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THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF
COLORED PEOPLE AND THE AMERICAN THEATRE

A Study of Relationships and Influences

VOLUME I

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the
Graduate School of The Ohio State
University

By

LEONARD COURTNEY ARCHER, B. A., A. M.

The Ohio State University
1959

Approved by

Advisor
Department of Speech
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INTRODUCTION

1. The Appropriateness of This Study

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People was organized in 1909 and has developed over the span of years to be the most important organization working in behalf of Negro rights in the United States. This Association's crusades, campaigns and protests against lynching, peonage, disfranchisement, racial segregation and discrimination, have made impressions on informed public opinion in the United States. The United States Supreme Court Decision of May 17, 1954, achieved by the Association's Legal Bureau, increased the area of informed public opinion because the decision concluded, "That in the field of public education the doctrine of separate but equal has no place." Although this decision is probably the greatest accomplishment of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, this organization has been active in the cause of economic, political, and educational equality for the Negro for almost forty years. Much has been written and said about these crusades and campaigns for equal rights for the Negro, but very little has been said and written about the Association's relationships with the mass media of entertainment, the stage, motion picture, radio, and television.
Therefore, it is desirable at this time to study the Association's relationships with the arts which refer to the mass media and to determine this organization's influence upon them.

A second factor which should make this study an appropriate one is the intellectual characteristics of the Association's leadership. Gunnar Myrdall, the Swedish scholar who made an objective study of Negro life in America for the Carnegie Corporation in 1944, evaluated the intellectual potential of the Association as follows:

It should be remembered, though, that lack of mass participation is not peculiar to the NAACP or even to the Negro world but it is a characteristic of American public life as a whole. Few similar organizations have reached the organizational stability and the membership size of the NAACP. It should also be stressed that while the lack of mass following is a weakness, the high intellectual quality of the membership is an asset. Few organizations in the entire country compare with the NAACP in respect to the education and mental alertness of the persons attracted to it. In a study of 5,512 Negro college graduates from all areas and of all ages, Charles S. Johnson found that 25 per cent of them were members of the NAACP. The national leaders of Negroes have generally been intellectuals, and the NAACP represents the highest manifestation of this general tendency.1

Thus this study will focus the interest and motives of this intellectual, Negro minority upon the arts as represented in the theatre.

2. The Purpose of This Study

This investigation of the relationships and influence of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People upon the American theatre has five primary purposes:

1. To determine the relationships of the NAACP with the commercial theatre and the results of these relationships with reference to the Association's national programs.

2. To document and describe and to determine the influence of the protest campaign of the NAACP against racial segregation and discrimination by commercial theatres and public places of amusement and entertainment.

3. To explain the interest of the NAACP in the noncommercial theatre with reference to the Negro educational and independent theatres of the Little Theatre Movement.

4. To trace the developments of the protest campaign of the NAACP against Negro stereotypes in films produced by the American motion picture industry and the effects of this campaign upon Negro actors and performers and upon the motion picture industry.

5. To trace the developments and to determine the results of the NAACP's program for creating more favorable public impressions of Negro life through radio and television and for securing more
economic opportunities for Negro actors and performers in the broadcasting industries.

Consideration of these purposes will be given in the chapters which will follow. An evaluation based on these purposes will be given in the conclusion of this study.

3. Sources of Material Used in This Study

The basic source for determining the relationships of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People with the American theatre has been The Crisis, the official monthly publication of this organization. The Annual Reports of the NAACP have yielded valuable data. Two studies have had specific values in explaining the Association's national programs: The History of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Robert L. Jack; The NAACP Versus Revolutionary Protests, Daniel Webster Wynn. Four authors have made significant studies of the Negro in the American theatre which were informative: Sterling A. Brown, Edith J. R. Isaacs, James Weldon Johnson, and Alain Locke. Authoritative statements, important events and incidents, and personal attitudes have been collected from books related to the several areas of this study; such as, The Negro's Morale, Arnold M. Rose: A Man Called White, Walter White; One Hundred Years of the Negro in Show Business, Tom Fletcher; The Patterns of Segregation, Charles H. Johnson; The Negro in Films, Peter Noble; The Age of Television, Leo Bogart; and
Art and the Color Line, Anson Phelps.

Periodicals, pamphlets, and newspapers have been used in documenting the discussion of the several areas of this study. For example, reported accounts relative to the Negro in theatrical entertainment have documented from Variety, The New York Times, and The Pittsburgh Courier which is one of the leading Negro newspapers. Additional assistance in documenting the study came from interested persons and organizations in the forms of interviews, letters, suggestions, and statements.

4. Procedures in Developing the Study

The relationships of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the theatre can only be evaluated within a frame of reference which includes the history of the Negro in the American theatre and knowledge of the overall objectives and methods of the NAACP. In order to provide this frame of reference, Chapter I of this study has been devoted to the history of the Negro in the American theatre while Chapter II treats in a general way the development and the objectives of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

Against this background, an attempt was made to evaluate the NAACP's interest in the commercial theatre in reference to the Association's general programs of economic, political, and legal actions. Cases and incidents of the
Association's legal actions against those commercial theatres which segregated and discriminated against Negroes have been documented. The effects of these actions and protests were determined.

The relationships of this organization to the non-commercial theatre were studied for the purpose of determining the NAACP's interest and objectives with reference to its programs for the social and cultural uplift of the Negro people. The NAACP's relationships with the educational theatre were evaluated with reference to the recent decision won by the NAACP, the United States Supreme Court decision against segregation in public education.

The NAACP's protest campaigns against Negro stereotypes and racial discrimination in the motion picture, radio, and television industries were studied. The results of these protests campaigns were evaluated with reference to influence of these campaigns upon these mass media of entertainment.

5. About the Author

The writer is a Negro, born some years ago of a parentage of school teachers in Atlanta, Georgia. As an undergraduate, he was a member of the Atlanta University Players. After graduation, he became associated with the Negro educational theatre as director of dramatics in Georgia, Mississippi, Arkansas, and Ohio. During his
career as theatre director, he has been a member of the Southern Association of Dramatic and Speech Arts, the Intercollegiate Drama Association, and the American Educational Theatre Association.

The *writer* has attempted to be objective throughout the documentation and discussion of the subject; he has attempted to approach the inherent controversial issues from a liberal point of view, hoping to avoid expressions of prejudiced and biased opinions. Above all, the *writer* hopes that this study will contribute to the resolving of these controversial issues in the best interest of theatrical production in America and in the best interest of American democracy.
CHAPTER I

THE NEGRO IN THE AMERICAN THEATRE

1. From the Beginning to the 1850's

The developmental trends of the Negro in the American theatre extend from the early appearances of stage representations of Negro characters to the present time. Along with the American Indian, the American Negro became one of the indigenous themes in literature, having become a part of the native scene in the novels of the eighteenth century. During the Colonial period, the Negro was introduced on the American stage as the noble savage type in Oroonoko by Thomas Southern, a British playwright. Additional stage-types were developed on the American stage.

Development of Negro stage types.—The comic type was developed in J. Murdock's The Triumphants of Love, which presented Cato, Caesar and Pompey to the American audience. Ralpho was presented in The Candidates and Zeka in Fashion, while Mungo appeared as a song and dance man in several plays. The tragic mullato type began its development on the stage.

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1 This chapter will not constitute a complete history of the Negro in American theatre. The writer's intention is to reveal important trends in the development of the Negro in the American theatre. Studies by Edith Isaacs and Frederick Bond present a survey of the Negro in the American theatre.

American stage in Dion Boucicault's *Octoroon* in 1859. The loyal servant type appeared in Lionel Stevens' play, *The Patriot*, in 1834. Richard Moody cited Mrs. Bateman's play, *Self* (1856), for presenting the first Negro "stage-mammy" in the character of Aunt Chloe. The discontented slave was characterized in William Dunlap's *A Trip to Niagara*. The first stage version of Mrs. Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) presented the fugitive slave, Uncle Tom, as the embodiment of meekness and patience while Topsy was more individualized by naive charm, irresponsibility and puckishness.

**Early stage representations of Negro life.**—From the Colonial period to the 1850's, there were no Negroes on the New York stage or even in the audiences where white companies performed. According to Edith Isaacs' study, there were no New York statutes against the appearance of Negroes in the theatre, "but there was a tradition that barred them almost as effectively as laws." Negro roles, therefore, were played by white actors in "black-face," a practice that extended to the 1920's. Except for comic relief and for romantic pictures, Negro characters and Negro life were not given serious treatment by American playwrights of this earlier period.

2. Development of the All-Negro Minstrel Show, 1850 to 1900

Negro actors entered the commercial theatre through the side door of minstrelsy, preceding Negro actresses by fifty years. These performers took over the entire format and conventions of the minstrel stage, "Even to the use of burnt cork and thickened lips." Having gained acceptance on the stage in black-face minstrelsy, these early Negro performers began to enliven and individualize their presentations with song and dance, and later, with the addition of colored show girls to the minstrel cast. Negro minstrelsy offered the first opportunities for Negro musicians and producers to express themselves in the American theatre through their own native folk rhythms and through other differing native qualities. Bob Cole, for an example, became the greatest single force among Negro performers of this period; besides singing and dancing, Cole wrote musical shows. Sissieretta Jones, at the same time, became the most popular of the show girls; as a singer, she toured the country in a modified minstrel show titled "Black Patti's Troubadors." These "black-face"

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4 Ibid., p. 25.

presentations began to depart from the tradition when dramatic sketches were added to the format.

3. New Developments in Theatrical Performances, 1900 to 1930

During the first decade of the twentieth century, Negro performers in New York City were exiled from the downtown theatres to the Harlem playhouses. According to James Weldon Johnson's account, this ostracism was caused by the growing tension and conflicts between Negroes and whites in New York City and over the nation. All the elements of the Negro theatre were together in one place for the first time; Negro actors, writers, musicians, dancers, and producers confined their activities to the Harlem playhouses. This Harlem interlude brought about the development of the all-Negro musical comedy, the Negro vaudeville circuit, the Harlem night club theatres, the Negro legitimate theatre, and Negro road companies.

**Development of the Negro musical comedy.**—Among the performers who came to Harlem, there were the theatrical teams of Bert Williams and George Walker, Bob Cole and Billy Johnson, Fournoy Miller and Aubrey Lyles, and Noble Sissle and Eubie Blake. These teams made further innovations upon the minstrel format by departing from the semicircular formation and employing a simple plot to unify the show. *Shuffle Along*, written and produced by Miller
and Lyles, and Sissle and Blake in 1921 was the most successful of the early Negro musical comedies; this show set the pattern and vogue. "Its principle assets," reported The New York Times, "was the distinction of being written and composed and played entirely by Negroes." Irvin C. Miller became the outstanding producer of this type of musical comedy; his Put and Take, written and produced also in 1921, followed the format of Shuffle Along. "Its first night audience found it lively and lilting entertainment, filled with excellent dancing, good singing and quite a dash of comedy. And above all, there is its ceaseless activity," wrote one observer.7

Development of the Negro in vaudeville. — From these musical comedies, Negro performers advanced to the major vaudeville stage and circuits of the country. Bert Williams joined the Ziegfeld Follies in 1910. Florence Mills, Adelaide Hall and Josephine Baker advanced from Shuffle Along to Lew Leslie's Broadway production of Blackbirds of the 1920's. While the new trends in musical comedy were developing, Negro musicians were polishing and giving new forms to ragtime, spirituals, and blues, and elevating instrumentalists to musical literacy. Alain Locke, Negro esthete, has attributed these developments to four Negro


musicians who came to New York City between 1905 and 1912; Ford Dabney, James Reese Europe, Will Marion Cook and William C. Handy. Ford Dabney organized and directed a jazz orchestra which was featured in Florenz Ziegfeld's Roof Garden Show. James Europe directed the Clef Club Orchestra which played for the famous dancers, Vernon and Irene Castle. (See Plate I - An Advertisement for the sale of stock in the Clef Corporation) Cook's orchestra, The American Syncopaters, traveled in Europe for a number of years. William C. Handy became known as "The Father of the Blues" because he gave style to the Mississippi folk tunes which became theatrical in spirit.

Development of the Harlem night-club entertainment—
Other Negro jazz orchestras came to New York City during the 1920's. Since there were only a few theatres to employ these musicians, the Harlem night clubs became places of theatrical entertainment. Each club had its featured personality and orchestra. Club Bamville presented Tip-Tap and Toe and Savannah Churchill. The Cotton Club launched to national fame band leaders Cab Calloway, Jimmie Lunceford, and Duke Ellington.

Development of the independent Negro theatre.—
During the period of the exile of Negro actors to Harlem, Lester Walton, a Negro newspaper man, leased the Lafayette Theatre, organized a stock company and began production.
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PLATE I
Among Lafayette's offerings were a season of grand opera, *Servant in the House*, *Justice*, and other standard Broadway plays. (See Plate II - An advertisement for the presentation of *Justice*.) In explaining this unexpected development in the Negro theatre, the production of non-Negro plays, James Weldon Johnson said that the Negro found himself free of a great many restraints and taboos in these plays. A Negro stock company developed out of this activity and became known as The Lafayette Players who traveled a circuit of Negro theatres over the country, Washington, D.C., Atlanta, Georgia, Dayton, Ohio, and other cities with large Negro populations.

**Summary, 1850 to 1930**—The course of the Negro performers from minstrelsy through musical comedy and vaudeville to the legitimate theatre has led to their advancement and acceptance in the American theatre. Emancipation from slavery gave these performers freedom of movement and more economic opportunities. World War I gave Negro performers opportunities to participate in the struggle which embraced the principles of democracy and thereafter the right to contend for civil rights and economic and political equality. However, segregation and discrimination, based on race and color, brought about wider separation of native cultures between Negroes and whites and promoted a spirit of Negro

---

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::: Comments :::

"Justice" is a great play. It is ten years ahead of its time.—Lee Shubert, Manager.

"Justice" is the most panoramic play I have heard. It seemed as if I saw the people as you read it. It is five years ahead of its time.—Henry Miller, Actor-Manager and Co-Star with Blanche Bates in "The Famous Mrs. Fair."

"Justice" is a great play. It should be played at once, but won't be in the condition our theatre is in today.—Emma Goldman, Author-Lecturer.

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nationalism that advocated Negroes' living in the United States as a nation within a nation. Inspired by this spirit of national independence, the Negro performers "lifted themselves by their own bootstraps." Minstrelsy gave Negroes opportunities to make a living upon the stage; musical comedy attracted trained musicians and talented performers who popularized this new form of entertainment by widening its appeal; they retained the best of minstrelsy and added the best of their native abilities. These developments opened the doors to the more lucrative theatrical enterprise, the Negro theatre for all of America to see rather than for only Negroes to see.

4. New Developments in the American Theatre From 1900 to 1930

Realism in plays of Negro life.—During the first decade of the twentieth century, Negro characters began to receive more serious attention from some of the American playwrights. Racial themes in drama came closer to actuality. Thomas Dixon's The Clansman (1905) and Edward Sheldon's The Nigger (1909) were based on the theme of political reconstruction in the South following the Civil War. At the same time, the themes became more realistic; treatment of Negro life and characters became more sympathetic. Ridgely Torrence was the first white
playwright to write a group of plays for an all-Negro cast which treated Negro life realistically and sympathetically. His *Three Plays for the Negro Theatre* were produced in New York City in 1917. Paul Green, a Southern white man under the influence of the Irish Literary Movement, and Professor Frederick Koch at the University of North Carolina, wrote a series of plays based on the tragic themes in the lives of Southern Negroes. Du Bose Heyward, another white playwright, based his plays, *Porgy and Mamba's Daughter* on the lives of Negroes living in Charleston, South Carolina. Marc Connelly, a white playwright closer to Broadway than the others mentioned, based his *Green Pastures* on the folk beliefs of Negroes living in a certain Louisiana community. Negro playwrights also became more realistic; for an example, Hall Johnson's *Run Little Children* and Frank Wilson's *Meek Mose*.

Sterling A. Brown in his study of the Negro theatre has classified the realistic Negro plays of this period into two categories: folk-realism, which has been discussed above; and urban-realism. This second category includes plays primarily about Negroes under the greater social and economic pressures of city life. Eugene O'Neil's *Emperor Jones* has been classified in this second category. "The play has nothing of social protest," asserted Brown, "but the American pressure upon Negro life is clearly seen."

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Other plays on the themes of urban-realism are Culbertson's *Goat Alley*, Jim Tulley's *Black Boy*, and *Lulu Belle* by Edward Sheldon and Charles MacArthur. Plays by Negro playwrights in this classification are Rachel by Angelina Grimke, *Appearance* by Garland Anderson, *Singing the Blues* and *Savage Rhythm* by Wallace Thurman, two plays based on the realistic themes of Harlem life.

**The Negro Little Theatre Movement.**--The activities of American little theatre movement under the inspiration of Jasper Deeter's Hedgerow Theatre, Paul Green and Professor Koch, and Lennox Robinson extended to the promotion of a Negro Little Theatre Movement. The Gilpin Players were organized in Cleveland, Ohio, by two white social workers in 1922 as an activity of a settlement House. The Ethiopian Art Players of Chicago, Illinois, was organized in 1923 to experiment with a native Negro art theatre. Dr. W. E. B. Du Bois, editor of *The Crisis*, the official publication of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, began the Krigwa Little Negro Theatre Movement in 1925, attempting to establish a Negro theatre associated with the Negro race for the purpose of cultural uplift and racial propaganda. The Neighborhood Players of Atlantic City, New Jersey; The Dixwell Players of New Haven, Connecticut; The Allied Art Players of Boston, Massachusetts; and the Harlem

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Experimental Theatre of New York City were also active in this movement.

The Negro in motion picture from 1900 to 1930. -- The developments for the Negro in American motion picture followed the same course as his developments in the American theatre, differing possibly in the element of time for the development of the motion picture medium. Peter Nobel's book, The Negro in Films, discussed the same racial stereotypes that had been presented on the stage. "At this time (1905) all films in which colored characters appeared could be divided into two categories: those like the 'Rastus' and 'Sambo' series and those which treated them in the conventional Uncle Tom manner as the devoted slaves who knew their place." Three silent film versions were made of Uncle Tom's Cabin, one in 1909, and others in 1918 and 1927. Thomas Dixon's novel and stage play was filmed in 1914 and was released as The Birth of a Nation. D. W. Griffith, in directing the film, demonstrated astonishing revelations of camera possibilities in realism. White characters in black face make-up were used to play Negro parts. Negro actors were also used; George Reed, for example, played a conspicuous role. Hal Roach began to produce in 1918 a series of films

which presented two Negro children in "The Our Gang Comedies"
two boys who were integrated into a cast of white children.

Similar to developments of the Negro on stage, the
silent films also attracted efforts at making film by independ-
ent Negro motion-picture producers. In 1916, The Frederick
Douglass Film Company produced a film which depicted racial
progress under the title, "Winning His First Suit." The Oscar
Micheaux Company made "The Wages of Sin" and "The Broken
Violin." The Colored Players Film Corporation featured Charles
Gilpin in "Ten Nights in a Bar-room."

Two sound films with all-Negro casts were produced in
1929, "Hearts In Dixie" starring Stepin Fetchit and "Hallelujah"
directed by King Vidor and starring Daniel Haynes and Nina Mae
McKinny. "Hearts in Dixie" contained a stereotype which became
popular on the screen, the lazy, shiftless, irresponsible Negro
played by Stepin Fetchit.

The realistic movement in the dramatization of Negro life
in America brought the problems of the race into sharper focus
upon the stage. On the other side of comedy, the audience saw
the tragic elements of Negro life, the struggle, frustration
and futility resulting from the conditions of race and color,
the problems and clashes between racial groups resulting from
social, political, and economic pressures.
The motion picture industry adopted the practices of the early American stage in representing Negro life. This industry used stereotypes represented by such Negro characters as "Rastus," "Sambo," and "Uncle Tom," the film counterparts of "Caesar," "Pompey," and "Zeke" of the stage. "Our Gang Comedy" was a new and an advanced development in the presentation of Negro characters for they were presented on screen as a normal part of the scene. "Hallelujah" was also an advanced development; this film broke the taboo of romantic love-making between a Negro man and a Negro woman on the screen.

5. Depression Years from 1930 Through World War II

By 1930, the economic depression was a reality in the United States, causing the Federal Government to begin programs of economic relief and recovery. The trends that had guided the course of development for the advancement of the Negro in the theatre continued under financial stresses. The format of the musical comedy had worn thin while the minstrel tradition was kept alive in the South by road companies such as "Butterbeans and Susie," "The Rabbit Foot Minstrels," and "Silas Green of New Orleans." Realistic approaches to the drama of Negro life continued in such plays as John McGowan's Singing the Blues (1931), Rose McClendon in Never No More (1932) and in plays by Negro dramatists such as Langston Hughes' Mulatto (1935) and Owen Dodson's Divine Comedy (1936).
New themes began to enter the drama of Negro life. Realistic poetical expression gave way to prosaic voices of social protests in such plays as Black Souls which cried out against oppressions. These newer developments brought Negro life closer to the mainstream of the American theatre.

**Federal Theatre Project and the Negro.**—The main purpose of the Federal Theatre was to give employment to theatrical workers. There were Negro units in several of the larger cities: Los Angeles, Cleveland, Chicago, and other cities. The Harlem Unit, according to Edith Isaacs, had excesses of talents, tastes, desires, and productions, but its outstanding achievements were the productions of plays adapted for Negro actors, such as *Swinging a Dream* and *Macbeth in Chocolate* from Shakespeare's *Mid-Summer Night's Dream* and *Macbeth* respectively. Under the Project's sponsorship, Negro playwrights were able to express themselves under more favorable circumstances on the themes of the times. For example, Ted Brown extolled the Negro legendary hero in *John Henry* while Theodore Ward voiced criticism of the Negro race in *The Big White Frog*.

**Communistic influences upon the Negro in the theatre.**—The depression years of the 1930's witnessed also the invasion of the American theatre by Communism. Glenn Hughes' book, *A History of the American Theatre*, termed plays influenced by
Marxist doctrines and by the Communist Party as "Drama of the Left." When nine Negroes were tried for assault upon two white girls in Scottsboro, Alabama, during 1931 to 1935, the Communist Party's International Labor Defense entered the case to defend the Scottsboro boys against Southern injustices. John Wexley studied the transcripts of the trial and wrote a play based on the trial, *They Shall Not Die*, which was produced in New York City by the Theatre Guild in 1934. During the same year, a "leftist" group, The Theatre Union, produced *Stevedore*, a play written by Paul Peters and George Sklar who based their plot on the problem of unionizing Negro labor in the South. Another "leftist" group, The New Theatre League, sponsored, published and produced plays that made social protests on the Negro race problem. Negro dramatists also turned toward "the left" during this period; for instance, Langston Hughes wrote *The Scottsboro Limited*, a mass-chant of prophecy on the case.

New trends in the commercial theatre.--During the early 1940's, Negro characters became more individualized in the stage plays containing mixed racial casts. Canada Lee played Bigger Thomas in Richard Wright and Paul Green's *Native Son*, produced in 1941. This play has been described as "A tragic case history of a morally mangled victim of society and circumstances." Paul Robeson's portrayal of the Moor in

*Quoted in The New York Critics' Review* (March, 1941).
Othello opposite a white Desdemona, Uta Hagen, reflected the changing attitude in the theatre toward interracial love themes. The musical comedy format gave way to a newer development in musical dramas by Negroes, the development of the Negro folk opera. Edith Isaacs marked Paul Green's Roll Sweet Chariot (1933), a symphonic drama for Negro people, as the forerunner of a long line of musical plays. Porgy and Bess was produced on Broadway in 1935 with Todd Duncan and Ann Wiggins Brown singing the leading roles. Porgy and Bess set the form and vogue for the Negro folk opera: quaint and exotic locale, an all-Negro cast, and a musical expression basically Negroid, and the blending of jazz, spiritual, and folk melodies.

Independent Negro theatres.—With the passing of the Negro Little Theatre Movement and its various motives, the Negro professional actors, writers, and producers moved into the theatre used by most of the New York amateur groups, the auditorium of the Harlem Public Library. Langston Hughes organized the Suitcase Theatre in 1937 for the purpose of presenting proletarian dramas, according to Frederick Bond's study. Dick Campbell and Frederick O'Neal founded the Rose McClendon Players the following year. Sterling A. Brown and

Thomas Richardson organized The Negro Repertory Players in Washington, D.C., during 1939. The American Negro Theatre, founded and directed by Abram Hill, was the most active and significant of the Negro independent theatres. This company attracted quite a bit of attention with its production of *On Strivers' Row*. The company's presentation of Phillip Yordan's *Anna Lucasta* was moved downtown in 1945 where it ran for 956 performances.

**Negro educational theatres.**—The pioneering institution among the Negro educational theatres was the Atlanta University Players under the direction of Miss Adrienne Herndon from 1905 to 1924; this group attempted to raise the cultural standards of the college community with productions of the classics. In 1921, Alain Locke and Professor Montgomery Gregory established the first Drama Department ever founded at a Negro institution at Howard University, Washington, D.C. Two Negro intercollegiate drama organizations were founded by Professor Randolph Edmonds; he founded the Intercollegiate Drama Association composed of institutions in North Carolina.

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South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania. In 1936, Professor Edmonds founded a second organization, the Southern Association of Dramatic and Speech Arts which has become affiliated with the American Education Association and with the American National Theatre Academy. Leaders in this movement to widen the cultural relations between Negroes and white institutions have been educational theatre directors; principally, Thomas E. Poag, Lillian Vorhees, Thomas Pawley and Floyd Sandal.

The Negro in motion pictures from 1930 through World War II.--The motion-picture industry continued to follow some of the practices of the American stage, such as featuring Negro performers in isolated segments of musical shows and using Negro stereotypes. Several films based on the historical South presented comical, lazy, brutish, and submissive Negro types; such films as "So Red the Rose," "Jezebel", "Way Down South," "Swanee River," and "Gone With the Wind". These stereotypes were played in Hollywood primarily by Stepin Fetchit, Willie Bess, Eddie "Rochester" Anderson, Mantan Moreland, Hattie McDaniel and Louise Beavers.

With the coming of sound to the motion-picture films, Negro musicians of every description were used. However, it was Benny Goodman who was among the first white orchestra
leaders to use Negro musicians in his band, Teddy Wilson, pianist; Lionel Hampton, vibra-harpist. In 1938, Goodman's orchestra was featured in the film "Hollywood Hotel," and the South objected to the appearance of Negro and white musicians in the same orchestra. Thereafter, Negroes were deleted from Southern exhibition of films that integrated Negro performers in scenes with whites.


War-time developments in films.—The social and economic changes which accompanied World War II had an effect on motion pictures similar to the effects on the stage. However, motion pictures have been more severely criticized than the stage for their use of racial stereotypes by individuals and organizations. Criticism against racial stereotypes caused the motion picture industry to produce and release a series of tolerance films, such as "In This Our Life," "Sahara," "Bataan," "Strange Incident," "The Burning Cross," and other films which carried the war-time message of tolerance toward
Negroes and other racial minorities.

The Negro in radio.--In radio, the Negro became associated with a broadcasting industry which was somewhat different from the motion picture industry and the theatre. The broadcasting industry is a competitive free enterprise depending on advertising and regulated by governmental control. At the same time, broadcasting is related to the theatre for it occupies a pivotal position at which the currents of stage and motion picture meet. No doubt, the recordings made by Negro performers were used by radio in the 1920's; for example, Bert Williams made popular records for the Victory Talking Machine Company before 1920. Local stations used Negro musicians in very much the same manner as the motion picture industry during the 1930's. The major national networks also used Negro talent: The Southernaires, a Negro quartet, sang every Sunday morning for almost ten years over the National Broadcasting Company Network, "Fats" Waller and his Beale Street Boys performed two nights a week for the Columbia Broadcasting System; the Wings Over Jordan Choir sang every Sunday morning during the same period.

A format for radio dramatic shows was established in 1928 by Freeman Gosden and Charles Correll when they

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developed the "Amos 'n' Andy" show, a series of shows using Negro characters and materials which were produced with simplicity and economy. Their show was a burlesque of Negro life in the black-face tradition of the minstrel which had great influences on the broadcasting industry and upon the American public. In 1931, the Columbia Broadcasting System signed the Negro team of Miller and Lyles for a series of shows similar to the "Amos 'n' Andy" show. Negro comedian, Eddie "Rochester" Anderson, later became a fixture in the "Jack Benny Show," Armanda Randolph in "The Great Gildersleeve Show," and Hattie McDaniel and Louise Beavers in the "Beulah Show."

6. Post-World War II Developments for Negro Performers

Trends in the theatre. — Early in the season of 1946, Elia Kazan produced Deep Are The Roots, a play which dramatized the problems of a Negro army officer who returned from the war to the South. Canada Lee's production of On Whiteman Avenue revealed the Negro housing problem. Edith Isaac's said of these themes in post-war plays that it was obvious that Negro material itself was beginning to count.

for its human and social values. There were later two plays based on human and social values in race relations between Europeans and Africans, Mister Johnson and Too Late the Phalarope, produced in 1956. Two Negro playwrights wrote on the problems of racial desegregation: Louis Peterson's Take a Giant Step and Lofton Mitchell's Land Beyond the River. A trend toward desegregation of the Negro on stage also developed during this period. Canada Lee played the role of an Italian nobleman in The Duchess of Malfi and used a special make-up to appear as a white man. Ruby Dee was cast as an angel of an integrated heaven in The World of Sholem Aleichem. Frederick O'Neal played a judge in Elmer Rice's The Winner. Robert L. Hilliard observed that these roles were not designed as Negro roles.

The trend, greater and more significant than the experiments toward desegregation of the Negro actor on stage, was toward humanizing the Negro performers, the casting of Negroes as a normal part of the scene. Ethel Waters in The Member of the Wedding, for example, was a cook but not a "mammy." The Negro lieutenant in No Time for Sergeants was just another officer in the Air Force. In such plays as Detective Story, Two Blind Mice, and The Iceman Cometh, the Negro characters simply met the needs of the play rather than the needs for comic relief.

\[16\] Edith J. R. Isaacs, op. cit., p. 176.

\[17\] Op. Cit., p. 107
Developments in motion picture. -- Stereotypes continued their appearance on the screen during World War II. However, in 1945, Walter White, executive secretary of the NAACP protested against the "Amos 'n' Andy Show" on television and against "The Beulah Show" on radio. As a result, "The Amos 'n' Andy Show" was removed from the network while "The Beulah Show" continued until after the death of Hattie McDaniel.

Similar to the stage and motion-picture practices, television has featured all-Negro casts in productions occasionally: Harry Belafonte and Ethel Waters in "Winner By Decision," Ossie Davis in "The Emperor Jones," Duke Ellington's "A Woman is a Drum," and William Warfield as De Lawd in "The Green Pastures." Nat "King" Cole presented his own show over National Broadcasting Company networks during 1956. Negroes, nevertheless, have received so little employment from television that the coordinating Council of Negro Performers and NAACP have launched a campaign to obtain more jobs for Negroes on television.

7. Conclusion: The Development of the Negro Performers

Accepting the stereotypes from novels and the early American stage, the Negro performers came into the American theatre as the minstrel man to distort his presentation with burnt cork and thickened lips. However, the performers improvised and enlivened the minstrel stage with folk
rhythms, songs, and dances, and sketches. The addition of colored show girls to the minstrel line-up together with independent Negro production led to the all-Negro musical comedy. The Negro theatrical idioms were further refined by trained Negro musicians and talented producers. From these beginnings, the Negro performers advanced to the major vaudeville circuits of the American theatre.

The Negro also made advances in American drama from the stage stereotypes. Sympathetic and realistic treatment of Negro life in the American theatre began with the production of Ridgely Torrence's *Three Plays for the Negro Theatre*. Realistic folk-dramas of Negro life were written by liberal white authors: Paul Green, Du Bose Heyward and Dorothy Heyward, and other dramatists. The Negro problem received serious attention by such playwrights as Eugene O'Neill and those of the Federal Theatre Project. Poetical realism later gave way to dramas of social protests, *They Shall Not Die*, *Stevedore*, *Deep are the Roots*, and *Take a Giant Step*. The stage Negro evolved as a human being in such plays as *The Member of the Wedding*, *The Winner*, and *Ice Man Cometh*. Although the all-Negro presentation has been popular from time to time, attempts at desegregation of the Negro performer on the stage have been made, either in accord with the aesthetic needs of the play or with the motives of the producer—Canada Lee in *The Duchess of Malfi*, for example.
The mass media of entertainment, motion picture, radio, and television have followed some of the practices of the stage in presenting Negro performers. Although these media are younger than the stage and have self-regulating codes, they have not been as liberal as the stage in their honest representation of Negro life. The motion picture industry has employed thousands of Negroes, including extras and stars, but this industry has been reluctant to relinquish Negro stereotypes. The motion picture industry has catered to the South and has lagged behind the theatre in humanizing and desegregating Negro performers. Radio and television, on the other hand, presented fewer stereotypes than motion picture, but have offered far less employment to Negro performers.

