ibid, 22-23.
denied access to the whites-only beach solely because of their race. *Lonesome v. Maryland*, filed on August 1952, sued the State of Maryland because of the segregated facilities at Sandy Point State Park and Beach. The next year, *Charles H. Isaacs, et al. v. Mayor and City Council of Baltimore, et al* was filed in September 1953 on behalf of several black plaintiffs, and one white plaintiff, who alleged that he was prevented from swimming with his black friends. The suit also claimed that swimming pools were inherently unequal and tried to prevent the city from establishing, operating, and maintaining segregated pools. Jack Greenberg, from the NAACP-LDF, assisted Linwood Koger, Jr. and Tucker Dearing, two local NAACP attorneys.  

Meanwhile, the Park Board, with the exception of Dr. Bernard Harris, the only black member, agreed that the staggered schedule of allowing African Americans to use the beach on certain days was the best method to comply with the spirit of Judge Chestnut’s order that the beach had to be opened to African-Americans—a ruling that failed to specify how that should look—but that still maintained segregation. There were also plans to construct separate, segregated facilities for black use in a decidedly undesirable section of the beach to comply with the mandate set in *Plessy* for the summer of 1952. Angered, Koger took the Board back to court in 1954, arguing that Fort Smallwood must admit all patrons at the same time on the same day regardless of color or race, but instead of Judge Chestnut, Judge Roszel Thomsen, the former school board president, presided.

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545 Terry, 263-264. Initially, the Sandy Point Park Case was heard in conjunction with the Fort Smallwood, but was separate; later, it was added to the other two lawsuits. See Terry, 263-264; “Cases Set Today on Segregation,” Baltimore Sun, 11 January 1955; Schuster, 99, n. 289. Schuster notes that Francis X. Gallagher, the Assistant Baltimore City Solicitor, said that a decision reached on segregation there “will be capable of application to all public swimming facilities.”
over the case. By this time, in late May 1954, the Park Board had successfully built separate facilities at Fort Smallwood, which the NAACP conceded were equal, but the Supreme Court had already ruled earlier that month in the landmark *Brown* decision that separate educational facilities were inherently unequal.\(^{546}\)

Koger and the NAACP had hoped that the Court’s ruling, although specifying educational facilities, would be applied to all segregated facilities. Judge Thomsen, however, did not share their view, taking the narrow position that *Brown* strictly applied to separate educational facilities and did not cover segregation in other public facilities. Therefore, Thomsen ruled in favor of the defense, which argued that “intimate contact” between men and women that naturally occurred at public beaches and swimming pools determined the continued maintenance of segregation. Thomsen agreed, arguing that desegregation in public swimming facilities engendered a different degree of interaction than what took place in schools: “the degree of racial feeling or prejudice in this State at this time is probably higher with respect to bathing, swimming, and dancing than any other interpersonal relationship except direct sexual relationship.”\(^{547}\) Tucker Dearing, the NAACP attorney, took issue with Judge Thomsen’s ruling, contending “it wasn’t a question of whether or not segregation was constitutional while they had equal but separate facilities. But I contended that segregation itself, racial segregation was bad…it was per se unconstitutional because it violated the Constitution and was contrary to the ways of a free people in a democratic society.” When Jack Greenberg tried to argue that segregation was psychologically damaging to African Americans no matter where it took

\(^{546}\) Ibid, 264-266; Schuster, 99-100.
\(^{547}\) Schuster, 100.
place, just as the NAACP did in Brown, Thomsen interrupted him to question the validity of such findings.\textsuperscript{548}

Highly disappointed, the Afro lashed out at Thomsen’s decision in several editorials, lambasting him for failing to understand the full implications of the Supreme Court’s ruling of segregation as unconstitutional, while the NAACP appealed the case to the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals in September 1954.\textsuperscript{549} In January 1955, the NAACP presented its case before the Circuit Court, and on March 14, 1955, it ruled in its favor, reversing Thomsen’s decision. The Circuit Court, unlike Thomsen, believed that “It is now obvious…that segregation cannot be justified as a means to preserve the public peace merely because the tangible facilities furnished to one race are equal to those furnished to the other.” The Court understood the broader impact of the Brown decision as it affected all public accommodations, explaining that “the Supreme Court had already specifically repudiated the doctrine of separate but equal in education and inter-state commerce” and did not subscribe to Thomsen’s view that desegregation in education and public recreation were separate issues, declaring that “public recreation is closer to public education than intra-state commerce.”\textsuperscript{550}

The State of Maryland, the City Council, the Park Board and their lawyers obviously did not agree, appealing the Circuit Court’s decision up to the Supreme Court. But they

\textsuperscript{549} “NAACP to Appeal Thomsen’s Ruling,” Afro, 7 August 1954; “Unconstitutional: How We Took Defeat on Beach Cases Last July,” ibid, 26 March 1955.
\textsuperscript{550} Terry, 267; Schuster, 102-103.
would get no satisfaction from the high court; in fact, it took the Court very little time to affirm the Circuit Court’s decision, simply stating “the judgment is affirmed.” These cases were the first to desegregate public recreation. The affirmation was a hard won victory for the NAACP and black Baltimoreans, and Robert Dawson, one of the plaintiffs, deemed it “a wonderful thing” to now be able to enter public recreational facilities without being rejected because of skin color.551 The decision and its larger implications were immediately apparent to the NAACP and several northern newspapers such as the New York Post. Roy Wilkins, the NAACP’s executive secretary, saw the ruling as the death knell of legalized segregation. He interpreted the positive rulings that the NAACP had recently won as not only “the handwriting on the wall spelling out the ultimate doom of Jim Crow,” but in the context of the Cold War, they “vindicate our [the United States’] claim of moral leadership among the free nations of the world.’ The New York Post also pronounced the death of Jim Crow, declaring that the “decrepit fellow,” was almost down for the count after being administered “another rough beating at the hands of the U.S. Supreme Court.” Southern newspapers, of course, had a different outlook, with Virginia’s Richmond News Leader seeing it as further tyrannical encroachment of the federal government into the everyday lives and social relations of the segregated South.552

551 Terry, ibid; “NAACP the Winners,” and John Jasper, “Separate But Equal is Out Window, Afro, 8 November 1955; Schuster, 103. The Dawson quote is from “Separate But Equal is Out Window.”

552 “Wilkins Sees Court’s Ruling as ‘Handwriting on the Wall,” Afro, 19 November 1955; The opinion of the New York Post and the Richmond News Leader were reported in “Daily Press Eyes Beach Ruling,” Afro, 19 November 1955.
The Struggle Takes a New Form

1954-1955 marked the highpoint of the Baltimore branch’s battle against Jim Crow and its victories in eliminating racial segregation in education and public recreation proved once again that it was the premier organization in the city, notwithstanding the significant work, and cooperation of, the Baltimore Urban League. Always on the offensive, the NAACP continued its fight against racial discrimination over the next five years when two other organizations, one relatively “old” but new to the city, and another just beginning to coalesce into a viable vehicle for social change, emerged on the scene. The Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) established a Baltimore chapter in 1953. A small interracial group of about thirty members, it was ready to engage in civil disobedience to combat Jim Crow segregation and only looked for the right opportunity to do so. Meanwhile, students at the local black college decided they, too, would use direct action, and chose discriminatory businesses right near campus as their initial target. Both organizations would vie with the Baltimore NAACP for funds, publicity, and recognition, and would cooperate and compete with them at various stages during their existence as non-violent direct action took center stage in Baltimore and the nation.

February 1, 1960 marked a turning point in the shape and direction of the civil rights movement. On that day in Greensboro, North Carolina four students from North Carolina A&T College—Ezell Blair, Jr., David Richmond, Franklin McClain, and Joseph McNeil—sat-in at the local Woolworth’s lunch counter when they were refused service. The four young men remained quiet and calm and promised to return the next day and every day after that until they were treated just like white customers. There is no doubt
that they were not conscious of the history they were making; they simply wanted to be
treated as human beings and exercise their rights as American citizens. However, their
actions set off a chain of events that energized black communities nationwide and
reinvigorated a movement that pushed the country that much closer to fulfilling its
promise to treat all citizens equally regardless of race, color, or creed.78

The action of these students was equivalent to a fuse being lit on a keg of dynamite.
Once word of their actions became known it set off a wildfire that spread throughout the
state of North Carolina within a week. Within a few weeks sit-ins were spreading across
the whole of the South. Aldon Morris notes in his book *The Origins of the Civil Rights
Movement* that between February 1 and March 1, 1960, cities in North Carolina,
Virginia, South Carolina, Florida, Kentucky, Maryland, Alabama, and Tennessee had
experienced student sit-in demonstrations. By the end of March sit-ins continued to
spread within these states while also reaching as far as Texas, Georgia, Arkansas,
Louisiana, Ohio, and West Virginia.79

The sit-ins clearly demonstrated that students, and communities everywhere, were
ready to move, only needing a spark to get the ball rolling. The energy and enthusiasm of
the student demonstrations prompted Ella Baker, then interim executive director of the

78 For more information on the sit-in movement, see Aldon Morris, *The Origins of the
Civil Rights Movement: Black Communities Organizing for Change* (New York: The Free
Press, 1984); Clayborne Carson, *In Struggle: SNCC and the Black Awakening of the
1960s* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1995); Emily Stoper, *The
Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee: The Growth of Radicalism in a Civil
Rights Organization* (New York: Carlson Publishing, Inc., 1989); William H. Chafe,
*Civilities and Civil Rights: Greensboro, North Carolina, and the Black Struggle for
Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981); Martin Oppenheimer, *The Sit-In
Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), to persuade Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. to call the students to a meeting at Shaw University in Raleigh, North Carolina in April 1960, under the auspices of the SCLC. There the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) was formed, which in a few short years became a major civil rights organization.\(^8^0\)

The sit-in movement of 1960 is one of the most studied phenomenon in the history of the modern civil rights movement because of its immediate importance and the formation of SNCC. However, absent from most general studies is the role of the NAACP in facilitating the entrance of students into the movement and providing them the support needed to both initiate and maintain the demonstrations.\(^8^1\) Also, despite the significance of the Greensboro sit-in, it was not the first sit-in organized and carried out by students in the United States. Other cities had already experienced sit-in protests, Baltimore being one of them.\(^8^2\)

\(^8^0\) Morris, 197-221; Carson, 9-30; Stoper, *Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee*, 6-18.

\(^8^1\) Morris points out that several studies contend that the sit-in movement caught the established organizations by surprise. Carson says, “the southern sit-in movement had demonstrated that black students could initiate a social struggle without the guidance of older black leaders and existing organizations.” And Zinn says “the sit-ins took the established Negro organizations by surprise,” and that “without adult advice or consent, the students planned and carried them through.” See Carson, 17-18 and Zinn, 29. However, Morris does an excellent job of documenting the fact that the established organizations (NAACP, CORE, and SCLC) helped to initiate or support sit-ins prior to 1960. In his view, the only reason they didn’t spread like Greensboro was because CORE and the NAACP did not have a mass base. The SCLC, which did, was not fully mature as an organization yet. See, Morris, 193, 313, n.50.

First, the attitude of the national NAACP toward the student movement can best be described as ambivalent and contradictory. Conventional wisdom says the national NAACP was totally opposed to or strongly disapproved of using sit-ins as a legitimate tactic against racial discrimination in public accommodations. In some instances this was the case. For example, William Chafe notes in his book *Civilities and Civil Rights* that when the Greensboro sit-ins occurred in February 1960, the national office criticized the sit-ins and refused to provide support for a period of time. The NAACP’s preferred method of effecting change was through the legal and political systems, so to them direct action tactics were too disruptive and could result in violence. This accounted for Dr. George Simpkins, head of the local branch, seeking the assistance of CORE to help the situation.84

But, the national office was about to do an about-face, at least in front of the public. In a press release dated February 18, 1960, Roy Wilkins, executive secretary, stated that the local branches were called upon by the national office to support the efforts of the students because their sit-in protests were “legitimate expressions of citizens in a democracy,” and that the Association “stands ready, upon request, to defend any of the young people who may become involved with the police or in court action as a result of their participation in this movement.” If that wasn’t enough, Gloster Current, director of branches, sent a memo dated February 23, 1960 to his branch department field staff to keep New York informed of their activities in support of the sit-ins because the

NAACP “was fully behind this movement.” Clearly, the national office was sending mixed signals to the branches and the students, presenting one face to them while another to the media.85

However ambivalent some members of the national office may have felt about sit-ins, other national NAACP leaders and members of local branches gave the students their full support. It is important to note that many of the sit-ins that occurred before and during the early months of the 1960s were carried out by NAACP Youth Councils and college chapters. These entities received training and support from adult activists. Aldon Morris says that these adult activists can be considered a part of the “direct action wing” of the NAACP for they considered themselves a distinct group within the organization. They used the resources and networks of the local NAACP branches to bolster the students’ efforts despite the ambivalence of their superiors.86

In the end, the national NAACP realized that the student sit-in movement was moving forward whether the NAACP supported it or not, so the national office sought to develop strategies and programs to aid the students. In an ironic twist, the national office even cautioned branches about working with other organizations such as CORE so that the NAACP could get all the credit! There are two important reasons why the NAACP was ambivalent about the student sit-in movements. First, the NAACP did have a legitimate argument against unequivocally supporting some student groups because those groups

86 Morris, 189-193.
would severely criticize the NAACP as being too slow and beaucratic but then turn to the
NAACP when they needed money or legal assistance. The other reason was that the
NAACP was rabidly protective of its status as the leading organization of black freedom,
and had a problem with any organization that received the attention and funding that the
NAACP felt it should have received. These problems were most glaring in places like
Mississippi.  

The second misconception about the sit-in movement is that the Greensboro sit-in was
the first sit-in protest by students. This was far from the truth. Students had been using
direct action tactics in various cities throughout the United States since the early 1950s.
Members of the NAACP Youth Council or college chapters conducted many of them.
These groups were more drawn to the direct action tactics of organizations such as CORE
than to the legalistic approach of their parent body. With the help of adults, students
organized sit-in protests in several cities across the Upper South and Midwest.
Louisville, Kentucky, Nashville, Tennessee, Charleston, West Virginia, Oklahoma City,
Oklahoma, and St. Louis, Missouri are some of the cities that experienced sit-in protests
between 1955 and 1960. These protests were carefully planned and executed, and several
met with a considerable amount of success. The protests by the Oklahoma City Youth
Council resulted in the desegregation of 49 drug and department stores and the Louisville

87 Gloster Current to Roy Wilkins, 8 April 1960; Roy Wilkins to Branch Presidents, 19
February 1960, NAACP Papers, III-A-290. For criticism directed toward the NAACP
and problems that arose between SNCC and the NAACP in Mississippi and other locales,
see Carson, passim; Charles Payne, I've Got the Light of Freedom: The Organizing
Tradition and the Mississippi Freedom Struggle (Los Angeles: University of California
Press, 1995), 32-33, 61-62, 100; and John Dittmer, Local People: The Struggle for Civil
Rights in Mississippi (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 119, 157-169, 274-
275, 498 n., 9.
sit-ins desegregated Kress and Woolworth’s. These successes elicited an enthusiastic endorsement from Herbert Wright, national youth secretary, in a letter to Wilkins and Current in 1959.88

Even the Greensboro protest was a part of this network of sit-in demonstrations and was not as spontaneous as is generally believed. All four young men at one time or another had been members of the NAACP Youth Council, had ties to Dr. George Simpkins and the Greensboro branch, attended activist churches, and were aware of the sit-ins that took place in Durham in the late 1950s. Indeed, they were probably aware of all of the protests of other Youth Councils because of the close-knit activist networks. Though it must be remembered that most of the above mentioned protests took place in Border South cities, they nevertheless are important to understanding the role of the NAACP in facilitating the entrance of students into the movement and serving as the link connecting a majority of the protests.89

As in other cities, the local NAACP branch facilitated the entrance of students into the movement in Baltimore. In 1947, the branch had initiated a picket line against Ford’s Theater in downtown Baltimore, which segregated African Americans into the upper balconies. In 1948, two students from Morgan State College were arrested after joining the protest for illegally obstructing the entrance to the theater. The students were the only two participants arrested. The Baltimore NAACP aided the students by providing legal assistance. This would be the first of many times that the Baltimore branch made its

88 Herbert Wright to Roy Wilkins and Gloster Current, 30 March 1959, NAACP Papers, III-C-56; Morris, 188-193.
89 Chafe, 80-83; Morris, 188-193,198.
resources available to students, and this episode would begin a long tradition of activism at the College.\textsuperscript{90}

The hostile environment in which they found themselves also hastened student activism. Located in northeast Baltimore, Morgan State was surrounded by a white community that was clearly uncomfortable with having a black college in its midst. After threats and lawsuits proved unsuccessful, the College took up residence at its present site in 1918, and the white community grudgingly accepted its new neighbors, although they made sure by the early 1950s that most of the surrounding area and establishments were as segregated as other areas in Baltimore.\textsuperscript{91}

Students certainly did not take too kindly to these circumstances. Vernon Horn, in his thesis \textit{Integrating Baltimore}, says that some of the students attending Morgan came from communities that were so isolated from the larger white society that these segregated facilities were their first real taste of the segregation that they had previously only heard about but had never experienced. In addition, more than 90\% of them had grown up in the church and believed deeply in the Christian creed, particularly the equality of all before God. Therefore, it was only natural for them to be angered to have racial discrimination rudely impose itself into their lives. As a result, these students decided to channel that anger into action and began in the early 1950s to informally protest against

\textsuperscript{90} \textit{Afro}, 24 February 1948, 1-2; Clarence Logan, interview by author, 14 May 2001, Baltimore, tape recording, tape in author’s possession (hereafter referred to as Logan interview, 14 May 2001). Palumbos, 8-9. The Five Star (Tuesday) and the Late City (Friday) differ from the national publication of the \textit{Afro-American}. They exist on separate microfilm reels at Morgan State University, Baltimore.

\textsuperscript{91} Horn, 70-73.
segregated facilities at the Northwood Plaza, which was literally across the street from the campus. 92

Interestingly, though the NAACP had provided a means for students to become involved in civil rights activities in 1948, the students did not turn to the NAACP when protests against the Northwood stores began to take on a more organized form. Interaction with the branch only began to pick up during the late 1950s. During the interim the students worked with the Baltimore chapter of CORE. Officially formed in 1953 under Dr. Herbert Kelman, a white psychiatrist at Johns Hopkins University and a pacifist, CORE attracted both black and white members, including Morgan State students. The involvement of these students was considered most important and proved to be beneficial to both groups. One thing that connected these initial members of CORE was their commitment to non-violent direct action. 93

The Origin of the Civic Interest Group (CIG)

In 1953, the Baltimore CORE and the Morgan students, organized under the Social Action Committee of Morgan State’s student government, combined and undertook a campaign to desegregate public accommodations in Baltimore, attacking on two separate fronts. The students concentrated on the Northwood area around the campus, because of its proximity and its immediate effects on their daily lives. The adult CORE members took on the department stores in the downtown area, since it would be difficult for

92 Ibid, 73-74.
students to maintain a steady presence there because of the distance from the campus.

Palumbos notes that this separation of interests, despite common strategies and goals, marked the beginning of underlying differences between student and adult activists that initially manifested itself in geographic terms, but would later develop into a tense rivalry for credit and publicity in later years. 94

Using interracial teams, the adult CORE members tested several lunch counters in the downtown area in January 1953 and were denied access. At the downtown Kresge’s, CORE’s letter of protest reached the national management office in Detroit. The management assured the protestors that the Kresge’s would serve them and a second test affirmed it. It was the first integrated lunch counter in Baltimore and a major victory for CORE. Emboldened by this, CORE used the Kresge’s letter as a bargaining tool, causing other stores such as Woolworth’s to integrate. Stores that proved to be more resistant, such as Grant’s and McCrory’s, were subjected to sit-in protests. McCrory’s capitulated in October 1953. Grant’s, which took longer because of the hard stance of the manager, finally fell on April 27, 1954. 95

After the victory at Grant’s, the adult members joined the already engaged Morgan CORE students in May 1954, the same month of the national NAACP’s victory in Brown, in a campaign against Read’s drugstore, a locally owned chain. This joint venture proved successful, for while students held sit-ins at the Northwood branch of Read’s once a week, managing to attract thirty or more students at a time, CORE adults entered into negotiations with Read’s management. This two-pronged approach resulted

94 Palumbos, 9-10; Horn, 77.
95 Horn, 78-83; Meier and Rudwick, 57.
in Read’s desegregating its stores in January 1955. The cooperation between students and adults proved highly effective, but the coalition was short-lived. Adult CORE members then announced a campaign to integrate higher quality restaurants while the students continued to concentrate on the Northwood area. It was the final separation between Morgan student activists and CORE adults, and foreshadowed tensions and rivalries that developed later in the movement.\textsuperscript{96}

The next protest campaigns that Morgan State students embarked on were independent of both the NAACP and CORE. The Baltimore NAACP at that time was heavily involved in desegregating county schools throughout Maryland in compliance with the Supreme Court’s desegregation orders and was also initiating efforts to integrate Baltimore area beaches, parks, and swimming pools. This may be one possible reason why the Baltimore NAACP was not directly involved with the Morgan students at this time. Meanwhile, CORE was busy with its own attempts to integrate White Coffee Pot restaurants and “All Nations Day,” an annual cultural celebration at Gwynn Oak Park.\textsuperscript{97}

The Morgan students’ target in spring 1955 was the Northwood Movie Theater, one of the anchor establishments in the Northwood shopping center. Despite the integration of other stores around it, the Theater remained segregated because its owners believed that integrating would drive away white patrons, thereby severely disrupting their business. The Theater had been the site of informal protests by students in the early 50s. However, this time the students began to make a more organized effort. Some students believed the Northwood Theater would fall in line with integration as others had. Unfortunately, they

\textsuperscript{96} Ibid, 83-86; Palumbos, 11-12.
\textsuperscript{97} Mitchell, OH 8095, 55-59; Horn, 86-88. Horns notes that these two campaigns would cause CORE substantial frustration for the next several years.
found out first-hand that the owners of the Theater were formidable opponents who steadfastly refused to integrate despite the protest of hundreds of students. The Theater situation would not be completely resolved until years later. Despite the resistance, these protests were significant because they took place almost five years before the celebrated Greensboro sit-ins in February 1960 and a couple of months before the Montgomery bus boycott.

The Northwood Theater protests affected two major changes in the student movement, with positive consequences for the later Baltimore movement. The first was the creation of the Civic Interest Group (CIG) in 1955. The formation of this organization was necessary in order to carry the movement forward. The students’ worked through the Social Action Committee of the Student Government, which in turn represented the student body, and therefore, the College itself. This put Morgan State in a vulnerable position because it received state funds; political pressure could be brought to bear against the school. To avoid putting Morgan State in a compromising position, Douglas Sands, Student Council president-elect, and other student leaders formed the Civic Interest Group. The creation of CIG served to both release Morgan State from a potentially difficult position and afforded the students the opportunity to be more independent in their actions without being held under the control of the administration. The formation of CIG marked the beginning of an organization that would be the main vehicle for student activists from Morgan State and other area colleges. It would soon


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become a highly effective direct-action organization that instituted important changes in Baltimore and throughout Maryland.\textsuperscript{99}

A second positive result of the 1955 protest was the fact that Morgan students for the first time began to solicit student support from other campuses, most notably Johns Hopkins. Some students at Hopkins were themselves beginning to awaken to the issue of racial discrimination. Activities of Morgan State students and incidents of racism experienced by African American students who attended Hopkins helped to raise their awareness. Tony Adona, a Hopkins sophomore who later became an important leader in CIG, joined the Northwood protests in 1955. Johns Hopkins gradually proved to be an important recruitment center for CIG activities.\textsuperscript{100}

Between 1955 and 1959, most of the contact between Morgan State student activists and the Baltimore NAACP occurred through indirect channels. Robert B. Watts, one of several legal advisors for the Baltimore branch, served as counsel for the students in their sit-in protests against the Theater. Although Mr. Watts could be said to represent the NAACP, there were no overt pledges of support on the part of the branch.\textsuperscript{101} More direct efforts to aid the student protests did not come from the Baltimore NAACP until the spring 1960 demonstrations. By the beginning of the 1960s, CIG had been conducting campaigns against segregated facilities at Northwood every spring since 1955, with the momentum growing as larger numbers of students participated every year.

\textsuperscript{99} Palumbos, 16-18; Horn, 92-94. Martin Jenkins, president of Morgan State, expressed support for the students but wrote an article in the \textit{Afro} distancing himself and the school from their actions, see Horn, 94.

\textsuperscript{100} Palumbos, 19-28.

\textsuperscript{101} “Police Promise ‘Neutral’ Stand,” \textit{Afro} (Late City Edition), 21 May 1955, 24; Logan interview, 14 May 2001; Palumbos, 15.
The usual target was the Northwood Theater, which still refused to integrate, and the Rooftop Dining Room of the Hecht-May Company department store. Although demonstrations against them proved unsuccessful in 1958 and 1959, the students were able to integrate the Arundel Ice Cream store in 1959 after a successful picketing and sit-in protest, which ran concurrently with the Rooftop demonstrations.\(^{102}\)

Though the Greensboro sit-ins sparked immediate protests in other cities, CIG began their demonstrations at Northwood in mid-March, when they were originally scheduled each year. This clearly illustrates the fact that had not the Greensboro sit-in protest occurred, CIG would have still proceeded with its own campaign, demonstrating how influential local events rather than national ones were on the students’ decision to continue their efforts. However, the Greensboro sit-in did create an atmosphere of excitement and enthusiasm for sit-in demonstrations, and the result was greater student participation in CIG protests and more direct support from adults and established civil rights organizations. Besides the Baltimore NAACP, the Baltimore Urban League, the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance, the YWCA, CORE, and other organizations pledged moral and financial support, and local black churches both organized picket lines in support of students and raised necessary funds for student use.\(^{103}\)

\(^{102}\) “Easter No Holiday on Picket Line,” *Afro* (Late City Edition), 28 March 1959; “Morgan State’s Sit-Down Strikers Win Fight,” ibid, 28 March 1959; “Be Willing to Go to Jail in Struggle for Your Rights,” ibid, 4 April 1959; Logan interview, 14 May 2001; Meier, 120; Palumbos, 28-29. Horn also points out that the students were able to desegregate a chain of seven downtown theaters in 1958. Horn, 95.

In response to student requests, the Baltimore NAACP pledged both monetary and legal assistance, providing bail for those students arrested and retaining Robert Watts to serve as the lead attorney for a battery of NAACP lawyers.\textsuperscript{104} A “Mother’s Committee,” officially known as the Women’s Public Service Committee of the Baltimore NAACP Student Sitdowners Fund, was organized to raise needed funds for student use. Mrs. Catherine Adams, wife of prominent physician Dr. Maurice Adams, chaired the Committee. In June 1960, the Committee began a fund-raising drive that sought to raise $1,000 for student expenses.\textsuperscript{105}

The funds raised by the Baltimore branch proved to be crucial in the weeks following the beginning of the spring campaign, which began on March 15. In response to continued protests, business dropped at an alarming rate and the Hecht-May Company, owners of the Rooftop Restaurant, sought and received a court injunction against the students. Judge Joseph Allen limited the number of protestors who could be in front of the Rooftop from several hundreds to two. Looking to recover from this setback, CIG decided to take their protests downtown to the major department stores that discriminated against African Americans, including a Hecht-May store. The injunction forced CIG leaders to move protests to an area that had previously proved difficult because of the

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\textsuperscript{104} “Northwood Restaurant, Store Say Pickets Cost Them Money,” and “Backed by NAACP,” photograph, \textit{Afro} (Five Star Edition), 29 March 1960, 9; Watts, OH 8102, 6. Watts said Jackson pledged financial and legal assistance to the students, even when she disagreed with direct action tactics that she believed were disruptive.

\textsuperscript{105} Logan interview, 14 May 2001; \textit{Afro} (Late City Edition), March 26, June 25, 28, July 2, 9, 1960; Watts, OH 8102, 16; Mitchell, OH 8183, 3. This committee later came under the purview of the CIG Adult Assistance Committee because Logan said whoever controlled the funds dictated the direction and actions of those in whose name the money was held.
distance from campus. This time, however, students were able to overcome these logistical problems because the Baltimore NAACP used funds to charter buses to carry students downtown.\footnote{Logan interview, 14 May 2011; “Sitdowners Return to Downtown, More Support is Pledged,” \textit{Afro} (Late City Edition), 2 April 1960, 1; Meier, 121-122; Palumbos, 34-35; Horn, 96-97. In an ironic twist, it was the Hecht-May Company, through the executive director of the Baltimore Urban League, who suggested that the students protest downtown. See Meier, 122.}

The issuing of the injunction and the forced relocation of the protest campaign proved to be a blessing in disguise for CIG. Targeting four major downtown department stores—Hutzler’s, Stewart’s, Hecht-May, and Hochschild-Kohn—the students eventually integrated all four stores within three weeks of the start of the protest on March 26. Hochschild-Kohn was prepared for them and integrated immediately. The other three proved to be more obdurate, but the key was Hutzler’s, for if it integrated then the other two would follow. After three weeks of sit-ins and picket lines that severely disrupted business, Albert Hutzler called a meeting with CIG leaders on April 16 to discuss integrating. After Hutzler’s integrated, Stewart’s and Hecht-May followed suit. The Baltimore NAACP maintained a presence in the negotiations through the participation of Robert Watts. Dr. Furman Templeton and David Glenn, both of the Baltimore Urban League, participated in the negotiations as well.\footnote{Ibid, 121-124; Baltimore \textit{Afro-American} (Late City Edition), April 2, 9, 16, 23, 1960, (Five Star Edition), March 29, April 5, 12, 19, 1960. The students received substantial support from ministers who organized a picket line downtown on Palm Saturday, April 9, in support of the students. Rev. Edward J. Odom, national church secretary of the national NAACP, organized the picket protests. This is just one example of support for the students by the national office. See “Ministers Join Line Downtown,” \textit{Afro} (Five Star Edition), 12 April 1960, 1, 17.}
The victories at the four leading department stores were a major turning point for CIG. Not only did their careful leadership of the demonstrations bring them victory in a relatively short period of time, but it also opened the door for students to expand their focus and gear their activities toward other projects. Vernon Horn says that the students focused their energy on three areas—they continued with their efforts to desegregate other public accommodations throughout the city; they involved themselves in voter registration activities; and they expanded their area of protests to include other parts of Maryland, most notably Route 40, the main thoroughfare between New York and Washington, D.C., and the Eastern Shore. The Baltimore NAACP lent vital support to CIG in all three endeavors over the next three years.108

Sitting In While Getting Out the Vote

When the sit-ins broke out and spread during February and March 1960 the national NAACP Legal Redress Fund, headed by Baltimore native Thurgood Marshall, called a conference at the Sheraton Park Hotel in Washington, D.C. from March 19-20. The purpose of the conference was to gather all NAACP attorneys and other legal minds that were or would be involved in representing students to discuss, develop and coordinate a plan of legal action. Attending the conference were Baltimore NAACP attorneys Robert Watts, Juanita Mitchell, Tucker Dearing, and Archie Williams. These attorneys left the conference with the directive to “appeal every fine.” With this in mind, the Baltimore NAACP Legal Redress Committee, with Watts as the designated lead attorney, sought to

108 Horn, 98.
challenge the arrest of student demonstrators against segregated facilities. The challenge was based on the fact that the state (police, et. al.) violates the 14th Amendment when it aids a public facility in maintaining segregation. Therefore, the arrest of sit-in protestors was violating their right to equal protection under the law.109

The Baltimore NAACP Legal Redress Committee then began looking for an “ideal case for test in higher courts.” The first case slated for a jury trial that hopefully would reach the Supreme Court was the arrest of four students—Philip Savage, Walter R. Dean, Jr., Manuel Deese, and Herman D. Richards, Jr. The Hecht-May Company charged them with trespassing during the first two weeks of the protest campaign against the Rooftop Dining Room at the Northwood Plaza. These students received the expressed support of both Lillie Jackson and Juanita Mitchell, who assured the students they were 100% behind them. However, before the case could go to trial the department stores had integrated; thus, the charges against the students were no longer valid and they were soon dropped.110

The NAACP did not have to wait long for its “ideal test case.” On June 17, 1960, Robert Mack Bell and eleven other students were arrested while protesting against segregation at Hooper’s Restaurant at the corner of Charles and Lafayette Streets and charged under state trespass laws. Bell was a high school student at Dunbar High School and just elected student government president when he was asked by CIG to recruit high

109 “Baltimore Lawyers at Sitdown Parley,” Afro (Late City Edition), 19 March 1960, 8; “NAACP To Appeal All Sitdown Cases,” ibid (Five Star Edition), 22 March 1960, 1, 2; “Sit-in Arrests Here Seen Illegal; Face Court Test—Watts,” ibid (Five Star Edition), 29 March 1960, 1, 11.
school students for demonstrations. CIG turned to high school students as a way to maintain protests of segregated facilities over the summer months, since the majority of Morgan State students would not be present on campus during that time. In Baltimore Criminal Court all 12 students were convicted of trespassing and fined $10 each. The fine was later suspended. However, a legal team comprised of Thurgood Marshall, Juanita Mitchell, Robert Watts, and Tucker Dearing appealed the case, known as *Bell v. Maryland*, to the Maryland Court of Appeals. Mrs. Mitchell argued that the trespass law was invalid because it was not read to students prior to their entering the establishment as required by law, and it was only being used against African Americans and state support of trespass discrimination violated the due process of the 14th Amendment.\(^{111}\)

When the Maryland Court of Appeals upheld the lower court’s decision in 1962, the NAACP took the case to the Supreme Court. After sitting on the case for two years, the Supreme Court remanded the case back to the Court of Appeals in October 1964, which upheld the convictions. Appealed once again to the Supreme Court in a petition filed by Mrs. Mitchell, the attorneys’ case was strengthened by the fact that by this time the Baltimore City Council and the Maryland General Assembly had passed laws prohibiting segregation in public accommodations. In addition, the Civil Rights Act of 1964 had passed in June 1964, barring segregation nationwide. With this evidence before it, the

Court finally reversed the convictions on April 9, 1965. The students were cleared of all charges after almost five years.\textsuperscript{112}

The NAACP continued to support CIG as it used direct action protests to desegregate public accommodations throughout the city, providing financial and legal assistance to those arrested. But it also recognized that the struggle was beginning to shift from lunch counter demonstrations to the ballot box and voting booths. 1960 was an election year, and the black leadership establishment in Baltimore felt the need to register black voters to help elect Senator John Kennedy in the upcoming presidential race. With that purpose in mind, Carl Murphy called a meeting on July 13, 1960 of over fifty leaders of various organizations, including Jackson and Clarence Mitchell, Jr., head of the NAACP’s Washington Bureau, to coordinate an effective voter registration campaign in the upcoming months. Four members of CIG, Tony Adona, Clarence Mitchell, III, John Quarles, and Clarence Logan, were also invited to the meeting, even though they had little knowledge of what was to be discussed. In the meeting, the students were praised for their energy and their efforts but the adult leadership wanted to put their energy, enthusiasm, and organization to use in voter registration.\textsuperscript{113}

Since they remained undecided about entering into voter registration after the success of their direct action protests, Clarence Mitchell, Jr. arranged for the four young men to speak to Rev. Adam C. Powell, Jr. Powell convinced them of the necessity of African

\textsuperscript{112} Baltimore Sun, 13 November 1994, 5; Irons, 139-140, 145-146; Mitchell, OH 8183, 9-10; Logan, notes. Bell would go on to Harvard Law School and become a lawyer. Ironically, he would be named the first black Chief Justice of the Maryland Court of Appeals—the same court that repeatedly upheld his conviction for violating trespass laws.