The Supreme Court Decision of May 17, 1954, which declared that segregation in the public schools of the United States is illegal has affected Negroes' relationship with the stage, motion picture, radio and television. Among Negroes since the decision, there has been a revival of interest in the right to attend the theatre and places of public amusement, in the desire for favorable representation of Negro life by the media, and in a more equitable participation in the media. At the present, the NAACP is campaigning for desegregation in all phases of American life. Since 1910, this Association has been the leading
organization fighting for political, economic, and educational equality for Negroes; this Association in executing its programs and campaigns has had relationship with and influences upon the mass media of entertainment which will be discussed in succeeding chapters of this study.
CHAPTER II
THE DEVELOPMENT, OBJECTIVES, AND CRITICISM OF THE NAACP

1. The Background of the NAACP

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People was organized in 1909 against a backdrop of racial intolerance, hostility, and confusion. Carter G. Woodson recorded the events of 1900 to 1910 as contributing to one of the darkest and most dismal periods for Negroes in America. Political Reconstruction in the South had disfranchised Negroes, reduced their educational appropriations, and forced them into a state of peonage. The Ku Klux Klan was revitalized to intimidate, and lynching was on the increase. Then came the migration to the North and West where Negroes suffered a more subtle discrimination in housing, education, and in obtaining work.

**Booker T. Washington's leadership.**—Prior to the founding of the NAACP, a Negro leader rose out of the confusion in the person of Booker T. Washington. He became Principal of Tuskegee Institute, Alabama, in 1881, and there he began developing a philosophy whereby Negroes could remain peacefully in the South. Booker T. Washington convinced the white South that industrial education for Negroes was in the true interest of the South. In 1895, Booker T. Washington made a

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speech at the Atlanta Exposition which his critics have called "The Great Compromise," a speech that pleased the southern whites:

"In all things that are purely social we can be separate as the five fingers, yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress."  

William E. Burghardt Du Bois' leadership.—All Negroes did not agree with Booker T. Washington's policies. Among the dissenting voices was that of Dr. W. E. B. Du Bois. (See Plate III) Dr. Du Bois believed and advocated that the first efforts to secure recognition for the Negro must come through agitation for higher education and political equality. In 1905, Du Bois called a meeting of Negro leaders which was held at Niagara Falls, New York, for the purpose of beginning a movement in defense of rights for Negroes. This meeting resulted in the Niagara Movement which held its first conference at Harpers Ferry, West Virginia, in 1908.

Leadership by liberal white people.—A race riot broke out in Springfield, Illinois, in 1908, which inspired many newspaper articles concerning the frequent violence in conflicts between whites and Negroes. One of the articles by William English Walling stated: "...Either the spirit of the abolitionists, of Lincoln and Lovejoy, must be revived and we must come to treat the Negro on a plane of absolute

political and social equality, or Wardman and Tillman will soon have transferred the race war to the North". This article by Mr. Walling resulted in Miss Mary White Ovington's correspondence with him which eventually led to a meeting of other interested white people.

2. The Beginning of the NAACP.

Mary White Ovington, who had been doing social work in behalf of Negro housing and employment, met with Mr. Walling and Mr. Henry Moskowitz. The objectives of this first meeting were sent to Oswald Garrison Villard, grandson of the abolitionist, William Lloyd Garrison. Villard used his influence to secure the cooperation of prominent persons; he then drafted a call for a general meeting on Abraham Lincoln's birthday, February 12, 1909. The objectives agreed upon at the Lincoln Day meeting were recorded as follows:

The overall objective of the new organization was to win full equality for the Negro as a citizen of America. The specific objectives were as follows: (a) abolition of all forced segregation; (b) equal educational opportunities for colored and white; (c) enfranchisement of the Negro; (d) enforcement of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments.4


Members of both racial groups were present at the Lincoln Day Meeting, and among them were Dr. Du Bois and his associates in the Niagara Movement. This interracial group formed a committee which was charged with the duty of arranging a second conference the following year. In May of 1910, the conference met in New York City and formed a permanent body to be known as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People.

3. The Growth of the NAACP.

The Association adopted the abolitionists' ideology and derived the following aims: (a) to secure equal application of the law; (b) to secure conformance of the laws of the Constitution; and (c) to provide equal security for Negroes in the South. This organization had a somewhat hectic first year warding off the conservatives who sought to capture control of the Association. "Then we nailed our flag to the mast," recorded Mary White Ovington," and invited Dr. Du Bois of Atlanta to come to us. He came in the Spring of 1910. And from that time onward, no one doubted where we stood."

5Ovington, Ibid.

6Ovington, "The Beginning of the NAACP," The Crisis, XXXII (June, 1926), 76-77.
After the Association had established itself in New York City, it gradually began to organize other branches. Below is a table which shows the growth of branches and membership:

Table 1. Growth of Branches and Membership From 1912 to 1929

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>BRANCHES</th>
<th>MEMBERSHIP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>329</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1,100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>6,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>8,785</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>9,202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>43,994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>310</td>
<td>91,203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>356</td>
<td>88,277</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Robert L. Jack attributes the increased membership in 1919 to the membership campaign conducted by the Association during that year. The membership figures for the years between 1920 and 1946 are not available to the writer at the present time. However, the Association reported 1,457 branches in forty-five states and the District of Columbia.

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7Annual Report, (1920), Pamphlet, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, p. 76. 20 West 40th Street, New York, New York.

During World War II, the membership climbed to 429,000 in 1944 as revealed by the following table:

**Table 2. Membership from 1946 to 1956 Compiled From Annual Reports**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>MEMBERSHIP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>4,200,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>4,200,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>3,830,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1949</td>
<td>2,480,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>1,930,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>1951</td>
<td>2,100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>2,150,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>2,400,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1954</td>
<td>2,400,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>3,050,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1956</td>
<td>3,050,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Increased membership during the war was due to subscriptions from Negro soldiers overseas. The National Office explained the decline of membership in 1949 was caused by the raising of membership dues from $1.00 to $2.00. This decline continued in 1950, particularly in larger cities. The *Annual Report*, 1950, explained the situation as follows:

With the exception of Baltimore, Detroit, and Cleveland, where membership exceeded 5,000, there was little or no increase in total enrollment in the larger cities such as Houston, Atlanta, Birmingham, Cincinnati, New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Washington, D. C. and St. Louis.9

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There was a rise in membership after the Supreme Court Decision of May 17, 1954, which declared segregation in public education illegal. In 1957, the National Office announced that more than fifty per cent of the enrollment was in the seventeen Southern and border states.

Besides the $2.00 membership fees, the National Office secures larger revenue from $500.00 Life Memberships taken out by individuals and organizations, from benefit performances and concerts, and from the sale of NAACP Christmas Seals. Individuals make large grants to the Association; for an example, the late Wendell Wilkie contributed part of the royalties from the sale of his book, One World.

4. Characteristics of the NAACP Personnel

Mary White Ovington listed the first officers of the Association as follows: William English Walling, Chairman of the Executive Committee; John E. Milholland, treasurer; Oswald Garrison Villard, disbursing treasurer; Francis Blascooer, executive secretary; and Dr. Du Bois, the only Negro officer, editor of The Crisis and director of research. James Weldon Johnson, a Negro, joined the staff as a field organizer in 1917; he had taught school in Jacksonville and had written lyrics for his brother's music. (See Plate IV) Arthur E. Spingarn, a white attorney of New York City, became the Association's third president.
James Weldon Johnson
PHOTOGRAPH BY CARL VAN Vechten
PLATE IV
in 1939, succeeding two other white men, his brother, J. E. Spingarn, and Moorfield Storey.

Walter White, a Negro from Atlanta, Georgia, was appointed assistant executive secretary in 1918; because of his fair complexion, he was used by the Association for the investigation of lynchings in the South. (See Plate V) Walter White became executive secretary in 1931, succeeding Johnson who went to Fisk University to teach English. Roy Wilkins was promoted from assistant editor of The Crisis to editor when Dr. Du Bois resigned in 1934 and became a professor of Sociology at Atlanta University. Walter White died in 1955 and was succeeded as executive secretary by Roy Wilkins. (See Plate VI)

The Association stated in 1957 that their national officers were of various races and faiths. During this period the officers were as follows:

Treasurer - Allen Knight Chalkers, a member of the faculty at Boston School of Theology.

Assistant Treasurer - Theodore Spaulding, Negro judge in Philadelphia.

Chairman of the Board of Directors - Channing H. Tobias, Veteran educator, church leader, and Negro elder statesman.

Vice President - Robert C. Weaver, first Negro appointed to a cabinet post in the New York State Government.
In Memoriam

WALTER WHITE
July 1, 1893 — March 21, 1955

Assistant Secretary
1918 - 1931

Executive Secretary
1931 - 1955

PLATE V
New Executive Secretary

ROY WILKINS
Assistant Secretary
1931 - 1950

Administrator
1951 - 1955

Succeeded Mr. White,
April, 1955

PLATE VI
Other Vice Presidents - Norman Cousins, Oscar Hammerstein II, Reverend John Haynes Holmes, Wayne Morse, Bishop W. J. Walls, Rabbi Cahn, Reverend William Lloyd Imes, Eric Johnson, and A. Phillip Randolph.10

One observer presented a different picture of the organization in 1956: Paul Jacobs reported the following:

The first obvious change is that the NAACP is being taken over, more and more, by Negroes. Where once the overwhelming majority of the board members were white, today there are only twelve whites and thirty-six Negroes serving as directors. When once the staff had only one Negro, today it has only two whites.11

3. The External Objectives of the NAACP

The Association's external programs which are designed to achieve complete political, economic, and educational equality for Negroes are directed from within the racial group toward the outside to the agencies that can help the Negro's cause. The external program attempts to exert pressures outside the race, or to influence persons or groups to act in behalf of the Association's objectives.

Early objectives.--In 1911, the executive committee decided upon the following program:

1. To begin a scientific study of Negro schools.


2. To organize a Legal Redress Committee.
3. To publish *The Crisis*.
4. To hold meetings and memorial services.
5. To establish a bureau of information.
6. To form local groups.
7. To take an active part in reappointments in Congressional Districts.
8. To form a national committee to study Federal aid to education.
9. To make foreign propaganda.

These early objectives were designed to strengthen the organization and to initiate educational, political, and legal action programs. Thus, the Association set as its chief task the completing of the work of emancipation: "To make a group of 10,000,000 colored people free from economic slavery, to fight against wide-spread discrimination, to fight against state laws and city ordinances that enforce segregation."¹³

World War I program and policy.—The Association held a conference in Washington, D. C., in May of 1917, during the

¹² Mary White Ovington, "The Beginning of the NAACP" *The Crisis*, XXXII (June, 1926), 76-77.
¹³ Mary White Ovington, "The Beginning of the NAACP." *The Crisis*, XXXII (June, 1926), 76-77.
second month of the War and published the following demands:

1. The right to serve our country on the battlefield and to receive training for such service.

2. The right of our best men to lead troops of their own race in battle, and to receive officers' training in preparation for leadership.

3. The immediate stoppage of lynching.

4. The right to vote for both men and women.

5. Universal and free common school training.

6. The abolition of jim crow cars (rail-road).

7. The repeal of segregation ordinances.

8. Equal civil rights in all public institutions and movement.

Later during the war, 1918, Dr. Du Bois modified these stern demands by suggesting that Negroes discontinue aggressiveness for the duration of the war: "Patience without compromise; silence without surrender... and yet with it and above it all, the tramp of our armies over the blood-stained lillies of France to show the world again what the loyalty and bravery of black men mean."

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14 "Resolutions of the Washington Conference," The Crisis, XIV (June, 1917), 59-60.

Believing that the freedom of the American Negro was dependent upon the freedom of the world's darker peoples, Dr. Du Bois joined the Pan-African movement which met in Paris under his leadership during January of 1919. The general purpose was "To bring to bear all the pressures possible on the delegates at the Peace Table to ease the oppressions of the colored races and nations."  

Program during the 1930's.—During the depression years, the Association campaigned to secure more job opportunities. It took action against discrimination in the National Recovery Act in the South. The National Office investigated discrimination on the Boulder Dam Project, urged the American Federation of Labor to end discrimination, and supported the equalizing of bargaining power in the Wagner Labor Disputes Act. The National Office protested against discrimination in the Tennessee Valley Authority. Greater efforts were made to secure salaries for Negro school teachers to equalize those of the white teachers.  

Program during World War II.--Segregation in the National Defense program was protested on the following issues:

1. Enlisting of Negroes as mess attendants in the Navy.
2. Discrimination by local Draft Boards in the South.
3. Conversion of the Negro units, 9th and 10th Cavalry, to Service Units.

The Legal Bureau defended a number of Negro service men who became involved in various cases of discrimination and violence.

During the war period, the National Office continued to campaign for better housing, civil rights, the right to vote, and for the National Social Security program. The point of attack in housing was the restrictive covenants used to prohibit Negroes from buying houses, owning houses or renting houses in certain residential sections of cities and towns.

Program following World War II.--"Equal Justice Under the Law" was one of the national slogans in this post-war period. Continuing to stress the issues of the Pan-African Movement of 1919, the Association participated in the United Nations during 1945 in behalf of Africa, Tunisia, Morocco, Tanganyika, Togoland, and South Africa, seeking to free these countries from colonial exploitation. Dr. Du Bois
was sent to San Francisco as an observer at the first meeting of the United Nations. On the labor front, the National Office renounced the Taft-Hartley Act. The Campaign against segregation was intensified. The "separate but equal" policy in public education was renounced by the Legal Bureau as the staff pleaded before the United States Supreme Court for the abolishment of segregation. A campaign for the passage of National Fair Employment legislation was launched on a wide scale.

Program toward final goals. -- 1963 will mark one-hundred years of emancipation from slavery for Negroes in the United States. This is the year the Association hopes to end its work with the complete economic, political and social emancipation of Negroes. To accomplish this purpose, the National Office has presented the following program:

1. Enlarge job opportunities for Negroes.
2. Work to make freedom of residence a reality.
3. Get out a Negro vote of 3,000,000 in the South.
4. Wipe out the remnant of segregation in education.
5. End all discrimination in transportation.

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"Dr. Du Bois Observer at the San Francisco Conference," The Crisis LII (April, 1945), 111.

6. End all segregation in places of public accommodation.

7. Break through the color bar in health and hospital services.

8. End filibuster in the House and Senate of the National Government.

9. Use education to break down segregation in voluntary associations such as churches, ministerial groups, professional associations and the like.

The external program of the NAACP is directed, first, toward securing rights for Negroes guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States and its Amendments; second, toward creating a favorable public opinion in securing these rights; and, third, toward exposing groups and individuals who do not practice the principles of democracy.

4. Methods of Executing the External Programs

Each branch was given five functions: (a) to conduct propaganda, (b) to form committees, (c) to secure civil rights, (d) to protest, and (e) to make studies. If a situation cannot be handled on the local level, the branch


may apply to the National Office for assistance.

Daniel Webster Wynn's study of the NAACP has described the function and operations of the National Office as follows:

Generally, this office watched over Negro rights. The Association promptly responded to any development which had an adverse effect upon the Negro. This approach was usually followed: The secretary sent a telegram or letter to the responsible officials, which was made public through the press service of the Association. It largely capitalized upon the prestige, stability and respect which it had assumed as a result of several years of constant publicity.

Negro rights were watched over by the National Office. It endeavored to get hearings before congressional committees and other investigating bodies... Systematic lobbying was kept up in the capitals of the states and the nation. The secretary holds the chief responsibility for this... The National Office rallied the branches to political action against officers there who were derelict or prejudiced. 23

The Interracial characteristics of the staff and personnel give campaigns a slightly wider base of operation. Prominent white and Negro board members sometimes use person-to-person contacts. When the protest involves legal actions, such as testing a place of public accommodation for racial discrimination, the principals are given legal advice before the test is made. The technique in campaigning is to

seize upon certain public incidents to keep the public interested and informed. During the anti-lynching crusade, a box-score was kept by a special research department on the number of lynchings each year. A third technique in protesting and campaigning is to seek the cooperation of other organizations and prominent persons. Several Negro ministers have rendered effective services to the Association's campaign against segregation.

Use of the mass media to influence public opinion.--In 1913, the Annual Report stated: "The work of the Association during the year can best be grouped under organization, legal redress, and publicity work." Succeeding Annual Reports have emphasized the importance of favorable public opinion. In 1924, Dr. Du Bois again emphasized the importance of public opinion:

The NAACP has been and probably always will be an organization for protest and fight against wrongs. On the other hand, its mission is also to call to the attention of the world to the achievements of the Negro, in that such progress proves the justness of the Association's contention for full citizenship to the Negro.26

24 Robert L. Jack, op. cit., p. 28.


Dr. Du Bois reported that during 1913 he traveled about 8,000 miles and delivered seventy-two lectures and talks to audiences aggregating 41,000 persons, of whom 19,000 were white and 21,200 were colored. The table below compiled from Annual Reports shows the coverage of the speaking staff over a five year period.

Table 3. A Five Year Travel Record of the Association's Speaking Staff

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Cities</th>
<th>States</th>
<th>Meetings</th>
<th>Miles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>791</td>
<td>60,951</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>719</td>
<td>106,357</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1938</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>828</td>
<td>52,320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>953</td>
<td>66,952</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>916</td>
<td>107,067</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

War-time restrictions on travel limited the mileage and coverage of the speakers after 1940.

In 1913, the Association's Publicity Bureau reported that it had difficulty in getting notices:

We have had conferences with the chief officers of the Associated Press, and have urged them to take an early opportunity to impress upon their agents that this order applies to colored people. It was through the NAACP that some interesting articles

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helpful to the Negro appeared in The New York Times which is often bitterly hostile.28

The Association's Publicity Bureau sought other press channels for reaching the public. The staff published their books quite frequently; for example, in the early years, Mary White Ovington's The Shadow in 1920, Du Bois' Dark Waters and Gift of Black Folk in 1924, and Walter White's The Fire in the Flint in 1925. The writing and publication by Negro authors increased to the point, that in 1927, Du Bois declared that Negro writers had become the best spokesmen for the Negro's cause. During 1927, his office sent out almost 500 press releases.

In addition to books and press releases, the staff published articles in various periodicals. The list of selected articles by Walter White is an example of subjects and periodicals used for publicity:

"Negroes," New International Year Book, 1939

"Progress of the American Negro," Children's Book of the Year, 1939.

"Lynching," Collier's, December 19, 1939.


"How Will the Negro Vote," Liberty, October 12, 1940.

"Negro Achievements in 1940," Book of Knowledge Annual, 1940.


"Will The Negro Elect Our Next President," Collier's, November 22, 1947.


In addition to the articles published by staff members, the Association invites other writers to do articles for publication. It also runs in The New York Times paid
advertisements such as "Who Is Blocking Federal Aid to School Construction" and "Help End Racial Tyranny in Mississippi". Special articles are written for the Negro press, such as The Pittsburgh Courier, which is one of the Association's main supporters. The information Bureau also publishes a number of pamphlets each year.

The Public Relations Department has sought the use of another media of mass communication, time on radio and television. The Department reported in 1940 that radio and theatres still offered difficulties when the Association approached them to secure time and space for publicity. The following presents some occasions when the Association was successful in obtaining radio time as cited in Annual Reports:

1. 1934 - J. E. Spingarn sent a message over NBC at the invitation of the Southernaires, a Negro quartet.

2. 1936 - Walter White delivered a fifteen minute speech over CBS on the subject "Equality of Education for Negro Youth".

3. 1940 - Three Senators spoke in behalf of the Anti-Lynch Bill over NBC.

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4. 1949 - Walter White participated in a coast-to-coast broadcast over NBC on "A New Birth of Freedom".

5. 1950 - Department of Public Relations prepared the script for a radio panel discussion for the National Council of Christians and Jews. The Annual Lincoln Day broadcast presented a skit with Canada Lee, Muriel Rhan, and Congresswoman Helen Gahagan Douglass.


7. 1954 - The Association suspended its Annual Lincoln Day Broadcast over ABC to give the news of the death and funeral of Walter White.

8. 1955 - The July 29th "Tex and Jinx Show" began the first in a series of three programs on "The NAACP Story."

Use of legal action to secure constitutional rights.--

In 1913, the Association established a Legal Bureau and ordered its branches to organize Vigilance Committees to be on the alert for hostile laws and ordinances, the curtailment of civil rights, new discrimination, over-taxation,
and law enforcement. Chapin Brinsmade became the Chief Counsel; his objective was to build up a body of judicial decisions which would state the law on the subject of civil and political rights.

Legal action in recent years has been directed by Charles Houston, Dean of the Howard University Law School who came to the office in 1930. As Chief Counsel, Houston became a hero in his fight for equal rights. Houston invited Thurgood Marshall, a former student, to be his assistant in 1936. When Houston retired in 1938, Marshall became the Association's Chief Counsel. During 1956 and 1957, Marshall maintained a staff of five lawyers in New York and attorneys on retainer in Washington, D. C.; Richmond, Virginia; Dallas, Texas; and Los Angeles, California. The importance of the Association's legal actions is attested to by the comparatively large contributions to its Defense Fund:

Contributions to the Defense Fund totaled $351,283 in 1956, and expenditures were $268,279. "It costs $50,000 to $100,000 to carry a case through the Supreme Court." Mr. Marshall says, "and

\[31\]

\[32\]
Chapin Brinsmade, "Our Legal Bureau," The Crisis, VII (April, 1914), 291.
the school desegregation cases ran to a
total of more than $200,000." Mr. Marshall
himself is paid $15,000 a year. 33

Securing cooperation of other organizations.--The
Association has enlisted the support of other organizations
on certain specific issues. On the issue of restricted
housing, the following organizations cooperated:

American Jewish Committee
Bina B'rith Anti-Defamation League
Jewish Labor Committee
Congress of Industrial Organization
General Council of Congregational Christian
Churches of U. S. A.
American Indian Citizens League of California, Inc.
National Lawyers Guild.
Protestant Council of the City of New York
National Bar Association
American Civil Liberties Union
American Veterans Committee
American Association for the United States
American Federation of Labor.

5. Results of Major Protests and Campaigns

Robert L. Jack's study has given space to the Associa-
tion's campaigns up to 1943: "The Anti-Lynching Crusade,"
"Segregation and Discrimination," "Seeking Educational
Opportunities," and "The Fight for Political and Constitu-
tional Rights." The campaigns that the Association promoted
in more recent years are to secure more economic oppor-
tunities and to abolish discrimination in the Armed Forces.

States News and World Report, XXXIII (September 27, 1957),
67.
The following section will give the developments and results of these campaigns.

Campaign against lynching.--The Association took the stand that lynching is criminal and the offenders should be prosecuted; it sponsored anti-lynching bills in 1922, 1934, and 1937. Data was gathered by Professor Monroe Work, statistician at Tuskegee Institute in Alabama. The 1934 campaign was intensified. Each time a Negro was lynched the National Headquarters raised a black flag outside a window. The caption on the flag read, "Another Lynching Today". From February 15 through March 2, 1935, "An Art Exhibit Against Lynching" was sponsored by the Association at the Newton Gallery in New York City.

No anti-lynch bill was passed, but lynching began to decrease each year. In 1950, the National Office reported that there was not a single lynching in the United States during that year.

Campaign to secure constitutional rights.--From the beginning, the Association has fought against the domination of courts by all-white juries in the South; it entered the case that brought a group of Negro farmers to trial in Arkansas during 1919. As a result, the Federal Court ruled that a trial dominated by a mob is unconstitutional. In 1920, the Association promoted the defeat of

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34 The Crisis, XLII (April, 1935), 106.
"Jim-crow marriage" legislation in twelve states.

The most important achievement in the fight for political rights was the defeat of the "grandfather clause" which disfranchised Negroes in certain Southern States on the grounds that their grandfathers had not voted. When the Association challenged the Democratic Primary in Texas in 1913 on the "grandfather clause", the United States Supreme Court ruled that Negroes may not be barred from the Democratic Primaries of Texas.

Campaign to secure equal educational opportunities.--

In the early stages of this campaign for equal educational opportunities, the Legal Bureau operated on the principle that education for Negroes should be "Separate but Equal" as established in the Plessy vs. Ferguson case before the United States Supreme Court in 1896. On the basis of this decision, the Legal Bureau was able to obtain in thirteen border and Southern States equal educational facilities, equal teacher's salaries, and equal expenditure per capita, school terms, and curricula.

The Legal Bureau contended for equal educational opportunities on the graduate level in several Southern States during the 1930's and the 1940's. The Legal Bureau sought to gain the admission of Negroes to the University

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of North Carolina in 1933. When Herman Marion Swett applied for admission to the University of Texas Law School in 1946, the District Court of Travis County, Texas, ruled that to bar Swett was unconstitutional. The most significant case was that of McLaurin vs. Oklahoma State Regents in 1948. McLaurin sought admission to the University of Oklahoma School of Education, and the Federal District Court ruled that the State is under a constitutional duty to provide the plaintiff with the education he seeks as soon as it does for applicants of any other group. McLaurin was admitted under segregated conditions which faded away. Legal action similar to the McLaurin case was taken in Missouri, Arkansas and Maryland with the same results.

Campaign for desegregation in the public schools. Believing that the Plessy vs. Ferguson decision of 1896 had provided the legal grounds for segregation, the Legal Bureau concentrated on voiding the "Separate but Equal" doctrine in 1950. Thurgood Marshall, Chief Counsel, and his associates went before the United States Supreme Court and argued, "Segregation is an anti-democratic device designed to perpetuate an obsolete caste system which flatly contravenes 36

the basic ethical concepts of our Judaeo-Christian tradi-

John W. Davis, Chief Counsel for the opposition responded, "We find nothing here which this court could formulate as a decree... Your honors do not sit, and cannot sit, as a glorified board of education for the State of South Carolina or any other state." 38

The result of the arguments were announced in the United States Supreme Court Decision of May 17, 1954, which read in part as follows: "In the field of public education, the doctrine of separate but equal has no place... The Plaintiffs and others similarly situated for whom these actions have been brought are, by reason of segregation complained of, deprived of equal protection of the laws guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment." 39

Campaign to abolish discrimination in public accommodations.—Local branches have been very active in contesting discrimination in hotels, bars, restaurants, swimming pools, golf courses, and theatres. Discrimination in theatres will


39 Ibid.
be discussed in Chapter IV of this study. However, the Legal Bureau won a victory in 1956 that had an immediate effect upon transportation. The Interstate Commerce Commission ruled that segregation of interstate passengers in rail and bus transportation and in waiting rooms of stations must be banned. As a consequence, Negroes traveling from one state to another are no longer segregated in the South.

Campaign to secure more economic opportunities.--There have been consistent efforts by the Association to break down bias in labor unions and to gain more opportunities through Fair Employment legislation. One of the results was a decision by a judge in Providence, Rhode Island who ruled in 1944 that the auxiliary unions created for Negroes in the Boilermakers' Union were illegal in the State. In 1945, Governor Thomas E. Dewey signed the Ives-Quinn Bill, making New York the first State to penalize discrimination in employment on ground of race or religion. United States Senator Hubert Humphrey cooperated with the Association when he conducted hearings on Fair Employment in 1952; however, no Federal legislation was passed.

41 Daniel Webster Wynn, op. cit., p. 99.
Campaign to abolish discrimination in the Armed Forces.--Lee Nichols, a newspaper reporter during World War II, recorded the story of desegregation in the Armed Forces, Breakthrough on the Color Front. Nichols stated that when President Franklin Roosevelt signed the Selective Service Act, which contained a clause barring racial segregation, September 14, 1940, Walter White, executive secretary of the NAACP, and his associates, urged President Roosevelt to discontinue segregation at once.

October 16, 1940, President Roosevelt appointed William H. Hastie, Negro attorney, as Civilian Aid to Secretary Stimson. At the same time, Benjamin O. Davis, a Negro Colonel, was promoted to Brigadier General, making him the highest ranking Negro officer in the nation. Nevertheless, segregation continued through World War II. President Harry S. Truman advanced the program of integrating the Armed Forces during his term in office. In 1953, President Eisenhower began a series of actions that led to racial desegregation in the United States Armed Forces.

6. The Association's Internal Program

Internally, the Association has the ever-present task of securing and maintaining the support of the Negro

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population on a national scale. In securing and maintaining this support the burden of proof lies with the Association, that it is acting in the best interest of the Negro people and that its principles and policies are those which will solve problems of race in the United States. To accomplish these internal purposes, the Association attempts to influence the thinking of its Negro constituency. The internal program is aimed directly at the Negro people as a form of education or propaganda.

After the Civil War, more than 3,000,000 slaves were emancipated; they varied in African tribal backgrounds, African dialects, colors, and previous conditions of servitude. Their only constructive leadership had been religious denominations, missionaries, and ministers. Therefore, any progressive leadership on a national scale had to appeal to the Negro through a consciousness of race, through strength in unity.

Publication of a monthly magazine.--During the first year, the Association felt the need of a monthly publication to keep the Negro public informed. Dr. Du Bois was appointed editor of The Crisis in addition to his position as director of research. The early issues of the magazine carried the following departments: Along the Color Line, consisting of "Social Uplift," "Political," "The Ghetto," "Education," "Art," "Meetings," "Personal," "Social,"
"Athletics," "Church," and "Courts"; Men of the Month, Opinion, Editorial, The Burden, and What to Read. A larger section was reserved for material about the national organization and its branches. (See Plate VII for a facsimile of the first issue of The Crisis which illustrates purposes and appeals of the magazine.

It may be assumed from the Third Annual Report (1912) that The Crisis was an immediate success. The November issue of 1,000 copies was exhausted at once, and 16,000 copies were distributed by the end of the first year, with circulation in every state in the Union except South Dakota. Dr. Du Bois announced in the Seventh Annual Report (1916) that The Crisis was entirely self-supporting. The table below shows the growth of circulation.

Table 4. The Net Paid Circulation and Annual Income of The Crisis, by Years, From 1910-1920

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEARS</th>
<th>ANNUAL CIRCULATION</th>
<th>ANNUAL INCOME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>3,500 Two Months</td>
<td>375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>108,000</td>
<td>6,572</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>264,000</td>
<td>13,217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913</td>
<td>336,000</td>
<td>19,739</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>377,400</td>
<td>22,124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915</td>
<td>385,872</td>
<td>23,865</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916</td>
<td>451,500</td>
<td>28,192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1917</td>
<td>495,177</td>
<td>32,836</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918</td>
<td>902,250</td>
<td>70,502</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>1,138,900</td>
<td>77,706</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>749,000</td>
<td>62,582</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dr. Du Bois reported a decline in circulation during the 1930's due to the economic depression. Roy Wilkins, the present executive secretary, became editor in 1934; he reported in the Annual Reports a circulation of 45,000 in 1947, a drop to 24,000 in 1951, and a recovery to 42,000 during 1955.

While promoting race-consciousness, the editor kept before his readers the objectives of social and economic "uplift," of advancement and achievement as they relate to the securing of complete economic, political and educational equality. Dr. Du Bois expressed this purpose as follows:

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People seeks to uplift the colored men and women of this country by securing for them the full enjoyment of their rights as citizens, justice in all courts, and the equality of opportunity everywhere...

It believes that the scientific truths of the Negro problem must be available before the country can see its way wholly clear to right existing wrongs. It has no other belief than that the best way to uplift the colored man in the best way to aid the white man to peace and social contentment; it has no other desire than exact justice, and no other motive than humanity.45

In 1915, Dr. Du Bois advised his readers as follows, taking into consideration the interracial characteristics of the personnel and membership:

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People does not believe that any white man is a free citizen in a free republic as long as black men are not equally free.... It urges the Negro to do what he is perhaps naturally inclined to do, to go after his rights himself. It urges its white members not patronize the colored man, not aid him out of sentimental pity for the underdog, but to aid him because he is fighting for the battle of American freedom and American idealism. 46

The Spingarn Medal.--The first Spingarn Medal was awarded in 1915 by the Association to Professor Ernest E. Just of Howard University, Washington, D. C., for research in biology. The Spingarn Medal was instituted by Joel Spingarn, Chairman of the Board of Directors. The purpose of this award is directed toward the promotion of "uplift" among American Negroes. The Association employed this award as a means of calling the attention of the American people to the existence of distinguished merit among American Negroes, and "to serve as a reward for such achievement, and as a stimulus to the ambition of colored youth." 47

46 The Crisis, VII (March, 1914), 227.
(See Plate VIII for the design of this medal which was awarded in 1958 to the nine Negro students who were integrated at Central High School of Little Rock, Arkansas, and also to Mrs. Daisy Bates, Little Rock newspaper editor and NAACP leader)

Cultural "uplift" through the arts.—Dr. Du Bois was concerned about the impression that the Negro race made upon the world; he was sensitive to public opinion created by the Negro people as well as to the misrepresentation of them. He stated two of the objectives of The Crisis: "to make 10,000,000 American Negroes free from ignorance and free from insult; to publish the truth repeatedly and incisively; to secure a change in public opinion." As a compromise with Booker T. Washington's program of industrial education for Negroes in the South, Dr. Du Bois recommended that ten per cent of the race be trained in the arts and sciences. His proposal became known as the doctrine of "The Talented Tenth." In 1915, The Crisis inaugurated a program for discovering abilities among "The Talented Tenth." A Drama Committee was appointed for the purpose of studying ways and means of utilizing the stage for the service of the Association.


Obtaining mass action from Negroes.--In the event of a political crisis, racial violence, or the urgency of protesting or campaigning, the Association had the problem of getting the Negro population to act in concert. For example, during World War I, Dr. Du Bois asked Negroes to suspend protesting for the duration, which they did. During World War II, the Association held a large Emergency War Conference in 1943 for the purpose of making plans for the post-war period. Later, during World War II, Negroes were mobilized by the NAACP and other groups to march on Washington to protest discrimination in Defense Industry, but the march was cancelled because the Roosevelt Administration advised against it.

Although the NAACP is a non-partisan organization, it has given instructions on the local branch levels to defeat certain candidates who have records showing that they are anti-Negro. Senator Sparkman of Alabama who ran unsuccessfully for the vice-presidency in 1952 was the target for this kind of action. Mass meetings are held on the local levels for various reasons.


Some of the branches sponsor "Emancipation Proclamation Services" every New Year's Day, with prayers, speeches and songs, but this observance has become less popular with the younger generations. The Association is now popularizing May 17 as the new emancipation of Negroes in the United States on the basis of the United States Supreme Court Decision which declared segregation in the public schools unconstitutional. On May 17, 1957, the Association organized and conducted a "Prayer Pilgrimage" to Washington, D. C., for the purpose of thanking God for the Supreme Court Decision. The call to the "Prayer Pilgrimage" ended with these words:

So we now, in these troubled and momentous years, call upon all who love justice and dignity and liberty, who love their country, and who love mankind, to join in a Pilgrimage, where we shall renew our strength, communicate our unity, and rededicate our efforts, firmly but peaceably, to the attainment of freedom. 52

Cooperation from Negro organizations.—The Negro's advancement in America has been helped by two other interracial organizations, the National Urban League, founded in 1910, which has as its main program the securing of job opportunities; and the Commission on Interracial Cooperation, which seeks to break down barriers between

52 NAACP, Call to a Prayer Pilgrimage for Freedom, Pamphlet.
races, conducts research, education and publicity. In addition to support from allied organizations, the Association has been able to obtain cooperation from Negro churches and their ministers. The executive secretary stated "A survey of church cooperation with the NAACP reveals that an increasing number of churches throughout the country are actively participating in the campaign for civil rights." The Negro press, in most instances, have supported the Association's programs, protests, and campaigns. The Pittsburgh Courier has been a major supporter of the Association. (See Plate IX, a cartoon from The Pittsburgh Courier which advertizes the NAACP through the use of topical humor)

A. Phillip Randolph, the president of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters has consistently supported the Association's major campaigns. Many outstanding Negroes have given their services and financial support to the Association. Retired athlete, Jackie Robinson, was National Chairman of the 1957 Freedom Fund, and is currently filling speaking engagements for the Association. Reverend Martin Luther King, who led the successful bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama, has given his cooperation to the Association.

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"Aw baby, baby... cut out all that hollerin' about you gonna report it to the NAACP. The men just naturally struck Jackie out, that's all!"
Achievements of the internal program.—On the basis of its work over the years in the fields of political, legal, economic and social actions, the NAACP has become the largest, most influential, and the best staffed organization working in behalf of Negroes in the United States. The Association has contributed to the following developments in Negro life:

1. Group consciousness and race pride, which is evident in the annual meetings and financial contributions to the Association.

2. Poise and dignity in protesting segregation and discrimination, which has led to obtaining accommodations in many public places.

3. Skill in the use of the ballot to secure beneficial political action, which has led to increased patronage by office-holders and office seekers.

4. The use of the boycott to bring economic pressures against biased business establishments.

5. A more informed membership on events affecting Negro life in the United States and in foreign countries.

From the point of view of one sociologist, the NAACP has made its greatest contribution to the internal developments in the promotion of group identification.

We have seen how the growth of group identification has increased the self-confidence of Negroes. It has made them less ashamed of being Negroes.

Secondly, the growth of group-identification has aided the development of an effective protest organization. Highly educated and talented Negroes are now more willing to go in for race leadership.

7. Criticism of the NAACP.

Arnold M. Rose's study has named four categories for the sizeable proportion of the Negro population which is somewhat apathetic toward the NAACP. These four categories which provide an approach to criticism are as follows:

1. Some of the Southern upper-class colored people who feel that the NAACP is a radical, tactless organization that stirs up trouble.

2. The Negro intellectuals who have been influenced by Marxism, and who feel that economic revolution is the solution to the race problem.

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3. Negro nationalists who do not want to work with white people, and who do not like light-complexioned Negro leaders.

4. A few individuals who disapprove of the specific policies or of the specific leaders.

**Criticism from Negroes.**—In the first category of the above classification is disagreement between Professor Clennon King and the NAACP.

On March 6, 1957, the Negro students at Alcorn College in Mississippi instituted a boycott against Professor Clennon King's classes because he had written an article in *The Jackson State Times* criticizing the NAACP. Professor King criticized the Association on the following points:

1. That the deep south is embarrassed by the NAACP's falsified anti-Negro reputation because the South has been ready to give up forced segregation.

2. That it is too difficult to keep up with the specific objectives of the Association because they vary according to the political expediencies of the Board of Directors.

3. That the NAACP is not interested in the Negro masses as much as it is interested in power over the Negro, which is entrenched in the hands of a few like the power in the Communist Party.

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4. That the NAACP goes into convulsions over a Negro killed by whites, but says nothing when one Negro kills another.

5. That Dr. Du Bois and The Crisis destroyed the legendary fame of Booker T. Washington by referring to him as "Uncle Tom."

6. That the NAACP does nothing in the South to ease racial tension.

7. That there is nothing which the NAACP has done which could not have been done by Negroes independently.

8. That the NAACP fights for freedom, but uses its great power to discourage Negroes from free discussion.

Professor Clennon King closed his article with "My voice as a Negro should not be stilled because I do not meticulously follow the NAACP line."

In the second category, criticism from Negro intellectuals who had been influenced by Marxism, is the movement which Daniel Webster Wynn's study has termed "Protest Revolutionary Antagonism." Wynn explained that this movement's underlying ideology can be rightfully credited to Dr. Du Bois and its popularization to Paul

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Robeson. Dr. Du Bois took leave of his position with
the Association in 1934 and returned to Atlanta University. In the meanwhile, during the 1930's, Paul Robeson,
the actor, was living in Soviet Russia where he became
convinced that Russia had the solution to minority,
racial problems. Robeson returned to the United States
in 1939 and joined the Council on African Affairs whose
operation Wynn has described as follows:

Ever since the organization of the Council
on African Affairs the Negro protest revolu-
tionary antagonists have been international-
minded.

Although these leaders still stress Africa,
their main interest has shifted to pro-Russian
agitation. Yet, it is expedient for them to hold
on to the Council. It gives them the security of
some type of formal organization and gives them
some type of front for their activities. 59

In 1940, Paul Robeson invited Dr. Du Bois to become
a member of the Council. Dr. Du Bois accepted the
invitation and was appointed Vice-Chairman and given an
office and a secretary. In 1948 Dr. Du Bois resigned
from the NAACP.

58  "Voice of Freedom," Time Magazine, LIII (June
27, 1949), 36.


60  Cited in From Slavery to Freedom, by John Hope
Franklin, p. 482.
The third category, criticism from the Negro nationalists, is best illustrated by Marcus Garvey and his "Back to Africa Movement." Garvey came to the United States from his native Jamaica in 1914 and organized a chapter of the Universal Negro Improvement Association. By the end of World War I, he had organized more than thirty chapters in the United States. His movement exalted everything black, meaning strength and not inferiority; he advocated Negroes' returning to Africa as a solution to their problem and raised more than one million dollars for his "Black Star Steam Ship Line." Garvey was contemptuous of Dr. Du Bois and the leaders of the NAACP. On one occasion, Marcus Garvey wrote:

The NAACP wants us all to become white by amalgamation, but they are not honest enough to come out with the truth. To be a Negro is no disgrace, but an honor, and we of the UNIA do not want to become white.... We are proud and honorable. We love our race and respect and adore our mothers.51

Marcus Garvey went to prison in 1923, having been convicted for using the mails to defraud; he died in London, England, in 1940.

51 "Dr. Du Bois Resigns" The Crisis, XXXI (August 1934), 245.
Falling into the fourth category, George Schuyler, newspaper columnist, discussed the weaknesses of the Association in the *Negro Digest* as follows:

Those who founded the organization, and whose philosophy still dominates and guides it, though primarily in terms of defense and were zealous to do something for the Negro rather than teach the Negro to do something for himself...

The Association does not practice the democracy it preaches. It is run by a board of directors numbering forty-eight of whom sixteen are elected annually. The method of selection is quite complicated and undesirable in these days of direct elections.

Schuyler added six other charges to those above:

1. The Association ranted against peonage in the South, but did nothing to help the Negro to help himself.
2. It failed to establish consumers' cooperatives in the urban areas.
3. The leaders failed to initiate a program to unionize labor.
4. It failed to initiate a Negro cooperative housing project.
5. It did not sponsor a program to rescue Negroes from illiteracy.
6. It did little or nothing for Negro health.

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Criticism from whites.—Governor Herman E. Talmadge of the State of Georgia has answered the anti-Negro charges made by the NAACP against him as follows:

These are some of the things done for Negroes of Georgia during my administration: $3,715,000 expended for building at Negro colleges and universities; $500,000 for a 1,000-bed psychiatric hospital for Negro patients; $470,000 Academy for the Negro blind, same amount for the State School for the Negro deaf.

Yet, the Communists, their fellow travelers and the NAACP call me an enemy of the Negro race... During the past decade as the NAACP's political power grew, the organization used pressure in fields far beyond civil rights and segregation.

The great Negro educator, Booker T. Washington, who did more for education of the Negro race than any other Negro in history, has been held up to scorn by the NAACP leadership. When the national shrine was established at his birthplace, the NAACP group steadfastly boycotted it...

Nor is the memory of Abraham Lincoln dealt with too kindly by these leaders. It seems some of them must have read the famous Lincoln debates with Judge Douglas... The most accomplished and professional race-baiters in the world today are the spokesmen for the NAACP and their fellow-travelers. I have never read one word in any of those same newspapers, nor have I ever heard one of those network commentators condemn this group for being race-haters against white people.63

The oldest foe of the NAACP among white people is the Ku Klux Klan which organized after the Civil War to intimidate Negroes, Catholics and Jews. Three days after the Supreme Court decision declaring segregation illegal in public schools (1954) flaming crosses of the Klan appeared in several Florida towns. Two months later the White Citizens Council held its first meeting in Indianola, Mississippi; it has today a membership of 500,000 in the Southern States. This Council criticizes the NAACP for successfully pleading the cause of integration before the United States Supreme Court. It accuses the NAACP of favoring inter-racial marriages and of being communists because several NAACP members were cited by the Committee on Un-American Activities for having been connected with "left-wing" organizations. There are similar organizations to the White Citizen's Council in the South, such as the National Association for the Preservation of the White Race.

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"NAACP's Right to Exist," American, CLXXXVI (October 27, 1956), 88.

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Criticism from the Communists.—Individuals and groups have criticized the NAACP for its alleged Communist connections; and, at the same time, the Communists have criticized the Association. One historical account stated:

The Daily Worker has attacked it repeatedly branding its policy a betrayal of the lower-class Negro. Less doctrinaire critics, both Negro and white, have regarded it sadly as a sign of anemia and faulty intelligence. Although they are beginning to change their minds, many students of reform used to maintain vigorously that legal gains for the Negro mean almost nothing unless accompanied by a revolution in the Southern economy.

NAACP lawyers and leaders have always held to the basic conviction that, in the long fight for equality, the law itself was their best weapon. And, to date, the policy has proved remarkably successful.67

The Communist Party in the United States organized two movements to engulf the NAACP and to seize control of the organization: The National Negro Congress in 1934, and the Civil Rights Congress during the 1940's. In 1949, the NAACP denounced Communism and expelled all of its 68 Communist members.


8. The NAACP and the Mass Media of Communication

In the Association's external program with the objectives of seeking and obtaining justice in the courts, political, civil and educational equality, of securing greater economic opportunities, and of seeking and obtaining undiscriminated health and hospital services, there are certain inherent relationships to the mass media of theatrical entertainment as afforded by the stage, press, motion-pictures, radio and television. There are also certain inherent relationships between the Association's internal program and the mass media. First, the promotion of race consciousness and group identification arouses racial sensitivities to the mass media; second, the Negro racial group, instructed and propagandized to attain human dignity and poise through social and cultural uplift, seeks also to be informed by the mass media concerning the group's progress and status.

Relationships with the theatre.—Dr Du Bois said that although the NAACP was campaigning in the field of political, social, and legal actions, the Association could not afford to overlook such a strong cultural force as the theatre. The Association has been interested in the theatre as a means of expressing the organization's cause to the world; first through favorable and sympathetic dramatizations of
Negro life; second, through sympathetic and realistic expression of the Negro's problem; third, through greater opportunities for Negro performers to win public acceptance with their talents. In 1915, the Association decided that the right of the Negro to attend theatrical performances was a civil right; it then began the campaign to open the doors of theatres to Negro patronage. Internally, the Association desired to use the theatre as a means of educating and uplifting the Negro people, as a means of creating race-consciousness and pride.

**Relationship with the press.**—Externally, the Association desired cooperation from the newspapers and periodicals in disseminating its causes to the American public. The National Office protested against the lack of balance between the favorable and unfavorable reporting on Negro life, the latter out-weighing the former. The National Office is also sensitive to stereotypes that appeared in novels, stories, periodicals, and school text-books. Internally, Dr. Du Bois encouraged Negro writers to state the Negro's cause to the world. Local branches are encouraged to seek and maintain human dignity for the race in the local newspapers by insisting that editors use "Mr." and "Mrs." when referring to Negroes in print.
Relationships with motion-pictures.--The Association recognizes the potential world-wide influence of motion pictures and its misconceptions of Negro life. The National Office became aware of the harmful treatment of Negroes in "Birth of a Nation" and protested the showing of the film from 1915 to the present time. Stereotyped Negro representations continued from the beginning of motion pictures up through World War II, when Negro soldiers overseas protested the showing of them in their recreation areas. In 1945, Walter White, executive secretary, intervened, attempting to persuade the producers to discontinue making film portraying Negro stereotypes.

Relationships with radio and television.--In one respect, the Association's interest in radio and television is similar to its interest in the press. The National Office seeks air time to advertise its programs and causes. In another respect, its interest is similar to that in motion pictures, for the National Office campaigned to abolish racial stereotypes presented in radio and television shows. However, the Association's main interest is that of more economic opportunities for Negro performers in television.

In the chapters to follow, the writer will attempt to compare these relationships with the trends in the mass media of entertainment as they affect the Negro performers and Negro life, and to trace any influences that these relationships have had or will have on the operations of the media.
CHAPTER III
RELATIONSHIPS OF THE NAACP WITH THE COMMERCIAL THEATRES

Among the factors which have created a more favorable attitude toward Negroes in America is the success of individual Negro performers in such fields as music, literature, the fine arts, and sports. The relationships of the NAACP with the commercial theatres have been toward creating a more favorable attitude for the Negro race and more economic opportunities for Negro performers. The term, "commercial theatres," as used in this study, refers to theatrical enterprises that offer employment and compensation to Negro performers. This organization has been interested in the effect of the Negro race problems arising on stage due to prejudice and discrimination. The Association in its desire to use the theatre for creating favorable racial impressions offered objections and requirements in the form of dramatic criticism and the expression of attitudes from the viewpoint of what is desirable for Negroes, from Negroes, and about Negroes. The NAACP also enlisted the cooperation of performers in behalf of the Association's major campaigns of protests. This Chapter is a study of some of these

1Arnold and Caroline Rose, America Divided (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1948), p. 34.
relationships with the commercial theatre for the purpose of determining the influence of the NAACP.


Early interests in obtaining more economic opportunities for Negro performers were reflected in The Crisis, the Association's monthly publication. In the July issue, 1911, Dr. Du Bois, the editor, called his readers' attention to the fine impression that a large Negro cast made in a spectacle playing at New York's Hippodrome, titled Marching Through Georgia. The author of the play was quoted when he spoke of the intelligence and earnestness exhibited by the Negroes in the cast during rehearsals.² (See Appendix B for notices concerning Negroes in the commercial theatre.)

Dr. Du Bois took an occasion to plead in person for more opportunities following the production of Ridgely Torrence's Three Plays for a Negro Theatre which were produced at the Garden Theatre in New York City, April 5, 1917. The bill included three one-act plays: The Rider of Dreams, a comedy; Granny Maumee, a tragedy; and Simon the Cyrenian, a passion-play, produced by Mrs. Emily Hapgood. Robert Edmond Jones designed the production. J. Rosamond Johnson directed the music. James Weldon Johnson, field organizer

²The Crisis, I (July, 1911), 101.
for the NAACP, proclaimed the date of production as the most important single event in the entire history of the Negro in the American theatre:

The stereotyped traditions regarding the Negro's histrionic limitations were smashed. It was the first time anywhere in the United States for Negro actors in the dramatic theatre to command the serious attention of the critics and the general press and public.3

An example of the favorable reception of the Colored Players at the Garden Theatre is the review by the American playwright, Zona Gale:

It is vital to understand that these plays are no imitation of the drama of the white race. Neither are they pseudo-delineations which the American dramatist has too often offered as interpreting a type-Negro.... Here is no pretense, no burlesque, no forced note, no sacrifice to humor. Here is a race infinitely potential, mocking before one in the individuals highly differentiated.4

Dr. Du Bois, probably hoping for more such portrayals of Negro life from Ridgely Torrence and other liberal dramatists, selected Torrence as one of the "Men of the Month" in the September (1917) issue of The Crisis:

Ridgely Torrence is a poet who has spent much of his life among colored people in southern Ohio and has come to


know and understand them, though not in the same sense in which they are "usually" understood or even "loved" by their southern white friends. When he first tried to secure a production of Granny Maumee with colored actors, he failed at the time because of the almost universal prejudice against them (Negroes) made such a performance impossible, but he never gave up the idea.

No white man has written of colored people more sympathetically than Ridgely Torrence. No one has done as much as he in opening to Negroes a new field of art, and no one ever approached the people of another race in a more generous spirit.

Soon after the production of these plays, Dr. Du Bois and his associates met with some of the members of the Drama League of America, an organization which attempted to promote better American drama. The Proceedings of the Drama League's Seventh Annual Convention stated that the New York Committee had attended, among other plays, the Three Negro Plays. The Crisis reported Dr. Du Bois' contact with the League as follows:

Members of the Drama League of America attended a special meeting at the Garden Theatre, New York City, where the Colored Players produced Ridgely Torrence's Plays. Dr. W. E. B. Du Bois spoke on the Negro drama, and Miss Burrill of Washington, D. C., made an appeal for

5 "Men of the Month," The Crisis, XIV (September, 1917), 256.
opportunity. The orchestra for the Colored Players, under J. Rosamond Johnson, rendered songs and melodies of the Civil War."

When the writer interviewed Dr. Du Bois on July 18, 1957, an attempt was made to establish the result of the meeting with the Drama League. He remembered the occasion, but he could not recall any policies or promises concerning more opportunities for Negro actors on the New York stage. Dr. Du Bois said that he was interested in the Torrence Plays, first, because the playwright was his friend; second, because Norman Hapgood, the husband of the producer, was his classmate and also his friend.

Charles Gilpin recognized by the Drama League.— The activities of the Colored Players were interrupted by World War I. After the War, Charles Gilpin came to New York from the Pekin Theatre in Chicago and joined the Williams and Walker Company. In 1919, he played an old servant in Drinkwater's Abraham Lincoln where he demonstrated his ability to play character roles.

By 1920, O'Neill's play, The Emperor Jones, was ready for production. Charles Gilpin was discovered by the Provincetown producers while he was acting at Harlem's Lafayette Theatre and was cast in the title-role of The Emperor Jones.

which opened November 3, 1920. The next morning, Gilpin found high acceptance by the critics for his acting. Gilpin's success was recorded in a history of the Provincetown Playhouse as follows:

New York had found the Provincetown Players. The press support was instantaneous and almost unbelievable. There were panegyrics on the production, on the lighting, and on the Negro actor. Charles Gilpin was the first professional to perform at the Provincetown, and it is significant that no labored decision of policy, but the needs of the play, had brought him there. 8

Gilpin honored by the Drama League of America. -- During February of 1921, the Drama League elected Charles Gilpin as one of the ten persons who had done most for the American Theatre during the year. As had been the custom, the League planned to give a banquet to honor the ten persons elected. A controversy arose among individuals and in the press as to whether Gilpin should be invited to the banquet because it was alleged that some of the members of the League objected to his presence. A member of the League stated that the rumor of prejudice against Gilpin started when someone said that if Gilpin was invited probably the hotel would not admit him to the banquet hall. Dr. S. Marion Tucker, president of the League, gave the following statement to the press: "The

Board of Directors of the New York Drama League can well afford to stand on its record in the matter of race which has come up in connection with the question of the invitation to Mr. Gilpin as one of the guests of honor. When it was suggested that a nice letter be sent to Gilpin instead of an invitation, some of the members objected. Several of the honorees stated that they would not attend the banquet unless Gilpin was invited.

When Gilpin was asked whether he would attend the banquet, he replied: "I do not want to socialize. I would like people to see my work, but I do not want to hob-nob with them.... The honor of being chosen one of the ten is enough for me without going to the dinner." However, Gilpin did attend the banquet and was cheered when he rose to speak; then he was applauded until he rose to speak a second time.

Having followed Gilpin's professional and social relationships with the Drama League, Dr. Du Bois honored

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Gilpin by selecting him as one of the "Men of the Month" and gave the actor this citation:

Charles S. Gilpin, now playing in Emperor Jones, is the most remarkable being.... a man who has seen his dream come true.... For once Fortune was kind and brought together the man who had the part to give and the man who could act it.... Emperor Jones is a great play, but it took Gilpin to show New York how wonderful it was.13

Dr. Du Bois did not editorialize on the controversy caused by the Drama League's inviting Gilpin to the banquet; he reprinted comments from the press which were inclined toward the acceptance of Negro performers on the bases of their talents and which suggested racial tolerance and liberalism in the arts:

From Musical America: "Among intelligent and cultured people, it is admitted that if there is one domain where there must be no prejudice on account of race, religion, even personality, it should be in that of art, music, drama and the sciences."

From The Brooklyn Daily Eagle: "We think that the world of art, music and of the stage will sooner or later have to make up its mind to fellowship with colored persons of marked proficiency."

13 "The Men of the Month," The Crisis, XXI (February, 1921), 171-172.
From The New York Times: (Charles Gilpin's statement)

I am honestly striving to present my art rather than myself to the public.... I have no right to pose as an object of compassion. Against those who do not care to sit in the dining-room with me, I have no complaint. This only will I say: Thus far in the world's history, no race or profession has ever been permanently prevented from winning an equality-rating for itself.\(^4\)

Charles S. Gilpin, in spite of prejudice and race, was considered successful by The Crisis because he had the opportunity to demonstrate his talents as well as his dignity and humility while facing trying circumstances. Dr. Du Bois gave praise to Gilpin as follows:

Mr. Gilpin's own statement with reference to the issues so hotly discussed by the Drama League people is entirely temperate and self-respecting.... Neither Booker T. Washington nor the creator of D'Artagnan and The Count of Monte Cristo could have put more personal dignity into an analysis of such a situation. But Alexander Dumas, developing in the broader and more catholic atmosphere of a Latin country, had no occasion for such an apology.\(^5\)

Gilpin exemplified for the NAACP what Negro actors could accomplish if given the opportunities that Dr. Du Bois sought from the Drama League in 1917. The Association awarded the Spingarn Medal to Gilpin on June 30, 1921, "For his

\(^{14}\)Cited in The Crisis, XXII (May, 1921), 26-27.

\(^{15}\)Ibid., p. 27.
notable performance in the title-role of Eugene O'Neill's play, *The Emperor Jones*.16 Charles Gilpin became the first Negro dramatic star to receive the medal. He lead the way for other Negro actors. His honor was desired by Bert Williams. "One of the things Bert couldn't understand," wrote Tom Fletcher, "and it worried him slightly, was about Gilpin becoming a star before him."17

2. The Association's Interest in the Race Problem on Stage

While the NAACP was interested in the incidents of discrimination that involved Negro actors, it was also interested in what playwrights had to say on the race-problem and the influence on the public of the problem play concerning Negro life. For example, *Taboo*, a play by Mary Hoyt Wiborg, produced in 1922, told the story of "Some far-off curse of mixed-blood descending on a little golden-haired Louisiana white child and making him abnormal and dumb, but around this theme was woven a fantasy of witchery, religious rites, and a dream-Africa."18 The production featured Paul Robeson opposite Margaret Wycherly, a white

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16 The Spingarn Medal, Pamphlet, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, 20 West 40th Street, New York, New York, p. 3.


actress who played the Voodoo Queen. The play was not favorably received by most of the New York critics. For instance, Alexander Woollcott reported the following:

Miss Wiborg has tried to make a tragedy of the dreams, voodooism and racial memory. She is quite right in thinking there is a good play in that material. There is. It's name is The Emperor Jones. In two minutes of the O'Neill play, all that Taboo struggles to so valiantly say is said with a dramatic eloquence that rings in the ears ever after.18

Dr. Du Bois in The Crisis took a defensive position toward Taboo and faced the uncomplimentary criticism of the play. He accused the New York audience and critics of prejudice against the acting of whites and Negroes together in the same cast:

Because the white world fears discussion, it fears even imagination or fantastic artistry on this race-problem. For this reason, Mary Hoyt Wiborg's great play spoke to deaf hearts in New York. First, because white and black actors played together in it and played exceedingly well, and this is "Social Equality." But because the audience had been taught to regard Negro witchcraft as funny minstrel-stuff and not as crimson tragedy, they could not understand what it was all about. To them the new art was Taboo.20


Johnson reported that after a brief run in New York, Taboo (Voodoo) was taken to London, England, where it was better received. In England, Robeson played opposite Mrs. Patrick Campbell.  

Race-problem in "All God's Chillun Got Wings."—Eugene O'Neill returned to the drama of Negro life in 1924 and wrote a play in which a colored boy married a white girl. All God's Chillun Got Wings was published in the American Mercury (magazine) three months before the play's production. When the public learned of the inter racial marriage in the play there were objections in the form of letters, articles, and speeches. Eugene O'Neill came to the defense of his play. Speaking of Paul Robeson, who had been cast to play opposite a white girl, O'Neill said: "I believe that Mr. Robeson can portray the character better than any other actor could. He is a fine actor. The question of race prejudice cannot enter here." Then O'Neill explained the casting of Mary Blair, a white actress who was to play Robeson's wife: "She is playing the part because she likes the part... As a true artist, she

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21 James Weldon Johnson, op. cit., p. 192.

does not recognize any other consideration as having any bearing.\textsuperscript{23} Two months later, preceding the production, O'Neill stated what he believed to be one of the purposes of the artist:

Isn't it a commonplace thing to say that the artist must be a breaker-down of barriers. Isn't Mary Garden's offer to sit next to Charles Gilpin, the Negro, who appeared in my Emperor Jones, because he was a fellow artist, the only acceptable attitude? In England, no one protested when Mr. Robeson played the King to Mrs. Patrick Campbell's Queen in the play, Voodoo. She is white.\textsuperscript{24}

The producers believed that all the mail that came to the Provincetown Playhouse protesting against All God's Chillun Got Wings was due to race-prejudice caused by the strong public feeling against the miscengenation theme. The Playhouse, therefore, limited the sale of tickets to subscribers.\textsuperscript{25} A series of events concerning the play preceded production. Among these events were, first, the New York Legislative League passed a resolution protesting the production; second, Mayor Hylan of New York City prohibited children from appearing in the prologue, which later had to be read during production; third, Reverend John Randall read


\textsuperscript{24}"O'Neill Defends His Play of Negro," \textit{The New York Times}, Sec. 9 (May 11, 1924), p. 5.

\textsuperscript{25}Helen Deutsch and Stella Hanau, \textit{op. cit.}, pp. 109-113.
and discussed the play before a large audience at the Community Church. The audience approved of the play. O'Neill attempted to explain the displays of prejudice against his play:

The prejudice is primarily economic and social. It is the fresh result of the same resentment which a Paris audience would have against a play in which a German and French woman were married. The dramatist does not present life but interprets it within the limitations of his vision.

Evidently satisfied with the culmination of events, Dr. Du Bois said, "Well, Mr. O'Neill's play has been given in New York and nothing terrible has happened in spite of the South, the Gerry Society, and the more nervous New York editors." Probably to emphasize that there was no cause for alarm over the play, The Crisis published reprints of favorable comments, such as the one by Ludwig Lewisohn:

Mr. Eugene O'Neill has at last hit upon tragedy. He has the theme, the intensity, the terror and exaltation. All of this will be missed by those who see the play through a curtain of words. Such words as miscegenation, for instance. It will be missed by those who indulge in sociological reflections. Mr. O'Neill has fortunately gone much deeper.

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29 Ludwig Lewisohn, "All God's Chillun," Nation, CXVIII (June 4, 1924), 164.
James Weldon Johnson, the NAACP executive secretary at that time, gave a dissenting opinion on the play and explained why he thought it was not one of O'Neill's best plays: "It may be that as the play began to grow, Mr. O'Neill became afraid of it. He side-stepped the logical question and let his heroine go crazy, thus shifting the question from that of a colored man living with a white wife to that of a man living with a crazy woman."  

Race-problem in "Lulu Belle."--The Plot of Lulu Belle, by Edward Sheldon and Charles MacArthur, involved another inter-racial love-affair. Dr. Du Bois gave this description of the plot. "In plot, it is ordinary, almost trite. A prostitute woos a young man from his family, tires of him, flirts with a prize-fighter and runs off to France with a viscount. Her lover, released from jail, finds her, and being repulsed, kills her." The producers of Lulu Belle, presenting their play two years after O'Neill's All God's Chillun Got Wings (1924), handled this love affair between a colored girl and a white man with a different stage technique. When Helen MacKeller was offered the part of the white girl in All God's Chillun Got Wings it had been reported

30 James Weldon Johnson, op. cit., p. 195.

31 W. E. B. Du Bois, "Lulu Belle," The Crisis, XXXII (May, 1926), 34.
that she would not accept the role unless the part of Jim was played by a white actor made-up with burnt-cork to look like a Negro. In Lulu Belle, a white actress, Lenore Ulric, played the colored wanton, but she used burnt-cork on her face. Three white actors also used burnt-cork and played Negro roles.