\textsuperscript{113} “New Register and Vote Campaign Launched as 54 Meet at Afro,” Afro (Late City Edition), 16 July 1960, 1, 3; Logan, interview; Palumbos, 41-42; Horn, 99-100.
Americans entering the “body politic.” During the summer and fall of 1960, CIG participated in the Baltimore branch’s annual voter registration campaign. CIG members found “nothing glamorous” about door-to-door canvassing, but they set out to register new voters and re-add those who had been stricken from the books. To assure the potential success of this campaign, CIG requested that the Election Board extend the hours of the Supervisor of Elections Office one day a week. They also arranged transportation and baby sitters for those who otherwise found it difficult to register. The result was 19,549 new black voters added to the rolls. They helped give John Kennedy the 58,562 votes he needed to win in Maryland. Due to the success of the campaign, CIG conducted its own voter registration campaign a year later.114

**Crossing Over the Chesapeake**

The Baltimore NAACP also helped provide CIG with the means to expand its activities beyond Baltimore and into communities as far away as the Eastern Shore. The entrance of CIG into the mostly rural counties followed the Route 40 demonstrations, in which students from Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New York protested segregated facilities along the only major highway between Washington, D.C. and New York in 1960 and 1961. Beginning in late 1961, CIG, with the help of students from Northern

114 Photograph, *Afro* (Five Star Edition), 19 July 1960; Logan, interview; Horn, 99-100; Palumbos, 43-44. It is interesting to note that CIG, a SNCC affiliate, would involve itself in voter registration when the question of whether to focus on voter registration at the behest of the Kennedy administration instead of continuing with direct action protests caused a huge rift between two factions of SNCC that threatened to tear the organization apart. See Carson, 40-42; Palumbos, 44-46; Logan, interview.
universities, many of them white, began to hold demonstrations in such Eastern Shore
cities as Cambridge, Easton, Crisfield, Ocean City and Chestertown. Working through
the Maryland State Conference of NAACP Branches, Lillie Jackson and Juanita Mitchell
put a call into the national NAACP to send someone from the national office to make the
initial contact with the local NAACP branches and act as a liaison between them and
CIG. The NAACP sent Phillip Savage, a former member of CIG and a paid staff member
for the Baltimore branch, to assist with their voter registration and membership
campaigns. Now serving as the national NAACP’s field director of the Tri-State Area
(New Jersey, Delaware and Pennsylvania), Savage helped CIG get in touch
with local leaders in these communities, which resulted in the formation of new branches
formed and the re-activation of inactive branches.¹¹⁵

As the students, black and white, spread the movement throughout Maryland they
encountered far more resistance to their efforts than they did in Baltimore. Not only were
whites more violent, especially on the Eastern Shore, which was as Deep South in its
attitude as Mississippi, but the students encountered more police involvement resulting in
more arrests in places like Annapolis, Glen Burnie, Elkton, Chestertown, and Cambridge.

With help from the NAACP-LDF, local lawyers from the Baltimore branch and those
retained by the Maryland State Conference went to the particular areas to bail students
out of jail or prepare their trials while they remained imprisoned. Juanita Mitchell,
Archie Williams, Tucker Dearing, Paul Cockrell, and, of course, Robert Watts were just
some of the lawyers available to aid students. Back home, Jackson, being an excellent

¹¹⁵ Logan, interview; Palumbos, 46-49; Meier, 172; Philip Savage, interview by John H.
Britton, 26 September 1967, RJB 44, RJBOHC.
fund-raiser, tapped her usual sources such as the churches and the fraternal organizations to provide money for bail and legal expenses.\textsuperscript{116}

Even in an atmosphere of mutual respect and support for each other’s efforts, disagreements and disputes were inevitable. Carl Murphy, respected by all and sometimes seen as the unofficial black leader in Baltimore, did have to mediate potentially serious disputes on several occasions. August Meier, a history professor at Morgan State from 1957 to 1963 and an adult advisor to CIG, posited that most of the disagreements centered on the NAACP’s efforts to subvert the students’ independence and dominate the movement in Baltimore. The NAACP had been the leading civil rights organization in Baltimore since the 1930s and had a long list of accomplishments. Now that the students were conducting campaigns of their own, campaigns that were also getting results, their energy and militancy threatened to push the branch into the background. As a consequence, the NAACP sought to remind these young people that it was they who had been in the trenches and had carried the movement forward, so the students should honor that and defer to their leadership. For its part, CIG was fiercely independent and fought to build and maintain this independence since its inception. This was one of the reasons they officially separated from Morgan State in 1955 in order not to be beholden to the authority of the administration. According to Meier, this push and pull between the NAACP and CIG produced a “bitter quarrel” between the two.\textsuperscript{117}

\textsuperscript{116} Mitchell, OH 8183, 7; Palumbos, 49.
\textsuperscript{117} Logan, interview 14 May 2001; Logan, interview by author, telephone, 18 May 2001; Meier, 26, 125, 159-160, 172; Clifton Henry, RJB 112, Ralph J. Bunche Collection, Moorland-Spingarn Research Center, Howard University.
There are those who disagree with Meier and contend that while conflicts did arise, they never produced a “bitter quarrel.” One of them was Lillie Jackson. In a letter to Murphy, she disputed the charge of infighting between the NAACP, CIG, or any other organization. As far as Jackson was concerned, the NAACP, both local and statewide, was going above and beyond the call of duty in helping CIG, CORE, and other organizations. Even today, Clarence Logan, chairman of CIG from December 1960 to January 1964, maintains that while conflicts did arise, they never stood in the way of cooperation between the two organizations and problems were basically solved before they reached a breaking point.\(^{118}\)

Most of the problems that developed were centered on generational issues. As militant as the Baltimore NAACP was, it mainly, like its parent body, preferred to work through the courts and the political establishment. Students, not just in Baltimore but nationwide, considered the courts slow and politicians untrustworthy. Therefore, they decided they were going to organize and push for changes to take place immediately. They also considered the older generation sometimes too willing to negotiate and compromise when action was what was clearly needed. Indeed, CIG developed a reputation for all action and very little negotiation. By the same token, adults sometimes considered students too arrogant, brash, and headstrong, and would take them to task for being political naïve. The adults’ philosophy sometimes suggested that more could be gotten with an opened hand than closed fist.\(^{119}\)

\(^{118}\) Lillie M. Jackson to Carl Murphy, 13 April 1962, NAACP Papers, III-C-57. Logan interview, 14 May 2001. Clifton Henry also notes that the friction between the groups never impeded cooperation between them. Clifton Henry, RJB 112, 44.

\(^{119}\) Logan interview, 14 May 2001; Watts, OH 8102, 16; Mitchell, OH 8183, 15, 17.
Overall though, the positive far outweighed the negative. The adult activists generally praised the students for their willingness to put their bodies on the line, thereby creating the atmosphere of militancy that sometimes served to reinvigorate their own efforts to go all out in the fight for black freedom and human dignity. The NAACP presented CIG with several awards and the *Afro* and local ministers constantly praised students’ efforts. For their part, the students considered the older generation their role models. Logan says that the students had tremendous respect for Jackson, Murphy, Mr. and Mrs. Mitchell, Rev. Bascom, and other adults, and learned all they could from them. Although independent in making their own decisions, they were sometimes willing to take sound advice from their elders, particularly from Mrs. Mitchell. Logan points out that Mrs. Mitchell would always encourage CIG to publicize its activities and accomplishments in order to receive just credit for its deeds. She also strongly advised them to answer the charge of critics as often as possible in order to set the record straight when conflicts arose, and pledged that the NAACP was ready and willing to back them up.¹²⁰

However bitter the quarrels may have been, they didn’t prevent CIG and the NAACP from collaborating or supporting each other on issues other than the desegregation of public accommodations. One such issue was racial discrimination in the police department. African Americans had been on the police force since 1938, due to a hard-

¹²⁰ Logan, interviews; “NAACP Cite CIG’s,” n.d. (1960), NAACP Papers, III-C-56; *Afro* (Five Star Edition), 5 April, 24 May, 1960. In the April 5 issue, Rev. John Tilley, pastor of Metropolitan Baptist and head of voter registration for the Baltimore branch, praised the students because they were “expressing a desire for freedom which the adults have also wanted but have not gone as far out to make the sacrifices to obtain. Our youth have expressed courage which is commendable and a willingness to suffer for their ideas, and for this, I think they should have the support of the church and various other organizations in this protest.”
fought battle by the Baltimore branch with the backing of the community. But, in approximately twenty-years no African Americans had been hired in divisions such as the Crime Laboratory, Foot Patrol, and Communications. In addition, certain districts did not have black police officers in radio patrol cars and other districts didn’t assign uniformed black police officers in two-man cruising patrols. As if this weren’t enough, black police officers were constantly passed over for promotions or assigned to “safe” jobs even when qualified, keeping the upper echelon of the department lily-white.\footnote{Baltimore Evening Sun 16 April 1963; Afro (Five Star Edition), 16 April 1963, 21-22.}

CIG conducted an investigation in April 1963 after complaints from African American police officers were brought to their attention. They then documented the charges and distributed them to Governor J. Millard Tawes, Police Commissioner Bernard Schmidt, and David Glenn, chairperson of the Baltimore Equal Opportunities Commission. Representatives from CIG, the NAACP, the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance, and the Baltimore CORE finally met with Commissioner Schmidt on April 19 to discuss these issues. At first, Commissioner Schmidt constantly denied that the police department discriminated and blamed the absence of African Americans in certain divisions on the lack of qualified candidates. This, of course, was strenuously challenged. Over the course of about six months, representatives from the above named organizations, as well as Parren Mitchell, executive secretary of the State Commission on Interracial Problems, and State Senator Verda Welcome, negotiated with the Commissioner while picketers held demonstrations in front of police headquarters. On September 28, 1963 after a two-hour closed-door meeting, the Commissioner announced plans to gradually place qualified black applicants in divisions in which they had
previously been absent, and to identify qualified black applicants for promotions. Periodic reports on progress in the department would be made available to the Governor.\textsuperscript{122}

CIG and the NAACP collaborated on other issues of employment discrimination. CIG was unique among civil rights organizations in that it recognized as early as 1962 that economic discrimination was more prevalent than outright segregation and its continued existence had a more adverse effect on the entire community than segregation in public accommodations. In this they were ahead of the national civil rights movement. In fact, Clarence Logan was asked by Ruby Doris Smith Robinson of SNCC to conduct a presentation on CIG’s work in this field.\textsuperscript{553} Focusing on this pertinent issue, CIG, with the backing of other organizations, particularly the Ministerial Alliance, protested discrimination in building trades, craft unions and other areas of labor. These efforts were especially important after President Kennedy announced in June 1963 that the Federal Government would seek to press for speedier integration in apprenticeship training and employment in the skilled trades. The campaign to eliminate employment discrimination received enthusiastic support from a cross-section of the black community. Juanita Mitchell, as president of the Maryland State Conference, advocated using direct action tactics against discriminating companies in order “to prod management, labor, and the public into granting equal rights.” The NAACP also

\textsuperscript{122} Baltimore \textit{Sun} 20 April 1963, 21; \textit{Afro} (Five Star Edition), 23 April 1963, 3; 28 September 1963, 1, 14.
\textsuperscript{553} Unfortunately, he was never able to do so because of other commitments. Logan, interview.
endorsed CIG’s and the Ministerial Alliance’s efforts to organize and assist laundry
workers in receiving better pay, benefits, and conditions.\textsuperscript{123}

Despite occasional disputes and disagreements over tactics, recognition, and activities, 
the Baltimore NAACP and CIG, along with many others, understood that in order for the 
African American community to advance, the continued cooperation between all 
organizations was essential. In fact, Meier says that the competition between all 
organizations proved more beneficial than detrimental to the Baltimore movement 
because more was accomplished than if one organization dominated or if there had been 
no friction between them at all. This was because underneath all that competition was 
mutual respect for each others’ commitment and accomplishments.\textsuperscript{124}

Clarence Logan made it clear that CIG may have disagreed with the NAACP and 
other older activists, but respected them as mentors and worked hard to cultivate and 
maintain positive relationships with them.\textsuperscript{554} The relationship between the two 
organizations made CIG one of the most successful student groups before and after the 
sit-in movement of 1960 and it is doubtful that it would have been without the NAACP’s 
support, for the branch allowed them to move beyond Morgan State’s campus into other 
areas of Baltimore to successfully desegregate several local and national chain stores. 
The NAACP was also vital in opening the way for CIG into other parts of Maryland, 

\textsuperscript{123} Logan, interviews; Logan, notes; Ruby Doris Smith to Clarence Logan, 25 February 
1963, in possession of author; Baltimore Sun, June 5, 6, 9, 1963; Baltimore Afro-
Other organizations that supported the laundry workers were the Baltimore Urban 
League, the Prince Hall Masons, and Womanpower. 
\textsuperscript{124} Meier, 26, 159-160. 
\textsuperscript{554} Logan, interview.
particularly the Eastern Shore, and had an indirect hand in creating the grassroots movement in Cambridge, which received national attention beginning in 1963.

As the decade progressed, the relationship between the NAACP and direct action protest groups such as CIG and CORE experienced significant changes as the freedom movement evolved from focusing on gaining African Americans’ citizenship rights to addressing their material circumstances. While CIG and particularly CORE embraced Black Power, the Baltimore NAACP found it difficult to adjust and had to contend with more radical organizations like the Black Panthers challenging their leadership among black Baltimoreans. The branch also experienced a seismic shift in leadership and philosophy as Lillie Jackson’s activist career began to wane.
Chapter 8: Targeting Baltimore: Black Power Comes to the Monument City

Betrayed

Juanita had become used to high authorities—city and state officials, police representatives—believing that black activists such as her were pushing too hard and too fast to enjoy the same rights and privileges that whites took for granted. She had been hearing it since the 1930s. They were “too radical,” “too militant,” “pushed too hard,” and “should learn to be patient”; things would come about with time and through goodwill. Of course, this counsel was coming from people who never felt the heel of oppression bearing down on their neck. Juanita would usually hear them out, knowing that she was right and the cause for which she, her mother, and other progressive black folk in Baltimore fought for was just. She had developed a thick enough skin to withstand their condescending attitudes and fire back when they had finished browbeating her, giving as good as she got. In the end, she usually got the last word.\(^{555}\)

That was not the case this particular morning of April 11 with Governor Spiro Agnew. In fact, what he was saying left her virtually speechless. Not that she actually lost her voice; she was certainly prepared to respond to his spurious charges and began to do so. She was just honestly stunned and amazed at his temerity in accusing the thirty or so black leaders who shared the room with them of being in league with Black Power militants, accusing them of tacitly condoning not only violent rhetoric, but also turning a blind eye to the destructive actions of those “thugs” in the streets who took those words

\(^{555}\) Juanita Mitchell, OH 8183, MJOHP, 26.
to heart. No, it was more so the fact that she was unable to get a word in edgewise in the midst of his tirade, unable to adequately defend herself and her colleagues because Agnew was too intoxicated with his own rhetoric to listen to anyone else. In retrospect, maybe she should have left like the others. About seventy black leaders had already decided about ten minutes into the meeting that they had had enough, refusing to be spoken to as if they were children by a governor who had already told one leader before an earlier meeting that same morning that he “repulsed” him.556

Agnew’s actions were even more galling because this was supposed to be a meeting of peace and healing in the aftermath of Dr. Martin Luther King’s tragic death. Thousands of people grieved alongside the King family, shocked and saddened by what took place on April 4 on the balcony of the Lorraine Motel in Memphis. But African Americans were particularly upset, and some expressed their anger by initiating urban rebellions in cities across the country. These “riots” exacted terrible costs in lives and property, but probably the most tragic casualty was hope. Many Baltimoreans, black and white, had heard that Washington, D.C. had exploded not long after King’s assassination and feared that the fires that lit the night sky would spread to their city. Their worst fears were realized two days later on the east side of town, where several store windows were smashed and fires were set. Many of the leaders who left the meeting with Agnew were in the streets, talking to the people for hours, urging them to go home, telling them that this was not the right way to honor King and his legacy. Juanita and her son, Clarence Mitchell III, a state senator, were among them.