The use of white actors in burnt-cork make-up to play Negro roles did not concern Dr. Du Bois on the issue of their denying colored actors economic and artistic opportunities. The editor was concerned with the artistic merits of Lulu Belle as achieved by David Belasco's production of the play, and with portrayals of race relations between Negroes and whites on the stage. The Crisis stated:

Why, despite the silence and evident bewilderment of the critics, is Lulu Belle the biggest drawing card in New York? Simply because the tragedy and comedy of the relations between white and black and yellow and red in the world race-problem, is the most dramatic thing at the end of the author's pen in this twentieth century. He cannot help writing about it. He has got to write about it. Witness "The Shanghai Gesture" and "Lulu Belle." 33

The statement concerning Lulu Belle is based on Dr. Du Bois' doctrine of internationalism which associates the Negro problem in America with the problems of other darker nationalities. James Weldon Johnson supplemented Dr. Du Bois' opinions

32 Cited in The Crisis, XXVII (May, 1924), 34-35.
33 W. E. B. Du Bois, Ibid.
on the play as follows: "Because of the manner in which it was set on stage, scenes from New York life that were wholly Negro, and because of the large number of colored performers in a mixed cast playing important roles, Lulu Belle was extremely significant in the history of the Negro in the theatre in New York." 34

The play was set on stage by David Belasco who also wrote an article for The Crisis. In securing the patronage of David Belasco for the Negro in the theatre, the editor published the producer's optimistic, if not prophetic, statements:

"Fate has decreed that I should know the Negro of our modern times, that I should know him and his psychology intimately and the contact has brought me to this finding: The theatre of tomorrow must reckon with a new force—the race of Ham.".... And as a climax to my prediction, I believe that another decade will see a Negro theatre in which we of the Caucasian race will witness his surprising development of his hitherto dormant nature.

That both, on the legitimate stage and in the motion-picture field, producers have come to realize the latent dramatic ability of the Negro is evidenced by the increased number of Negro actors who have been engaged for productions this fall. 35

34 James Weldon Johnson, op. cit., p. 206.

35 David Belasco, "The Negro on the Stage," The Crisis, XXXII (October, 1926), 316-317.
Brooks Atkinson judged that David Belasco's production was an exhibition of techniques which took precedence over the story. Giving a view opposite to Johnson's, Atkinson saw little or no progress for the Negro in Lulu Belle:

As produced, however, it records little progress except for background; it does not interpret, illuminate or stimulate. Like a thousand other plays of courtesan, it unrolls a long panorama of sinful practices legitimate nowhere except on stage, and legitimate there only because the standards of taste are amazingly low. Whatever distinction it may have as a piece of writing lies entirely in the picturesque dialogue.

These two points-of-view concerning progress and the lack of progress in Lulu Belle are perhaps natural when their sources are considered. Mrs. Atkinson stated that in the main course of the American theatre, the production contributed nothing new. Johnson, on the other hand, saw progress for the Negro in the realistic production of David Belasco, which was a vast improvement over Negro production of minstrels and the musical comedies, progress in the employment of Negro actors along with white actors, and progress in breaking the taboo against interracial love-making on stage.

The Association's influence on the problem of mixed-casting.——The NAACP, while interested in all problems of

discrimination and segregation as they affect Negroes, had a passive and weak relationship with the race-problem on the American stage. In the case of prejudice against All God's Chillun Got Wings, Eugene O'Neill and the Provincetown Playhouse defended Paul Robeson and the play. In the situation where there was prejudice against Charles Gilpin attending the Drama League banquet, his white theatre colleagues censored the intention to discriminate against him. No evidence has been found where the NAACP officials have written letters to the press or to the individuals responsible for liberal actions in behalf of Negroes on the American stage. Dr. Du Bois has said in reference to the theatre, that the Association was very careful in limiting its scope of operation. The Association's relationships to the theatre in these instances were more inclined toward expression of attitudes than action.

3. Dr. Du Bois's Attitudes Toward the Negro in Drama

Dr. Du Bois cast his intellect in many directions while helping to execute the Association's internal programs. One of his biographers, Edwin R. Embree, said the following of his intellectual leadership among American Negroes: "He founded the magazine, Crisis, which became the powerful spokesman of Negro rights, the platform for Negro expression of every sort... Du Bois led the aggressive wing of the Negro movement, and he built, for the first time in America,
a strong bloc of Negro opinion." When Dr. Du Bois turned his attention to the Negro in the American theatre, he presented opinions and principles which were based on a conception which was as critical of the attitudes of Negroes toward the theatre as it was toward the intentions of those who dramatized Negro life.

Defense of "The Emperor Jones."—Although the NAACP honored Charles Gilpin for his performance in the title-role of The Emperor Jones, there was evidently a segment of Negro opinion which did not approve of the play and made verbal protests against it on the bases of the play's superstition, dialect, characterization, crap-shooting, and the tragic elements. Sterling A. Brown, Negro literary critic, described the attitude of this segment of opinion as follows: "One fears that for them, the dramatic ideal is race-gloryification, and any other portraiture of Negroes means the betrayal of race." Dr. Du Bois wrote a similar observation:

We want everything that is said about us to tell the best and highest and noblest in us. We insist that our Art and Propaganda be one. This is wrong, and in the end it is harmful. We have a right, in our effort to get just treatment, to insist that we produce something of the best in human character and


38 Sterling A. Brown, "Concerning Negro Drama," Opportunity, IX (September, 1931), 288.
that it is unfair to judge us by our
criminals and prostitutes. This is
justifiable propaganda.

On the other hand, we face the
Truth of Art. We have criminals and
prostitutes, ignorant and debased
elements, just as all folk have....
The black Shakespeare must portray his
black Iagos as well as his white Othellos.

Sheldon's play has repeatedly been
driven from the stage by ill-advised
Negroes who object to its name. Torrence's
plays were received by educated blacks with
no great enthusiasm; and only yesterday a
protest came from colored folk, in a western
city, that stated that The Emperor Jones
should never be staged under any circum-
stances, regardless of theories, because
it portrays the worst traits of the bad
element of both races.

No more complete misunderstanding of
this play or of the aims of Art could well
be written, although the editors of the
Century and Current Opinion show almost
equal obtuseness.

Nonsense. We stand today secure enough
in our accomplishments and self-confidence to
lend the whole stern human truth about our-
selves to the transforming hand and seeing
eye of the artist, white and black, and
Sheldon, Torrence, and O'Neill are our great
benefactors—fore-runners of artists who will
yet rise in Ethiopia on the Outstretched Arm.39

The "misunderstanding" and the "obtuseness" in the
reviews of The Emperor Jones that Dr. Du Bois mentioned
had reference to the following, for example:

XXII (June, 1921), 55-56.
The idea around which the play is built is the fact that the exemplar of an inferior race will succumb to weakness against which even a weak member of a superior race may be proof of. Properly speaking, it is not so much a great play, in our estimation, as a great episode set forth in one act and eight scenes. 40

Mary White Ovington, one of the white founders of the NAACP, was more caustic toward Negroes who protested against such a play as The Emperor Jones. She supplemented Du Bois' editorial in the next issue as follows:

I want to say "Amen" to your editorial on "Negro Art." There is indeed a vast wealth of human material that lies at the hands of Negro artists, but no Negro dares use it. The colored man today is self-conscious, afraid even of the old-time musical comedy of Williams and Walker, Cole and Johnson, and Ernest Hogan. Instead, he stands back and lets Roy Cohn depict second-rate buffoons. 41

Dr. Du Bois' attitude and opinions on the presentation of plays like The Emperor Jones probably had some effect on Negro thinking; however, his attitude is not that of the NAACP today when considered in comparison with Mr. Henry Lee Moon's statement, the present Director of Public Relations. On June 18, 1957, the writer interviewed Mr. Moon in his New York office. When asked about the Association's attitude

40 The Emperor Jones, Current Opinion, LXX (January, 1921), 55

41 Mary White Ovington, "Negro Art," The Crisis, XXII (July, 1921), 27.
toward a Broadway revival of The Emperor Jones, Mr. Moon replied that the NAACP would not favor a revival during the present time while the Association is fighting for desegregation in all phases of American life. However, Mr. Moon did concede that there would come a time in the near future when the NAACP would favor the revival of The Emperor Jones and The Green Pastures and even minstrels, but not at the present.

Attitude toward Shaw's "Back to Methuselah."—The Association and Dr. Du Bois were interested in the theatre as a stage for race-propaganda from any source for both domestic and foreign influence. This approach to the theatre was based on Dr. Du Bois' doctrine of internationalism for the darker races as it affected the Negro problem in America. During the month of March, 1922, the editor witnessed a presentation of George Barnard Shaw's Back to Methuselah which was playing in New York. He expressed his attitude toward the play as follows:

Shaw's Methuselah cycle is a bold critique of evolution and man; keen, fantastic, tremendous; wherein are treated the problems of short life.... And in the midst of the five parts, in part three, there is a picture of the year 2170 A.D., with a Republic in England ruled by Chinese and Negroes, with a colored woman as Minister of Health, to whom the white President, Burge-Lubin, is making desperate love. We have searched the reviews of New York critics in vain to find the slightest allusion
to this incident. Mind you, the greatest effort of the year with no, or almost no, allusion to the fact that George Bernard Shaw predicts salvation of the world through a mulatto.\(^{42}\)

Through this interracial concept, the editor saw in *Back to Methuselah* the amalgamation of races and nationalities and the world to be saved by a mulatto. Dr. Du Bois wondered how the reviews of the play missed this point. Probably the editor of *The Crisis* over-looked the character Eve as the symbolic figure of all woman-kind as discerned by Stark Young:

> This magnificent motif of the woman and mother, giver of life, the prophetic and creative force, lends unity to the whole event. But this motif has to emerge, it must be said from a vast quantity of talk; and it must be said too, that what does most to establish in our imagination its moving eloquence, is not the dramatist's control of the scene, but Mr. Simonson's design for it.\(^{43}\)

Thus, it seems that the New York critics had to be selective of the impressions that they reported because of Shaw's many ideas and Lee Simonson's stage illusions.

**Attitude toward Walter Hampden's "Othello."** —By 1925, Dr. Du Bois stated that the New York theatre as an


\(^{43}\) Stark Young, "Back to Methuselah," *New Republic*, XXX (March 15, 1922), 81.
institution had become more aware of the Negro problem and Negro life: "The New York Theatre is slowly rising to spiritual leadership of the nation, with more courage than the church, more knowledge than the university, and more honesty than current literature attacking human problems."

He named All God's Chillun Got Wings, The Emperor Jones, Processional, and Othello as significant indications of courageous spiritual growth in the theatre. In Othello, he observed what he thought was a new development in portraying the Moor:

I have seen Walter Hampden in Othello, and I am glad that he was gotten up as dark as America allows.... He portrayed a great man, a magnificent soul capable of no petty deed, full of affection and gentle courtesy....

But above all, the thing that intrigued me in this play was that it was no play on the "Color-Line." Color and race entered as facts, but as simple and not over-valued facts. Othello might have been red-headed and slavic so far as the basic tragedy was concerned. Thus we realize how far our stupendous race-problem of today is a matter of the last two or three hundred years.\footnote{W. E. B. Du Bois, "Plays," The Crisis, XXX (May, 1930), 26.}

Again, the editor was impressed by the interracial aspects of what the play said concerning the Negro, but at the same time, there was his desire for racial identification with Othello the Moor, the African, or the Arab. He
was pleased with the darker than usual make-up of a white actor playing this role. Probably Walter Hampden suited his actions to his make-up, as suggested by Thornton Wilder's review of the production:

His Othello is a dignified, benignant, out-raged figure lacking somewhat the torrential passion of the Moor, but of great poetic beauty and flaming into complete life in the scene where Iago first kindles his jealousy in his ear.

After such a play, with all its faults, reference to Walter Hampden's production of Othello must be based on the question, was it vital? Had this Othello been an enormous and benignant savage instead of the thoughtful and hesitant educated soldier?

Attitude toward Paul Green's "In Abraham's Bosom."—On December 28, 1926, the Provincetown Playhouse produced Paul Green's folk-tragedy, In Abraham's Bosom. High critical acclaim of the production varied accordingly: "It was a beautiful though horrible play. It was nearer the true actual Negro life and probed deeper into it than any drama of the kind yet produced," said Johnson. "Seems to be a direct transcription of the lives of men and women whose hearts are laid bare in all their simplicity," wrote Barrett H. Clark. "This Pulitzer Prize play is richly colored by

46 James Weldon Johnson, op. cit., p. 207.
the playwright's sensitive awareness of the group and folkmores that produced the dilemma Abraham cannot possibly solve.\textsuperscript{48}

The Crisis, after praising Torrence's Plays, gave a rather unenthusiastic review of In Abraham's Bosom:

Paul Green is a sympathetic author. He feels with his black folk. But he and his producers, between them, have presented the same defeatism genre of Negro art which is so common and at present apparently inescapable. It arises from the fact that the more honestly and sincerely a white artist looks at a situation of the Negro in America, the less he is able to consider it in any way bearable, and therefore, his stories and plays must end in a lynching, suicide, or degeneracy.

If after looking further and seeing the Negro group, noting its bounding energy and sturdy refusal to take defeat, the artist tried to give his black hero a degree of triumph, spiritual or physical, he meets, usually, the absolute refusal of the producer. Nothing but disaster must follow self-assertion and success among black folk on the American stage.

I can but think that this is but pure assumption and that the time has come for the Negro to be treated humanly on stage, not only as to his suffering, but as to his pain and unquestionable triumphs.\textsuperscript{49}

Relative to Dr. Du Bois' approach to the race problem, Paul Green's play said to the world that the Negro problem in America is fraught with futility and frustrations that


\textsuperscript{49}W. E. B. Du Bois, "In Abraham's Bosom," Editorial, The Crisis, XXXIV (March, 1927), 12.
lead to defeat and to crime; that the Negro's effort toward freedom is filled with pain and deep humility. Although *In Abraham's Bosom* is art based on "truth" and "beauty," it fails as propaganda to promote the Negro's "Right to live, to love and to enjoy."

Defense of "The Green Pastures."—Another Pulitzer Prize play based on Negro life, *The Green Pastures* by Marc Connelly, was presented in 1930. Again, a sizeable number of Negroes did not like this play; they did not like the basis for generalizing that all Negroes believed in a black heaven, a black God, and celestial fish-fries. Very possibly, the producers sensed that Negroes would dislike *The Green Pastures*, and possibly for that reason the producers invited Walter White, the NAACP executive secretary, to the rehearsals. Walter White recalled the situation as follows:

"I had been invited to sit in on rehearsals and had been reluctant to do so, for I had known Marc Connelly only as the author of shrewdly satirical plays such as *Beggar on Horseback, Dulcy, To the Ladies*, and *The Wisdom Tooth*. After offering various excuses, I finally went to the theatre one bitingly cold Sunday afternoon early in February, 1930... And above all else, there was a tenderness and respect in the relations between Mr. Connelly and Mr. Harrison that were not of the theatre. It was as though the simplicity of the play and its characters had also filled the author and leading player of *The Green Pastures*."

Walter White probably gave his approval to the production, which opened February 26, 1930. The Green Pastures was generally acclaimed one of America's greatest plays, as a great triumph for the large, all-Negro cast led by Richard Berry Harrison as "De Lawd." The presentation was enhanced by the singing of the Hall Johnson Choir. Nevertheless, The Crisis, due to protesting Negroes, found it necessary to defend The Green Pastures:

It is difficult for the Negro audience to judge a play for themselves. Most of us lack clear standards. What do we want in a play? A picture of ourselves as we would like to seem? A picture of ourselves as some of us are? Caricature of Negro life today is certainly not. Yet all these things can be portrayed upon the stage in an artistic way and if the result is artistic, the play has a right to be given.

The difficulty, of course, with the Negro on the American stage, is that the white audience, on the one hand, demands caricatures and farces, and the Negro, on the other hand, either cringes to the demand because he needs the pay, or bitterly condemns every Negro book or show that does not paint colored folk at their best....

All these difficulties are being slowly overcome. In Green Pastures, Marc Connelly has made an extraordinarily appealing beautiful play based on folk religion of Negroes. Some whites will not like it because it is too human and tragic with all its humor. But more Negroes will view it aghast because it will seem to them sacrilegious.51

Dr. Du Bois' attitude toward Negro protest and criticism of *The Green Pastures* also was expressed by Professor Randolph Edmonds, Negro playwright and educator. "They (Negroes) cannot see how a fish-fry could represent the Negro's idea of heaven when they have been told all their lives about the golden stairs and pearly gates. God being black is something they have never heard except as a humorous part of the Garvey Movement. They conclude that *Green Pastures* is just another play making fun of the Negro." In recognition of Richard Perry Harrison's "magnificent achievement as De Lawd, the NAACP awarded him the Spingarn Medal in 1931.

**Summary of attitudes about art as propaganda.**--Having recognized the "growing self-consciousness" of his own people and the rise of the "Black Bourgeois" demanding how their lives should be portrayed on the American stage, Dr. Du Bois addressed the 1925 Chicago Conference of the NAACP on the subject, "The Criteria of Negro Art," beseeching his audience to seek "truth," "beauty," and the "right to live, to love, and to enjoy." His speech read in part as follows:

Thus all art is propaganda and ever must be. I stand in utter shamelessness and say that whatever art I have for writing has been used for propaganda, for gaining the rights of black folk to love and enjoy. I do not care a damn for any art that is not used for propaganda. But I do care when propaganda is confined to one side while the other is stripped and silent.

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In New York we have two plays: "White Cargo" and "Congo." In "White Cargo," there is a fallen woman. She is black. In "White Cargo," the black woman goes down further and further and in "Congo" the white man begins with degradation but in the end is one of the angels of the Lord.

In such cases, it is not positive propaganda of people who believe white blood divine, infallible, and holy to which I object. It is the denial of a similar right of propaganda to those who believe black blood human, lovable, inspired with new ideals for the world. White artists themselves suffer from this narrowing of their field. They cry for freedom in dealing with Negroes because they have so little freedom in dealing with whites. DuBose Heyward writes "Porgy" and writes beautifully of the black Charleston underworld. But why does he do this? Because he cannot do a similar thing for white people of Charleston, or they would drum him out of town. The only chance he had to tell the truth of pitiful human degradation was to tell it of colored people.53

This speech revealed a change of opinion by Dr. Du Bois for in 1921, he wrote that it was wrong and harmful for Negroes to insist that their art and propaganda be one. In 1925, he declared that all art concerning the Negro should be for propaganda. In his speech, he argued against the traditional and symbolic meaning of color and hues in art, black for evil and white for good. He complained against white authors invading the lower strata of Negro life to

exploit pitiful, human degradation when they dare not do the same with the lower social levels of white life.

Earlier, Dr. Du Bois warned the invading playwrights of the difficulty in dramatizing Negro life:

It would be very easy for a great artist to interpret the history of our country so as to make the plot turn entirely upon the black man. Thus two classes of dramatic situations of tremendous import arises. The inner life of this black group and the contact of black and white. It is going to be difficult to get at these facts for the drama and treat them sincerely and artistically because they are covered by shells. In the first place comes the shell of what most people think the Negro ought to be, and this makes everyone a self-appointed judge to say without further thought whether this is untrue or that is wrong. Then, secondly there comes the great problem of the future relations of groups and races, not only in the United States, but throughout the world. To some people this seems to be a tremendous problem and in their wild anxiety to settle it in the only way which seems to them the right way, they are determined to destroy art, religion, and good common sense in an effort to make everything that is said or shown propaganda for their ideas.54

Dr. Du Bois was less active in dramatic criticism after 1930; his magazine began to lose its subscribers due to the economic depression. He left behind, when he resigned the editorship in 1934, a body of attitudes and opinions on the Negro in drama which should be of value to those individuals

who desire serious considerations of the Negro's motives in the expression of attitudes and in dramatic criticism and protests.

The Crisis paid less attention to the theatre after 1930. This was due, first, to the development of Negro newspapers which carried theatrical notices; and, second, to the additional concentration of the NAACP on its major programs.

4. The Association and the Communist in the Theatre

The relationships between the NAACP and the Communist Party in the United States developed out of the Communists' program to capture the control of American Negroes for a revolutionary movement against capitalism. The Communists' first approach to the Negro was the organization of the International Labor Defense Council to challenge the NAACP as the uncontested spokesman for Negroes in their fight for legal justice and civil rights. In 1931, these two opposing forces, vying for leadership in the Negro masses, collided while defending nine Negro boys.

The collision of the NAACP Legal Bureau with the Communist Party International Labor Defense Council occurred

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as a result of events described by Walter White: On a March morning in 1931, nine white men climbed aboard a freight train in Chattanooga, Tennessee, to hobo their way to Huntsville, Alabama. When the train reached Stevenson, Alabama, a group of Negroes, numbering between twenty or thirty, climbed aboard. A fight between the whites and the Negroes ensued in which the Negroes threw seven white men off the train. The train was stopped at the next town, Painted Rock, and nine Negroes and three whites were arrested by the sherriff. Two of the whites were discovered to be women in men's clothing. The two women maintained that they did not have sexual relations with the Negroes. Later, the women changed their story and said that they had been assaulted by the Negroes. The Negroes were jailed. The Chattanooga Branch of the NAACP and the colored ministerial alliance hastily raised money to employ a lawyer and asked the National Office for assistance.  

The Legal Bureau undertook the defense of the nine boys, while the Communist Party carried on an intensive propaganda campaign in which southern injustice and the ineptness of the NAACP's defense were the principal themes. The boys were convicted; eight of them were given the death penalty.

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sentence. While the appeals were pending, the I. L. D. sent its representatives to the parents of the condemned boys and persuaded them that the I. L. D. rather than the NAACP should thereafter handle the cases.57

The NAACP not only tried to defend the Scottsboro boys, but had to defend itself against the Communist International Labor Defense. The Association made a statement of its attempt to divide itself from the Communists:

The NAACP, throughout the case, realized that the purpose of the Communists was not only to use the Scottsboro case as a means of revolutionary propaganda, but to weaken or destroy the Association. The idea was to convince Negroes that they had no hope of achieving justice except through the Communist Party.

In September, Clarence Darrow, who previously declined to defend cases for the International Labor Defense, accepted an invitation by the NAACP to join our defense counsel. Arthur Garfield Hayes, distinguished attorney from New York, volunteered to serve with Mr. Darrow.

Messrs. Darrow and Hayes, eager to save the boys, proposed that all attorneys drop all organizational connections and jointly sign the statement.

Representatives of the International Labor Defense refused to permit their attorney to sign this statement and insisted that Mr. Darrow and all other attorneys in the case must repudiate the NAACP and work under

57Wilson Record, op. cit., p. 86.
Communist direction. This Mr. Darrow and Mr. Hayes declined to do, and on December 29, they withdrew from the case. The NAACP Board of Directors, at its annual meeting on January 4, 1932, approved their decision and publicly withdrew from the case.58

The play about the Scottsboro boys.—Two years after the Association's withdrawal from the case, John Wexley, working from the transcript of the trial, finished They Shall Not Die. The play was produced by the Theatre Guild at the Royale Theatre, New York City, on February 21, 1934, with a cast headed by Claude Raines, Ruth Gordon, and Frank Wilson.

The author of the play, John Wexley, went South to gather first-hand material for his play: "It was the South itself that interested him, the relationship between Negroes and whites, the condition of the mill-workers, the many things that lay beneath the surface of the case that happened to become a cause célèbre.59

On the stage, Tredwell of the American Society for the Progress of Colored Persons (NAACP) was thoroughly out-maneuvered by Rokoff of the National Labor Defense (I.L.D.) Tredwell brought a Negro preacher to the Scottsboro boys to influence them to let the A. S. P. C. P. handle their defense:


(Takes from pocket a prayer book and speaks to them. After a few words he begins unconsciously to chant rhythmically)

My chillun. I want tuh put the Lo'ed in yuh. I want yuh tuh feel that the Lo'ed Almighty is in us an' is in the great A. S. P. C. P. An' wherever the Lo'ed is, don't yuh feah tuh tread. This N. L. D. is a contraption of the devil's and Satan. He sent them tuh make trouble an' bring down hate an' prejudice on God's colored chillun. An' I want yuh tuh know that Mist' Brady who fo't fo't yuh up theah in Cookesville, helped yuh an' fo't yuh cause, we ministers come tuh him in Chattoogee an' made him see that the Lo'ed would reward him with Heavenly love an' Christian spirit if he would help yo' po' nigger boys...

Rokoff brought their mothers and fathers to console them; he, a white man, dared to shake hands with a Negro in the South; he gave them cigarettes, and completely won the boys away from the A. S. P. C. P.

The victory in this battle of propaganda definitely went to the Communists who held the stage against the NAACP. George W. Streater complained that the play was propaganda for the Communist Party transferred to the stage. Mr. Streater made an observation that the white mob in They Shall Not Die was too "quick-witted" because a southern mob "is slow, tobacco spitting and sadistic, but rarely voluble."

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Concerning the treatment that the NAACP received in the play, Mr. Streator had the following to say:

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People did not receive credit for a single honest motive, and the colored minister from Chattanooga would hardly have been so complete an Uncle Tom. That type is still afraid of the NAACP. The minister and the official of the Association made good comedy, but not a distinguished performance in the light of truth. But from the beginning of Act Two to the end of the play, there is nothing for a Negro to get excited about. The Court Scene is all that a critic of southern legal processes would want to see. Of course, the Scottsboro Boys were as completely forgotten in the play as the real life struggle.61

Most of the reviews over-looked the counter propaganda of the Communists and the NAACP. For example, Brooks Atkinson said, "Although Mr. Wexley is writing about the Scottsboro Case, his play had a good many implications. It is a play of race-hatred, intersectional hatred, and hatred between city and county, and those are the roots of a malignant national evil."62 One year after the production of They Shall Not Die the NAACP reentered the case for the reason given as follows:

61 George W. Streator, "They Shall Not Die," The Crisis, XLI (May, 1934), 104.

62 Wilson Record, op. cit., p. 87.
At the time, (1935), with the I. L. D. facing failure in its efforts to obtain the freedom of the defendants, and with the new line of cooperation having been laid down to the Party and the I. L. D. by the Communist International, the Communists agreed to share the case with the NAACP and other organizations.63

A play about Negro labor, "Stevedore."—Two months after the production of They Shall Not Die, the collaboration of Paul Peters and George Sklar brought Stevedore to the New York stage. The similarity between the two plays was pointed out by Anita Block as follows:

The Scottsboro case revealed the constant danger in which the Negro of the deep South lives. To relate this danger to the social conflict and make clear its economic aspects, to show that race prejudice not only is the white employer's weapon for Negro exploitation, but also acts as an economic boomerang for the prejudiced Southern white worker who refuses to make a common cause with his black fellow-worker— that is the theme of Stevedore.64

Stevedore was produced by the Theatre Union, classified by Glenn Hughes as a "leftist group."65 The program notes for Stevedore revealed the authors' interest, or the Communists'


interest, in the conflicts between Negroes and whites, as propaganda material.\footnote{As cited in "The Drama of Race Riot," by Brooks Atkinson, \textit{The New York Times} (April 18, 1934), p. 33.}

The plot of the play is centered around the character of Lonnie Thompson, a raw-boned Negro dock roustabout. Lonnie was accused of assaulting a white woman because he was helping to organize a longshoremen's union. Lonnie was arrested, but his escape from the police resulted in a series of inflammatory incidents, climaxed by an attack of the white mob against the Negroes barricaded in the front yard of a house. Just as the white mob was about to move in on the almost defenseless Negro stevedores, members of the white labor union came to the Negroes' rescue. Lonnie Thompson was killed in the final attack, but he posthumously affected the union of black and white longshoremen in New Orleans.

George W. Streator, writing for \textit{The Crisis}, titled his review "A Nigger Did It," which did not suggest the core of the play's message. He described the rescue by the white union as a "stunt," although it resulted in the integration of the white and Negro members. Continuing his review with a description of the mob's viciousness, Mr. Streator finally came to the racial significance of the play:
I doubt that any member of the cast will receive the Harmon Award, or that any member of the cast will be awarded a degree by a Negro college (Richard Berry Harrison), but I feel, nevertheless, that more good will come out of all the religious twaddle bound up in The Green Pastures, the excellent cast of that show to the contrary.

A lot of timid Negroes will object to Stevedore. Many nice, clean, colored people feel that a play which depicts the Negro with anything except a Harvard accent and a dress suit is bad publicity. The woods are full of stuffed shirts who want only the "best side shown." On the other hand, the play is not a recommendation to a lot of dreamy-eyed youth to write drama in imitation of Stevedore. Where is the play that will portray that black woman sweating over a tub of clothes that her children might go to school? Where is the play that will treat the disillusioned city Negro in the proper light?

Mr. Streator's review revealed the Association's changing attitude toward the theatre; he appeared to be enthusiastic about proletarian drama when he asked who will write the play about the Negro washerwoman.

The NAACP was probably more inclined toward the Labor Theatre than the theatre which promoted the Communist Party's cause among Negroes in They Shall Not Die. Walter White made the following comparison between the two plays:

The authors of Stevedore were far wiser than the writers of They Shall Not Die, based on the Scottsboro Case, for those who wrote Stevedore were contented more largely to let the story tell itself instead of making it

67George W. Streator, "A Nigger Did It," The Crisis, XLI (July, 1934), 217.
too obviously propagandistic. But the purpose of this piece is not go go into the merits of the play in too great detail; instead, we are concerned here with the coming of age not only of the Negro as an actor, but of the theatre audiences, at least in New York City, in their willingness to cast aside race prejudice and accept Negro actors on their merits without derogation because of their dark skin.

Walter White termed the 1933-1934 theatrical season as an important period in the development of the Negro as an actor and of Negro life as subject matter for drama. He took an optimistic view of Four Saints in Three Acts, an opera presented by an all-Negro cast.

Summary: Communists and the NAACP in the Theatre.—
During the four years that the Communists controlled the defense of the Scottsboro Boys, it used the technique of "mass pressure" and publicized the case throughout the world and dramatized the nine Negro boys as victims of a capitalistic economic order. The Association's attitude toward this "cause célèbre" was stated in 1935:

The exploitation of Negroes by the South has been pitilessly exposed to the world. An important legal victory has been won against the lily-white jury system. As far as propaganda is concerned the whole Negro race is far ahead of where it would have been had the Communists not fought the case in the way they did....

The question is: did they have the right to use the lives of nine youths who did not know what it was all about to make a propaganda battle in behalf of the Negro race or the theories of Communism? The Crisis does not believe they had that right.

Thus, concerning the play, *They Shall Not Die*, the NAACP was in accord with the motive of exposing the "lily-white" jury system of the South, but the Association did not agree on moral grounds to the use of the boys for that purpose. The Association was bewildered by the Communist attack on its leadership as dramatized on-stage and off-stage.

*Stevedore* was the result of the Comintern's sponsorship of an international revolutionary movement among Negroes through the International Trade Union Committee of Negro Workers for the purpose of carrying on propaganda and agitation among Negro laborers and to organize them in opposition to the "approaching imperialist war." The Communist labor movement was aimed at crushing the NAACP and the National Urban League, which they considered the " licked spital of the capitalistic system." Again, the Communist and the NAACP had a common purpose, the unionizing of Negro labor. *Stevedore* was more favorably received by the NAACP probably because it was a better play than *They Shall Not Die*.

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69 *The Crisis*, XLII (December, 1935), 369.

70 *Wilson Record*, *op. cit.*, pp. 84-87.
"Even in labor plays," wrote Brooks Atkinson, "an understanding of humanity is a dramatic asset. If Stevedore is the most satisfying of the American labor plays up to the present time, it is not so difficult to discover why." 71

5. The Association and the Federal Theatre

During the 1930's, the NAACP was campaigning for Fair Employment Practices as they affected Negroes in the Works Progress Administration. The Federal Theatre Project was organized as a relief measure under the W. P. A. in 1935. Negro units were established in several cities, and "Uncle Sam" for the first time in history, became a theatrical producer. One occasion has been found where the NAACP intervened in the Federal Theatre concerning employment of Negro performers. The National Office protested the firing of sixteen Negroes from the Cleveland, Ohio, Federal Theatre in 1938. 72

The Crisis published two articles which revealed that a controversy had developed among Negroes on the issue what should be the racial objective of the Federal Theatre Project, entertainment or education? Anne Powell praised the project in her article and attempted to explain the reason for the controversy:


72 John D. Silvera, "Still in Blackface," The Crisis, XIVI (March, 1939), 76-77.
This always happens when the needs of the people have not yet made themselves felt. It is particularly the case with the Negro people, who, in the main, have had little contact with the living theatre. To what extent this is true can easily be gleaned from the fact that only about twenty-five per cent of the people in Harlem, the largest and most cosmopolitan Negro center, have ever seen a legitimate show.\textsuperscript{73}

The succeeding events in the Federal Theatre for Negroes proved that the controversy was probably unnecessary. Nevertheless, John D. Silvers, one of the officials of the Federal Theatre, contributed an article to \textit{The Crisis} that came nearer to the basic attitude of the Association toward Federal Theatres. After sketching the progress of the Negro in the theatre from black-face Harlequin Friday in \textit{Robinson Crusoe} (1796) to musical comedies, Silvers gave what he thought should be the purpose of any Negro theatre:

\begin{quote}
The purpose of any Negro Theatre worthy of the name should be devoted to the correction of false ideas concerning the Negro. Some may say that this would make for a theatre of propaganda and that, as such, it would not be real theatre. Nothing is further from the truth, for with capable writing, themes well chosen and skillfully executed, propaganda can be coupled with entertainment.