556 Agnew had said this to Rev. Marion Bascom, the minister of Douglas Memorial Community Church and a prominent civil rights activist. See Smith, Here Lies Jim Crow, 234.
But to hear the governor tell it, they had virtually sat on their hands and did nothing. In fact, he had accused them of conspiring with more extremist elements to foment rebellion. And to think that earlier this morning most of them were excited to meet with him, prepared to sit down and engage in a fruitful dialogue to improve race relations in a still smoldering city that had not seen a riot since the Civil War. But, some became suspicious when they entered the room and were face to face with dozens of newspapers reporters, flashing cameras, and state patrolmen. To Agnew, who had decided during student protests at the historically black Bowie State a week earlier that he would not bow down to the demands of those who did not adhere to “law and order,” the moderate black leaders assembled before him had committed a mortal sin by getting into bed with the Stokely Carmichaels and Rap Browns of the world, black demagogues who sought to destroy rather than build, and they needed to be publicly repudiated. If Agnew was prepared to—and did—publicly condemn Connie Lynch, the Birchers, and their “fellow travelers,” then black leaders needed to do the same with what he called the “circuit-riding, Hanoi-visiting, caterwauling, riot-inciting, burn-America-down type of leader” and so far, they had not done so.

If she had been allowed to finish, Juanita would have informed the governor that some of the leaders who remained in the room, and many of those who had left, had

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557 Connie Lynch was a state organizer of the National States’ Rights Party, a minister in the Church of Jesus Christ-Christian, a right-wing, Christian identity church, and a member of the United Florida Ku Klux Klan, the Minutemen, and the Christian Defense League who was convicted, along with two others, for inciting a riot in Baltimore in July 1966, and served a thirteen month sentence in the Maryland State Penitentiary. See “State Righters Charged with Riots in Baltimore,” *St. Petersburg Times*, 30 July 1966.

558 Quote taken from Smith, 233. Agnew was referring specifically to Stokely Carmichael.
condemned militants—or least their rhetoric—like Carmichael, Brown, and Robert Moore, a local leader who publicly declared the police “enemies of the black community,” and was repudiated by her son on the State Senate floor. Public condemnation such as this rarely happened, not because the NAACP and other moderate black folk tacitly agreed with the militants, but simply because they chose not to do so before microphones and waiting reporters. Agnew had no appreciation of the fine line they walked. There was no way they could preach to people that their anger was not justified or their frustration, despair and impatience not legitimate; to do so would bring charges of Uncle-Tomism. They just suggested other ways to express and channel it, which, unfortunately, was not a message that resonated with people at the moment. For those catching the most hell, Carmichael and Brown had their ear and their attention, and though the ministers and old school civil rights leaders may not have agreed with a lot that they said, they had to tread carefully with how they dealt with the possible consequences.

But Agnew did not want to hear that. He was hunting for culprits who had “lit the fires,” and Carmichael and others of his ilk were solely responsible. It surely was not the continued white racism that African Americans experienced, nor the previous lack of social programs that the Kerner Commission suggested would prevent future rebellions. No, it had to be an unholy alliance between black extremists and the “permissive attitudes” of white liberals who accounted for the destruction, the breakdown of law and order that was contributing to the fall of America. It was this view that would later catch the ear of future president Richard Nixon and his camp, who were injecting new code words such as “law and order” into the national discourse on race to mask their racial
hostility. Agnew would ride the wave to the second highest office later that year, while Juanita, the NAACP, black ministers, and other civic leaders would have to pick up the pieces as the city recovered from chaos.

**Fighting to Remain at the Forefront**

The NAACP had dominated the freedom movement in Baltimore since its revitalization in 1935, but it did not hesitate to cooperate with other local and/or national organizations that shared similar goals and interests, particularly the Baltimore Urban League. In fact, the Baltimore NAACP demonstrated its willingness to follow the lead of other entities, as evidenced by its support of the Urban League when it desegregated Poly Tech in 1952, and the assistance it rendered the Baltimore CORE and CIG in desegregating public accommodations during the 1950s and 1960s. This was sometimes in marked contrast to its parent body, which jealously guarded its reputation and prestige as the oldest, most respected, and most effective civil rights organization in the nation. The national office sometimes engaged in highly public disputes with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC), the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), and the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) for credit, publicity, and most important, funds.

It should be noted, however, that although the NAACP shared the spotlight with others, it did not simply fade into the background and let ‘upstart’ organizations take over simply because they seemed more visible and exciting. Lillie Jackson was a proud woman who had committed much of her adult life to making Baltimore a more equitable
city and despite growing older, had not lost any of her zeal for proving that the NAACP was the premier organization in the state. She continued to make sure that the branch was still relevant in changing material conditions in the lives of black Baltimoreans after the passage of significant civil rights legislation in the early 1960s. But proving that would become increasingly difficult as the country experienced tumultuous changes in mood, politics, and domestic and foreign policy while steadily moving toward a new decade and black Baltimoreans, along with African Americans nationwide, became more strident in their demands for equal opportunity, equal treatment, and social justice. As the Black Power Movement (1965-1975) challenged the goals, methods, and tactics of the civil rights orthodoxy and addressed previously neglected concerns, the Baltimore NAACP witnessed a change in leadership as the new decade began. This new leadership made a concerted effort to turn black civic strength into sustained and viable political power.

Making Civil Rights a Reality in the ‘Free State’

As early as 1962, the NAACP made it imperative that civil rights legislation was passed in order to make gains more concrete. They continuously pressed Maryland political leaders, who surveyed the civil rights landscape and were anxious about what they saw. As demonstrated in the last chapter, students from Morgan State, Johns Hopkins, and Goucher College, assisted by those from outside the state, had renewed their campaign in 1960 to dramatize the extent of racial discrimination in public accommodations by initiating direct action campaigns in Baltimore, which soon spread
throughout the state, most dramatically along Route 40, the main road from Washington, D.C. to New York. The protests caught the attention of President Kennedy and the federal government in early 1961 when they sought to placate African diplomats from newly independent countries who had complained of years of racial discrimination in restaurants and hotels along the road. Large scale demonstrations that brought highly publicized arrests and hunger strikes, coupled with the intervention of the Kennedy administration and the pleadings of restaurant proprietors, who were stifled by local laws and traditions, all converged to compel Governor J. Millard Tawes to do away with racial segregation in public accommodations throughout the state.\(^559\)

In January 1962, Tawes, backed tentatively by popular opinion, introduced an open accommodations bill in the Maryland General Assembly outlawing segregation in beaches, restaurants, hotels, stores, recreational facilities and theaters, though it was initially applicable only to Baltimore City and eight counties.\(^560\) It was defeated when it fell two votes shy of majority,\(^561\) but Tawes soon profited from court-mandated legislative restructuring that reduced the power of the rural counties. Thus, the bill passed in early 1963, and included the counties of Anne Arundel, Howard, Cecil, and Harford. It also put teeth into the Maryland Commission on Interracial Problems and Relations by granting it enforcement powers, including the ability to issue cease and

\(^{559}\) Callcott, *Maryland and America*, 155-156.

\(^{560}\) It only applied to the southern and western counties of Baltimore, Charles, Prince George’s, Frederick, Alleghany, Garrett, Washington, and Montgomery.

\(^{561}\) Though the bill was defeated on a statewide basis, the Baltimore City Council and the Montgomery City Council enacted their own open accommodations ordinances. See Callcott, 156.
desist orders and subpoenas, something that black activists had been seeking for years. Finally, in March 1964, the bill was applied to the whole state.\footnote{Callcott, ibid.}

With its open accommodations bill, Maryland preceded the nation in eliminating racial segregation in public accommodations and was in some instances slightly ahead in passing landmark civil rights legislation between 1963 and 1968. The General Assembly passed the bill at the same time as the SCLC’s Birmingham campaign and it was in effect as the nation witnessed the March on Washington in the summer of 1963 and Kennedy’s assassination that fall. When the bill was applied to the whole state in March 1964, it preceded the Civil Rights Act passed by Congress in the summer of that year, which incidentally differed very little from the Maryland law. In 1965, Maryland passed the Fair Employment Act before federal legislation made it illegal for public and private employers to practice employment discrimination in hiring and promoting. Maryland passed the Open Housing Act in 1967 before the federal statute in 1968, which both forbade discrimination in the sale of new houses and apartments, but the Maryland law went even further by making it illegal for lenders to discriminate against home buyers, including buyers of older homes. For many, favorable court decisions, civil rights legislation, and changing public opinion due to African American activism that sought to make them first class citizens and create a more equitable society, serve as the high mark of the civil rights movement. The prevailing feeling seemed to be that now that they had achieved equal access to public accommodations, had removed impediments to voting, and had at least moved toward establishing fair and equal employment opportunities,
African Americans could concentrate more fully on gaining other freedoms, such as expanding employment, economic and political opportunities.\footnote{Ibid, 156-157. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 did not apply to Maryland.}

Unfortunately, the Baltimore NAACP’s failure to truly address the employment concerns of the masses of black Baltimoreans reveals one of its fundamental flaws—though it was a mass-based organization, it had middle-class leadership and its program and activities were inevitably geared toward middle-class interests. As president, Lillie Jackson consciously sought to broaden the NAACP’s membership beyond the small number of middle-class professionals who ran the branch in its earlier years, partnering with the *Afro* and a cross-section of black churches to reach not only the black community centered in the northwest section, but throughout the city and the surrounding areas. Jackson was highly successful in that endeavor, creating a network that conducted successful membership drives that reached all classes. Within a decade after its revitalization in 1935, the Baltimore NAACP was one of the largest branches of the Association—it was within the top ten during the majority of Jackson’s thirty-five year tenure—and was the largest branch in 1946.\footnote{Mitchell, OH 8095, 42, 44.}

Jackson was generous in giving her time, energy, and resources to eradicating segregation and all forms of racial discrimination to ensure African Americans lived in a free, democratic, and just society. As the leader of the local NAACP, Jackson placed Baltimore in the forefront of that struggle, using the Constitution to challenge and eliminate the legal barriers to first class citizenship. With *Brown* in 1954, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, African Americans could revel in
the fact that so much had been achieved in a relatively short period of time. However, the victories would be bittersweet. Civil rights legislation served to raise expectations even higher and only further exposed the problems that still remained. Although the NAACP’s precedent-setting legal cases in the Supreme Court and lobbying efforts in the U.S. Congress had established legal equality across the country, it failed to address the material well-being of a majority of African Americans. ⁵⁶⁵

This “crisis of victory,” as A. Philip Randolph termed it in January 1965 before the passage of the Voting Rights Act, was felt within all civil rights organizations, as some activists, many of them weary and battle-worn, sought to press on and develop methods that would “bring about sustained and rapid progress.” At the same time they increasingly questioned the traditional civil rights orthodoxy of interracial cooperation, non-violent direct action and voter registration. Nationally, the failure of change to keep pace with expectations manifested itself in urban rebellions in several cities in the mid-1960s, including Cambridge, Maryland in 1963, and a number of civil rights activists and organizations on the ground began to more fully emphasize nationalist and/or separatist ideas and platforms, including community organization, black identity, self-defense, and independent political action. Some individuals and organizations in Baltimore soon, implicitly and explicitly, questioned the relevancy of the NAACP, and the relatively friendly competition that existed in Baltimore that served to benefit the entire African American community soon turned acrimonious as the Baltimore branch had to justify its viability as a major civil rights organization pushing for full black equality. ⁵⁶⁶

⁵⁶⁵ Meier and Rudwick, CORE, 329.
⁵⁶⁶ Ibid, 330.
The problems were still great. School desegregation had proceeded at a very slow pace. Ten years after *Brown*, the NAACP realized that open enrollment was not resulting in desegregation but re-segregation as whites increasingly left for the suburbs, leaving in their wake overwhelmingly all-black schools. Federal urban renewal policies were actually displacing African Americans from their neighborhoods as the city razed them for new developments, causing crowded black residential areas to almost burst at the seams. The problems were further exacerbated by deindustrialization, as the city was steadily losing jobs in the 1960s, raising unemployment. These and other problems, coupled with the fact that middle-class leaders, organizations and institutions such as the NAACP, though well-intentioned, were not doing enough to reach the poor and working class black Baltimoreans and create opportunities for them to participate in their own empowerment, left the door open for other entities to attempt to address those issues and concerns.

**CORE Targets Baltimore**

On April 14, 1966, at a much publicized press conference taking place at their national headquarters in New York City, Floyd McKissick, CORE’s national director, along with James Griffin, chair of the Baltimore CORE, and Vivian Jones, president of the Maryland Freedom Union, a new labor organization in Baltimore affiliated with CORE, announced that CORE had chosen Baltimore as the first city for its “Target City” project. According to the CORE leaders, the project would be a national demonstration of how the black poor and working classes could be organized to better their conditions and attain
economic and political equality in a city that McKissick characterized as “one of the worst cities in the nation.” Determined to mobilize the black poor to confront continuing racial discrimination and rectify racially discriminatory treatment in housing, employment, and education, the CORE leaders promised to remain active until substantial changes were made in the lives of those living in Baltimore’s black ghettos.567

In a follow up press conference that occurred a week later in Baltimore, Lincoln Lynch, CORE’s associate director, and James Griffin, addressed the city in a special televised evening newscast before the local press. Answering the inevitable question of “why Baltimore?” Lynch and Griffin reiterated some of the responses given by McKissick during the initial press conference. First, Baltimore was the one city where both northern and southern patterns of racial segregation and discrimination were practiced. Second, statistics of the living conditions between black and white residents proved that inequality still existed in several key areas. Third, national CORE had decided to establish their first project there at the request “of local organizations in Baltimore, many church groups, and the local CORE chapter.”568

According to the Afro in a front-page article almost two weeks after the initial press conference, the community backed such a project and several prominent black leaders in

567 Louis C. Goldberg, CORE in Trouble: A Social History of the Organizational Dilemmas of the Congress of Racial Equality Target City Project in Baltimore, 1965-1967 (Ph.D. diss., Johns Hopkins University, 1970), 1. According to Meier and Rudwick, and Mills, some of the project’s goals were to organize welfare recipients to challenge the abuses of the welfare system; act in an advisory capacity to upgrade and integrate city schools; develop the Maryland Freedom Union to fight for better wages and hours for black workers in white-owned ghetto stores; and create a training program using U.S. Department of Labor funds for black high school dropouts to become gas station attendants and managers. See Meier and Rudwick, CORE, 410, and Mills, Got My Mind Set on Freedom, 536-537.
568 Goldberg, CORE in Trouble, 1; Mills, 535-536.
Baltimore were quoted as stating that the project was welcome because “action was needed.” The Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance, which included a number of activist ministers who were members of and supported the NAACP, pledged their full support. Most whites, particularly white political leaders, including Mayor Theodore McKeldin, believed that Baltimore had already made significant progress in race relations, and that the city was more than capable of making progress on its own without “outside agitators.” They were worried that CORE’s program and confrontational stance would make the city susceptible to the kind of urban riots that had engulfed Cambridge, Maryland in 1963, Watts in August 1965, and other American cities. Despite these fears, McKeldin decided to welcome CORE to the city and pledged to work with them.569

Even before Stokely Carmichael formally introduced the slogan “Black Power” to the public in June 1966 during James Meredith’s March Against Fear in Mississippi, the “Target City” Project represented CORE’s embrace of Black Power. Like all civil rights organizations in the post-Voting Rights era, CORE struggled to respond to the inequities that existed in Northern ghettos and the problems of the black poor nationwide. Achieving civic equality in a relatively short period of time inevitably raised expectations, and when change could not keep pace with expectations, many African Americans became impatient and were prepared to adopt new ideologies, goals, and methods to achieve equality and justice. Now focusing more on community organizing and less on non-violent direct action, interracial cooperation and integration, which guided CORE since its founding in the 1940s, the organization’s new direction was exemplified by the election of Floyd McKissick as national director, replacing James

569 Leon Sachs, OH 8136, MJOHP, 12-13, 52
Farmer in 1966. McKissick, an activist from North Carolina, represented the nationalist and/or separatist factions within the organization, and moved it in a more militant direction over the next couple of years.570

Despite the *Afro* reporting that black leaders in Baltimore welcomed CORE’s project, this was far from the truth. In an article in the Baltimore *Sun* under the headline “CORE Chief Here to Heal Rights Rift,” McKissick travelled to Baltimore for a meeting with thirty Baltimore black leaders, some of whom took issue with his characterization of the progress, or the supposed lack thereof, in race relations in Baltimore. McKissick also planned to reaffirm the support from civil rights leaders for the project as reported earlier in the *Afro*. Juanita Mitchell was particularly upset that McKissick, in the initial press conference, seemed to disregard the long history of the NAACP in breaking racial barriers. Taking issue with McKissick’s assertion that Baltimore was one of the worst cities in the nation when it came to racial discrimination, Mitchell claimed that CORE officials were not only “arrogant” in choosing Baltimore without consulting and coordinating with already existing local organizations, but that they were “dishonest” when assessing Baltimore’s civil rights gains because they did not publicly acknowledge the accomplishments of the NAACP. Mitchell then remarked that the NAACP had long been considered militant because of its uncompromising stances against Jim Crow and had done so when it was especially unpopular. Finally, Mitchell pointedly reminded

McKissick that when CORE needed legal aid and bail money for its protest activities, especially during the 1961 Route 40 campaign, the NAACP readily complied.571

The meeting foreshadowed the problems that CORE would experience during the two years that the “Target City” project existed in Baltimore. Not only did national CORE upset local leaders by “researching” the city without consulting with them, but it also found itself in conflict with Baltimore CORE, which already had existing projects and programs in the city, particularly around housing. That the “Target City” staff seemed to assume leadership and serve as the spokesperson for the local CORE affiliate was just one of the problems between the two factions, causing some members of Baltimore CORE to leave and form their own organization. Though initially promising, the “Target City” project was racked by internal racial conflicts, lack of funds, corruption, mismanagement, and an inability to fully connect and effectively work with the communities they were supposed to organize.572

In the meantime, CORE also chose Baltimore as the site of their twenty-third annual convention, held in July 1966. McKissick, coming off the Meredith March the previous month and at the center of the ideological split between militants like Carmichael and himself and more moderate civil rights leaders, publicly announced on July 4, after four days of rather heated philosophical and organizational debates among the delegates who

571 Mitchell and Kiah, OH 8097, 5; Mills, 561-562. Like Juanita Mitchell, Rev. Marion Bascom, pastor of Douglas Memorial Community Church, and a member of the NAACP and the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance, accused the CORE officials of making unfounded blanket statements when they declared, “that nothing significant in the area of civil rights had gone on in Baltimore.”

572 Goldberg, CORE in Trouble; Meier and Rudwick, CORE, 410; Mills, 535-569. Mills was a member of Baltimore CORE and goes into great detail about the conflicts between the local affiliate and the “Target City” project.
attended, that CORE now embraced Black Power as both an ideology and as organizational policy. The organization now committed itself to community organizing, political power, black pride, economic independence, and self-defense and criticized the growing conflict in Vietnam. Several speakers, including Fannie Lou Hamer and Stokely Carmichael, criticized not only the growing conflict in Vietnam, but also declared that blacks would choose and define the tactics that would best achieve their goals, and excoriated African American elites for selling out their poor and working class brethren for political gain.\textsuperscript{573}

It did not take long for the national NAACP to publicly denounce Black Power and CORE and SNCC for embracing it. The NAACP held its fifty-seventh annual convention in Los Angeles, which began almost as soon as CORE’s ended. There, Roy Wilkins, in his keynote address equated Black Power with black racism and separatism, a concept that could only lead to “black death.” For Wilkins, Black Power, no matter how many times its advocates defined its meaning, could only be seen as oppositional to other racial and ethnic groups in a racially pluralistic society. His remarks sought to distance the NAACP from the two organizations, painting them as extremists while positioning the NAACP as a moderate organization that should attract the support of the white public. The NAACP’s stance was strengthened when Vice-President Hubert Humphrey, who also spoke at the convention, denounced Black Power as racist and separatist. He

pledged that the federal government would continue to support the NAACP’s efforts to integrate African Americans into the mainstream of American society.\textsuperscript{574}

Uttered publicly less than a month ago, Black Power, in the minds of many, was still a slogan that was not clearly defined and as yet offered no viable program that could bring tangible results, and was therefore open to a whole range of interpretations, many of them negative among both blacks and whites. James Farmer, the former national director of CORE, did not explicitly condemn Black Power as had Wilkins and Whitney Young of the National Urban League, but their reactions bore out his warning to the delegates at the convention that the slogan could be misinterpreted and misconstrued by a general public that was fearful and anxious about its implications. Fears were stoked as Stokely Carmichael, SNCC’s new chairman, toured the country that summer and fall building national support for Black Power. Carmichael at that time defined the slogan based on SNCC’s organizing experiences in Lowndes County, Alabama, where he and other activists helped local people form the Lowndes County Freedom Organization (LCFO), which was the original Black Panther Party because of their organizational symbol. There, the freedom movement emphasized black consciousness and independent electoral politics. Carmichael’s activities garnered the attention of not only the mass media but also the FBI, who stepped up its surveillance, and though his public utterances in support

of Black Power appealed to many black activists, they engendered fear and anger amongst the media, government officials, and ordinary white citizens.  

**Assessing Black Power**

Lillie Jackson and Juanita Mitchell did not condemn Black Power as forcefully as Wilkins. They could certainly identify with some of its key components, such as racial pride and racial consciousness. Lillie Jackson was made aware of her racial heritage as a child and taught at a very early age by her mother to honor and respect her African forebears. She and her husband, Keiffer Jackson, passed their family history down to their children and admonished all of them to fight racial oppression and injustice. Keiffer Jackson, the product of an interracial coupling, was also a “race man,” who readily identified as black though light enough to pass for white. Having witnessed several lynchings and other acts of racial violence in his native Mississippi, Jackson never

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576 Mitchell and Kiah, OH 8094, 3-4, 34-35. Ironically, Jackson also took pride in the fact that she was supposedly descended on her paternal side to Charles Carroll of Carrollton, a Maryland delegate to the Continental Congress, and an early signer of the Declaration of Independence. It was for this act that Jackson would proudly exclaim “freedom runs on both sides of my blood,” ignoring the fact that Carroll was also a slaveholder who was opposed to slavery in principle but never manumitted those he enslaved. He was also a member of the Maryland branch of the American Colonization Society. See Mitchell and Kiah, OH 8094, 11-12.
allowed his wife and daughters to work in white households so as to lessen their chances of sexual assault by whites.\textsuperscript{577}

The Jackson-Mitchell clan could also appreciate Black Power’s call for African American self-reliance and economic independence. Jackson was an independent businesswoman, and came from a long line of entrepreneurs on her maternal side. Her mother, Amanda Bowen, conflated economic independence with citizenship, advising Jackson that property ownership was the prerequisite for full and equal citizenship. It was Jackson’s position as an independent entrepreneur that afforded her the time, money, and resources to devote herself full time to the freedom struggle.\textsuperscript{578}

Like some Black Power activists, Jackson, Mitchell, and others had always advocated the need for full black political participation and power in order to eliminate unjust laws, ensure that African Americans’ Constitutional rights were observed and protected, and elect political leaders to office who served African Americans’ best interests and hold them accountable for their actions. Although Jackson believed that working within the political system could temper a person’s ability to think and act independently, and that there should be space for those outside of the political system, such as herself, to protest and compel governmental entities to hold to democratic principles, she did see politics as one of the best avenues for African Americans to make policy changes that would positively affect the lives of all Americans. However, unlike a number of Black Power activists, Jackson was a reformist and did not advocate a radical restructuring of the

\textsuperscript{577} Ibid, OH 8094, 13, 14-18. Keiffer Jackson loathed racial oppression to so much that he never again visited Mississippi after leaving as a young man, not even to attend the funerals of family members.

\textsuperscript{578} Ibid, OH 8094, 6-7; Mitchell and Kiah, OH 8095, 2, 5; Mitchell, OH 8183, 11.
political system. She seems never to have encouraged independent political parties and affiliations, favoring instead to work within the two-party system.\(^{579}\)

Finally, Jackson and Mitchell did not have a problem with militant or radical activities. The Baltimore NAACP had long been considered militant and its activities radical, not only by those whites who opposed its agenda, or by those African Americans who felt the NAACP was too insistent in their pursuit of racial equality and justice, but by Jackson and Mitchell themselves. Jackson’s militancy stemmed from a Christian philosophy that considered racial discrimination a sin against God, which motivated her to “root out” racial oppression no matter the cost.\(^{580}\) Fiery and outspoken, Jackson was also considered ‘radical’ because she was unafraid to voice her opinion, no matter the audience or circumstances, which defied prevailing gender notions of a woman’s place in the public sphere. The Baltimore branch was also willing to use a variety of methods and tactics to pursue their objectives, including using direct action protests, such as picketing, boycotts, and sit-ins, though always as a last resort. However, it should always be noted that Jackson and the NAACP’s radicalism was rooted in non-violence principles.\(^{581}\)

Nevertheless, the Jackson-Mitchell clan disagreed philosophically with some of Black Power’s supposed tenets and was disturbed by the rhetoric and actions of SNCC, CORE,


\(^{580}\) Ibid, OH 8097, 4, 7-9; Brailey, OH 8147, 8; Burrell, OH 8138, 16. Both the local branch and the national organization, in the context of the Cold War, were often branded “Communist” by segregationists because agitating on behalf of racial equality would upset the status quo. However, the label of ‘Communist’ had difficult sticking since Jackson grounded her activism within the church and Communism was a secular political philosophy that criticized organized religion.

\(^{581}\) Ibid, 19; Parren Mitchell, interview by Susan Conwell, 12 August 1976, OH 8170, MJOHP, 13.
and other local and national Black Power individuals and organizations as the years progressed. They rejected black nationalism and separatism, believing as the NAACP did in integrating African Americans into the mainstream of American society. Jackson identified as an American who firmly believed in the democratic way of life and much of her opposition to separatism came from her religious belief that all human beings were equal under God, and in a practical sense, the United States greatly benefited from being a racially, religiously, and ethnically heterogeneous nation that needed to recognize and appreciate the contributions of all of its citizens. Although proud of her African forebears, Jackson never favored migrating back to Africa or creating a separate nation within the borders of the United States, and judged those who did as nihilistic and suicidal.  

Since the NAACP was founded as an interracial organization and believed that the United States benefited from the contribution of all races, religions, and classes, Jackson, too, trusted in interracial cooperation and was convinced that whites had a vital role to play in the freedom movement. Therefore, she was distressed when SNCC and CORE began to assess and debate whether whites should be asked to leave their ranks and they proceed as all-black organizations in 1966. SNCC would officially do so by 1967; CORE by 1968. Jackson and Mitchell considered this a fatal mistake, and erroneously believed it as one of the major reasons for their demise or existence as a shadow of their former selves by the mid-1970s, while the NAACP continued to prosper. Ironically, though an interracial organization, the Baltimore branch was majority-black by default  

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582 Mitchell, OH 8094, 11; Judge Robert Watts, OH 8102, 23, 27.  
583 Watts, OH 8102, 23; Meier and Rudwick, 420.
because many whites were turned off by Jackson’s personality and authoritarian leadership style. Several whites, who would otherwise cooperate with the NAACP, refused to participate in its activities because of Jackson, and several informed the national office of their discontent with her throughout her tenure.  

Finally, Jackson and Mitchell were greatly disturbed by the sometimes violent rhetoric of Black Power activists such as Carmichael and H. Rap Brown, who succeeded Carmichael as chairman of SNCC in 1967, and the prospect of violence that could result from their advocacy of armed self-defense or revolutionary action. She considered such language crude and improper. Again, Jackson’s philosophy of non-violence stemmed from her Christian principles and adherence to the Constitution as the highest law of the land. Jackson emphasized “ballot, not bullets,” and saw political participation and the courts not only as viable avenues to affect meaningful changes, but also as the proper vehicles to register grievances against those who violated Constitutional principles and discriminated against their fellow citizens.

Although she may have believed in self-defense and one’s God-given right to protect and defend their person and/or property, Jackson felt that those who advocated or engaged in violence would receive retribution. In a practical sense, violence, whether rhetorical or physical, could bring the full weight of the U.S. state upon individuals and organizations, which was counterproductive to advancing the freedom movement and could result in serious harm to its credibility and efficiency. Violence was a

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584 Mitchell, OH 8183, 17-18; Watts, OH 8102, 23, 27. The NAACP did have white members, but very few were open about their membership because of possibly being ostracized by the white community.

585 Kiah and Mitchell, OH 8097, 10;

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manifestation of hate and despair, and those who engaged in it lacked discipline, which was vital to progress.\footnote{586}{Mitchell, OH 8183, 16-18.}

These criticisms did not preclude the NAACP from cooperating with certain militant individuals or organizations, as long as their actions were non-violent. Although CORE espoused Black Power, that did not prevent the NAACP from working with or supporting the activities of the Baltimore chapter or the CORE Target City staff when they protested against discrimination in housing, education, or employment. In fact, Mitchell claims that despite their philosophical and ideological differences, the NAACP and younger, more militant activists respected one another. Though the Baltimore NAACP was an interracial organization that primarily worked through the political process and the court system to affect change—a process that many younger activists considered slow, bureaucratic, and advancing the interests of only a few—it was sufficiently militant enough in its demands for equality, self-respect and equal opportunity. Since it engaged in a wide variety of activities to eliminate racial discrimination, used a variety of tactics, including direct action, and was led by a woman who was outspoken, forceful, and had the backing of the respected institutions in the community, the branch could not be labeled an “Uncle Tom” organization. Militants never openly or personally criticized Jackson, and she was prepared to, and more than capable of, defending the NAACP and its record of accomplishments.\footnote{587}{Kiah and Mitchell, OH 8097, 4, 5-6; Mitchell, OH 8183, 15, 17; David Glenn, OH 8112, 23; Verda Welcome, OH 8145, 7-8; Parren Mitchell, OH 8170, 13.}

The NAACP, for its part, understood that one of the reasons for conflicts between them and militant activists was generational. Younger people are naturally more
impatient with the sometimes glacial pace of substantial change, particularly when so much had already been accomplished, thereby proving that positive changes were possible, which raised expectations even higher. The younger generation believed that the older generation had not done enough, were a little too cautious in their approach, and were too willing to compromise. Mitchell, as a person who began her activist career as a young woman in college, understood this, as did her mother, and despite their opinion that some of their rhetoric was irresponsible and their actions occasionally misguided, they and other older civil rights leaders valued young people’s commitment and their contributions.588

Juanita Mitchell, in an interview in the mid-1970s, recognized one of the circumstances that compelled some militant activists to reject non-violence as a philosophy and its practical use in attaining equality. According to her, many of the most prominent Black Power activists’ views on the viability of non-violence as an agent of change were shaped in the crucible of their experiences with racial oppression in the Deep South states of Mississippi, Georgia and Alabama, where they not only had to live under the threat of real violence from ordinary white citizens, but from law enforcement as well. The psychological effects of living in virtual war zones caused them to seriously question non-violence not only as a tactic but also as a way of life. The inability, or in some cases, unwillingness, of the FBI and other law enforcement agencies to prevent such violence or take action against the perpetrators of violence against them, “broke the back of non-violence.” Even though she clearly criticized this turn toward armed self-

defense and call for revolutionary violence, she certainly understood how and under what circumstances such views came about.\(^{589}\)

What is also clear from the interview is that Mitchell found that the rhetoric, whether explicit or implied, and the actions of Black Power advocates were sometimes useful and indeed, necessary. When the NAACP’s conventional modes and methods of operating failed to get the desired results from their opponents, it sometimes took pointing out the alternative in order to compel them to comply with their demands. In these instances, Black Power served as the perfect foil for the moderate, integrationist goals of the NAACP. Civil rights leaders, in their negotiations with recalcitrant white political or business leaders, could always point to Black Power militants as the people whites would not want to deal with. It was therefore imperative that they endorsed the moderate goals of the NAACP or be faced with those who favored more extreme measures.\(^{590}\)

Mitchell further revealed that in her opinion, Black Power helped to expose those whites who were racist and/or opposed to the aims of the movement. In responding to the supposedly racist utterances of black militants, whites sometimes expressed their own extreme racial views or lay bare their feeling that the movement was going too far and that African Americans were ungrateful and undeserving. In effect, Black Power removed the veil of civility from a number of whites and unmasked their true selves. Because of this, Mitchell and other moderate black leaders in Baltimore held no real resentment toward black militants. One of the people that Black Power “exposed” was a supposed white liberal who, because of his growing opposition to black militancy, would

\(^{589}\) Mitchell, OH 8183, 15-16.