The appearance of the Federal Theatre on the horizon has altered the pattern distinctly to the Negro's advantage. Generous Uncle Sam has become a willing
\end{quote}

producer of suitable material for the Negro audience. Haiti stands out as a clear example.  

Here again is the question of art and propaganda as they relate to the expression of Negro life as desired by Negroes themselves. Mr. Silvera is a little afraid of Dr. Du Bois' principles of the arts based on the promotion of racial progress.

In spite of the score or more of Negro plays that were produced by the Federal Theatre, The Crisis reviewed only two. The first review was on a "Grand Opera," Il Trovatore, which was presented in 1936 by the Harlem Unit of the Federal Music Project:

Many came in disbelief, others came expecting a Harlem adaptation of Verdi's opera, and, only a few, who had seen the rehearsals, knew that each one of the amateur cast of fifty-five, of porters, houseworkers, seamstresses and laborers, was determined to justify the hope and heartbreaking efforts of months, by presenting such a sincere and sympathetic interpretation of the opera as to leave no doubt in the minds of the audience of the artistry of the performers.

This production probably had as its aim the education of audience and cast, for it was done in full costume and with a symphony orchestra accompanying the singers, or probably

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74 John D. Silvera, "Still in Blackface," The Crisis, XXXIII (July, 1936), 214.

75 Levi C. Hubert, "Harlem WPA Group Sings Opera," The Crisis, XXXIII (July, 1936), 214.
Il Trovatore was done in the traditional style to show resentment toward the Negro adaptations in the Federal Theatre, such as Macbeth in Chocolate, and the swing-version of Shakespeare's Mid-Summer Night's Dream, Swinging A Dream.

The second play reviewed by The Crisis was related in spirit to the Labor Theatre and to the Association's national program of non-segregated housing. One Third of a Nation took its title from President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's Second Inaugural Address in which he said that when he came to office, he found "One third of the nation ill-housed, ill clad, and ill nourished." Arthur Arent's living-newspaper presentation based on this phrase was produced in New York during 1938. The titles flashed on the screen during the production read: "Act I, Fire; Investigation; Land; Looking Back; Why They Came (An Irish Family); What They Saw (Steve and Joe); What They Got (Jewish Family and Cholera); Appoint a Committee; Act II, The Law; Crosstown - 1933; Kids, East-Side West Side Harlem; What Price Housing; Looking Forward." 76

The review in The Crisis called the readers' attention to the point that much of the material used in this documentary drama was gathered from the housing situation in Harlem, and then the author editorialized on the Negro's part in the situation:

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76 "One Third of a Nation," Time Magazine, XXXI (January 31, 1938), 40.
This information is proof of the fact that not only has the Negro suffered the brunt of the depression but in New York City his suffering has been increased by the growth, since 1920, of the population of Harlem to over ten times the former number....

It would be well for the Negro to plan similar action. The stage has been set by such statements as President Roosevelt's and such legislation as the Wagner-Steagall Housing Bill.77

No doubt, the NAACP desired mass-action by Negroes on the Wagner Steagall Housing Bill, and no doubt, it approved of the play's propaganda, as a document on housing. It may be concluded that the relationship between the NAACP and the Federal Theatre Project was a weak one of little significance. However, at the Thirtieth Annual Conference of the NAACP held in Richmond, Virginia, in 1939, a living-newspaper play was presented under the title, "Place: America," which told the story of the Association's development.78

The period of the 1930's witnessed the advancement of Negro characterizations in the propaganda plays. Robert L. Hilliard's study, which has been referred to before in this study, attributed these advances to the Negro's advancing economic and social status. Walter White stated other

77 Raphael Knight, "State Spotlight on Housing," The Crisis, XXXV (May, 1938), 143-144.

78 NAACP, Annual Report, 1939, p. 31.
sociological reasons for the changing attitude toward the Negro on stage:

Within the last decade these stereotypes little by little have begun to be discarded. Slowly there is coming in their stead a more veritable presentation of the Negro and Negro life in its relation to the American scene. Certain vital changes to make this possible, and these have subtly, been taking place during the years since the World War (I). One of these changes is that of the attitude of white America toward the Negro, particularly in the discarding of fixed concepts of what a man should do, say and think under given stimuli if that man's skin happened to be black. The War-time migration northward of Negroes made the colored American a less infrequent part of the American scene. Novels, poems, and songs have been published in great numbers which pictures an Afro-American who is human. Awards such as the Spingarn Medal and the Harmon Foundation prizes directed public attention to the contributions of Negroes. Such organizations as the Interracial Commission and the NAACP made rapid strides in causing at least the enlightened minority of the American mind to recognize the absolute necessity of intelligent and less biased appraisal of the Negro and the color question. This development was speeded by the emergence of Japan and the Far East, of India, through the widely publicized Gandhi, of Africa, and other remote parts of the world.\(^7^9\)

In other words, according to Walter White, all the major NAACP policies have contributed to the advancement of the Negro in theatre.

6. The Association's Relationship With The Commercial Theatre After World War II.

By 1940, The Crisis had become a less important publication under the editorship of Roy Wilkins. The Association used the general press for coverage, and more specifically, the Negro newspaper, The Pittsburgh Courier. Walter White, the Association's executive secretary, had gained a national reputation. In 1942, Walter White began a campaign against motion-picture Negro stereotypes which had repercussions in an all-Negro play on Broadway in 1946.

Protest against theatrical stereotypes in "St Louis Woman."---Walter White met Wendell Wilkie in 1940. Knowing that Wilkie was President of the Board of Directors for Twentieth-Century Fox Motion-Picture Studios, White explained to him the harm that Negro stereotypes were doing in mis-representing the Negro all over the world. Wilkie promised White that he would do something about the stereotypes. In 1942, Wendell Wilkie and Walter White met again on the occasion of Wilkie's address to the NAACP Annual Conference in Los Angeles, California. Wilkie arranged for White to talk before the Hollywood producers at a special luncheon. As a result of this luncheon, the NAACP set up an organization

in Hollywood to advise producers and to analyze screen plays containing Negro characters. This censoring organization caused a controversy between the Negro actors and the NAACP.

Lena Horne, who was under motion-picture contract to Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studio, was given permission by her studio to head an all-Negro cast in St Louis Woman. The Broadway production was to be backed by Lena Horne's studio as a possibility for a motion-picture. Two Negro poets wrote the book for the musical, Arna Bontemps and Countee Cullen. Harold Arlen and Johnny Mercer composed the music.

When the production of the play was announced, Leon Hardwick, a Negro writer and the executive secretary of the Hollywood interracial Film and Radio Guild, criticized the theme of St Louis Woman. The Pittsburgh Courier reported Hardwick's statement as follows:

Hardwick termed 'St Louis Woman' as another of those subtle instruments through which the entire Negro race is being stereotyped. He said that the Guild's action was also based on the conviction that should Lena Horne be forced to enact the characterization it would cause irreparable harm to her position as one of the finest artists of the colored race.

(See Plate X, Lena Horne's picture on the front-cover of

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82"Lena Horne and 'St Louis Woman'," The Pittsburgh Courier, (June 16, 1945), p. 15.
The Crisis). Lena Horne's auto-biography does not include this controversy, but it does mention her connection with the NAACP and contact with Walter White and Wendell Wilkie:

The war brought our injustices into sharper focus, and many white people had joined in the fight to bring Negroes into the mainstream of American life. In fact, it was just about this time that Wendell Wilkie came to Hollywood with Walter White where he made an eloquent plea for a revision of Hollywood's approach to Negroes as people....

At a convention of the NAACP, I had the honor of sharing the platform with the late Wendell Wilkie. We sat side-by-side on the platform - and made the most of that chance for very revealing and understanding little chats.83

The Hollywood Interracial Film and Radio Guild had cooperated with the NAACP in protesting a number of films. Although the protest was made by Leon H. Hardwick for the Guild, Walter White of the NAACP was behind the censorship of St Louis Woman. Arna Bontemps, one of the writers of the show, has explained Walter White's part in attacking the production:

The reason Walter White was out to get St Louis Woman, in my opinion, is explained by the fact that the backing for the Broadway production came from Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer, and this was one of the studios which had disappointed him.

I do not think that Walter White's position on it was consistent with his attitude toward Porgy and Bess, and Strange Fruit.... (For full text of Arna Bontemps letter, see Appendix C)

Walter White had praised the funeral scene in the play Porgy, and his daughter played one of the leads in Strange Fruit.

The role in St Louis Woman which was to have been assigned to Lena Horne was that of Della Green, a beautiful girl of easy morals who throws over a saloon-keeper for a successful jockey called Little Augie. Bontemps defended his story against the Negro critics:

If sympathetically and intelligently staged and directed, St. Louis Woman should do no more to low-rate the Negro people than a blues song does. Of course, the play deals with a fast crowd of people in a colorful city during the era of the box-back coat. But that setting is history, not fiction. I do not see why anyone should be ashamed of the period and the people who gave the world ragtime music and the other musical forms that followed in its wake. 84

The controversy continued, and Paul McGee, feature writer for the Occidental News Service, denounced the criticism toward Lena Horne's contemplated role on Broadway, and said, "Good actors and actresses are judged by their ability to portray characters whether good or bad." 85

84"St. Louis Woman," The Pittsburgh Courier (September 15, 1945), p. 15.

85Quoted in The Pittsburgh Courier (September 15, 1945), p. 15.
Billy Rowe, theatre editor for The Pittsburgh Courier, reported that he had followed the controversy and had come to a conclusion:

However, last week we were fortunate to hear co-author Countee Cullen read the lines as they stand ready to be presented, when and if the play hits the stage this fall as planned. After hearing it, we'd like to say that to our minds, there is nothing objectionable or degrading in so far as the race is concerned.

The play was attacked by a Negro actress, Fredi Washington who was theatre editor for The People's Voice, because the script contained dialect.

The Broadway production of "St. Louis Woman."—Lena Horne did not accept the role. Ruby Hill took the part of Della Green. Others in the cast were Rex Ingram, Juanita Hall, the Nicholas Brothers, and Pearl Bailey. According to Variety, the cast became involved with the controversy concerning stereotypes:

Some of its principals became particularly conscious of at least one stereotyped part in St. Louis Woman. Differences of opinion reached such a point last week that rehearsal was suspended for at least an hour while Rouben Mamoulian, the

86Billy Rowe, "St. Louis Woman," The Pittsburgh Courier (September 15, 1945), p. 15.

87Thelma Berlack Boozer, "Script Proves Lena's 'St. Louis Woman' No Reflection on Race," The Pittsburgh Courier (September 22, 1945), p. 15.
director, lectured the company. He was backed up by Pearl Bailey, comedy warbler, one of the show's featured players, who told others they were wrong in voicing objections to certain types of characters in the show. 88

The reviews of the production were divided between favorable and unfavorable. Burton Roscoe of the New York World-Telegram said, "I enjoyed St. Louis Woman so much that when the final curtain descended at the Martin Beck on Saturday night, I felt I should have liked to see the whole thing all over again, I think the whole shebang is quite a lot of fun and beautiful." 89 Ward Morehouse of The Sun was less favorable: "St. Louis Woman offers some stunning ensemble effects and some good singing and dancing, but the score is only fair, the cast is not over-powering, the book is laggard and frequently tiresome." 90 Louis Nichols of The New York Times stated what he thought was a weakness in the show: "No doubt the basic trouble is that St. Louis Woman never fully decides what it wants to be. Presumably the original design was to make a folk-play, something on the order of Porgy and Bess." 91


89 As cited in the New York Theatre Critics' Reviews, VII (May 6, 1946), 416.

90 Ibid., p. 314.

91 Ibid.
Arna Bontemps believes that Walter White's interference caused a shorter run for the play. Dick Campbell of the American National Theatre Academy observed that Lena Horne did not receive another Broadway role for seventeen years, probably due to her withdrawal from the show. This intervention by the NAACP seemed to have worked hardships on the playwrights, producers and actors.

The Association's study of employment of Negro performers.—John Lovell, Jr., Negro professor of English at Howard University, wrote a series of articles for The Crisis concerning Negro performers in Broadway productions. His theme in the series was "Democracy in the American Theatre," which attempted to show trends toward integration in the casting. In his first article, he gave his impression of Call Me Mister:

Oh yes, The State of the Union and Born Yesterday are about democracy and how it works in America. But Call Me Mister is democracy. It has interracial, inter-sectional performers with one of the minority members singing from the top rung. It has equality of propaganda that is really effective, and it is swallowed by people out for a good time....

Go back stage and you will see the why of all this. The cast is proud of its liberalism, as a whole, and as individual people.92

92John Lovell, Jr., "Democracy in a Hit Revue," The Crisis, LIV (March, 1947), 76.
Lovell's next article opened with the statement: "The stage is one of the great instruments of mass entertainment and education, and in recent years both playwrights and actors have shown an increasing inclination to make it a more effective weapon in the fight for democracy." To illustrate this point, Lovell selected the musical Street Scene. The original stage-play by Elmer Rice contained no Negro characters, but he added three Negro characters to the musical version: a janitor, the janitor's daughter, and a Negro neighbor. Lovell commented on the additional characters: "The Negro characters are not dragged in by the ears; they are a natural part of the play's people. 93

Lovell in his third article made a survey to determine the number of Negroes who had performed in Broadway productions of every kind and description and to show the progress

made by Negroes in the War and Post-War Broadway theatres. The table below is a summary of his more comprehensive chart:

Table 5. The Approximate Number of Negroes in the Casts of Broadway Productions from 1940 to 1947

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Years</th>
<th>Total Shows</th>
<th>Total Performances</th>
<th>Total Actors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1941</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>428</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1942</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1442</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1943</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2621</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1944</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>4380</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1396</td>
<td>219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1946</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>2296</td>
<td>279</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>587</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>13,373</td>
<td>991</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During the seven year period covered by the Table above, including Pre-War and Post-War years, the Broadway theatres employed approximately 991 Negro performers, possibly the same performers in different shows. Negro performers appeared in 110 shows which ran an aggregate of 13,373 performances. Lovell gave the following explanation for his figures:

This means an average of about sixteen plays a year. But notice also, that the rise is steady, from 3 each

in 1940 to 28 in 1946, the last full year of the "Round-up." 1947 is not necessarily a drop from 1946 in view of the fact that Fall and early Winter are the ideal times for introducing plays.95

Lovell also pointed out that of the 110 plays produced, only twenty-two contained all-Negro casts. He remarked, "it probably means that the old Negro show of delightful memory is on its way out along with the 'lily-white' show. American drama is learning that restricted themes have been pretty well exhausted. It is at last turning to the field of melting-pot drama."

When Henry Lee Moon of the NAACP was questioned about this trend toward "Democracy in the Broadway theatres," he answered that the Association desires to believe that it has had some influence on this trend.

However, this trend toward democracy lost some of its force in 1951, according to a survey made by Frederick O'Neal, Vice President of the Coordinating Council of Negro performers and also Vice President of Actors' Equity Association (See Plate XI). Mr. O'Neal declined to run against Ralph Bellamy for the presidency of Actors' Equity in 1958.

From September 1, 1951, to March 15, 1952, forty-nine plays reached Broadway. Those forty-nine employed 692 actors. Of the total number of actors employed, only thirteen

95Ibid.
of them were Negroes, a little less than two per cent. Of the thirteen used, only two could be considered to be employed in supporting roles. Such is the story as regards to the employment of Negro talent in the legitimate theatre as of the above period.96

O'Neal's figures compared with Lovell's reveal a drop in employment for Negro performers from approximately sixteen per cent for the period, 1940 to 1947, to less than two per cent between 1951 and 1952. During this period, employment for Negro performers on Broadway and elsewhere became so infrequent that a committee composed of members of the Dramatist's Guild, the League of New York Theatres and Actors, and the Chorus Equity Association drafted a statement on the "Integration and Employment of Negro Performers." (See Appendix C for the entire statement) The NAACP had made a similar statement for the motion-picture and radio-television industries.

Desegregation and integration of the Negro in all phases of American life are the major concerns of the Association at the present time. There are indications of more direct relationships with the mass media of entertainment than before on the part of the NAACP. For example, when Rudolph Bing, manager of the Metropolitan Opera Company, signed Janet Collins, Negro dancer, Lindsey H. White, president of the New York Branch praised Mr. Bing in a letter:

________________________

I wish to congratulate you and the officers of the Metropolitan for introducing democracy to the Metropolitan Opera by having Miss Janet Collins in the ballet and Negro singers in the chorus.

We know that by removing the bars of racial discrimination, the world of opera will be greatly enriched. We are sure that your action will mean as much to opera as the admission of Negro players meant to major league baseball.

However, more logically, the Association's influence on any trend toward integration of the Negro performers in the American theatre is in proportion to the Association's contribution toward the political, social and economic progress of Negroes. Robert L. Hilliard's study supports this assertion when he came to the following conclusion:

The over-all degree of integration, despite dramatic progress of the last few years, is moving slowly. What the place of the Negro actor in the Broadway theatre will be ten or twenty years from now can only be guessed. But, like the synthesis of historical events from the beginning of the Negro on the New York stage to today, it seems like that it will be related to the sociological progress and relationship of the Negro to society as a whole.

Thus, the trend toward integration on Broadway came almost to a stand-still. There were not many "melting-pot dramas" as predicted by John Lovell, Jr. The old all-Negro

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97 "NAACP Congratulates Metropolitan's Rudolf Bing," The Pittsburgh Courier (December 1, 1951), p. 21.

98 op. cit., p. 107.
shows of "pleasant memory" came back to Broadway; for example, Lena Horne and the all-Negro cast are a current smash-hit in Jamaica, an old fashioned Negro musical comedy on Broadway.

7. The Association's Relationships With the Negro Theatre

The Negro theatre may be considered as having two aspects. The first aspect is the all-Negro theatre, including the theatre building, performers, audience, and locality. The second aspect consists of Negro performers and shows which are seen by the general public, yet this theatre in spirit belongs to the Negro. The NAACP is interested in this second aspect of the Negro theatre because its performers have greater influence and contact with the American public. Mr. Henry Lee Moon admitted in an interview, "We like the Negro performers. We encourage them too. We have given the Spingarn Medal to three Negro actors."
The NAACP uses the Negro performers in three capacities: (a) as racial symbols of success to gain favorable public opinion for the Negro, (b) as financial contributors to the organization, and (c) as agents of protest against discrimination and segregation. The performers as agents of protests will be discussed in Chapter IV of this study.

Negro performers as symbols of success. --While promoting the major programs of the Association, The Crisis continued
its internal program of Social and Cultural uplift, by giving recognition to the artistic and economic achievements of Negro performers. (See Appendix B for notices concerning theatre activities in The Crisis)

Bert Williams.--Egbert Williams died at the age of forty-six in New York City, March 11, 1922. His achievements in spite of racial handicaps are fairly well known; nevertheless, The Crisis called attention to his growing frustration due to his color while he was performing in the Ziegfield Follies in 1918: "Bert Williams has left the company, alleging that while his name was carried to help the show, his parts have not been commensurate with his ability or reputation." 99 Two months after Bert Williams' death, The Crisis printed an article written by Jessie Fauset who painted a word-portrait of Williams' frustrations:

By a strange and amazing contradiction, this comedian symbolized that deep, ineluctable strain of melancholy, which no Negro in a mixed civilization ever lacks. He was supposed to make the world laugh, and so he did, but not by welling-over his own spontaneous subjective joy....

He could not forget his color and the limitations it imposed on him in his chosen field. In spite of his greatness, he was unusually modest. He did not push himself;

99 Jessie Fauset, "The Symbolism of Bert Williams," The Crisis, XXIV (May, 1922), 12, 15.
he was tolerant in the presence of intolerance, but he simply could not understand.... "I breathe like other people," he said; "I eat like them.... Put me at a dinner and I'll use the right fork. I think like other people. In London I am presented to the king; in France I have sat at dinner with the President of the Republic, while here in the United States I am often treated with an air of personal social condescension by the gentleman who sweeps out my dressing room or by the gentleman whose duty it is to turn the spotlight on me.

The symbol created by Miss Faust falls short of racial martyrdom as she pleaded for social acceptance of an individual Negro performer based on his talents and not his color.

Florence Mills.--The Crisis consistently called its readers' attention to the more favorable acceptance of Negro performers abroad than they received in America; it gave the following report on Florence Mills in London, England:

I saw Florence Mills and considered her a truly great artist, a phrase I rarely use. I saw her several times. She can be mentioned in the same breath as Yvette Guilbert or Marie Lloyd. I negotiated with Salvin, her manager, because Miss Mills was an artist, not because she was a Negro.

Statements taken out of context by the editor have their obvious meaning for American readers. A reprint of Hennen Swaffer's article who wrote of her in the London Daily Express, was dramatic and equally as obvious as to its intent:

100 As cited in The Crisis, XXVI (May, 1923), 38.
Florence Mills, it seems, dreams of the future of her people. One of her grandfathers was a white man. Otherwise—she is what is called a quadroon—she is entirely black.

When feted, not long ago, in a Piccadilly cabaret, she burst out, suddenly, into a passionate plea for colored people. No one wrote it down. She has forgotten now what she said, but her eloquent plea for tolerance made an impression on many minds.

"I want to help the colored people," she told me. "I realize that in my line of work, I am doing much to help them. The stage is the quickest way to get to the people. My own success makes people think better of other colored folk. I must say that I have found in London nothing but kindness and friendliness." 101

Florence Mills died November 1, 1927. Harlem was stunned. Later there were rumors of foul play. James Weldon Johnson, who was still executive secretary of the NAACP at that time, said her funeral was attended by five thousand people. 102 No doubt the Association realized more fully the potential value of such a symbol as Florence Mills to its cause, for her successors, Adelaid Hall, Josephine Baker and Lena Horne were used more directly in the Association's programs.

Richard Berry Harrison, "De Lawd."—Success came almost too late for Richard Berry Harrison. He was born in London,

101 As cited in The Crisis, XXXVI (September, 1927), 229.
102 Johnson, op. cit.
Ontario, Canada in 1861 of fugitive slave parents. Harrison later moved to Detroit, Michigan, where he worked and studied dramatics. In 1931, the NAACP honored Richard Berry Harrison by awarding the Spingarn Medal to him. The Crisis gave the following citation for the award:

Richard Berry Harrison, whose fine and reverent characterization of the Lord in Marc Connelly's play, The Green Pastures, has made that play the outstanding dramatic accomplishment of America in the year 1930. But the medal is given to Mr. Harrison not simply for this crowning accomplishment, but for the long years of his work as dramatic reader and entertainer, interpreting to the mass of colored people in church and school the finest specimens of English drama from Shakespeare down. It is fitting that in the sixty-seventh year of his life he should receive widespread acclaim for a role that typifies and completes his life work.

The implications of The Crisis' citation is that this talented colored man had to wait a long time for opportunity and recognition.

Rose McClendon.—The reputation and leadership of Rose McClendon in the Negro theatre developed with the years of her acting on stage. Her first significant success was achieved in Deep River during 1926. She played a magnificent scene at the "Quadroon Ball" in this play which Alexander Woollcott has described quite vividly:

103 Olyve L. Jeter, "De Lawd on Broadway," The Crisis, XXXVIII (April, 1931), 119.
The door opened on the high balcony and down the winding stone steps came an aging mulatto actress who played in black taffeta and diamonds, the procuress of the quadroon ball. She stood there for a moment, serene, silent, queenly, and I could think only of the lost loveliness that was Duse. The noble head, carved with pain, was Duse's.

When Deep River was having its trial flight in Philadelphia, Ethel Barrymore slipped in to snatch what she could of it. "Stay 'til the last act if you can," Arthur Hopkins whispered to her, "and watch Rose McClendon come down those stairs. She can teach some of our most hoity-toity actresses distinction." It was Miss Barrymore who hunted him up after the performance to say, "She can teach them all distinction."

Rose McClendon may be called the "First Lady of the Negro Theatre." The Crisis said of her work in Never No More -- "Her acting alone was enough to hold the show up for its Broadway engagement. She is a tragedian of the classical tradition, neither over-acting nor under-acting. She was symbolized in The Crisis as an actress of intelligence, dignity and restraint.

The Crisis also symbolized Rose McClendon as a foil against another racial stereotype, "the natural-born performer." This type is based on two conceptions, or misconceptions in some cases, that the Negro needs no theatrical training or education to perform, that he is naturally engaging on the stage due to his differing qualities from


105 Robert Schlick, "Theatre and the Arts," The Crisis, XXXIX (February, 1932), 90.
white performers. After taking notice of Rose McClendon's success in _Deep River_, the editor invited her to write an article for _The Crisis_. The following is a part of her response:

I cannot say that all my life I wanted to act. I had seen so many things badly done in church that I wanted always to teach children what to do and when to do it; so when the chance came to study under the late Frank Sargeant of the American Academy of Dramatic Arts, I jumped at it. I studied with him for three years; before I knew it, I was doing one of the leading roles in Butler Davenport's _Justice_.

The intimation of the above is that even "natural-born performers" need training and opportunities. Rose McClendon died during the late 1930's.

**Paul Robeson.**—In 1943, Paul Robeson played Othello with an interracial cast including Uta Hagen as Desdemona and Jose Ferrer as Iago. The critics were generous in their praise of his portrayal of the Moor.

Paul Robeson was declared the 1945 winner of the Spingarn Medal. (See Plate XII, an oil painting of Robeson as Othello which was published in _The Crisis_.) The Award Committee issued the following statement after Robeson's selection as the winner:

106Quoted in "Rose McClendon," Editorial, _The Crisis_, XXXXVIII (April, 1927), 55, 56.
Mr. Robeson received the award for his distinguished achievement in the theatre, on the concert stage, and in the general field of racial welfare. His most recent triumph is as Othello in Margaret Webster's production of Othello. Mr. Robeson has appeared in many legitimate plays during his stage career.... He has also appeared in such films as The Emperor Jones, Showboat, Saunders of the River, King Solomon's Mines, and Jericho. 107

Paul Robeson was under the influence of the Communist Party at this time. Although Negroes do not generally agree with Robeson's revolutionary approach to solving the race problem, they admire him for his talents, his intellect and his courage. The NAACP probably desired to capitalize upon Robeson as a symbol of revolutionary protest, as termed by Daniel Webster Wynn. 108

Due to Robeson's personal appearance commitments overseas, the NAACP delayed the presentation of the Medal until his return. When Robeson came back to the United States, he insisted that the award be made in a "good downtown hotel" rather than at the Annual Convention. After the hotel had been secured, Robeson would not give the NAACP officials an advanced copy of his speech of acceptance. He came to the banquet almost an hour late. After Marian Anderson had sung, Robeson rose to speak amidst great applause.

107 "Robeson to Get Spingarn Medal," The Crisis, LII (June, 1945), 173-174.

When he finished, there was little applause because he had made an anti-American speech. "Apparently imperceptive of the magnificent opportunity to make converts," reported Walter White, "Robeson launched into a lengthy vehement attack upon all things American and indiscriminate laudation of all things Russian.\textsuperscript{109}

Paul Robeson is a Negro symbol, but not a symbol of the NAACP. Walter White explained that Robeson's life had always been slightly out-of-balance, and that his stay in Soviet Russia steered him to the "left," and that there have been innumerable contradictions which have characterized Robeson's obvious groping for a political and economic philosophy which are understandable only to himself and possibly to a psychologist. The NAACP attempts to use these symbolized personalities of the theatre to create awareness of the Negro's cause of justice and equality and to promote race-pride and group consciousness.

Negro performers as financial contributors.—While seeking the aid of Negro performers, the Association in the early years of its existence gave some patronage to the performers and their productions. During the time when the performers were confined to the Harlem playhouses, Dr. Du Bois

\textsuperscript{109}Walter White, "The Strange Case of Paul Robeson," \textit{Ebony}, VI (February, 1951), 78-84.
editorially criticized the conduct of the Negro audience. He expressed his concern about the colored audiences laughing in the wrong places during a presentation of Othello: "Although we are an appreciative people, the most frenzied Othello can hardly conceal his bewilderment when his attempt to strangle Desdemona provokes shouts of merriment. Is this state of affairs due to ignorance or thoughtlessness."\(^{110}\)

On another occasion, Mr. Du Bois was critical of the manager of the Lafayette Players and complimentary of the actors. He praised Clarence Muse, Andrew Bishop, and Mrs. Anderson for their performances in *The Servant in the House*, but he took the manager to task:

> These colored players are doing pioneer work, the value of which for Negro art can scarcely be over-estimated. It is therefore, doubly unfortunate that their manager is apparently making their devotion and art so much a matter of business and so little a question of ideals. These actors and their fellows are being painfully and persistently overworked and under-paid, and the staging of their plays is much too parsimonious.\(^{111}\)


Benefit by the "Shuffle Along" Company.--James Weldon Johnson called *Shuffle Along* a remarkable aggregation which
made the Sixty-Third Street Theatre one of the best-known houses in New York. But this theatre was a drawback to the show, according to The New York Times: "Limited stage facilities at the renascent Sixty-Third Street Playhouse enhanced the crudities of the production until the general effect is about that of fair-to-middling amateur entertainment."112 The Crisis, in its turn, took the occasion to inform the public about the prejudice and discrimination that afflicted the Shuffle Along Company:

Except in the city of New York, the people of the United States are only allowed to hear and see such plays as two sets of theatrical Czars permit to be staged in their houses. These monopolists have determined that "Shuffle Along" shall not be permitted to play their theatres in the United States. "We'll take Miller and Lyles and let them write their own comedy, but they must play in a white company. We are not going to have any colored woman on our stage." The only chance, then, for "Shuffle Along" would seem to be in England. Thus the Monopoly aids Ignorance to manufacture prejudice. And thus this stupid land shuffles along.113

The Shuffle Along Company complimented the Association for its patronage with a benefit performance that was given at Harlem's Lafayette Theatre in 1923 which netted more than


113 W. E. B. Du Bois, "We Shuffle Along," The Crisis, XXIV (September, 1922), 201.
a thousand dollars for the NAACP. The Company also gave a benefit performance for the Chicago Branch at the Avenue Theatre. The show was a great success, according to reports, contributing $722.00 to the Branch. "In addition, Mr. Aubrey Lyles made an appeal for the NAACP during the intermission. The entire house was sold out several days before the affair." The Branch presented "resolutions" to the company for their services. 114

**Benefits by Liza and Running Wild.**—In the Spring of 1923, Irving C. Miller came out with a successful tuneful show, *Liza*, which had a profitably long run at a downtown theatre. On March 27, 1923, the *Liza* Company gave a midnight benefit show for the Harlem Office of the NAACP which netted over $900.00 for the effort. In the Fall of 1923, Miller and Lyles produced *Running Wild* which ran for eight months at the Colonial Theatre on upper Broadway. The Association made this benefit show more elaborate by presenting a pageant:

On the evening of April 4, 1925, the New Star Casino in New York City was crowded to the doors with those who had come to witness the Pageant of Progress presented by the stars and cast of the "Running Wild" Company. It was a beautiful event the most successful affair held in New York during the year. There was dancing until eleven-thirty to music

114 *The Crisis*, XXVI (May, 1923), 26.
furnished by Ford Dabney's "Ziegfield Frolic Orchestra." Then came the pageant, as members of the Company dressed to represent famous Negro characters. 115

With this benefit show, from the above description, the NAACP successfully blended propaganda, uplift, and entertainment, and added $1562.25 to its treasury.