\(^{590}\) Ibid, 17.
become a symbol of the conservative white backlash against the black freedom movement and use that to propel himself all the way to the White House. 591

The Baltimore NAACP, as usual, moved forward with its own programs and objectives while trying to deal with CORE’s “Target City” project, the advent of Black Power, and the possibility of other more militant organizations, both indigenous and from the outside, taking root in the city. The branch had definitely experienced a drop in membership, going from 10,201 in 1964 to 5,517 in 1965. The branch was able to raise those numbers back up to 9,106 at the start of 1966 through an extensive membership campaign, but the low numbers seem to indicate that those who would normally have joined the NAACP in years past were opting not to do so. 592 This proved especially relevant for youth, who may have been more compelled to join organizations composed of their peers and engaged in more activities that brought notoriety and seemed to bring more immediate results. Besides CIG, the local SNCC affiliate, there was CORE, which, admittedly, was never very large, and an SCLC chapter, along with a number of other local organizations. Jackson reported to Gloster Current, director of branches that Black Power advocates were trying to “take over” the city. Though the NAACP still received substantial support from the community, it is entirely possible to believe that the NAACP’s mode of operating and their integrationist goals, despite occasionally engaging

591 Ibid.
in direct action protests that attracted the support of young people, was viewed as slow and failed to address the day-to-day living conditions of the black community.\footnote{Jackson to Current, 2 August 1966, NAACP Papers, VI-C-97; Jackson to Current, ibid, VI-C-97. Other branches were battling the perception that the NAACP was no longer able to truly address their concerns. In correspondence with Jackson, Current informed her that the Rochester, New York branch was experiencing difficulty because of the “divisive efforts” of some community groups that believed that the NAACP no longer represented the community and its interests. It is not difficult to infer that these may have been Black Power groups. See Gloster Current to Lillie Jackson, 25 April 1966, VI-C-97.}

The Baltimore branch’s membership had decreased over the 1960s, but it was still one of the most populous branches of the Association, and the potential was there to further increase members because of the continual influx of black migrants to the city as whites increasingly fled to the suburbs. Therefore, Current proposed in April 1966 the Baltimore, along with Philadelphia, Detroit, and Chicago, be divided into multiple branches.\footnote{Current to Jackson, 12 April 1966, VI-C-97; Current to Jackson, 29 November 1965, ibid. To make the sell more appealing, Current informed those branch presidents reluctant to do so that multiple branches were already operating in large cities such as Los Angeles (four), Houston (eight), and Dallas (four).}

There were several rationales for such a proposal. First, the national office felt that this would make the branches more effective, particularly in recruiting new members. Second, it was harder for a one large branch to be able to adequately service the entire black community in cities that contained over 250,000 residents, and multiple branches would allow leaders of each community to more effectively deal with the issues of their particular constituents.\footnote{Sartain, 164.}

The main reason why the NAACP proposed multiple branches in urban cities with a large African American population was to lessen the possibility of urban riots. Since 1965, Roy Wilkins had been looking to reduce the number of urban rebellions like those
that had already taken place, particularly in Watts, and worked with Current on possible solutions. Research at Johns Hopkins University suggested that there was a strong correlation between the size of individual branch membership and the likelihood of urban rebellions. Examining the top 12 Northern cities with a large African American population, studies suggested that those branches that contained 3 percent or more of the African American population as members had insulated the city from urban rebellions in the last two years. Therefore, Current pushed the four largest branches to accept such a proposal. Jackson was initially resistant to such an idea, arguing that multiple branches would seriously disrupt the branch’s unity and weaken its effectiveness. Of course, it could be said that Jackson opposed the plan because it weakened her monopoly of leadership within the branch. Jackson, in early 1966, swayed the branch’s executive committee to table the proposal until further study could verify its effectiveness but the issue became moot once the branch’s membership slowed in the late 1960s.596

The Growing Power of the Black Vote

Meanwhile, the branch continued with one of its top priorities, the registration of black voters. The NAACP had registered thousands of African Americans causing white political leaders to take notice and respond to black Baltimoreans, lest they feel it at the polls. Toward the end of the 1950s, the NAACP began to concentrate on placing more African Americans in office on the city and state levels to engage in policy making, since

596 Louis Goldberg to Gloster Current, 6 March 1966, VI-C-97; Jackson to Current, 20 September 1966; ibid; Sartain, 164.
a number of municipal and state civil rights bills had failed to pass. Under the direction of Rev. John Tilley, the pastor of New Metropolitan Baptist Church and the first executive director of King’s SCLC, the branch assisted Verda Welcome in becoming the first black woman to enter the Maryland House of Representatives in 1958, and later to the Maryland Senate in 1966. Closer to home, the NAACP proudly assisted Clarence Mitchell, III in his successful bid for the Maryland House of Delegates in 1961.597

The NAACP voter registration machine was adept on defeating politicians as well. In 1964, George Wallace, the segregationist governor of Alabama, campaigned against Lyndon Johnson for the Democratic nomination for president on a segregationist platform, and focused much of his attention on Maryland. He deliberately began his campaign in Cambridge, the site of much racial tension and violence for the past three years and where there was much pro-segregation sentiment. Wallace’s campaign energized the NAACP which, along with CORE and other groups, organized a vigorous statewide campaign that held mass rallies and utilized churches, both black and white, to conduct a door-to-door educational campaign to forewarn black voters what a Wallace victory would mean for African Americans nationwide. They also developed a transportation system to convey African Americans to the polls. The success of the campaign was happily reported to the National NAACP by Juanita Mitchell, who informed them in a telegram that the NAACP, working with “the clergy and women’s groups and students produced the margin of victory over Wallace in Maryland.” This fact did not escape Wallace, who despite winning 42 percent of the Democratic vote,

597 Sartain, 159; Watson, Lion in the Lobby, 638-639. Welcome would also be the first black woman to be elected to a state senate.
bitterly recognized that “if it hadn’t been for the nigger bloc…we’d have won it all.” An added comfort was the reelection of incumbent congressmen and senators who had voted for the Civil Rights Act.  

In 1966, the NAACP galvanized its forces once again to oppose George P. Mahoney, the Democratic candidate for governor who ran on a viciously racist platform, stoking white fears on the volatile issue of housing. The NAACP supported the Republican candidate Spiro Agnew, the former Baltimore County executive. Agnew took the governor’s seat in November 1966, and Jackson believed that he would be amenable to the civil rights movement and its demands of equality under the law. Ironically, civil rights activists took as Agnew as liberal on race, and though he certainly supported the movement’s broader aims, Callcott argues that Agnew was more neutral rather than liberal on race matters. Essentially, he was a conservative, a point that was brought home from 1968 onward.  

However, in his first years of office, The NAACP’s faith in—and vote for—Agnew seemed to be justified. Promising during the campaign to integrate his staff, Agnew did so, becoming the first governor to appoint an African American, Dr. Gilbert Ware, as one of his advisors. In December 1967, he issued the first executive Code of Fair Practices that eliminated racial discrimination in hiring in all branches of the state government and among all state contractors, named three black judges to the bench, and extended the reach of the state’s law against discrimination in public accommodations to include

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598 Juanita Mitchell to Roy Wilkins and Gloster Current, telegram, 21 May 1964, NAACP Papers, III-A-270; Sartain, 160-161; Carter, The Politics of Rage, 213, 215; Callcott, Maryland and America, 162.
taverns, which had previously been exempt. Agnew also supported an open housing bill and signed into law in March 1967 legislation introduced by Clarence Mitchell III to repeal the miscegenation law that forbid black and white intermarriage, a law which Agnew labeled a “blot on Maryland’s escutcheon for 306 years.”

It did not take long for Baltimore’s black civil rights leaders to sour on Agnew. Liberal in his policies concerning civil rights, Agnew proved to be caustic in his language toward so-called “irresponsible” black leaders such as Carmichael and H. Rap Brown who betrayed his conservatism, and some black leaders, such as Rev. Marion Bascom, pastor of the Douglass Community Church and a member of the Interdenominational Ministerial Alliance, who did not appreciate Agnew’s assertion that any criticism of the war in Vietnam by black leaders would seriously hamper the passing of civil rights legislation. Bascom resented Agnew attempting to impose parameters on what black leaders could critique and what affect that would have on their rights. Others, such as the SCLC in Baltimore, believed that Agnew created an atmosphere in Maryland that welcomed such demagogues as George Wallace, who again ran for the Democratic presidential nomination in 1968.

Agnew’s conservatism began to fully shine through when Cambridge exploded in July 1967. Still reeling from years of racial battles, unfulfilled promises, and dire living conditions for African Americans, particularly in the black Second Ward, Cambridge again erupted in rebellion soon after a speech given by H. Rap Brown, the chair of SNCC. Delivering a fiery and hyperbolic speech that exhorted blacks to arm themselves

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601 Albright, 172-173; Sartain, 165.
and prepare to take drastic action if conditions did not change, Agnew was shocked upon
hearing a recording. Blaming the rebellion entirely on Brown rather than the conditions
there, Agnew from that point on viewed the world in starkly black and white terms. In
Agnew’s estimation, there were black extremists and liberals who enabled such rhetoric
and behavior, or conservatives such as himself who stood on the side of law and order
and only dealt with those responsible persons who presented their grievances through the
proper political and administrative channels.\(^{602}\)

Agnew now painted all black protestors with the same brush, even those with
legitimate demands. Now with a new get-tough policy, Agnew gained the chance to
display it when protests erupted on April 4, 1968 at Bowie State College, a small, black
college located between Washington, D.C. and Baltimore. Initially upset that a popular
history professor failed to receive tenure, the students soon agitated against deplorable
conditions on campus, including bad food, inadequate vending and laundry machines,
crowded facilities, and shabby buildings, a state of disarray that Juanita Mitchell
described as “a disgrace to a civilized state.” Determined that Maryland would not be
held ‘hostage’ by student protesters like those at Columbia University and San Francisco
State University, Agnew was unsympathetic toward their plight when they took over the
campus in late March 1968, and coldly refused to meet with students when they marched
to Annapolis and peacefully occupied the Maryland State House demanding an audience
with him to resolve the situation on April 4. Not willing to bow to even legitimate
demands, Agnew had the 227 students arrested and then had the state police travel to the

\(^{602}\) Ibid, 173-177; Calcott, *Maryland and America*, 164.
campus and shut it down, forcing remaining students to vacate the premises in five minutes or face arrest.\textsuperscript{603}

**The 1968 Baltimore Rebellion and the Conservative White Backlash**

While the NAACP posted bond for the arrested students, and an angry black community found the governor’s action outrageous, word reached the nation that Dr. King had been assassinated. When Baltimore, like other cities, exploded in rebellion, Agnew immediately proclaimed a state of emergency that included a temporary ban on the sale of firearms, alcohol, and gasoline in containers, and ordered 6,000 national guardsmen to assist 1,100 police officers; Agnew soon declared it an insurrection and federal troops were called in on Sunday, April 7. Mayor Thomas D’Alesandro III imposed a curfew between 11 p.m. and 6 a.m. Several black leaders, including Juanita and Clarence Mitchell III, and members of organizations such as CORE, the Soul School, and the Black United Front, were given special passes to traverse the city and assist in calming people down and compelling them to return to their homes. When the dust settled, more than 5,000 had been arrested, over 7,000 injured, 1,049 businesses destroyed, and 6 were dead.\textsuperscript{604}

As the city lay smoldering, and black leaders were exhausted from days in the streets, Agnew called one hundred of them to the state house on Wednesday, April 11. Flanked

\textsuperscript{603}NAACP News Release, 5 April 1968, NAACP Papers, IV-A-69; Callcott, 164; Albright, 181-182.

\textsuperscript{604}Mitchell, OH 8183, 21-22; Parren Mitchell, OH 8170, 15; Sartain, 166; Callcott, 165-166.
by law enforcement officials, Agnew berated them. Subscribing to the “outside agitator” theory, Agnew blamed the rebellion solely on Carmichael, who visited Baltimore three days before trouble erupted, ignoring the existing social, economic, and political problems that plagued the city. Some seventy black leaders, including Congressman Parren Mitchell, were angered and walked out. They proceeded to caucus among themselves and plan their next move, while other leaders, such as Juanita Mitchell, attempted to reason with Agnew, to no avail.605

Agnew’s browbeating of moderate black leaders played out before local and national media, where many whites, who had become exasperated with black protest, inundated Agnew’s office twenty four hours after the event with telegraphs and phone calls commending him for his actions. As Albright notes, those who had voted for the “two Georges” in the prior two presidential races, were much more aware that Agnew was their man more so than those moderate black Marylanders who voted him into office.606

Agnew’s national profile as an official who stood for law and order brought political dividends when Richard Nixon, who was running for president, had his office contact him with an offer to serve as his running mate, which Agnew accepted. The Maryland State Conference’s reaction was swift and indignant. Juanita Mitchell made it clear that Agnew had retreated from a positive position on civil rights that he held when he first ran for governor, a position he attained largely on the backs of black voters. She expressed the thoughts of many NAACP members across Maryland when she noted that Agnew was now kowtowing to white reactionaries across the country. Despite these criticisms,

605 Sartain, 166-167; Smith, 236.
606 Albright, 168, 191; Witcover, 27-29.
in 1969, Agnew parlayed his new public image into the second highest office in the nation when Nixon was elected president.\textsuperscript{607}

**The Panthers Come To Town**

The Baltimore rebellion was the physical manifestation of the anger, frustration, and hopelessness that many black Baltimoreans, particularly the poor and working class, felt about their living conditions that grew progressively worse as the city neared the next decade. According to a survey conducted in 1965, their socioeconomic conditions stood in stark contrast to their white counterparts. Inferior schools, high unemployment, drugs, overcrowded and dilapidated housing, poor sanitation, police brutality, inadequate health care and social services, insufficient fire protection, and violent crime plagued poor and working class African Americans. Many felt that city government officials were indifferent to their plight and believed they were more harmed than helped by them. Baltimore soon became the city with the highest violent crime rate, and by 1970, the city accounted for three-fourths of the violent crime that took place in the state.\textsuperscript{608}

The rebellion clearly demonstrated that the NAACP, the Urban League, and CORE, despite its turn toward Black Power and the “Target City” project, were viewed by many as incapable of addressing the issues affecting the poor and working class. The Baltimore chapters of the NAACP and Urban League were able to prevent Baltimore

\textsuperscript{607} Baltimore NAACP News Release, 18 August 1968, NAACP Papers, IV-C-15; Albright, 191; Witcover, 29; Sartain, 168-169.

from experiencing rebellions in the preceding years because they managed to focus the community’s energies on attacking the visible signs of Jim Crow segregation, but now that the movement had achieved legal equality, they faltered in dealing with the more insidious forms of racial oppression. That white political elites such as Agnew felt comfortable in publicly castigating black leaders demonstrated their waning political influence, which contrasted with their interactions with former Governor Theodore McKeldin and Baltimore Mayor Thomas D’Alessandro III, who were more conciliatory. This diminishing influence in the city provided an opening for other, more radical organizations such as the Soul School, the Baltimore Defense Committee, and the Black Panther Party (BPP) to fill the void.609

Although members of the Black Panther Party were visible during the uprising in April, the chapter was not formally established until the fall of 1968, opening an office in east Baltimore.610 Nationally known for their militant rhetoric, distinctive uniform, and advocacy of armed self-defense—resulting in a number of well publicized armed confrontations with law enforcement—the Panthers were the premier Black Power organization for many African Americans. The Panther’s brand of militancy was welcomed by some segments of Baltimore’s black community, those who believed that

609 Ibid.
610 Marshall “Eddie” Conway and Dominique Stevenson, Marshall Law: The Life and Times of A Baltimore Black Panther (Baltimore: AK Press, 2011), 37. Conway, who served as a firefighter during the uprising, noted that four members of the Party from New York were accused of burning down parts of a shopping center in the Cherry Hill neighborhood.
they would not bend a knee to the white political establishment. For them, the Panthers were the one group that would not hesitate to confront racial oppression.611

The NAACP did not welcome the Panthers. Jackson and Mitchell believed that the Panthers preached hatred and violence, so, it was no surprise that Juanita Mitchell was quoted as saying that “The Panthers act too much like a Black Ku Klux Klan” and she therefore, “cannot support them.” While they may have believed in self-defense, they considered the Panthers a violent, anti-white organization that would only lead African Americans down the road to destruction. In their critique of the Panthers, the NAACP could not see beyond the Panther’s hyperbolic rhetoric and appreciate the ideological and operational differences between the Panthers and other Black Power organizations. For example, Jackson and Mitchell, like Wilkins and many whites, believed that Black Power was automatically anti-white and considered Black Power advocates the ideologically equivalent of white supremacists such as the Klan. Whites being asked to leave SNCC and CORE may have also colored their opinion. However, the Panthers sought coalitions with white radicals such as the Peace and Freedom Party and the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and had conflicts with cultural nationalist organizations such as US over the role of whites within the movement.612

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611 Jeffries, “Revising Panther History,” 19. One black resident was quoted as saying that the “Panthers are the only brothers who can deal with the white man on any terms necessary, they’re not scared to stand up and tell the honkies were to go.” See John Robinson, “Black Panthers: Revolution and Social Change,” Baltimore News-American, 6 September 1970, 1.