Occasions for other benefit shows.--In 1935, the stage and screen actor, Clarence Muse, directed a benefit show in Los Angeles, California, to raise money to support the Costigan-Wagner Anti-Lynch Bill which was being sponsored in Congress by the NAACP. The Association received $1,147 from this show. 116 In 1939, the Association received funds from a benefit performance of the stage play, Abe Lincoln in Illinois, donated by the author, Robert Sherwood. 117 Marian Anderson gave a concert to raise funds at Carnegie Hall New York City, in 1940. The NAACP was one of three organizations to benefit from the concert. 118 Four Negro band

115 "Running Wild Benefit," The Crisis, XXVIII (June, 1925), 70-71.

116 "Benefit Directed by Clarence Muse," The Crisis, XXXII (September, 1935), 277.


118 "Marian Anderson to Give Benefit Concert," The Crisis, XXXVII (May, 1940), 26.
leaders subscribed with $500.00 memberships in 1945: Jimmie Lunceford, Duke Ellington, Count Basie, and Cab Calloway.119

Duke Ellington gave a concert for the Association at the Metropolitan Opera House on January 21, 1950. The Pittsburgh Courier described the background of the project as follows: "Adhering to an annual policy which started eight years ago, Duke Ellington is now at work writing two new long concert compositions to be premiered at his benefit concert for the NAACP.120 The concert was opened by Mayor Vincent R. Impelliteri of New York City with words of commendation for the NAACP and Duke Ellington. During the intermission, Walter White presented a scroll of honor to Ellington. The concert contributed $14,000 to the Association's treasury.121

Madison Square Garden Benefit Show.—In 1952, the NAACP produced its largest benefit show of all years. The show was presented at Madison Square Garden and was co-sponsored by Lena Horne and Oscar Hammerstein II, and included outstanding performers in show-business, both colored and white. One of the interesting features of the show was a sketch written by Dick Campbell and narrated by Canada Lee, titled

119The Crisis, III (December, 1945), 356.


121"Duke's Concert Draws $14,000.00," The Pittsburgh Courier (February 3, 1951), p. 17.
Toll the Liberty Bell. Campbell's sketch documented an incident of racial intimidation which involved the NAACP, the murder of Harry Moore, the Association's leader in Florida. The first Madison Square Garden Show netted the Association $15,000 in contributions. The NAACP presented a similar Madison Square Benefit Show in 1953 at which time Dick Campbell's sketch, Jim Crow Must Go, was presented. During the same year Harry Belafonte teamed with Ella Fitzgerald and Steve Allen of the CBS-TV "Steve Allen Show" and others and presented a show for the Brooklyn Branch of the NAACP.

The Nat (King) Cole incident.—A violent attack was launched upon Nat (King) Cole and his trio while they were playing a concert for an all-white audience in Birmingham, Alabama, during 1956. One news reporter described the attack almost bemusedly:

Nat (King) Cole, one of the darlings of the countless American lovers of the dulcet cooling voice and sophisticated piano, said he thought he was on the brink of losing his life here in the Municipal Auditorium,

122 Dick Campbell, Toll the Liberty Bell, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, 20 West 40th Street, New York 18, New York, 1952, p. 2.


Tuesday night when six alleged goons of the law-defying White Citizens' Council subjected him to an old-time football flying-wedge type attack.125

After the attack, Roy Wilkins of the NAACP sent Mr. Cole a telegram which stated in part the following:

The NAACP regrets exceedingly the unprovoked attack upon you in Birmingham by hoodlums consumed with race hatred... The attack upon you clearly indicates that organized bigotry makes no distinction between those who do not actively challenge racial discrimination and those who do. This is a fight which none of us can escape. We invite you to join us in the crusade against racism in order to create a society in which the Birmingham incident would be impossible.126

When the Birmingham news reporter questioned Mr. Cole concerning the NAACP's request that he join the crusade against racism and promise not to play for white audiences it was alleged that Mr. Cole said, "I'm letting you know emphatically, I don't intend to become a politician. I'm a performer. I'm crusading as a gentleman."127 After this statement was published, the Negro press began to criticize Mr. Nat Cole, and several Harlem taverns barred his records from the vending machines.


127Ibid.
Following these events, Mr. Cole telephoned The Pittsburgh Courier and explained that he was deeply hurt about the untrue statements attributed to him by the press concerning the NAACP and his joining "The Crusade against racism." Later, Mr. Cole presented a check for $500.00 to the Detroit Branch of the NAACP for his Life-Time Membership Certificate. Upon presenting the check, Mr. Cole stated his views to the press:

First of all, I would like to say that I am, have been and will continue to be dedicated to the complete elimination of all forms of discrimination, segregation, and bigotry, this has been my position all along, and contrary to any published reports, it remains my position.

I had hoped that through the medium of my music I had made many new friends and changed many opinions regarding racial superiority.

I have in my personal records, cancelled checks of my contributions to several NAACP chapters as well as to the Montgomery boycott.

The initial report concerning alleged statements I made about the NAACP were completely misunderstood and twisted completely out of context.128

Mr. Cole's statement continued with his mentioning many benefit shows which he had performed for the Association. When asked if he would continue to play to all-white audiences

in the South, he replied that he would boycott all-white segregated audiences if all the other Negro performers would do the same. He said that he would not make any speeches for the NAACP, but would help the organization.

This Nat (King) Cole incident illustrated that the NAACP can influence public opinion against some Negro performers who openly do not cooperate with the Association's programs, or who openly criticize its policies. The incident also demonstrated how the Negro press is used by the Association to put an offender under public scrutiny; for example, the articles concerning Mr. Cole in The Pittsburgh Courier were not slanted in his favor but in favor of the NAACP. The more a Negro performer is dependent upon a Negro clientele, the more he is subjected to the Association's influence. The banning of King Cole's records by bars and taverns in Harlem was a form of reprisal. Louis Armstrong, the trumpet player, failed to appear for a NAACP benefit performance in Detroit in March of 1958. Mr. Armstrong stated his attitude toward benefit shows in a negative manner:

It's those people out there in the theatre, the one's clapping their hands together for our music, they're the important ones. If I gotta be honored guest here and honored guest there, and get citations and say howdy-do and be polite and all that stuff, then I got no time to get out there and perform for the people who paid to hear me.129

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There were no reprisals taken against Mr. Armstrong, probably due to his international reputation as "Ambassador Satch" which he earned while traveling over-seas for the United States Department of State.

8. Summary and Conclusion

In a program to keep the public informed on the various phases of the Negro problem, the Association gave attention to the theatre. Observers, considering the Association's relationship to the developmental trends for the Negro in the theatre, have credited the NAACP with contributing to the factors which helped to promote the advance of Negro performers in the theatre.

The Association's relationship to the problem of prejudice, segregation, and discrimination against the Negro in theatre was primarily concerned with the right of Negroes to attend the theatre before World War II. However, on the secondary level, the Association through The Crisis and other media, sought to reflect attitudes of the Negroes which it hoped would bring about more favorable representations of Negro life in the theatre. Dr. Du Bois approached the theatre from the point of view of using art for Negro propaganda. He arrived at the dictum that art should be aimed toward "truth, beauty, and the right of Negroes to live, to love, and to enjoy." Dr. Du Bois took a universal concept of "Negro art" to accommodate his doctrine of
internationalism in regard to the darker races, hoping to gain more acceptance for the Negro in America. He viewed the folk-dramas with their defeatist themes and exploitation of the lower social strata of Negro life from the standpoint of the impression of these plays upon the world concept of Negro life in America.

Because of the diversity of the Negro problem, it is difficult for anyone who is sincerely interested to learn what the attitude of the Negro people is toward the theatre, or toward any other institution. The Crisis' contribution to the relationship of the NAACP with the theatre is its body of opinions and attitudes on the theatre.

**Relationship with the theatre of the "left."**—The theatre of the "left" revealed, first, the competition between the NAACP and the Communist Party for the leadership of the Negro masses, as reflected in They Shall Not Die; second, it revealed the collaboration between the Communist Party and the NAACP in defense of Negro rights, as illustrated by the joint defense of the Scottsboro Boys in 1935, and Walter White's approval of Stevedore and its propaganda toward unionizing Negro labor. The Association's recognition of Paul Robeson also revealed the pressure and influence of Communists on the NAACP. These economic, social, and political pressures brought about closer relationships between Negroes and Whites in the theatre audiences and wider acceptance of Negroes on the stage.
Stronger relationships after World War II.---Negro participation in the war-effort, beginning in 1940, resulted in a more intensified execution of the Association's programs. Walter White became active on the home-front and over-seas in several capacities. When he brought his crusade against motion picture stereotypes to Hollywood and to the production of St. Louis Woman on Broadway in 1946, this stronger relationship resulted in a harmful effect upon the theatre, having worked hardships on everyone concerned with the production of the play.

The pre-war and post-war periods of World War II witnessed the advance of Negro performers toward integration on the New York stage similar to the advances made by Charles Giplin and Paul Robeson after World War I. Mr. Henry Lee Moon, Public Relation Director for the NAACP, stated that the Association would like to think that it has had some influence upon this trend toward integration in the theatre. Robert L. Hilliard's study did not give much credit to the influence of the Supreme Court Decision on desegregation in the New York theatres. According to this study, the greater influence upon this desegregation in the theatre came from (a) the liberal and radical white playwrights and producers, (b) the idealized, democratic principles of World War I and World War II, and (c) the Negro's total social, economic, and political advances. Therefore, the Association's influence
must be considered in proportion to its effect upon the Negro's advancing position in American society.

Relationships with the Negro theatre. -- The Negro theatre has been considered in this study as having two aspects; one, the genuinely all-Negro theatre which afforded the Negro performers a very meager existence as they traveled the circuit of the Theatre Owners' Booking Association. The NAACP recognized this division of the Negro theatre, but had weak and passive relationships with it. For example, Walter White took the following view of the all-Negro theatre:

There the Negro performers usually earning a mere pittance, hardly sufficient to provide more than a meager existence, could and did indulge in lusty, and at times, ribald humor, and at times merciless satire at the foibles and shortcomings of himself, his fellow-performers, and audience, and the Negro as a race. No member of the audience ever dreamed of taking offense even at the most cutting jibes. Instead, applause and laughter could invariably be measured by the directness of the hit.

It is impossible to estimate fully and accurately the influence of this genuinely Negro theatre has had not only on the Negro but on America as well. It is certain that few forces which have directed Negro life have done more to debunk the Negro in his own estimation and to keep him free from smugness and overpowering self-esteem which afflicted and still does afflict white America.130

Walter White's attitude toward the all-Negro theatre seemed to have been aloof and impersonal. At the same time, this theatre needed financial support and paying audiences in greater numbers more than the aloof observations of Negro intellectuals. The NAACP could be criticized for not promoting the all-Negro theatre as the Communist did for the Labor theatre in the 1930's.

The NAACP manifested more interest in the more prosperous theatre where the performances were given before the general public. The Association has been quite successful in securing the cooperation of Negro performers in this division of the Negro theatre.

The trend toward full integration of the Negro actor on the New York stage has become more gradual during the 1950's. According to Frederick O'Neal, Negro performers are receiving better roles and assignments, but the roles are fewer in number than in the years immediately after World War II. At the present time, the NAACP is cooperating along with other organizations is campaigning against racial biasness and discrimination in the mass media of entertainment, which will be discussed more in detail in Chapter V of this study.
CHAPTER IV
NAACP AGAINST SEGREGATION AND DISCRIMINATION IN THE COMMERCIAL THEATRES

From the very beginning of the NAACP to the present day, this organization has carried on a campaign against discrimination and segregation in many phases of American life. The Association's relationships to the commercial theatre, as discussed in the preceding chapter of this study, were in the behalf of the Negro performers and the more favorable representations of Negro life on the stage; they were indirect relationships which sought to change prejudiced attitudes of both the theatrical producers and the general public. The relationships of the NAACP with the commercial theatres in this chapter are in behalf of the Negro population in certain regions and localities; they are more direct relationships with the commercial theatre which seek to change the traditions, patterns, and laws of segregation through legal actions and boycotts. The campaign of the NAACP against the theatres was only one phase of the Association's general campaign against segregation in all places of public accommodation, such as restaurants, hotels, and places of amusement.
In 1913, the NAACP instructed all branches to organize Vigilance Committees—"To protect the colored people in their several communities from aggression, to coordinate their activities, to exchange experiences, and to concentrate the application of funds where the need is greatest."\(^1\) The NAACP established a Legal Bureau in 1914 to achieve the following objective:

The objective we conceive is to build up a body of judicial decisions which comprehensively states the law on the subject of civil and political rights which shall mold the law, so far as possible, along the lines which admit of no distinction whatever on the grounds of race and color.\(^2\)

Theatres in America that segregated and discriminated against Negroes followed three different patterns: (1) refusing to admit colored people to the theatre; (2) restricting colored patronage to separate entrances and to separate seats either in the balcony, to the first floor, or to the rear or side; and (3) separate performance for an all-Negro audience, or for an all-white audience.

During 1920 and following World War II, Dr. Du Bois

\(^1\) "Vigilance Committee," Editorial, The Crisis, VI (May, 1913), 26, 29.

stated the Association's position on segregation:

When the NAACP was organized, it seemed to us that the subject of "social equality" between races was not one that we needed to touch officially, whatever our private opinions might be. We soon found, however, certain difficulties: was the right to attend a theatre a civil or social right? Is a hotel a private or a public institution?

The time has, therefore, evidently come for The Crisis to take a public stand on this question in the interest of justice and clear thinking. We believe that social equality means moral, mental, and physical fitness to associate with one's fellowmen. In this sense, The Crisis believes absolutely in the Social Equality of Black and White and Yellow races, and it believes, too, that any attempt to deny this equality by law is a blow at Humanity, Religion, and Democracy.

The editor attempted to keep the issues clear on segregation by eliminating the issue of social equality from the case of Negroe's rights to attend the theatre without discrimination of race and color.

In 1935, the NAACP instructed its members and branches on the methods and procedures in protesting against discrimination in places of public accommodation. The Crisis published the procedure which is given briefly as follows:

1. Know the Civil Rights Act.
2. When seeking the public accommodations to which you are entitled, act in a calm and dignified manner.

Ibid.
3. Secure a witness. A witness is always desirable.

4. In seeking the accommodation, be as definite and specific as possible.

5. Actually tender or produce the money covering the cost or charges for the service or accommodation.

6. If the person who refused you is a subordinate, go to a higher authority, then to a higher one if you are not satisfied.

7. If the management calls the police, welcome the police and repeat your request for service before him.

8. If the police arrest you, do not resist.

Just before and after World War II, the NAACP protested against discrimination in the Armed Forces and against restrictive covenants in housing and campaigned for civil rights under the slogan, "Equal Justice Under The Law." During 1952, the Association's campaign against segregation took a new direction toward the transportation system and recreational facilities in the cities and towns. This new direction was announced at the Forty-Third Convention of the NAACP at Oklahoma City, Oklahoma:

A step-up in the campaign to end segregation in public recreation facilities and in transportation was disclosed today by Thurgood Marshall, head of the Legal Department of the NAACP.

The shift of emphasis in the fight against segregation from school systems to the recreational and transportation fields came after a meeting of the Association's Legal Staff...

The NAACP called on the Democratic and Republican Parties today to include in their platform an "unequivocal civil rights plank…" 5

This change in direction extended the Association's campaign against segregation and discrimination by theatres to include recreational facilities, such as swimming pools, golf courses, and places of amusement, such as night clubs, auditoriums, and dance halls. Since the problems of racial segregation and discrimination vary in pattern according to the State, community, and geographical regions of the United States, the campaigns of the NAACP against theatres and places of amusement and theatrical entertainment will be discussed according to the following regions: Northeast, South, Midwest, and Farwest, which corresponds to the development of the campaigns.

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5 "Battle Renewed for Civil Rights," The Crisis, XLII (October, 1935), 311, 317.
1. Campaign Against Theatres and Places of Amusement in the Northeast

The Northeastern section of the United States was a haven of Negro freedom following the Civil War. The legal grounds for this freedom began to be cultivated in 1883 when the Supreme Court declared that the Federal Civil Rights Bill was unconstitutional. At that time, the Northern States began to enact civil rights bills to guarantee freedom for their citizens. Charles S. Johnson in his study, *Patterns of Negro Segregation*, cited the civil rights laws of the State of New York as an example of anti-segregation legislation. Persons and establishments found guilty of breaking these civil rights laws in New York were subjected to punishment.

Against theatres and places of amusement in New York City.—On October 11, 1912, the Lyric Theatre of New York City refused to give Mr. Louis F. Baldwin and his company seats in the orchestra section of the theatre after he had purchased his tickets for that section. Mr. Baldwin sued the Lyric Theatre and won the decision. The three judges making the decision stated that a Negro buying seats in the orchestra of a theatre is entitled to use

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them. The New York Times took a different view of the case:

Probably the theatrical managers would admit Negroes to orchestra seats as readily as white persons if it were found profitable. It is a matter of business with them, not of prejudice. But, if compelled to admit Negroes, they would find that prejudice of white patrons has deprived them of their profits. This would amount to confiscation and an invasion of the rights of private business.

During 1913, The Crisis reported that the New York City Vigilance Committee was very active in pursuing several cases of discrimination in places of public amusement. The executive secretary had investigated over forty-three cases of complaints; in several instances, he had visited the proprietors and had convinced them that they were violating the law. One special case was that of Hull versus The 86th Street Amusement Company which conducted a motion picture theatre on 86th Street of New York City. The defendant in the case refused to sell Mr. Hull tickets for any part of the house other than the topmost gallery. The Crisis reported the outcome

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7 "Colored-Folk in the Theatre," The Crisis, IV (May, 1912), 20.

8 Loc. Cit.
of the case as follows:

After careful consideration, Judge Marks, of the Sixth District Municipal Courts, rendered a decision in favor of Mr. Hull, giving judgment of $100.00. The attorneys for Mr. Hull were Messrs. Studin and Sonnenberg. An appeal has been taken by the defendant to the appellate term of the Supreme Court, but the management of the 86th Street Amusement Company has evidently been decidedly impressed by the verdict, for their policy of discriminating has been changed in favor of that of admitting colored people to any part of their theatres, of which they own several.9

Due to the civil rights laws of the State of New York and to the enforcement of these laws, the campaign against the theatres was won with less difficulty than in other cities and sections of the country.

Sherman Billingsley's Stork Club accused of discrimination, New York City.--During the month of June, 1951, Josephine Baker returned to Harlem where she started her career over twenty years earlier in the all-Negro musical comedy, Shuffle Along; from Harlem, she went to live in France and became one of the favorites of the Paris stage. Among the dignitaries on the welcoming committee were Mayor Impelliterri, Ralph Bunch, and Lindsay White, president of the New York Branch of the NAACP, for whom

9 Cited in The Crisis, VI (July, 1913), 144.
Miss Baker gave a day-long benefit performance.

Josephine Baker remained in the United States during the year, performing and doing race-relations work for Negroes. One evening in November of 1951, Miss Baker visited Sherman Billingsley's Stork Club on East 53rd Street of New York City. An incident of alleged discrimination against her was described in the following manner by *Time Magazine*:

Miss Baker and some friends had sat down in the Club Room, where they were served a round of drinks. Then, according to friends, nothing else had been served, and the waiters were playing a rotary defense. Josephine, who had made something of a specialty of creating incidents reacted with practiced dispatch. She stormed into the night to find Walter White, executive secretary of the NAACP, to whom her companions delivered the shattering charge.11

The report stated that Walter Winchell was in the Stork Club at the time of the incident, but he did nothing to relieve the situation. Walter White sent a letter of protest to Winchell, Billingsley's friend, and wires to both the New York City Police Commissioner and the State Liquor Authority, asking them to revoke the Stork Club's liquor license. Miss Baker volunteered to picket the club, the NAACP picketed it instead from October 22 to 24. The *Crisis* editorialized: "It shows that Negroes even

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when they are famous as Miss Baker, can meet discourtesy in a city as liberal as New York. It gave America a black-eye abroad and furnished more grist for the Russian propaganda mills."

Mr. Winchell stated that he was appalled by the incident and that he did not witness it because he had left the club before it happened. Winchell defended himself with testimonials from Negroes. Then he launched an attack on Miss Baker in his syndicated news column: "In successive columns she became a pro-fascist, a troublemaker, and a communist-guided 'provocateur.' Her supporters became riot-inciters.... Then he reported that, in 1935, Josephine had declared, 'I am willing to recruit a Negro army to help Italy in Mussolini's war on Ethiopia.'

The prize fighter, Sugar Ray Robinson, said he would regretfully quit Winchell's Damon Runyon Memorial Cancer Fund unless Billingsley cleared the situation immediately. Miss Baker had given the Fund $60,000 from a Los Angeles appearance. Walter White asked for time on the American

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14 Ibid.
Broadcasting radio network to answer Walter Winchell's defense of his friend Sherman Billingsley.

Mayor Impellitterri's Unity Committee investigated the incident and asked Sherman Billingsley to issue a public statement clearly enunciating the Stork Club's policy in regard to serving all people without reference to race, color, or creed. The New York Times reported that Mr. Billingsley's reply was a terse statement sidestepping the issue of racial discrimination and declaring, "Our policy is to cater to a clientele made up of the people of the world, giving preference, naturally, to those who have been our patrons through the years." Later, Walter White made public a letter supposedly written by Mr. Billingsley which stated: "Because of the exclusive nature of our clientele, we find it necessary to exclude certain types of persons who may be regarded as obnoxious by the majority of our patrons." Billingsley said the typewritten letter was forged and that he did not send it.

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15 Quoted in "Billingsley Avoids Racial Bias Charge," The New York Times (November 1, 1951), p. 34.

Mayor Impellitterri's Unity Committee reported to him that the controversy between Miss Baker and the Stork Club might have been avoided had Miss Baker and her companion asked "responsible management of the club for an explanation for the alleged delay in serving the food and wine." The report declared, however, that the point was not of major importance since it could be reasonably assumed that "subordinates represented management in policies and practices." Later the Police Commissioner, who entered the case during the picketing by the NAACP announced that there was no basis for further actions. Arthur E. Spingarn, President of the NAACP, stated that the facts were insufficient to proceed against the Stork Club. Josephine Baker filed a $400.00 damage suit against Walter Winchell.

Against theatres in Baltimore, Maryland.—Arbitrarily, Maryland and the District of Columbia are to be considered as Northeastern localities in this study. However, with reference to the present question of racial desegregation, they have been termed "Border" areas. Charles S. Johnson described the border areas as having a mixture of traditions

of both the North and South and with the general attitude
toward the separation of races in the residential sections
of cities. The City of Baltimore passed an ordinance for
racial segregation in 1913, even after the Supreme Court
had declared such an ordinance unconstitutional on two
previous occasions. This ordinance stated:

An ordinance to prevent conflict and ill
feeling between the white and colored races
in Baltimore City, and to preserve the public
peace and promote the general welfare by making
reasonable provisions requiring the use of
separate blocks for residence by white and colored
people respectively.\(^\text{19}\)

One reaction voiced by the NAACP declared "This was a
rather unusual procedure, and showed clearly where the
sympathies of the city lay." In June of 1913, \(\text{The Crisis}\)
reported a victory for the NAACP: "The Association
had its moment of triumph when on the second day of
the Conference, word appeared in the papers that Judge
Elliott had declared the Baltimore segregation ordinance
invalid. .... This decision is important to all those who
dwell in the South. \(^\text{21}\)

\(^{18}\) Charles S. Johnson, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 11

\(^{19}\) "Ordinance Passes in Baltimore," \textit{The New York Times}
(September 26, 1913), p. 1.

\(^{20}\) Quoted in \textit{The Crisis VI} (November, 1913), 69.

\(^{21}\) Johnson, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 75.
Evidently, the tradition and practices of segregation continued in Baltimore. Negroes, as a rule, generally attended all-Negro theatres in the Negro residential sections. However, Negroes could and did attend the three white theatres which presented legitimate stage performances as well as motion pictures; they used a common entrance to the theatre and sat segregated in the balcony. In 1946 the NAACP singled out the Ford Theatre of Baltimore for a campaign of picketing against its segregation practices. At the same time, Actors' Equity Association appointed a special committee to study segregation in the theatres and to see what could be done about it. During the 1946-1947 theatrical season, the all-Negro musical, Carmen Jones, did not play in Baltimore because of the theatre's policy of segregation. Negroes sought a ruling from Actors' Equity Association that white shows would also by-pass Baltimore. The Baltimore branch of the NAACP continued to picket Ford Theatre; and in 1948, Milton R. Brown, Executive Secretary of the Branch, requested the Theatre Guild of America and the Theatrical Association of New York City to help the Branch in breaking

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23 Johnson, op. cit., p. 75.

the discriminatory policy of Ford Theatre. Warren Care, Executive Secretary of the Theatre Guild, replied that the Guild was opposed to segregation and every form of intolerance, but that since the Guild's membership was under contract to the Ford Theatre they were obliged to live up to the terms of the contract. 25 Charles Boyer, the French-born actor who appeared in Red Gloves at the Ford Theatre in November of 1948, stated that he would not play the Ford again because of its policy of racial segregation.

In 1949 the Baltimore branch of the NAACP effected a change in the Maryland Theatre Policy when they picketed the all-colored Anna Lucasta company which was playing the theatre. As a result of the picket line, the Maryland Theatre abandoned its segregation policy, reported the Pittsburgh Courier. The NAACP continued to picket the Ford Theatre through 1950. In the meanwhile, a demonstration was presented on the eve of Lincoln's birthday in front of the office of Marcus Heiman, the owner of the Ford in Baltimore and the

National Theatre in Washington, D. C. Ten of the demonstrators of this racially mixed group were arrested.

The purpose of the demonstration was stated as follows:

The demonstration was inspired by the Committee of Racial Equality and set into motion to draw attention to the fact that a New Yorker was behind the gross injustice of theatrical discrimination in the nation's capital. According to the arresting officers, the line thrown around the business address of the United Booking Company, 234 West Forty-Fourth Street was beyond legal size and moved too slowly.27

After six years of being picketed by the NAACP, Ford Theatre dropped its policy of racial segregation which had existed since 1871. In abandoning this policy, the theatre operators accepted a recommendation of the State Commission on Interracial Problems and Relations. John Little, manager of Ford Theatre, replied to the recommendation: "This is a peaceful and honorable and orderly approach to this problem and accordingly we accept the recommendation of the Commission." The Commission's resolution stated that the climate of opinion is changing in the direction of the removal of discrimination between races and called on theatre owners to "lift


such discriminatory practices as now exist.”

Governor McKeldin of Maryland also made a statement:

The resulting humiliation has brought a picket line to the theatre. The picket line has endured the last several years. Many white persons have been reluctant to cross it.... And in addition to the injustice involved there has been inconvenience to many persons and economic loss. This may be a contributing cause to the scantiness of the theatre programs now offered in Baltimore. 30

The director of the Baltimore Theatre Guild stated that the organization has planned a sustained drive to bring the legitimate theatre back to Baltimore.

At the same time as the campaign was waged against the Ford Theatre, three other theatres in Baltimore were also under attack by inter-racial groups. Three members of the cast of At War With The Army refused to sign contracts to play the Maryland Theatre in 1949. The actors were Jerry Jarrett, Bernard Kates and Mike Kellin. 31

Governor McKeldin objected to the segregation policy of the Lyric Theatre. One evening in May of 1955, a mixed racial group of students from Baltimore's John Hopkins University...

29 Loc. cit.

30 Loc. cit.

University and Morgan State College staged a "passive resistance" demonstration in front of the suburban Northwood Theatre. The demonstration was arranged at the time of rushing business for this theatre as a protest against its segregation policy. Also in 1955, the Supreme Court outlawed segregation at Baltimore's public parks and golf courses.

Against theatres and places of amusement in Washington, D.C.—Charles S. Johnson's study of the patterns of Negro segregation explained that the theatres in Washington, D.C., the nation's capital, were completely segregated. No Negroes, except those who passed as whites, attended the theatres with white patrons. In such border areas as Washington, D.C., and Baltimore, in which institutional forces are so largely arbitrary and the total pattern of segregation so often broken by both planned and unplanned exigencies, the pattern of segregation so often is not clear. Of the five cases against segregation that the NAACP was prosecuting in 1924, the Association considered the one concerning Washington, D.C., the


34 Johnson, op. cit., p. 7.
Harrison and his cast were scheduled to present Marc Connelly's Green Pastures at the National Theatre in Washington, D.C., during the month of February of 1933. Negroes went to the National Theatre to buy tickets for the performance. The National Theatre refused to sell tickets to Negroes because of its segregation policy. The colored ministers and representatives of the NAACP went to Baltimore, Maryland, where Mr. Harrison and his company were presenting Green Pastures and petitioned him and the cast to refuse to play the National in Washington unless the theatre withdrew its policy of no admittance to colored people. The Crisis reviewed the report of the petition: "Harrison and the cast were dumbfounded.... They were sorry, deeply pained at the insult to the race, but the play's the thing. The show must go on".

After The Green Pastures had come to Washington and was playing the National Theatre, the NAACP and the ministers petitioned the producer Rowland Stebbins, to

35 The Crisis, XXIX (November, 1924), 19.

withdraw the play. The reply to this petition was stated as follows:

It was understood from Charles G. Stewart, representative of Mr. Stebbins, that Mr. Harrison and members of the cast were eager to continue the Washington performance despite a few threats by letter-writers. A performance of the play which will admit Negroes will be given Sunday night, February 26, under the auspices of the 37 Improvement Benevolent Protective Order of Elks.

This proposed benefit performance for the Elks education fund was unacceptable to the NAACP and associated groups. Then it was suggested that Green Pastures be performed for a third week to unsegregated audiences at Washington's Belasco Theatre, but this proposal was also rejected. The Association stated that it would be satisfied with nothing short of breaking down the segregation barriers at the National Theatre. The manager of the National Theatre explained that this was impossible:

Other organized Negro groups would have been satisfied with nothing short of opening the National to them together with our white patrons, which is impossible. To have done so would have ruined us. To admit them to the special performance as proposed, will not be approved any more than by many of our regular patrons than by Negroes who are trying to break down all exclusiveness from the National.

But we are going as far as we can to make it possible for Negroes here to see Green Pastures. (It has never been the policy of any

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"Protest Capital Row on 'Green Pastures',' The New York Times (February 16, 1933), p. 23."
first-class theatre in Washington to admit those whose presence the white patrons will not tolerate. There have been times when following the admission of a Negro, white patrons have risen and left their places for a considerable area surrounding the seat to which he had been ushered).  

Marc Connelly and Rowland Stebbins took sides with the NAACP and protested the exclusion of Negroes from the performances of Green Pastures in a letter to the manager of the National Theatre, which read in part as follows:

Inasmuch as Green Pastures has played to 1,500,000 persons, whites and Negroes, in all parts of the United States, none of whom has ever raised the question of Negro exclusion in the theatres in which it has appeared, we wish to protest against the reported exclusion from the National Theatre.

While we are informed that there are no legal steps we can take which would confirm our disapproval of the exclusion on the part of the management of the National Theatre, we wish to state emphatically that, if this exclusion is proved to exist, no other plays with which we may be associated will play the National Theatre, if we can prevent it.  

In spite of the protests of the NAACP and its associates, the policy of segregation remained unchanged at the National Theatre. Then the NAACP turned its

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39 Ibid.
criticism upon the colored Elks who had arranged the special performance for Negroes. J. Finley Wilson, the head of the Elks, stated that he did not arrange the segregated performance, that it was arranged by Judge Huston, a native of Indiana who had not been in Washington long. Nevertheless, a special performance of *Green Pastures* for Negroes was given at the National Theatre, Sunday night, February 10. The NAACP expressed the following attitude toward this performance in an issue of *The Crisis*:

> The show went on. Various estimates put the attendance at about four or five thousand colored people and a handful of whites. Lots of whites came, saw, and growled, "Nigger Night," and left.

> The Tribune, a local colored weekly, carried the names of the people of prominence who attended the special performance. Among them were a few teachers, a pair of lawyers, a preacher, and a physician.... When Charles Edward Russell, who has spent a lifetime battling to give colored people equal rights, stood on the sidewalk and watched hundreds of Negroes crowding into the National Theatre to a "Jim Crow" performance, he left--disgusted and discouraged.

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And thus ended one of the attacks by the NAACP on the National Theatre's segregation policy.

During 1940 the Washington Branch of the Association turned its attack from the National Theatre to one of Washington's movie houses and picketed the premiere showing of the motion picture, *Abe Lincoln in Illinois* to protest the barring of Negroes from the theatre.

During April of 1947, Actors' Equity Association appealed to Marcus Heiman, the manager of the National Theatre, to abandon his segregation policy. Clarence Derwent, president of Equity, sent Mr. Heiman an open letter which expressed Equity's position:

> The time is approaching when the actors and actresses of America must make up their minds as to whether they will continue to perform in the theatre of the nation's capital so long as a large percentage of the population is asking nothing more than rights as American citizens are barred from admittance.

> It has been erroneously stated that should the actors decide through their organization to voice their disapproval in the only effective way open to them, they would be closing the theatre or at best throwing it to the lions, in this case possibly only one lion—Metro-Goldwyn-Meyer's lion.

> Nothing could be further from the truth. Equity strives to keep the National Theatre open, as it strives to keep every legitimate

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*The Crisis, XXXVII (February, 1940), 55.*
theatre from the hungry maw of the radio and movie industries. It endeavors to augment its audience by the inclusion of a group that has a right to legitimate entertainment as undeniable as its right to breathe the same air as its white neighbor... 43

Following this appeal, Mr. Heiman did not relent on his segregation policy; then Equity delivered what amounted to an ultimatum, that the National Theatre had one year to comply with Equity's request for non-segregation, until May 31, 1948. After this date, if the National Theatre had not complied, all actors and actresses who are members of Equity would be barred from the National Theatre.

Several reactions followed this ultimatum to the National Theatre, both for and against the non-segregation policy. Reactions against the non-segregation policy included, first, no comment from Marcus Heiman; second, some of the newspapers took exception to the fact that Equity entered the dispute in behalf of Negroes and took such a firm stand. The Pittsburgh


44 Ibid.
Courier gave the following account of negative reactions:

According to The Washington Star, "Equity's action will contribute little or nothing toward a constructive solution of Washington's racial problem." It also questions the real motives underlying the campaign against the National. Following this, an Atlanta, Georgia daily came out with the statement that Paul Dulzell of Equity was largely responsible for the stand taken by the organization. Following the article's appearance in the paper, he received a letter signed by the Ku Klux Klan, daring him to come South of the Mason Dixon line. His reward for so doing, they said, would be the use of the rope and the gun.

Meanwhile, theatre managers in and around the disputed territory loudly decried the right of the stage organization to invade the front of the house, and attempt to dictate the policy pursued in that area. Play managers in many instances are also loud in their protests since the most profitable stands on the legit circuit. According to some of these, they will file suit against the organization if the National should decide to give up the ghost and resort to a straight film policy.

As an effort toward mediation in this dispute, one Washingtonian sent a letter to The New York Times suggesting that the issue be decided by letting the Washington Theatre Guild take a poll of its members on the non-segregation policy. Later, an editorial in The Washington

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Post gave a different view of Equity's ultimatum:

The decision by Equity respecting the National Theatre means that after May 31, 1948, the white people of the community will be able to enjoy live stage performances only if they are willing to share that enjoyment with their Negro fellow citizens. We have no doubt that enough white people of Washington will be willing to do just this to keep the National Theatre full to over-flowing. As we have observed before, we feel sure that their enjoyment of the theatre will not be diminished by this sharing.47

Equity's non-segregation stand was strengthened during May of 1947 when the Dramatist Guild threatened that it would keep performances off the stage of the National Theatre, the Guild having secured the pledge of forty-four playwrights. During August of the year, Equity successfully inserted an anti-discrimination clause into a contract negotiated with the League of New York Theatre Producers which became effective against all theatres August 1, 1948. However, it was revealed during this time that Equity's campaign against the National Theatre began several years previously when thirty-two playwrights


of the country made a joint agreement not to allow their works to be put on at the National Theatre until the policy barring Negroes was changed. This agreement was adopted by Chorus Equity, an affiliate of Actors' Equity. At the same time, a committee was formed with Marc Connelly as its chairman. Cornelia Otis Skinner, speaking at a meeting sponsored by the Catholic Interracial Council in New York City, said in behalf of Equity: "Art knows no racial barriers, and we want to be free to act for all the people who love the theatre."

During March of 1948, almost three months before the deadline of May 31, an Equity Committee had a conference with Congresswoman Helen Gahagan Douglas, Congressman Bender, the Under-Secretary of the Treasury, and other Government officials, in an effort to secure Washington's Belasco Theatre as a non-segregated house. At the same time, Miss Edith Atwater, acting chairman of the committee, instructed Negroes to send letters and telegrams to President Truman and to the Secretary of the Treasury, John Snyder, requesting that the Belasco be leased, which was being used by the Treasury Department as a storehouse.

50 Quoted in "Equity's Bias Fight Described by Actress," The Pittsburgh Courier (September 13, 1947), p. 17.
During the second week of May, 1948, the Treasury Department released the Belasco Theatre to become the first legitimate theatre in Washington, D. C., which would not discriminate against Negroes.

Marcus Heiman, manager of the National Theatre, announced that his theatre would become a motion picture house, and stated his position as follows:

Originally we took the position that any change in the racial situation in Washington should be approached from the over-all condition in that city and that any change should come about in an orderly and lawful manner. That community is directly under the Federal Government. We are steadfast in our original position and since Equity has forbidden its members from playing there after August 1, 1948, unless the racial policy changes we are forced, much to our regret, to eliminate the theatre from the legitimate field.

Both sides of the issue on abolishing the segregation policy at the National Theatre continued. Richard Y. Coe, drama critic for The Washington Post, gave the following view of the issue:

To me, the issue boils down to one more battle between property rights and human rights. To others, it means depriving the individual, the owner of the National Theatre, the right to conduct his business as he sees fit. To an observer, as impartial as he can make himself, the National's closing is a mixture of idealism, pride, stubbornness, confusion, ignorance, hypocracy and apathy.

54"Quoted in "Dividing the Blame," New York Times (June 20, 1948), Section 2, p. 1.
Two weeks after Equity's ban went into effect against the National Theatre, a New York and Washington theatrical interest attempted to circumvent Equity's ban by seeking to convert a movie house to a legitimate house in Alexandria, Virginia, just across the Potomac River from Washington and well within the city's metropolitan area. The NAACP then wired Actors' Equity to extend its ban to theatres in Virginia and other parts of the capital area. Later, the Municipal Court of Appeals in Washington sustained the National Theatre's right to refuse to admit Negroes.

The campaign against the National Theatre continued through 1949 to 1952. During this period, American National Theatre Academy sought the Strand Theatre motion picture house as a second non-segregated legitimate house in Washington. In 1950, Washington's Gayety Theatre opened under a non-segregation policy as a legitimate house. On March 15, 1952, the National Theatre was

58 "ANTA To Continue Efforts To Obtain Theatre in Washington," Ibid. (March 19, 1950), Section 2, p. 1.
signed in a ten-year lease to the New York Theatrical producing team of Richard Aldrich and Richard Myers. The National Theatre opened with *Call Me Madam* under a policy of non-segregation of the races. "The event was of significance," stated *The New York Times,* "because of the 117-year-old history of the National in drama and because it represents a victory of the Actors' Equity Association and the Dramatist Guild in their determination to have the theatre's traditional racial segregation policy abolished." In recognition of Actors' Equity's successful campaign against racial bias in the theatre, the National Conference of Christians and Jews presented the Annual Brotherhood Award to Equity. A week later, the Negro Actors' Guild presented a plaque of recognition to Equity which was received by Ralph Bellamy at the Negro Guild's annual benefit at the Majestic Theatre.

Against Constitution Hall.—A resume' of the Marian Anderson incident which began with the Daughters of the American Revolution denying the Negro contralto's use of the Daughters' Constitutional Hall in Washington, D. C., during 1939 has been recorded in a pamphlet under the


title *Art and the Color Line*. This record of the incident states that the Howard University School of Music, a Negro institution in Washington, requested the use of Constitution Hall for Miss Anderson's concert in January of 1939. The management of Constitution Hall replied to the request that it was impossible to use the hall on April 9 because of prior commitments. The management refused to accept the University's second application because the Daughters of the American Revolution had ruled that white artists only may be presented in commercial concerts at Constitution Hall.

Having failed to secure Constitution Hall, the School of Music of Howard University tried to obtain the auditorium of Washington's Central High School, but the Board of Education denied the request. An article in the students' paper of Central High School requested that the Board of Education change its attitude to permit Miss Anderson's concert, but the Board continued to deny requests for this concert. Finally, on March 3, the Board of Education offered the auditorium, but with the following concessions:

As a proof of good will to Marian Anderson and the Colored people of the District... but only under positive and definite assurance and agreement that the Board of Education will not in the future be asked to depart from the principle of a dual system of school and facilities.\(^\text{61}\)

The sponsoring group did not accept the Board of Education offer because the group did not wish to recognize the dual system as it was involved in the application. Many reactions followed the Daughters' barring Marian Anderson from Constitution Hall. First, a Marian Anderson Citizen Committee was formed to pursue her cause against the D. A. R. Second, Mrs. Franklin Roosevelt, wife of the President of the United States, wired the committee her regrets over the incident and indicated that she would resign from the D. A. R. Third, the National Office of the NAACP received a telegram from the Metropolitan Opera tenor and president of the American Guild of Musical Artists, Lawrence Tibbett, stating that the actions of the D. A. R. were undemocratic and un-American, and expressed profound regret for their actions. The Crisis stated that there were protests from musicians such as Kirsten Flagstad, Geraldine Farrar, Walter Damrosch, Leopold Stokowski, and Frederick Jagel. The Board of Directors of the NAACP suggested to Miss Anderson's manager that she sing her concert at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D. C.

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62 Ibid., 3.
Easter Sunday, April 9, 1939. The plans for the outdoor concert at Lincoln Memorial were approved by Harold L. Ickes, the Secretary of the Interior, and by President Roosevelt. Marian Anderson's Lincoln Memorial Concert was presented on the scheduled date before more than fifty thousand persons and was broadcast over the major radio networks. One observer recorded that the concert was a brilliant success and there was perfect order throughout; that Miss Anderson's brief address in response to the ovation which greeted her was a model of courtesy and consideration, revealing her to be not only a distinguished artist, but a woman of culture and dignity.

David Lawrence's column in The Washington Star under date of April 11 referred to the Lincoln Memorial concert as follows:

Though the voice of Marian Anderson was the voice of genius, as Secretary Ickes aptly characterized it, the scene was much more than a concert in which science, through electrical amplification and radio, had played a spectacular part. It was a scene in which the audience knew full well that an issue of racial intolerance had denied the singer the use of an auditorium owned by an organization which seeks to memorialize the history of the founders of the Republic itself.

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Anson Phelps Stokes, Art and the Color Line, p. 3.
But for the mistake in judgment on the part of the D. A. R., the opportunity to re-emphasize in America that which Lincoln stood for might not have occurred. Also but for this incident, the opportunity might not have been afforded for Government officials, irrespective of party, to show that they do not countenance the theory of inequality of citizenship which has become such an integral part of totalitarianism. 66

The Washington Daily News of April 4 reported that the Memphis, Tennessee, Chapter of the D. A. R. accepted an affirmative decision on Marian Anderson's concert in Constitution Hall. "The tolerance and appreciation displayed there can be found in many another southern community, constituting a good example for every American community" the article stated. 67

The relation of the NAACP to the incident which occurred when the D. A. R. discriminated against Marian Anderson on the basis of her race and color and barred her from Constitution Hall was indirect in most instances. The Association's Annual Report for 1939 stated that the National Office had suggested the Lincoln Memorial Concert and that the Washington Branch had lead the fight in rejecting the offer of the Central High School auditorium

66 Quoted in Ibid., p. 13.

67 Ibid
by the Board of Education. However, an editorial in The Crisis responded to the stand taken by the D. A. R. which in brief was published as follows: "This is not a question for the Daughters of the American Revolution to solve alone. When the community at large has worked out its problem, the D. A. R. will be willing at all times to adapt its policies to the practices and customs in accordance with the highest standards of the community." The Crisis editorialized as follows:

In other words, the Daughters of the American Revolution is not a society standing for certain principles of American democracy. It does not believe unalterably in democracy, in the Bill of Rights, in the Constitution, and in all the guarantees of civil liberties contained in the American form of government.

The D. A. R. believes in these principles and stand up for them only in the instances where communities have worked out these principles in their own lives... It creeps in after others have set the pattern and quietly pitches its tent, subscribing carefully to all the community mores.

When the last note of Marian Anderson's Easter Sunday concert had died away over the hushed throng below the Lincoln Memorial, everyone felt that the ultimate rebuke had been delivered to the D. A. R. and to bigotry... It remained for the D. A. R. itself through its official explanation to reveal precisely what the D. A. R. is.  

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68 Annual Report 1939, Pamphlet, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. 20 West 40th Street, New York, New York, p. 31.


70 Ibid.
The NAACP used the D. A. R. and the Marian Anderson incident as an opportunity to build up a body of public opinion against the racial bias of the D. A. R. in particular and against racial bias generally. Besides relationships to the incident through the Association's promotion of the Lincoln Memorial Concert and its stand against refusing the offer of the Central High School auditorium, the NAACP had an indirect relationship with the Marian Anderson Citizen's Committee. The chairman of this committee was Charles H. Houston who had been the Chief Counsel of the Association's Legal Bureau. This interracial committee stated its purpose as follows:

Our major purpose at this time may be simply stated. It is to secure the abrogation of your Society's (D. A. R.) rule by which at concerts for which admission is charged white artists alone may be presented. This rule is the fundamental issue at stake between your Society and those thousands of citizens of Washington who would like to have the rule abrogated, and who believe that such abrogation is both advisable and necessary if the society is to be true to the exalted purposes outlined in its Congressional Act of Incorporation.71

The Marian Anderson Citizens' Committee made an appeal for the abrogation of the Daughters' discriminatory rule concerning Constitution Hall on May 31, 1939.

71 Stokes, op. cit., p. 6.
The appeal was made to Executive Committee of the National Board of Management of the D. A. R., with Anson Phelps Stokes (Canon of Washington Cathedral and former Secretary of Yale University) representing the Citizens' Committee in the place of Charles Houston. Section III and IV of this appeal had the following form as outlined:

III. Objections Raised and Answered

(1) That the granting of the request would "under the conditions existing in the District of Columbia" be inadvisable, as it would be "contrary to accepted custom."

(a) As to the Public Schools
(b) As to Playgrounds
(c) As to Churches
(d) As to Hotels and Restaurants
(e) As to Social Life.

(2) That local law is contrary to having white and colored people in the same auditorium unless segregated.

(3) That such a concert involves some white people being seated next to Negroes in the audience.

IV. Reaction of Public Opinion

(a) The local press has, on the whole been most friendly to the idea of a concert by Miss Anderson in the D. A. R. Hall.

(b) Protests on the action of the D. A. R. came from representative bodies.

(c) The Gallup Poll is worthy of note because it is generally considered to be accurate reflection of public opinion in this country.
The following table showing the sectional vote of the approval and disapproval is highly significant, the South being the only section which disapproved of Mrs. Roosevelt's actions in resigning from the D. A. R. and that by a very narrow margin.

Table 6. Sectional Approval and Disapproval of Mrs. Franklin Delano Roosevelt's Resignation From the D. A. R. in Protest Against Race Discrimination.72

<table>
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<th>Sections</th>
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<th>Disapproval</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>New England</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Atlantic</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
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<td>East Central</td>
<td>71%</td>
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<tr>
<td>West</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(d) Opinion of representative artists.
(e) The Southern press was in many instances favorable to the proposal that Miss Anderson be allowed to sing in Constitution Hall.73

The "white only" clause was not abrogated in 1945 from the commercial contract for concerts in Constitution Hall; the clause was invoked against Hazel Scott, Negro


73 The question was raised in the discussion following this presentation as to whether Communistic groups are not represented in the Marian Anderson Citizens' Committee. A check-up of the list published March 20, 1939, containing 89 organizations showed only 3 with any marked Communistic leanings or connections.
concert pianist and wife of Representative Adam Clayton Powell, who was barred from the hall. This instance of discrimination was protested by the Leroy New York Branch of the NAACP when the vice-president of the Branch Reverend J. Stanley Ormsby, sent a letter to the local chapter of the D. A. R. requesting the chapter to join the Branch in public protest against Daughters' barring Hazel Scott. The letter in part stated the following:

The Leroy Branch of the NAACP joins with all democratic thinking people in a nation-wide protest against the unjust barring of Miss Hazel Scott... In as much as Constitution Hall is tax exempted it is a public institution; therefore, we make this protest.

We are wondering if you believe strongly enough in the applied principles of our democracy to file a formal protest resolution to be sent to the National D. A. R. We would like to take this opportunity to invite the members of the local D. A. R. to be with us at our next meeting at the Leroy House.74

The Leroy Branch received a reply from the local chapter of the D. A. R. in the form of a letter signed by the Regent of the local chapter. The letter stated the following: "I am enclosing a resolution which was already prepared before we received your letter this morning, and which passed at our chapter meeting this afternoon, and which explains our stand on the question." 75

74 Quoted in The Crisis, LIII (January, 1946), 21.
75 Ibid.
The resolution expressed the following attitude:

Tecarnawunna N. S. D. A. R. regrets the recent action taken by the National Board in regard to the renting of Constitution Hall to Negro Artists and Resolved that we urge immediate repeal of the rule forbidding such renting and that one copy of this resolution be mailed to the President-General, one to the Recording Secretary-General, and one to our State Regent. 76

At the same time, the National Office of the NAACP sponsored federal legislation to remove Constitution Hall from the tax-exemption provision on the grounds that since the hall barred Negro Artists it was no longer a public enterprise, but a private enterprise which should pay taxes. In connection with this legislation, Walter White of the NAACP issued the following statement:

There is no more complete barometer of the low estimate to which the Daughters of the American Revolution have sunk than the fact that the organization's defenders are Rankin and Bilbo (Southern Senators). Refusal of the use of the Constitution Hall to artists because of race or color, coming at the close of the war against Hitlerism is appalling.... The NAACP Legal Committee and the Association as a whole, will leave no stone unturned to effect the withdrawal of tax-exemption and other benefits which the D. A. R. enjoys as a quasi-public institution. 77

76 Ibid.
77 Quoted in The Crisis, LII (November, 1945), 326.
Later, the NAACP Washington Bureau protested the printing of the D. A. R. annual reports at the expense of the Federal Government; the Bureau pointed out that the reports had been printed for forty-seven years, and that the last report was a 202 page booklet. Then the NAACP urged Senator Hayden to introduce legislation in Congress to repeal immediately the section of the law contained in the Act incorporating the D. A. R. and authorizing the D. A. R. to make an annual report of its activities to the Smithsonian Institute and Congress.

In April of 1946, the D. A. R. Executive Committee began a drive to delete the "White Artists Only" clause from the leases of Constitution Hall. Miss Chester Mangle, a member of the D. A. R. committee said: "The policy pursued by the D. A. R. board in refusing to permit artists such as Marian Anderson and Hazel Scott has caused embarrassment to many loyal members of the organization." The 1947 Annual Report of the NAACP announced that the Legal Bureau had prepared a bill which provided that D. A. R. owned Constitution Hall "should have tax-exemption only so long as it did not discriminate against

78 Loc. cit.

79 Quoted in "D. A. R. Committee Opens Drive to Delete Clause," The New York Times (April 4, 1946), p. 27.
any person in admission to, or commercial use of, or rental of said property." This bill was introduced in Congress. During 1917, the D. A. R. permitted the Tuskegee Institute Choir to sing in Constitution Hall, but the hall was given to the choir without charge. Thus, according to the manager of the hall, the setting of a precedent was avoided. In May of 1918, the NAACP requested of James C. Petrillo, president of the American Federation of Musicians, that he not permit the Federation's second annual free music appreciation program to be given in Constitution Hall.

In April of 1951, twelve years after the barring of Marian Anderson's concert from Constitution Hall, the D. A. R. abolished its racial ban in the commercial use of the hall. The National Symphony Orchestra announced that Dorothy Manor, Negro soprano, would be the guest soloist in Symphony concert at Constitution Hall in 1952.

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82 Ibid.

The *New York Times* reported the occasion of the concert as follows:

Dorothy Manor, noted Negro soprano, sang in Constitution Hall today, the first Negro Artist to perform commercially in the D. A. R. headquarters since before 1939.

Harold Maynard, Constitution Hall manager, recalled that the D. A. R. was so irritated by people telling them how to run the hall that they wrote "White Only" provision in all their contracts.

Two years later, the D. A. R. removed the racial ban for Marian Anderson's concert. The Constitution Hall Management scheduled Marian Anderson's concert for Saturday, March 14, under the sponsorship of the American University Concert Series.

**Against theatres and places of amusement in other localities.**—The *Crisis* published incidents of discrimination and legal action in theatres and places of amusement in other localities of the Northeastern region. The following list gives a brief account of the incidents:

**Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.**—Mr. Robinson and Dr. Crampton, two prominent colored men, purchased tickets for the lower floor of the theatre. They did not see a notice over the ticket booth which read: "The balcony of this theatre is provided for our colored patrons. If you do not

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desire to sit in the balcony do not purchase tickets, as they will not be honored in any other section of the theatre." The two men were not allowed to occupy seats on the first floor. The two men sued the theatre.

Decision: The judge stated in charging the jury: "It is not for the proprietor of a place of that kind to say 'you can just come in and sit in the balcony'. He has not the right to compel one to climb the stairway to the balcony where there are unoccupied seats on the first floor.... Mr. Robinson and Dr. Crampton won the suit. VI (August, 1913) 167.

Newark, New Jersey.--Charles Lanier sued the Newark Theatrical Company for $500.00 damages because he and his wife were refused admission to the main auditorium of the Odeon Theatre. VII (March, 1914), 220.

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.--Representative Glass introduced a bill in the State Legislature to prevent places of public resort or amusement from discriminating against persons on account of race and religion. XUV (June, 1917), 91.

Buffalo, New York.--In a case brought against the Olympic Theatre for refusing to honor orchestra seats sold colored people, the complainant won. XV (March, 1918), 249.

Rhode Island.--A civil rights bill requiring equal treatment for all citizens in public places and backed by the Rhode Island Branch of the NAACP was passed by the State Senate in amended form and returned to the House. The text of the measure read: "No person within the jurisdiction of this State shall be debarred from the full and equal enjoyment of the accommodations, advantages, facilities, and privileges of any licensed inns, theatres, etc." XXVI (July, 1923), 129.

Atlantic City, New Jersey.--Mrs. Allmond was the victim of a brutal assault by a ticket-taker at the Royal theatre, when in the company of a friend, Mrs. Aubrey Tildon, she attempted to sit in the so-called white section of the theatre. She took her case before two grand juries, but she failed to bring an indictment against the ticket-taker.
The NAACP State Conference took an interest in the case along with the City Civil Rights League in taking the case to a higher court. XXXXIX (June, 1938), 169.

Rahway, New Jersey.--The NAACP Youth Council sent a letter to the editor of The Rahway Record to protest the indignities and inconveniences imposed upon Negroes in public places of amusement, especially in local theatres. The letter stated "It is the practice of the management of theatres to accost colored patrons, attempting to escort them to segregated portions of the theatre... The management has stated that as far as they were concerned there would be no discrimination, but that the white patrons objected.... XXXXVII (January, 1940), 23.

East Orange, New Jersey.--Three members of the NAACP Branch brought suit for $1,500 in penalties against the Beacon Theatre for alleged violation of the State Civil Rights Law. According to the papers filed in the suit, Mrs. Cordelia Martin, Mrs. Nancy Wanzer, and Mrs. Madeline Williams claimed they went to the theatre and sought to purchase tickets for orchestra seats and were told by the manager: "It is contrary to the policy of this theatre to sell orchestra seats to colored persons." LII (February, 1945), 57.

Wilmington, Delaware.--Six theatres began admitting Negroes on equal basis with other patrons for the first time in the history of the State. The victory was the outcome of the campaign waged by the NAACP Branch and Pauline Young. LVIII (April, 1951), 257.

Summary of campaign in the Northeast Region.--The NAACP campaign against theatres and places of amusement in New York City was aided by the civil rights laws of the State; nevertheless, there was discrimination based on customs and the individual policies of establishments such as the Stork Club. The NAACP used Josephine Baker as its agent of protest in attacking racial discrimination at the Stork Club. Although the Association did not
win its case against the Stork Club, the NAACP did focus public attention upon the issues of discrimination by establishments in New York City. The Association exerted some influence upon the appointing of the New York State Commission Against Discrimination which notified owners and proprietors of public accommodations that "Acts on their part which denied such accommodations to any person because of race, creed, or color or national origin would fall under the jurisdiction of the State Law Against Discrimination, beginning July 1, 1952."

The campaign in Baltimore, Maryland, against the Ford Theatre was more difficult than the campaign in New York City because Maryland, as a border state, contained more of the Southern tradition against racial desegregation. The NAACP successfully picketing of the Ford Theatre was aided by the individual protests of white actors against the theatre's policy as well as by the development of a favorable attitude of Governor McKeldin toward desegregation. The NAACP encouraged campaigns against other Baltimore theatres, such as the Maryland and the Northwood Theatre.

The campaign against the National Theatre in Washington, D. C., lasted from 1933 to 1952, a period of almost twenty years. This lengthy campaign was due to the segregation pattern of Washington, D. C., which contained more of the Southern tradition than either New York City

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or Baltimore. The *Green Pastures* incident at the National Theatre offered the NAACP an opportunity to draw the attention of the public to the segregation policy which barred Negroes from a performance by an all-Negro cast. Failing to secure the support of the *Green Pastures* cast for protesting, the NAACP was successful in attracting the attention of Actors' Equity, the Dramatists Guild, the Academy of National Theatre Arts, the League of New York Theatre Producers, the National Council of Christians and Jews, and the United States Treasury Department to the segregation policy of the National Theatre. The Association was successful in securing the necessary quantity of mass action on the part of Negroes and white persons. As a result of Equity's banning of its actors and actresses from the National Theatre, Equity extended its crusade to the hotels in attempt to obtain better accommodations for Negro actors and performers who traveled outside metropolitan New York. A committee was appointed for this purpose.

The campaign against the segregation policy of Constitution Hall, operated in Washington, D. C., by the Daughters of the American Revolution was centered around Marian Anderson, world-famous contralto, whom the NAACP used as an agent of protest.

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Through the relationship of the NAACP with the Marian Anderson Citizens' Committee, the NAACP was successful in aiding the development of a body of public opinion against the segregation policy of Constitution Hall. The Association concentrated on its campaign against discrimination in Washington, D. C., in order to focus both national and international attention upon the discriminatory practices in the nation's capital. The Eisenhower administration, having made campaign promises to desegregated Washington, D. C., filed a brief against discrimination by the restaurants in the nation's capital with the United States Supreme Court through Attorney General Herbert Brownell, Jr., in March of 1953. The following June, the Court ruled that it was a criminal act for any proprietor to refuse to serve any person solely because of his color. The Eisenhower administration ended theatre jim-crow in Washington during the Inaugural festivities in 1953.


2. Campaign Against Theatres and Places of Amusement in the South

Charles S. Johnson's study of segregation patterns came to the conclusion that the chief amusement places in the South are motion picture theatres, swimming pools, skating rinks, bowling alleys, dance halls and baseball parks. Negroes are excluded from all of these amusement places except theatres and baseball parks. According to Johnson's survey, all the Southern towns visited contained motion picture theatres which segregated Negroes. All of the theatres had outside separate entrances for Negroes in the front of the building to the side of the white entrance. Each theatre had a separate ticket window for Negroes. In all of the Southern cases of Johnson's study, Negroes sat in the balcony. The NAACP's campaign in the South against discrimination was primarily a defensive measure before World War II, a method which has received criticism from the more aggressive segment of the Negro race.

Against the segregation ordinance in Louisville, Kentucky.—Johnson found four types of segregation ordinances that were being passed in the South, all designed to

keep Negroes and white persons in separate residential areas and districts. Louisville passed its first segregation ordinance in 1914 which was protested immediately by the NAACP according to this news release:

Financial support in interest of the constitutionality of an ordinance segregating Negroes in Louisville was pledged by several hundred Negroes at a mass meeting here today. An address was delivered by Professor Spingarn of New York and Professor William Pickens of Talladega College, Alabama.... Professor Spingarn said the NAACP would assist in fighting the ordinance.92

Booker T. Washington, reacting to the segregation ordinances that were being passed in the South said that he had never found a case where the masses of the people of any given city were interested in the matter of segregation of white and colored people, but city politicians had taken the leadership in promoting segregation ordinances. With the aid of the NAACP Legal Bureau, and the colored citizens of Louisville, a decision was won from the United States Supreme Court that declared the city's segregation ordinance unconstitutional on November 5, 1917.


92Cited in op. cit., Johnson, p. 175.

Three years earlier, The Crisis reported a victory won by the colored people of Louisville, Kentucky, in the area of theatre segregation: "The colored people of Louisville, Kentucky, have obtained a half-victory from the manager of the National Theatre in that city. Instead of a back entrance and seats in the gallery only, they will hereafter use the street entrance and have accommodation in the first balcony.

Colored citizens of Louisville, having defeated the segregation ordinance in 1917, laid a legal foundation for further advances toward desegregation. For example, they broke down the segregation pattern for the use of municipal auditoriums in the South. In the following, Johnson described the interracial uses of auditoriums:

There are three kinds of things given at the auditorium. There are all-Negro affairs when Negroes take the whole house and have no contact with white people. Then, there are mixed things, such as the Marian Anderson concert this Spring when the auditorium was divided equally from the first floor to the top gallery, one-half for Negroes and one-half for whites. There were white ushers and colored ushers. The third kind of affair is the white affair, when provisions are made for Negroes in the gallery.95

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94 The Crisis, VII (March, 1914), 221.
95 Charles S. Johnson, Patterns of Negro Segregation, p. 43.
This pattern was broken by the colored people of Louisville when Billy Rose's all-colored cast of Carmen Jones was presented at the Municipal Auditorium in 1946. The local branch of the NAACP threw a picket line around the auditorium to protest the segregation pattern which called for complete division of the house from top gallery to stage. Because of this protest, Mayor Wilson Wyatt made a new policy, "No segregation for an all-Negro attraction." During 1953 the NAACP brought a suit against the Louisville Amphitheatre which was public owned but was privately operated in order to exclude Negroes. The NAACP lost its case in the United States Court of Appeals. The following year, the Association took two cases to the United States Supreme Court, one against public school segregation and the other against the Louisville Park Theatrical Association which denied Negroes access to the Municipal Amphitheatre. Action was reported on the cases

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96 "Picket Auditorium," The Crisis, LIV (January, 1947), 43.

97 NAACP, Annual Report, 1953, p. 47
as follows:

Both cases were disposed of by the Court on May 24; certiorari was denied in the first, and the judgment in the latter was vacated and remanded for consideration in the light of the decision in the school segregation cases. In neither case was there a ruling on the merits, but Negroes immediately began to enjoy the advantages of both recreational facilities."98

As a result of this city's early victories over the segregation ordinances, Louisville was the first large Southern city to desegregate its educational, transportation, and recreational facilities.

Against theatres and places of amusement in Richmond, Virginia.--The Johnson survey on the segregation patterns of theatres revealed that in Richmond, Virginia, the all-Negro theatre had entirely displaced the attendance by Negroes at white theatres.

Incidentally, an appearance of the "Ziegfeld Follies" at the Academy Theatre was cancelled in 1916 "Because it was not thought wise to have Bert Williams, the colored comedian appear with a company otherwise made up of white actors and actresses.

99 Johnson, op. cit., pp. 74-75.
100 The Crisis, XII (June, 1916), 65.
This pattern of segregation has remained quite rigid, for two concerts by Negro artists were cancelled during 1951. On January 9, Dr. J. M. Tinsley, president of the Richmond Branch of the NAACP wrote a letter to Marian Anderson in which he asked her to cancel her concert which had been scheduled at the Mosque. It was reported that Dr. Tinsley advised Miss Anderson that the NAACP felt compelled to urge its members and other freedom loving citizens to refrain from attending the concert unless the audience is unsegregated. Irving Field, whose company handled the tickets for the concert, explained to the press that the entire center of the house had been allotted for sale to Negroes. "There may be some complaints from white patrons about this," commented Mr. Field, "we went a way out to make it clear that Negroes will have ample opportunity to hear Miss Anderson." Miss Anderson cancelled her concert. The segregation pattern at the city-owned Mosque varied from the general pattern for a Marian Anderson concert because the house was divided unequally: Negroes would occupy the center one-third; the white patrons would occupy the two sides, which is two-thirds of the auditorium.