612 Mitchell and Kiah, OH 8097, 6; Mitchell, OH 8183, 16-17, 18. Ironically, Jackson herself would be accused of being anti-white, one of the reasons being her failure to build coalitions with progressive white organizations during her tenure as president, which Robert Watts, an NAACP attorney, considered one of her organizational shortcomings. Watts, OH 8102, 22-23. For the conflicts between the Panthers and US over the role of
The Baltimore Panthers immediately began to address community concerns by implementing a number of community service programs. Though the chapter did possess firearms, they were mainly used to protect and defend the black community, not to patrol law enforcement in an effort to check police brutality.\(^6\) One of the community service projects mandated by the national office was the free breakfast program, which the chapter initiated in 1969. The Panthers housed the program in various churches between 1969 and 1971. The Sharp Street United Memorial Methodist Church, Jackson’s home church, served as the second site for the program. That Sharp Street welcomed the Panthers illustrates the waning influence of Jackson and the NAACP. Rev. Clifford, the new pastor of Sharp Street, allowed the Panthers to use the church’s basement for the program. When Jackson, a member of the Board of Trustees, objected to this at a trustee’s meeting and called for the Panthers to be evicted, Rev. Clifford politely refused and argued that the Panthers were providing a much needed community service and believed they were not listed at that time as a subversive organization by the Justice Department.\(^7\)

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\(^7\) By the time the Baltimore chapter was formed, the national office in Oakland had deemphasized monitoring and patrolling the police because Huey Newton, a founder, was imprisoned for allegedly shooting a police officer in 1967. 
\(^7\) Mitchell and Kiah, OH 8097, 6; Jeffries, “Revising Panther History,” 22. Rev. Clifford was not aware that the FBI’s director, J. Edgar Hoover, had previously declared the BPP “the greatest threat to the internal security of the United States” and sought to “neutralize” them as part of a counterintelligence program established in 1967 called COINTELPRO. For the FBI’s war against the Panthers, see Ward Churchill and Jim Vander Wall, *Agents of Repression: The FBI’s Secret War Against the Black Panther Party and the American Indian Movement* (Boston: South End Press, 1988).
The Black Panther Party understood the central role of the black church and developed amicable relationships with them in order to better reach the masses. In the early years, chapters across the country used churches to feed thousands of people, mainly children, in a number of large cities. However, Jackson objected to the Panther’s breakfast program because she contended that the program was a ruse to indoctrinate young people with their philosophy of hatred and then train them in the use of firearms to instigate a revolution. Her view of the ulterior motive behind the free breakfast program jelled with that of the FBI and other law enforcement entities, which sought to destroy the breakfast program and the other social services provided by the party.615

What is amazing about the attitude of Jackson and Mitchell toward the Panthers is that it was diametrically opposite to that of other civil rights activists and black leaders; even within their own family. Evelyn Burrell, who as a young girl joined the Young People’s Forum and then transitioned into the NAACP, served on the city’s Community Relations Commission, and worked closely with the Panthers. She assisted the free breakfast program and considered it a pleasure to work with them. In fact, Burrell worked with both civil rights and Black Power organizations such as the Soul School, and within an umbrella organization called the Black United Front. Parren Mitchell, Juanita Mitchell’s brother-in-law and a U.S. Congressman, also had a great relationship with the Panthers and other radical groups and keep in contact with them even after the organizations formally disbanded.616

The Baltimore chapter lasted until 1972, when the Central Committee disbanded it and its members called to Oakland to assist the political campaigns of Bobby Seale and Elaine Brown who were running for mayor and the city council, respectively. Like other chapters, the Baltimore Panthers were victims of police repression, internal dissension, and other factors, which weakened them considerably. For example, the FBI and the Baltimore Police Department accused the Panthers of using their food programs to indoctrinate children to hate whites. The Baltimore PD constantly arrested Panther members on spurious charges like inciting to riot and loitering, forcing the organization to divert funds from needed community programs for bail and attorney fees. This further decimated the chapter, since the incarceration of members opened the door for new recruits, several of whom were informants/agent provocateurs who reported on chapter activities to law enforcement or attempted to sabotage coalitions with other radical left groups such as the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). This infiltration resulted in internal dissension because members found it hard to trust fellow comrades, which caused paranoia within the ranks.617 The disintegration of the chapter, which was part and parcel of the nationwide federal campaign to destroy the organization, served to validate Jackson’s contention that the Panthers were ultimately victims of their own demagoguery and internal violence. Of course, she and Mitchell had no idea the extent to which the FBI and other law enforcement entities deliberately sought to destroy them.618

618 Kiah and Mitchell, OH 8097, 7; Mitchell, OH 8183, 16-17; Jeffries, 41.
A Changing of the Guard

Lillie Jackson turned eighty in 1969. Fatigue, illness and the natural effects of old age were taking their toll, and Jackson had informed Gloster Current, director of branches, and Kivie Kaplan, NAACP president, on several occasions that the burden of running such a large branch was becoming too much to bear. She was also concerned about the future of the branch after her retirement, confessing that she would regret stepping down only to see “the branch go backwards.” Therefore, she requested a conference with Current, Juanita Mitchell and herself to discuss such a transition. \(^{619}\)

Jackson would remain president until November 1969, when she publicly announced her retirement. Jackson had hoped to see her daughter Juanita take the position. Juanita had been her mother’s right hand since her return to Baltimore in 1941 from a stint serving the Urban League with her husband, Clarence, in Minnesota, and had already served as president of the Maryland State Conference. Therefore, Jackson and her supporters made plans to transfer the title when Jackson finally retired.\(^{620}\)

However, a faction of the NAACP that included Enolia McMillan had decided that the branch needed new leadership. Although appreciative of Jackson for her long years of dedicated service, there were those in the branch who believed that someone not of the Jackson-Mitchell family would better serve as president. Therefore, in order to prevent Jackson-Mitchell supporters from controlling the election and instantly installing

\(^{619}\) Jackson to Current, 22 August 1967; Jackson to Current, 14 February 1968; Jackson to Current, 1 March 1968; Jackson to Kivie Kaplan, 29 March 1968; 18 April 1968, all in NAACP Papers, IV-C-14.

\(^{620}\) Sartain, 169.
Mitchell, the McMillan faction appealed to the national office to ensure that the election would be an open contest. The national office agreed, and for the first time in 34 years, the Baltimore branch had a contested presidential election between two new candidates that was overseen by an outside entity. To ensure a fair election, the national office appointed an independent observer to monitor the proceedings. The observer made sure that only members in good standing could nominate from the floor and that branch members were given the correct date, time and location of the election.621

On December 16, 1969, at Lillie Jackson’s home church, Sharp Street Memorial Methodist, Enolia McMillan, to the surprise of a number of people, defeated Juanita Mitchell and was elected the thirteenth president—and third female—of the Baltimore branch since its founding in 1913. The final ballot tally was 101 to 77 in her favor. The victory effectively ended the reign of the Jackson-Mitchell family, which had led the Baltimore freedom movement since the early 1930s.622

The election was not without controversy. Several members of the branch felt that a voting electorate of 178 was way too low for a branch that contained over 10,000 (making it the sixth largest in the nation), and that the results should be challenged. The Baltimore Sun reported two days later that Mitchell herself, who was also surprised by the outcome, made the same charge and was also considering challenging the results. She informed a member of the election supervisory committee, who reported it to McMillan, that an investigation needed to be conducted to determine whether there were

621 Current to Jackson, 12 November 1969, NAACP Papers, IV-C-14; Current to Silas Craft, 12 November 1969, ibid; Jackson to Current, 12 November 1969, ibid; Sartain, 169.
some ineligible voters who were allowed to cast ballots. However, when questioned about it, Mitchell sharply replied “I have no comment at this time.”

McMillan defended the low voter turnout, arguing that the members had become so accustomed to Jackson as president that they refrained from voting and were therefore not used to doing so. On the question of the low number of voters, McMillan intimated that there might have been subterfuge on the part of Jackson and her administration. She contended that only 500 notices were sent out in the mail and that the election committee attempted to check the membership records to determine eligibility but was told by Jackson that she would release the files because they were incomplete. McMillan believed that the question of eligibility would have been resolved had the committee had access to the files.

By December 20, Juanita Mitchell had apparently changed her mind about challenging the election. The *Afro* reported that in the spirit of unity, Mitchell would concede the presidency to McMillan. She praised the achievements of the branch under her mother’s leadership and stated that she had not planned to run but was “drafted…to ensure the pace of the battle for freedom,” mostly likely by Jackson, who worried about the future of the branch. She stated that she was actually too busy to run an effective campaign, since her legal cases against continuing racial discrimination throughout the state filled up her schedule. However, it is telling that she previously told the *Sun* two days before that she “didn’t think I had to campaign.” This alludes to her belief that the position was already hers. So, it was shocking to her that “she [McMillan] wanted the job so badly.”

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623 “NAACP President Wants More Voice for Youth,” *Afro*, 20 December 1969, 1; *Sun* 18 December 1969.
624 *Sun*, ibid.
Nevertheless, Mitchell pledged her support for McMillan, stating “The NAACP is too powerful a force for justice, decency and equality to have it splintered by factional interests.”

McMillan was officially declared president in a ceremony at Bethel A.M.E. Church on January 1, 1970. In her acceptance speech, she thanked the members for having confidence in her leadership and pledged to “do all that I can to further the efforts of the NAACP.” From the outset, McMillan announced her intentions to follow a path of leadership that was very different from that of her predecessor. While campaigning, McMillan declared that she would make a “broader appeal to black militants.” McMillan, like Jackson and Mitchell, considered herself a militant, but was “not an extremist.” However, she was more willing to work with militant, Black Power organizations than Jackson, who dismissed most of them because she severely disagreed with their ideology and/or practices. Nevertheless, McMillan still betrayed some of the paternalism of the NAACP when she purported that these groups needed direction that only the NAACP, as the oldest civil rights organization, could provide. And like Jackson, the NAACP under McMillan would not adopt the tactics and methods of the militants, but would “continue to work within the framework of the United States Constitution.”

McMillan’s main priority was closing the generational gap by attracting more young people to join the NAACP. Although she was a part of Jackson’s generation, she

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625 Sun, ibid; “NAACP Unity Comes First—Mrs. Mitchell, Afro, 20 December 1969, 1, 29.
understood that the organization needed new blood to bring new ideas and new energy. She promised to broaden the NAACP’s appeal to youth, since the current chapter was “filled with old people.” She reiterated this at her inauguration ceremony, subtly criticizing Jackson for failing to embrace the broader community. For McMillan, the branch became too comfortable in its relationship with the church, and neglected those individuals who frequented taverns, bars and nightclubs. Jackson had waged a moral crusade against these establishments for years on the grounds that they eroded the moral fabric of the black community, and managed to make several enemies. McMillan hoped to persuade them to support the NAACP. The first step toward repairing the relationship occurred in 1970 when Morris Liquor Store gave $50 toward a life membership.  

As there were several people who wanted to challenge new leadership, there were also those who welcomed such as change. McMillan expressed the opinion that not only would the recent election not split the branch, but that many people were ready for a change, including the national office. Roy Wilkins, Gloster Current, and other top officials certainly appreciated Jackson’s dynamic leadership and the branch’s outstanding accomplishments under her stewardship. The Baltimore NAACP was one of their premier branches, and their predecessors realized early on its potential to serve as an example for other branches and how its unique geographic position and state of race relations could influence the freedom movement nationwide. As a result, they constantly defended Jackson against those who urged them to remove her as president because they

believed she had overstepped her perceived bounds by concentrating on issues beyond civil rights, or that she was shamelessly nepotistic. But they also realized that Jackson was sometimes too demanding and took too many liberties, often disregarding certain provisions of the NAACP [branch] Constitution, particularly when it came to retaining funds donated in the name of the organization. Therefore, they were pleased with the outcome, feeling that McMillan’s administration would bring new life to the branch.628

A New Era Begins

As the new decade commenced, McMillan worked to build the branch’s membership in the face of competition with other organizations. But there was not much to worry about. As the years went by, several organizations, such as SNCC, CORE, and the SCLC either ceased to exist or were shadows of their former selves, which affected their local chapters. The Baltimore Panthers were decimated by law enforcement and eventually shut down by the Oakland leadership. For Juanita Mitchell, the fact the NAACP still existed seemed to validate its mission to reform the system rather than overthrow it, and vindicated its position on non-violence and working within the framework of the U.S. Constitution to seek racial equality and social justice.629

McMillan maintained a high level of branch membership during the first few years of her administration. By 1973, the branch consisted of 5,205 members and 828 youth members, making it the third largest branch after Detroit and Chicago. But McMillan

629 Mitchell, OH 8183, 18.
found it hard to maintain the level of community interaction that Jackson did. The
NAACP itself experienced financial difficulties, and this impacted the branches as well.
McMillan found that to keep cost down, some of the NAACP’s “normal” services had to
be reduced or eliminated. This certainly caused concern, so much so that the *Afro,* in
1977, lamented the fact that the NAACP was no longer available to help ordinary citizens
on matters that were unrelated to continuing racial discrimination. To cut costs, the
branch was short on staff, and officers were no longer available after hours. The situation
was so untenable that the *Afro* went so far as to express regret that Jackson was no longer
the president. McMillan responded that the NAACP could no longer act as a “welfare
agency,” a subtle dig at Jackson’s leadership.630

The most difficult obstacle the branch had to face was the era itself. The branch was
not as important as the 1970s progressed because it steadily lost political and social
capital, was given limited financial support, and curtailed vital services because of
inadequate staff. In addition, it still was unable to fully eliminate the racial
discrimination that still festered. The city itself was undergoing major changes. Urban
decline due to white and black flight and deindustrialization severely affected the black
underclass, making their deteriorating socioeconomic conditions even more glaring.
Whites and upper and middle-class African Americans were not only increasingly
leaving for the suburbs but their disappearance contributed to a corresponding decline in
retail businesses, home ownership, city income tax revenue, and city services. With its
economy shifting from manufacturing, trade and construction to education, government,
health and tourism as the major sources of employment, Johns Hopkins University and

630 Sartain, 170-171.
Johns Hopkins Hospital became the largest employers by the 1970s. In addition, white backlash nationwide against civil rights gains resulted in white political leaders voted into office who contributed to an atmosphere where America was become increasingly indifferent to urban decay and lingering racism.631

Politically, black Baltimoreans had been registering in large numbers since the 1940s, and were able to acquire seats on the City Council and in the Maryland legislature, but were still not formidable enough to capture the mayoral seat. Whereas African Americans were able to elect a black mayor in Cleveland, Gary, and Newark in the 1960s, black Baltimoreans were still considered a “sleeping giant” by the Baltimore Urban League in a special report on the “State of Black Baltimore” in 1987,632 because they were unable to find viable candidates to challenge the white monopoly on the position. There was an early missed opportunity. In 1971, an African American, George Russell, the incumbent city solicitor and a former state trial judge, challenged William Donald Schaefer, the powerful former president of the City Council, for the Democratic nomination. Russell built a multicultural coalition and had solid support amongst older, middle-class black Baltimoreans. However, Clarence Mitchell III, an incumbent state senator and scion of the Jackson-Mitchell clan, soon entered the race, and garnered the support of younger African Americans. His entrance effectively split the black vote,

632 This report was issued on the cusp of the election of Kurt Schmoke, the first African American mayor of the city. See McDougall, 95.
allowing Schafer to become mayor, beginning a long reign that did not end until he retired in 1986.\footnote{McDougall, 93.}

Disappointed but not defeated, African Americans’ attempts to acquire other important city administration positions began that same year and were successful with the appointment of Roland Patterson as school superintendent in 1971. Three black Baltimoreans were later appointed to the school board in 1975, along with a new African American superintendent, John L. Crew. These victories gave African Americans a majority on the school board for the first time in history. Several black superintendents followed Crew after his resignation in 1982 and African Americans comprised the school board’s top administrators from that point forward. State Senators Verda Welcome and Clarence Mitchell, III, who were now a part of the Maryland political establishment after beginning their careers as outsiders in the 1960s, had by the early 1970s used their considerable political clout to appoint African Americans to several key municipal posts. Black Baltimoreans soon held 46 percent of the 41,000 municipal jobs by 1971, and that percentage increased as African Americans steadily migrated to the city. In 1984, when African Americans finally became the majority of city residents, Mayor Schafer appointed Bishop L. Robinson police commissioner, ending a long struggle to occupy the top position in local law enforcement. Although black Baltimoreans now controlled key aspects of the city government, they struggled mightily to stop the city’s decline, stripping some African Americans of the notion that black political power could adequately address the social problems of the black underclass and overcome the
increasing hostility toward urban decay and its requisite racial issues exhibited by the larger society in the 1970s and 1980s.\textsuperscript{634}

Despite this, the Baltimore NAACP continued to work to strengthen black political power and fight continued racial discrimination in education, housing and voting. It had to concede some ground to other organizations that were as moderate as the NAACP and working toward some of the same goals, such as Baltimoreans United in Leadership Development (BUILD), which formed to develop economic and housing opportunities and was created by NAACP members such as Rev. Vernon Dobson and Rev. Wendell Phillips. In addition to BUILD there was the “Goon Squad,” an informal group of eleven influential black ministers, political leaders, and entrepreneurs who coalesced around U.S. Congressman Parren Mitchell and used their considerable political capital and social connections to elect African Americans to political office and push for racial equality in employment, education and the criminal justice system.\textsuperscript{635}

Despite these challenges, the Baltimore NAACP pressed on. In the 1980s, because of her leadership of the branch and her long years of activism, McMillan was elected president of the national NAACP, the first woman to hold the position. She remained Baltimore’s president, holding both positions simultaneously from 1984 to 1990, and was

\textsuperscript{634} Sartain, \textit{Borders of Equality}, 171-172; McDougall, \textit{Black Baltimore}, 93, 95; Orr, 57-59.
instrumental in having the NAACP move its headquarters from New York to Baltimore in 1986, the year before Kurt Schmoke became Baltimore’s first elected black mayor.\footnote{Sartain, 171-172; Adam Bernstein, “Enolia McMillan, First Woman to Lead NAACP,” Washington Post, 26 October 2006. When Schaefer was elected governor in 1986, he resigned as mayor, leaving the seat to Clarence “Du” Burns, city council president and the first black mayor of the city. Burns held the seat for over a year, then was defeated by Schmoke in the Democratic mayoral primary in 1987. See Orr, 60.}
Enolia McMillan’s hard work had finally paid off. As national NAACP president, she had convinced the NAACP’s board and its executive director, Benjamin Hooks, to move the headquarters from New York City to Baltimore. Paying rent in the Big Apple was becoming too costly, and despite being in the city for 77 years, it was almost shameful that the nation’s premier civil rights organization had to struggle financially to remain in a building that was not their own. Yes, there was the possibility that the move could backfire. Being in New York gave them access to major news outlets—not to mention prominent fundraisers—and some feared that moving to a smaller city could diminish the Association’s importance and make it appear to no longer be in the forefront of the freedom movement as it had been all of these years. These were all legitimate concerns, for the organization had been struggling to change its image as a slow-moving, bureaucratic organization that was responsible for dismantling legalized racial apartheid, but was largely unresponsive to the contemporary economic needs of African Americans and also had a difficult time challenging structural racism in housing, employment, education, the criminal justice system, and social welfare policy, among other areas.\(^{637}\)

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McMillan and supporters of the move argued that the organization was moving at the right time and for the right reasons, and that it would actually reinvigorate the organization. For the first time in their storied history, the NAACP would own the building that housed it. Hooks realized that it was hard for the NAACP to argue that African Americans needed to attend to their own economic needs and promote economic equality and independence while owning nothing of its own. The proposed building would certainly make an impression, being a five-story red brick structure located in a new industrial park in northwest Baltimore that consisted of 50,000 feet of usable space. A large space generates grand plans, such as an archive to house important papers on the civil rights movement. It was also large enough for several conference rooms, which hopefully would attract more visitors. This move could bring more jobs and increase revenue, so much so that the headquarters could potentially be, in Hooks’ estimation, “black America’s Camp David.” It went without saying that the organization would be closer to Washington, D.C., which afforded national officers direct access to federal officials and institutions.\footnote{Williams, “Despite Debate, N.A.A.C.P. Calls Baltimore Home,” ibid.}

While Hooks and other national officers preferred to remain in New York, they literally could not afford to disregard the reality of their situation. Plus, McMillan had already campaigned incessantly in the black community, in city hall and Annapolis to build support and did the groundwork to raise some of the necessary funds. As branch president, McMillan and her supporters started a grassroots campaign by selling commemorative bricks, having bake sells, and holding raffles to get folks excited. The clincher came when McMillan got Baltimore and Maryland to finance some of the

\footnote{Williams, “Despite Debate, N.A.A.C.P. Calls Baltimore Home,” ibid.}
renovations, to the tune of $1.1 million. In exchange, the Association agreed to remain in Baltimore for the next fifteen years, lest they renege on the deal and have to pay back the grant. The enthusiastic welcome from Baltimore was an added incentive. It’s true that things could be hidden in plain sight, at least to Hooks, for he felt that the NAACP was actually receiving less attention from New York media outlets for its accomplishments, while the Baltimore news media seemed to be documenting everything about the proposed move. So, it was hardly a surprise that the 64-member board voted unanimously on the issue, authorizing the move at the end of 1985.639

That the NAACP chose Baltimore as its second home makes perfect sense. After all, it was the second branch founded by the Association. However, while there were certainly historical and practical reasons for doing so, there were symbolic reasons as well. It was here in the “City of Firsts”640 that the NAACP, in its pursuit of African American freedom and racial equality in the twentieth century, first challenged educational inequality with the 1935 Murray case; first challenged restrictive residential covenants; first recognized the potential for young people to affect racial change on a nationwide basis with the success of the City-Wide Young People’s Forum’s boycott campaign in 1935; first equalized teachers’ salaries between black and white teachers on a statewide basis in 1941; first forced governmental and public entities to comply with the equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment despite private oversight with Kerr v.

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640 One of several nicknames for Baltimore, including “Monument City,” “Charm City,” “Mobtown” and “B’more.” See msa.maryland.gov/heritageareas_baltimore.html and Baltimore.org/about-baltimore/Baltimore-firsts.

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Pratt in 1945; first desegregated state parks and swimming pools in 1955; first integrated a school before the 1954 Brown decision with the desegregation of Poly Tech the year before; and first complied with Brown immediately after the Supreme Court’s ruling. It was where lifelong freedom activists such as Thurgood Marshall received his initial training and experience, which prepared him to become the first African American Justice of the Supreme Court. The distinctions did not dissipate after the 1950s. McMillan herself established a first for the organization in 1984, when she became the first woman to serve as national president, holding two positions simultaneously. Largely ceremonial, McMillan was still very much involved in important internal discussions and debates, as the move to Baltimore attests, and took presidential administrations, specifically that of Ronald Reagan, to task for economic and social policies that harmed African Americans and other oppressed and marginalized groups.  

[Some] Things Fall Apart

Despite the excitement, the Baltimore that the NAACP was coming to had experienced substantial and sweeping changes, and the results were not all positive. The city suffered from deindustrialization and middle class flight since the 1940s, severely affecting the urban landscape. Whereas Baltimore accounted for slightly more than half of the state’s population that enjoyed the highest standard of living in 1920, by 1980 it accounted for only 19 percent of the state’s residents and was plagued with the highest

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rates of crime, poverty, unemployment and welfare. The suburban boom that began in the 1940s and accelerated after the urban rebellion of 1968 changed residential patterns in the city, as affluent families, both black and white, moved from the city into the surrounding counties, leaving the poor behind. Baltimore was certainly not alone, as several major cities, particularly in the Northeast and the Midwest, experienced similar problems.  

The changes in Baltimore’s urban landscape severely affected the African American community, which naturally impacted the Baltimore branch’s membership, finances, and influence. The promise of the 1960s engendered by all the civil rights gains in the previous three decades began to turn sour in the 1970s. African American middle class professionals, now unhindered in their efforts to migrate to more prosperous areas, began an exodus from Old West Baltimore to the affluent suburbs, leaving behind a growing black underclass that was living at or below the poverty line. Federal housing projects, built to house the influx of thousands of African American migrants during the World War II era and once a source of pride and possible upward mobility, were now plagued by increasing crime and social isolation that threatened to spill over into the surrounding communities. Old West Baltimore experienced overcrowding, as federally sponsored urban renewal programs in the 1950s and 1960s demolished black homes and businesses, forcing African Americans to move.  

No longer the final destination for Baltimore’s black middle class, the once proud and prosperous neighborhood began to deteriorate rapidly. Pennsylvania Avenue,

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642 Calcott, *Maryland and America*, 81, 82-85, 89-91.
affectionately known as “the Strip,” was being stripped of those foundational landmarks that once made it the mecca of African American life and culture throughout Maryland. Ironically, desegregation allowed African Americans to live, shop, and entertain themselves throughout the city, breaking the monopoly that Pennsylvania Avenue enjoyed during the Jim Crow era. A lack of patronage forced several important businesses to close, including the Royal Theater, the crown jewel of the “Strip,” which shut its doors in 1971; it was demolished that same year. Vice, which had always been present in the area but was tempered by a respectable atmosphere due to the patrons, became even more visible, as Pennsylvania Avenue became a haven for drug dealers and addicts operating in open-air drug markets. The boulevard was riddled with abandoned buildings and vacant lots, and garbage was strewn everywhere. Even the Afro, one of the most successful black businesses in the country, which still continued to publish through the 1970s, suffered a dramatic enough decrease in circulation later that decade to prompt the paper to launch an intense campaign in the 1980s to rally community support to increase subscriptions.644

The coalition that was at the forefront of the black freedom movement in Baltimore and Maryland—the Baltimore NAACP, the Baltimore Afro-American newspaper, and the black church—began to splinter and became less effective in the late 1970s as black Baltimoreans were faced with increasingly complex challenges due to the urban crisis and the changing national political, economic and social landscape, which was either indifferent or outright hostile to black aspirations after the end of legalized racial

644 Orr, ibid; Christina Royster-Hemby, “Street of Dreams: Pennsylvania Avenue Was Once the Center of Black Life and Culture in Baltimore—Can It Be Again?” Baltimore City Paper, 2, 9 February 2005.
apartheid in the 1950s and 1960s. But beginning in the late 1930s, the “triple generals of the movement,” headed by the branch, was responsible for the concerted push for racial equality and first class citizenship for over forty years, from the Great Depression to the dawn of the Reagan era. Working hand-in-hand with the national NAACP, the Baltimore freedom movement developed new methods, tactics, strategies on the grassroots level to secure their freedom rights, serving as a model for organizing black communities on a nationwide basis while setting legal precedents that culminated in the 1954 Supreme Court decision that declared legal segregation unconstitutional. These developments placed Baltimore in the forefront of a burgeoning national civil rights movement that captured the world’s attention in the 1950s. The NAACP, as part of the larger Baltimore movement, would continue to press for first class citizenship for African Americans and advance the organization’s integrationist agenda after federal legislation guaranteed civic and social equality. However, other more progressive and militant individuals and organizations increasingly challenged them to alleviate the plight of the black underclass and develop the political will to adequately address the spiraling urban deterioration of the city and its requisite racial issues through the 1970s and 1980s, a task that the organization found more insidious to tackle and overcome.

On the Frontlines of Freedom

Thus far in civil rights historiography, Baltimore has been merely a footnote in the modern African American freedom struggle, a movement on the periphery that was
generally overlooked, along with those in other border states, by black freedom
movement scholars as they began to increasingly examine local struggles outside of the
Deep South over the past decade. But as scholars continue to delve deeper into the
origins of the civil rights movement, challenging its periodization and widening its
geographic scope beyond the confines of the former Confederate states, Baltimore must
move from the margin to the center of the story of the Civil Rights Movement, if for no
other reason than this is where the asphalt was first laid in constructing the road to
*Brown*, which is still largely seen by the general public as its starting point. A study of
the NAACP in Baltimore validates the proponents of the Long Civil Movement thesis
who argue that the roots of the Movement lay in the political and social ferment of the
Great Depression and the World War II era. However, where they tend to point to
liberal/left labor activists as the supposed catalysts for the new social movement seeking
racial and class equality, the Baltimore movement was composed of grassroots African
Americans who relied on indigenous, social and political African American organizations
and institutions, many of which were founded in the late nineteenth or early twentieth
century, and close community ties to build and sustain their freedom movement. Richard
Kluger’s work clearly demonstrated that the *Brown* decision did not appear
spontaneously, devoid of an historical background, but was instead the result of years of
grassroots organizing in several disparate local African American communities that built
support for court cases attacking educational inequality and coalesced under the direction

645 For more on the Long Civil Rights Movement thesis, see Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, “The
Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past,” *Journal of American
646 See Kluger, *Simple Justice*, for the individual local movements that resulted in the five
cases that became part of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*.
of Thurgood Marshall and the NAACP Legal Defense Fund. However, the Baltimore movement provided the blueprint for these struggles, establishing a new mode of community organizing that changed the dynamics of the relationship between the national office and the local branches, having positive consequences for the fight for racial equality in the coming decades.

But of course, there is much more to the local struggle in Baltimore than this, and several historians have published works recently that detail its rich history and make a strong case for its national significance. Ironically, it had been journalists and others in the public sphere that had been highlighting Baltimore’s importance and made some very bold claims, particular regarding Lillie Jackson, the de facto leader. In eulogies and other tributes to her accomplishments and growing recognition as an early movement activist after her death in 1975, some have proclaimed her “the mother of the civil rights movement.” They gave Jackson credit for developing the nonviolent techniques that led to the legal dismantling of Jim Crow, claiming her activism preceding that of Rosa Parks and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and she should therefore be accorded such a distinction. I hesitate to agree, considering that there are a number of early woman leaders who contributed to the making of the modern Civil Rights Movement and could lay claim to such a title. Furthermore, such an assertion presumes that the Civil Rights Movement began before Brown or the Montgomery Bus Boycott, which again gels with the Long Movement paradigm, and was a “centrally coordinated national campaign”

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rather than a number of local movements that were conducted by local people, which is becoming the prevailing scholarly view of the freedom struggle.\textsuperscript{648}

An assessment of Jackson’s place in the civil rights “pantheon” does highlight one of the growing historiographical trends in civil rights studies and that is the critical role played by black women in the freedom movement and a gendered analysis of not only their participation but also their leadership. The modern freedom movement in Baltimore began with the Forum’s 1933 Buy Where You Can Work Boycott under the direction of Juanita Jackson, and two black women, Lillie Jackson and Enolia McMillan, ascended to the position as principal leader and spokesperson for the movement. What is most remarkable about Baltimore is not only the longevity of their leadership, but also how seamlessly it passed to each woman seemingly \textit{unchallenged} by black male leaders. The Baltimore movement provides a great case study in how it redefined the concept of leadership in local movements and what criteria was used to assess the ways in which gender may have helped these women ascend into leadership positions and what criteria was used to judge their performance and effectiveness.

The Baltimore movement also calls for a re-evaluation of the national NAACP and its relationship with its local branches and adds to the growing historiography of the Association. The prevailing image of the NAACP is of a conservative, top-down, bureaucratic organization that was more comfortable with using the legal and political systems to advance racial progress and saw local branches as little more than “cash

A closer examination of local and state branches illuminates how the NAACP more closely resembled a democratic organization that allowed its local branches a large degree of autonomy, enabling them to help shape its agenda more than previously thought. It is also noteworthy that NAACP branches first developed the tactics and strategies more commonly associated with the direct action organizations such as SNCC, CORE, and SCLC. The Baltimore movement used a variety of direct action tactics such as picketing, boycotts, marches, and selective buying campaigns to combat Jim Crow segregation and discrimination in the 1930s, and those tactics were transferred into the NAACP youth movement designed by Juanita Mitchell when she became national youth director for the Association in 1935. It was the youth councils and college chapters that incorporated these tactics in their fight on the local and state level during the late 1930s and 1940s, and developed the network that indirectly led to the national sit-in movement sparked by the 1960 Greensboro protests. Juanita Mitchell, and the movement that honed her skills and developed her into a national leader, deserves its recognition as one of the progenitors of nonviolent direct action tactics made more visible during the 1950s and beyond.

Finally, as a border city, Baltimore, along with Louisville, Kentucky and St. Louis, Missouri, is, according to Tracey K’Meyer, uniquely positioned to develop a fuller understanding of the Civil Rights Movement as a whole and could potentially create a new analytical framework to examine local movements. Situated at the crossroads between two (or even three) regions, with none dominating the political or cultural

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Adam Fairclough, “Foreword,” in *Long is the Way and Hard: One Hundred Years of the NAACP*, eds. Kevern Verney and Lee Sartain (Fayetteville, Arkansas: University of Arkansas Press, 2009, iv.)
landscape, and containing both systems of racial domination, the freedom movements in border cities and states may provide a window into the issues faced in freedom movements conducted across the country and how they developed the strategies and tactics to deal with them. In addition, freedom movements in border cities could be viewed as spaces that demarcated regions but also where “people, ideas and experiences overlap and differences blur.” Here, conventional southern racial apartheid combined with the “civility” found in northern racial practices demonstrated that these systems of racial control were often indistinguishable and that there were very few differences in battling Satan as opposed to the devil—they were both evil. The battles fought here often foreshadowed shifts occurring elsewhere and this was certainly the case in Baltimore and Maryland, where the campaign to eradicate Jim Crow first began.650

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