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Later in the month, the Richmond Branch of the NAACP asked Negroes to stay away from Duke Ellington's concert because of the segregation pattern used at the Mosque. When the Richmond News Leader called Mr. Ellington by telephone in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Ellington was reported to have said: "It's a shame. Why do they wait until an artist makes commitments? What do they do the rest of the year?" Dr. Tinsley, president of the Branch, explained that the boycott was not aimed at Mr. Ellington: "It is just part of our campaign to get the segregation laws of Virginia repealed. Duke Ellington and his band yielded to the boycott and canceled the concert.

During 1954, the Richmond NAACP picketed The Black Hills Passion Play which was playing at the municipally operated Mosque. The branch president reported that although the segregation pattern remained unchanged, the Richmond performances were financial flops.


103 Ibid.

104 The Crisis, LXI (February, 1954), 112.
Against a theatre segregation pattern in New Orleans, Louisiana.--During 1914 colored citizens in New Orleans, Louisiana, overcame complete exclusion from the French Opera House and gained admission to the fourth gallery and to the pit at the Sunday matinees. The report in The New Orleans Picayune gave the following compliment to the Negro audiences:

And incidentally, among the most appreciative listeners when Faust was sung yesterday afternoon were the colored people in the fourth gallery. Quietly, but with eagerness and enjoyment manifested throughout the little group which extended across the first row, they listened to the performance and enjoyed it as perhaps none of the other lovers present. 105

Another report from New Orleans illustrated the pattern of segregation composed of an all-Negro performance for an all-white audience. A Negro vaudeville troupe gave a special midnight performance for an all-white audience at the Lyric Theatre which evoked the following review in The New Orleans Item:

The Negro has an art, music, and mannerism all his own. The white man cannot imitate them. It isn't in his blood. We've borrowed the Negro's jazz and danced to it, but we cannot create it. Our ancestors were born in the wrong places for that.... No white man could have composed "Swing

105 Quoted in The Crisis, VIII (September, 1914), 86.
Low Sweet Chariot", he hasn't the background of centuries of oppression. The Negro's music, and his minstrel art are his own.

The Negro has his art, and he is so pathetic in the picture of a true artist denied expression of his art because of a black skin.106

The above illustrated the patronage paid by Southern whites to Negro art, although there were laws and customs which separated the races.

Against a segregated seating pattern in Jacksonville, Florida.—A Negro sorority, Alpha Kappa Alpha, sponsored Marian Anderson in a concert at the Jacksonville Armory Auditorium and set aside a section of the auditorium for white patrons who had bought tickets. When Marian Anderson was informed of the segregated arrangement, she reminded the sorority that her contract contained a non-segregation clause. The sorority immediately refunded the money for tickets to 250 white persons. The Crisis editorialized as follows on the incident:

It seems that some southern cities are willing to accept top-flight Negro artists in non-segregated public concerts. Marian Anderson sang to a non-segregated audience in Jacksonville, Florida, on January 23; on January 25, she again sang to a mixed Negro-white audience in Miami, with sixty plain

106 Quoted in The Crisis, XXVI (October, 1923), 268.

clothesmen, F. B. I. agents and Miami and Dade County policemen mixing with the audience. In Miami, it is said that about sixty per cent of the 2,000 persons in attendance were white....

If all outstanding concert artists had enforced non-segregated clauses in their contracts, the South could not long afford the luxury of the segregated concert audience in a civic auditorium. Culturally, Dixie is still in many respects the "Sahara of the Bozart," especially in areas of music and drama. Hence, the apostles of southern Kulture are much more likely to relax their segregation policies first in these areas. It is extremely hard to defend the separation of a music-loving audience on such an irrational basis as skin-color. And this particular type of segregation seems to be getting less and less support in many southern municipalities.108

Against a segregated seating pattern in Charleston, South Carolina.---The Dock Street Theatre of Charleston, South Carolina, decided to present performances of Porgy in its natural locale, the play having been written by Du Bose and Dorothy Heyward and having brought them fame on Broadway in the 1920's. Mr. A. J. Clement, Jr., president of the Charleston Branch of the NAACP wrote a letter to the Dock Street Theatre committee and expressed the hope that the production would be handled with sincerity and sensitivity. The letter added that since the laws of South Carolina require separate but equal seating arrangement, Negroes would occupy at least half of County Hall

108 "No Segregation- Marian Anderson," The Crisis LIX (March 1952), 165-166.
divided from gallery through the orchestra. The Dock Street Theatre producers agreed to the terms of the NAACP and recruited an all-Negro cast and went into rehearsal on March 1, 1954. At a meeting with the sponsors on March 13, Mr. Clement and other Negro spokesmen demanded that the audience be integrated with no designated sections for white and Negro patrons. The sponsors held that changing the arrangement of County Hall was a legal problem not within the province of the Dock Street Theatre and regretfully canceled the production of Porgy in its natural setting. The New York Times reported that the next day, the president of the Branch issued a statement saying that he had been under "pressure" from sources both in Charleston and outside that objected to his agreement to segregated audiences at the proposed performances.

Towards desegregation in Southern theatres and places of amusement.—The NAACP began a campaign after World War II to desegregate places of entertainment in the South which featured Negro performers. For example, Norman Granz, who traveled with a group of colored and white musicians in a musical show called Jazz at the Philharmonic,

asked the NAACP to compile the civil rights provision of all states and cities so that he and his group would know their legal rights wherever they traveled. Mr. Granz's contract contains an anti-discrimination clause similar to the one in Marian Anderson's contract which states in essence that there is to be no discrimination in the sale of tickets and no segregation of whites and Negroes; and, in the event of violation, the performer had the right to refuse to give the show. Mr. Granz, a white performer, achieved the following results for his efforts toward desegregation:

In late October of 1951, the "jazz at the Philharmonic" group signed for an engagement at Miami's Dinner Key Auditorium, but not before Granz had insisted that there be no segregation of any kind in the auditorium. As a result of his adamant stand against the protests of the management, for the first time in history, segregation was abolished in a Miami concert hall. Granz scored similar victories in El Paso and San Antonio, Texas, during November.

In 1956, Morris Levy and his associates who presented the Birdland Jazz Stars, interracial musicians who performed in New York City and also toured the South, inserted an anti-discrimination clause in the musicians'

110 "Granz Fights Segregation," The Pittsburgh Courier (September 27, 1947), p. 22.

111 Eunice Truckenbrodt, "Granz and the Jazz Philharmonic," The Crisis, LIV (May, 1947), 143.
contracts. The NAACP sought to get other performers to insert similar clauses in their contracts through the various unions.

The racially-mixed performing groups such as Jazz at the Philharmonic have generally been unacceptable by white audiences in the South because of the general segregation pattern which formed a taboo against white and Negro performers occupying the same stage at the same time, but which approved sometimes of shows which present Negro performers in isolated segments of productions. Billy Eckstine, a Negro singer who traveled in the South with a concert group of white and colored performers in 1953, reported a degree of progress toward the acceptance of "mixed concert packages":

The growing number of all-Negro units which have been hitting the Southern trail, adds Eckstine, are spearheading the way to better understanding and it'll probably be only a matter of four or five years before mixed units will be regular attractions.

More and more theatres, reports Eckstine, are dropping their color barriers by permitting Negroes to purchase tickets at the same box-office and eliminating the special section designated for "Negroes only".

113 "Ask Music Union to Aid Bias Fight," The Pittsburgh Courier (October 6, 1956), p. 20.
In one theatre which refused to seat Negroes
downstairs, Eckstine beat the prejudice problem
by placing 500 Negroes on the stage behind him.

Eckstine credits the teen-agers and the
college kids for the South's regeneration. "They're
forgetting the prejudices of their parents and
coming to the dances and concerts with nothing more
on their minds than the desire to be entertained."

The "rock 'n' roll" dances and concerts which attract
both white and Negro teen-agers in the South are examples
of Mr. Eckstine's observation of their desire to be enterta­
tained without reference to the tradition of segregation.
For example, an integrated "rock 'n' roll" dance was
given in the Samuel Houston Coliseum of Houston, Texas,
with music supplied by the Record Stars of 1956. It was
reported that white and Negro teen-agers jammed the floor
and that the police were unable to prevent the white teen­
agers from dancing on the floor at the same time the Negro
teen-agers were occupying the floor. One week later, the
Negro ensemble of Fats Domino played for a dance at the
Samuel Houston Coliseum. When Mr. Domino played "Ain't
It A Shame," hundreds of white teen-agers came to the
floor and attempted to dance while Negro couples were
occupying the floor. This time, the police stopped the
dance and announced that only white couples could dance
since there were more whites than Negroes. Then Mr.

114 "Mixed Acts in Dixie in Five Years," The Pittsburgh
Courier (May 9, 1953), p. 18.
Domino refused to play for the dance; he stated, "Man, I could not go for those happenings as my people made me famous and to play for a jim-crow dance would hurt me over the country." The promoters had to refund the money for the tickets, and their attitude toward the situation was expressed accordingly:

Asked for an explanation, Mr. Rausaw said that he did not give Negro or white dances and all were invited to come. Since all the talk about desegregation, white teen-agers are no longer content to come to dances featuring Negro artists and sit and listen while Negroes dance.

There is no Texas State law against white and Negroes dancing on the same floor, one prominent Houston lawyer told The Courier. The only interracial laws deal with inter-marriage, buses (now invalid) and state parks (also voided). White teen-agers are getting their first taste of discrimination and they don't like it....

The segregation pattern is more rigid in the State of Alabama than in Texas. When the Nat (King) Cole ensemble played for an all-white audience in Birmingham, Alabama, during 1956, the group of musicians was attacked physically by a group of white men. After the attack,

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116 Ibid
Mr. Cole was asked by the NAACP to join a crusade against "racism", an incident which has been referred to in Chapter III of this study. At the same time, The Pittsburgh Courier, a Negro newspaper favorable toward the programs of the NAACP, wrote a letter to all the theatrical organizations requesting that they take a stand against Southern bias, violence, and discrimination toward Negro musicians and performers.

William G. Nunn, Sr., National Affairs Editor for The Pittsburgh Courier, wrote an article requesting Negro bands and entertainers to stay out of the South; he based his request upon the assertion that such performers as Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong, and Nat (King) Cole were making enough money to avoid appearing before Southern audiences. Mr. Nunn continued his article as follows:

I don't know how many of these Negro stars have life memberships with the NAACP, but all of them should. As I view the South today, there can't be over half-dozen places in all of Dixie where there's any big money.

And Negro entertainers today can't hide behind the worn-out cliche' that it's their job to entertain people, and to hell with Jim-crow seating, undependable hotel accommodations, slurs, insults, slanders, and what have you.117

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Summary of the campaign in the Southern Region.--
The NAACP made more progress toward desegregation of theatres and places of amusement in Louisville, Kentucky, than those in other cities of the South. For example, the colored entrance to a motion picture theatre in Louisville was changed from the rear of the theatre to the front; a precedent was established by changing the seating pattern for an all-Negro performance from segregation to non-segregation. On the other hand, the segregation pattern was so firm in the places of amusement, such as Richmond, Virginia, that there is now complete separation of Negro and white motion picture theatres and in the use of the municipal auditoriums.
The segregation issue arising out of the seating arrangement in County Hall for the proposed production of Porgy in Charleston, South Carolina, led to the Association's refusing to accept the usual pattern of dividing the auditorium from gallery through the orchestra but to its insisting on non-segregation.

Further South, in cities such as New Orleans, the only progress that the colored citizens have been able to make, even with the aid of the NAACP, is from no admittance to places of amusement to segregated admittance. In some instances, all-Negro shows give two performances, one separate performance for Negroes, and one for whites.
The influence of the campaign by Actors' Equity Association against the National Theatre's segregated policy in Washington, D. C., extended further South than the District of Columbia. Norman Granz's Jazz at the Philharmonic and The Birdland Revues place non-discrimination clauses in their contracts. "Rock 'n' Roll" musical shows and dances are contributing to integration among Southern Negro and white teen-agers. The merging of the Negro musical forms, both in performance and composition, is also contributing to racial integration in the South and leading to more favorable acceptance of shows featuring both Negro and white performers in the same acts and segments of production.

However, since the Supreme Court Decision of May 17, 1954, which has brought about action upon the issue of desegregation in the public schools primarily in the South, desegregation in the theatre will continue at a slower pace than it did before the Supreme Court Decision. For example, Alabama permitted racially mixed baseball when the major league teams played exhibition games during the spring on the way from Florida to the North, but since the Supreme Court decision, racially mixed athletics are no longer permitted in Alabama and some of the other Southern states. On the other hand, the Supreme Court Decision has opened other
places of amusement to Negroes to which they have been previously barred. For example, the municipal golf courses, parks, and swimming pools in Baltimore, Maryland; Washington, D. C.; Louisville, Kentucky; and Nashville, Tennessee, all are now admitting Negroes on non-segregated basis. Desegregation in Southern theatres will follow the pace of desegregation in public schools more closely than desegregation in other places of amusement.

3. Campaign Against Theatres and Places of Amusement in the Midwest and Farwest

The segregation patterns of the Eastern and Southeastern states extended with various modifications to the Midwest and Farwest. As early as 1917, the NAACP protested against racial discrimination practices by theatres in the West and Midwest. The Crisis published the following notice concerning protests: "...In Topeka, Kansas, Negroes have appealed to the County Attorney for their rights in theatres; in California, a judgment of $50.00 and cost have been won in a theatre in Oakland for discrimination; in Chicago, the doorkeeper of the Franklin Theatre, has been adjudged guilty of discrimination against two colored persons. The Strand Theatre has been sued by a colored girl, Malinda Phifer, in 1918."
Charles S. Johnson observed in his study that the local theatres in Dayton, Ohio, discouraged Negro patronage by changing prices without notice when Negro patrons presented themselves to purchase tickets. The migration of Negroes before and after World War II to the Midwest and Farwest intensified the type of segregation and discrimination practiced by the border states.

Against theatres and places of amusement in Cincinnati, Ohio.—During 1941, the Cincinnati Branch of the NAACP became more aware of the discrimination against Negroes by the downtown theatres of the city which were evading the Civil Rights laws of the state. The campaign waged by the local branch was described in a feature article for _The Crisis_ as follows:

To cope with this planned conspiracy to exclude Negroes, the Cincinnati Branch had to organize both offensive and defensive maneuvers. Every single case had to be rehearsed before it was staged. Principals and witnesses were told what to do and what not to do. Prior to staging the case, the Branch sent its white members to the theatres in order to ascertain all pertinent facts, such as the proper approach to the ticket window, seating arrangement, and the appropriate time to send theatre excursions.

Motion pictures played a valuable part in the planning of the Cincinnati cases. Dr. G. Barrett Rich secured motion picture cameras for the Branch and actually took pictures of the refusals in the theatre lobbies. On one excursion, the management after refusing the aggrieved party, became so confused and excited when he learned motion pictures had been taken, that the manager begged to admit the colored

Charles S. Johnson, op. cit., p. 75.
patrons if he would not be prosecuted. By such prior preparation, the Branch was not only able to cope with the strategems of managements but to employ effective offensive maneuvers.119

This article appeared in The Crisis for the purpose of instructing other Branches in the techniques of protest against discrimination by theatres in States and cities which have civil rights laws. However, the Cincinnati Branch has not been able to change the segregation policy at Coney Island, a privately owned recreation park and dance hall of that city. Stan Kenton, popular white jazz orchestra leader, was questioned by The Pittsburgh Courier after his orchestra had played Coney Island as to his awareness of the racial ban against Negroes. Mr. Kenton was quoted as follows on the subject:

"Yes, I am much aware of the fact that I am playing in a controversial spot," said Kenton, "I realize it more this year than I did last year."

Kenton went on to say that it was regrettable that such discrimination exists. He pointed out that since Coney Island is privately owned he knew of nothing which would be done about it for the time being. He was surprised to learn, however, that the park received its license from the city and also the city collected taxes from Coney Island.120

119 William A. McClain, "Cincinnati's Theatre Doors Are Opened," The Crisis, XXXVIII (December, 1941), 382-383, 289.

Against theatres and places of amusement in Oklahoma City.—A protest against a theatre operated by white owners for Negro patronage occurred in Tulsa, Oklahoma, during 1939 is another example of discrimination in services for Negroes. The NAACP Youth Council of Tulsa complained to the management about the conditions at the Dreamland Theatre, but the management refused to make improvements. The Youth Council then organized a boycott against the theatre. The management, a month later, made the following improvements, which indicated the previous conditions at this theatre, and invited the local NAACP to inspect the renovations:

1. Painted the men's rest-room
2. Painted the women's rest-room
3. Screened the women's rest-room
4. Moved the water fountain away from the toilet door
5. Replaced the old toilet seats with new seats
6. Decorated the sounding screen
7. Enforced a policy of strict order in the audience
8. Offered the theatre to civic organizations for sponsoring benefit shows
9. Offered the services of the theatre to the NAACP for the Association's financial campaigns

121 "Theatre Improvements South," The Crisis, XXXVI (April, 1939), 119.
The Municipal Auditorium in Oklahoma City became the center of a controversy within the racial group and the NAACP when Etta Moten, Negro singer and motion picture star, gave a concert there in 1953. Mrs. Caroline Burks of the Oklahoma City branch reported to The Crisis that Miss Etta Moten had stated during her concert that the NAACP was controlled by the Communists. When Miss Moten was questioned about her alleged remarks, she explained that the charges of Communism had been made by a Muskogee school teacher. Then the local branch claimed that Mrs. Burks's letter to The Crisis was unauthorized. At the same time, the branch expressed its appreciation for Miss Moten's concert and approval of her favorable comments on the integrated seating pattern in the Municipal Auditorium. "We loved her for that," wrote the local branch, "particularly we who have fought so hard for integration at the Municipal Auditorium."

Against theatres and places of amusement in Kansas City. --During the third year (1913) of the NAACP's existence, the National Office received a letter from Kansas City, Missouri, which explained an unusual pattern of racial segregation in theatres. The letter published in

The Crisis, LX (October, 1953), 491.
The Crisis, quoted the following policy of the theatre:

During the week of February 9-15, Southern and Marlowe were in Shakespeare repertoire at the Shubert Theatre. As is generally known, the colored people are placed in the rear seats of all theatres in Kansas City, some of them selling the seats to colored people from the last row forward, but only so far forward as the demand for seats on the part of the white permits. Some colored people, refined and intelligent, purchased tickets in the last row. On presenting the tickets they were told that they could enter and stand, but could not occupy the seats for which their tickets called. They were informed that their money would be refunded if they did not care to enter under these conditions.123

Beneficial motives toward the Negro at cross purposes brought about a suit against a Kansas City theatre in 1949. Following World War II, Walter White, NAACP executive secretary, met with the motion picture producers of Twentieth Century Fox and succeeded in gaining their cooperation in removing Negro stereotypes from the screen. Partially as a result of this meeting, Twentieth Century Fox produced such films on racial tolerance as Gentlemen's Agreement, Pinky, and No Way Out. In 1949, two Negroes sued one of Fox's theatres, The Grenada Theatre in Kansas City, Kansas, for $20,000 damages on the ground that they were refused admission because of "discrimination as to color and race." The New York Times reported that one of the officials at the studio stated

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123 The Crisis, VII (May, 1913), 41.
that Twentieth Century Fox's policy on racial segregation and discrimination is determined in each individual case by the conventions of the community in which the theatre is located. The National Office of the NAACP reported that suits were filed by the Kansas City branch against theatres that denied tickets to Negroes, and that segregation and discrimination were abolished by the theatres without formal court procedure.

Against theatres and places of amusement in California.--Following World War II, in 1921, the NAACP took advantage of an opportunity offered by a suit against a theatre for racial discrimination. A Negro youth, accompanied by a girl, purchased tickets for the orchestra of Kinema Theatre in Fresno, California. When they entered the theatre, they were accosted by the head usher who attempted to direct the boy and girl to a remote part of the theatre near the right wall. When the boy and girl protested, the usher politely but firmly called their attention to a statement printed on the back of the ticket which read, "Admit one to such seats as may be assigned by the management." The boy, Edward Jones, and the girl left the theatre when they were prevented from occupying seats


in the center section. Since Edward Jones was a minor, his father entered a suit against the theatre in the State's Superior Court and won the decision, but the theatre appealed the case. The boy's father did not have enough financial support to fight the appeal. At this point, the Fresno branch continued the suit against the theatre in the higher court and won the decision. One of the justices made this statement in connection with the decision: "The kernel of this decision is that principle therein established and which enlarges upon the legal definition of discrimination. In effect, it says that enforced segregation is, per se, a discrimination which is in violation of civil rights statues." Two years later, the San Diego branch succeeded in having the State Civil Rights Law amended so that racial discrimination would be illegal in hotels, restaurants, ice-cream parlors, barber shops, bath houses, theatres, and other places of public accommodation.

The migration of Negroes to California after World War II caused a revival of interest in discrimination and segregation. In 1952 the segregationist factions in the

126 "Civil Rights in California," The Crisis, XXI (February, 1921), 166.

126 The Crisis, XXVII (November, 1923), 8.
state came forward with a movement to prevent segregation; they used the slogan, "Freedom of Choice," and sought to amend the State Constitution to prevent desegregation. According to The Crisis, the proposed amendment would insure the following:

1. Freedom of choice for owners, proprietors, and managers of places of public accommodation "to choose" their patrons

2. Freedom of choice for property owners "to choose" their neighbors

3. Freedom of choice for employers to "choose" their employees.

While some of these amendments would be of doubtful legality or effectiveness, it was clear that the campaign had to be shorn of high-sounding phrases and exposed in its true light. The NAACP joined with other groups in forming a committee to combat the movement. The efforts put forth in publicizing its purpose resulted in its failure to really get going. The threat that such a movement might be initiated again remains, and all branches in the region were alerted to be on guard.128

The National Office of the Association continued its vigilance in California against segregation and discrimination. In 1954, before the Supreme Court Decision of May 17 of that year, Negro leaders on the

128 NAACP, Annual Report, 1952, p. 28
West Coast assayed the regional status of the Negro and concluded that an intensification of his problems had outweighed his over-all gains. Franklin H. Williams, regional secretary on the West Coast and counsel for the NAACP explained the situation as follows according to a press report:

Actually, he said, the West Coast and neighboring states are far behind the Middle Atlantic and New England States in respect to the rights of Negroes.

He declared that with 1,000 to 2,500 Negroes moving into California alone every month, there was danger that in five or six years the Farwest would have its own "South Chicago" and Harlems. Such a development he said will lead to all-Negro schools and situations contributing to juvenile delinquency.

The statement issued by the association's regional leaders viewed "with justified alarm the continued widespread denial of basic and inalienable rights and privileges to large segments of our growing population in the Farwest."

Summary of the campaign in the Midwest and Farwest. Although Charles Johnson's survey of segregation patterns did not cover the Midwest and Farwest, the Association's campaign revealed that the more rigid conventions and traditions of the South and border states were observed in the West. The campaign in Cincinnati, Ohio, was an

example of interracial cooperation in protesting against theatres which occurred in the Midwest and the Northeast, but seldom occurred in the South. On the other hand, the boycott as employed by the Youth Council in Tulsa, Oklahoma, was an example of protest used in cities where there are neighborhood theatres operated by white management for Negroes. In most instances, these all-Negro theatres are not equal to the white neighborhood theatres in equipment, decorations, construction, and cleanliness. Oklahoma City evidently used segregated seating in its Municipal Auditorium before the NAACP successfully protested against the pattern which was revealed in the controversy over Etta Moten's remarks. The report on the segregation pattern in Kansas City gave evidence that Negro patronage was discouraged by the theatres as well as by theatres in other Midwestern cities.

The NAACP campaigned against discrimination and segregation in California and received more emphasis due to the steady growth of the Negro population in that state, a situation similar to the earlier enactment of civil rights legislation in New York. The opposition to desegregation seemed to have been more stern than in New York, the "Freedom of Choice" movement for an example. The NAACP West Coast Conference of 1954 came to the conclusion that the West was lagging behind the East in the recognition of
the Negro's legal rights and was following a segregation pattern that would create "Harlems" and segregated schools.

4. Methods of the NAACP in Campaigning Against Segregation and Discrimination

According to the documentation in this chapter, the NAACP was successful in most of its protests in achieving the results desired by the Association. The NAACP exerted its influence on the courts of law, on other organizations, on important individuals, and on public opinion in the campaign for desegregation and for the end of discrimination based on color and race. In the cases where the NAACP was not entirely successful, the Association did achieve the goal of informing the public concerning the practices of segregation and discrimination in opposition to civil rights laws. These results were achieved by the Association through methods discussed in Chapter II of this study, through the Association's external and internal programs.

Legal action.--The earlier protests of the NAACP against theatres and places of amusement were in the area of legal action and were based on the concept that the right to public entertainment is a civil right and not a right for social equality. The campaigns in New York City, Baltimore, Maryland, Cincinnati, Ohio, and in the State of California were based on either the passage of civil right laws or on
the enforcement of civil right laws. Legal action against segregation and discrimination in Southern theatres and places of amusement has been based on the Constitution of the United States, especially since the Supreme Court Decision of May 17, 1954.

Cooperation with other organizations. — In the more difficult campaigns against the National Theatre and Constitution Hall of Washington, D. C., and against the theatres in Baltimore, Maryland, the assistance of other organizations was largely responsible for the success of the campaigns. The list of organizations participating in protesting includes Actors' Equity Association, Chorus Equity, The Theatre Guild, The Dramatists Guild, The League of New York Producers, The Marian Anderson Citizens' Committee, The Leroy New York NAACP Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, student groups, and several other organizations. The direct participation of Negro groups were in the minority. This list also revealed active liberalism of certain theatre producers, directors, and actors.

Cooperation of individuals. — Besides gaining the cooperation of other organizations, the NAACP was successful in using the personal prestige and services of a few individuals. The prestige of Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt was
used in the campaign against Constitution Hall. Norman Granz was one of the first white performers to insert a "no segregation" clause in his contract. Several actors and actresses gave personal statements publicly in favor of the anti-segregation and non-discriminatory policies of the NAACP. Marian Anderson, however, has been the most important individual in the Association's campaign in breaking down the segregation pattern in municipal auditoriums. Miss Anderson's Easter Sunday Concert at Lincoln Memorial furnished national publicity for the NAACP; she has used the "no segregation" clause successfully in the South. Other performers have also been effective in protesting against discrimination and segregation in places of public amusement.

Mass action.—There has been the use of mass action by groups under the influence of the NAACP in several localities. In New York City, a group demonstrated its protest before the office of Marcus Heiman, the owner of the Ford Theatre and the National Theatre. The picketing of the Ford Theatre and Sherman Billingsley's Stork Club was another example of mass action. On other occasions, the boycott or the threat of boycott was used. The threat of boycott was used against the Dreamland Theatre in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and against Duke Ellington's concert scheduled for Richmond, Virginia. In the deep South, the NAACP
exerted its influence upon the mass action, or inaction of Negroes, as an outside force; for example, the president of the branch in Charleston, South Carolina, admitted that he was influenced by the National Office in protesting against the segregated seating pattern at County Hall.

Creating favorable public opinion.--In the preceding chapter of this study, there is the discussion of the Association's concern about Negro performers gaining public acceptance on the stage. In this chapter, there is the Association's concern about Negroes' gaining public acceptance in theatre audiences. In the border states and Northeastern States, public opinion changed to accept the Negro in the audience rather than to be denied any theatre entertainment at all as illustrated by the campaign in Washington, D. C. In other situations, segregation was not the will of the majority of the people concerned but the will of the minority acting in accord with the traditions of the community concerning segregation, which led to the barring of Marian Anderson from Constitution Hall. In the South since the Supreme Court Decision of May 17, 1954, which called for desegregation in public education, it is possible that full acceptance of the Negro in the audience will follow his full acceptance in the integrated public schools.
CHAPTER V
RELATIONSHIPS OF THE NAACP WITH THE
NON-COMMERCIAL THEATRES

The approach to the theatre in this Chapter is somewhat the reverse of the approach in Chapter III. Here, the theatre is to be considered not specifically as the non-commercial theatre that operated in reaction to commercialism, but generally as the theatre that did not offer Negro performers economic opportunities and compensation for their work. The Association's relationships with the commercial theatre was and still is toward obtaining more favorable representation of Negro life and more economic opportunities for Negro performers. These motives are related to the external program of the NAACP. Consequently, the Association's relationships with the non-commercial theatre are related to its internal program: social and cultural uplift, promotion of race-pride and group consciousness.

The Little Theatre Movement, which began in America during the first decade of the twentieth century, was one of the first reactions to commercialism in the theatre. Theatre historian, Sheldon Cheney said:

The little theatre movement was essentially a revolt. What the insurgents revolted against was commercial domination of "amusements" such as no
other country has known, as pretty and powerful a trust as that ever controlled by steel or oil or wool, and made millions while all competition was stifled. 1

Reactions to commercialism brought about three main classes of group activities, according to Clarence Arthur Perry's study: (1) independent organizations, (2) those connected with high schools, and (3) those connected with colleges, universities, and normal schools. 2 This chapter will include for discussion the independent theatre groups and the educational theatre above the secondary school level.

1. The Association's Inter-racial Attitude
   Toward Pageantry

Percy MacKaye, son of Steele MacKaye, was among the individuals who revolted against commercialism in the theatres. As early as 1909, Percy MacKaye began to publish articles which presented the idea that the theatre could be used as a recreational and cultural activity for a community. In his book, The Civic Theatre, he explained his conception of pageantry as follows:

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How does such an art concern the American people at large? Pageantry is poetry for the masses. The parades of Election and Saint Patrick's Day, the procession of Antics and Horribles, the clanging brigades of firemen, the May-Queen rituals of children, the marching of drum-corps and regiments—these make an elemental appeal to every man in the street, as to every woman who throws open her shutter to look and listen.

Crude though it often be, then, pageantry satisfies an elemental instinct for art, a popular demand for poetry. This instinct and this demand like other human instincts and demands, capable of being educated, refined, developed into a mighty agency of civilization. Refinement of this deep popular instinct will result from a rational selection and correlation of the elements of pageantry.


Dr. Du Bois subscribed to Percy MacKaye's conception of pageantry on the basis of its mass appeal to the elemental instincts of humanity and its potential refinement in the processes of mass education. During the third year of the Association's existence, the Negroes in the United States declared the year, 1913, "A Year of Jubilee," for the observance of fifty years of emancipation from slavery.

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dating from Abraham Lincoln's Proclamation in 1863. A National Emancipation Exposition was planned for the celebration in New York City the last ten days of October. This Exposition was given a budget of $25,000.00. As a member of the Exposition Commission, Dr. Du Bois wrote a pageant, The Star of Ethiopia, which was to be presented during the Exposition.

The Star of Ethiopia was performed in New York City as scheduled, October 25, 26, and 30, 1913. Charles Burroughs was the producer, assisted by Dora Cole Norman, Marie Stuart Jackson and Augustus G. Dill. The Star of Ethiopia was printed in The Crisis with the following synopsis of scenes:

Prelude: The lights of the Court of Freedom blaze. A trumpet blast is heard and four heralds, black and of gigantic stature, appear with silver trumpets and standing at the four corners of the Temple of Beauty cry:

"Hear ye, hear ye! Men of all the Americas, and listen to the tale of the eldest and strongest of the races of mankind, whose faces be black. Hear ye, hear ye of the gifts of the black men in this world...." (Then follow the episodes of presenting the gifts):

First Episode: The Gift of Iron
Second Episode: The Gift of the Nile
Third Episode: The Gift of Faith
Fourth Episode: Gift of Struggle Toward Freedom
Fifth Episode: The Gift of Humiliation
Sixth Episode: The Gift of Freedom for the World.

Epilogue: With burst of music and blast of trumpets, the pageant ends and the heralds sing:
"Hear ye, hear ye, men of all the Americas... Men of America, break silence, for the play is done." 4

Dr. Du Bois remarked after the New York production, "It became, as it was designed to be, a great popular festival with 350 actors living their parts. Its imagery and beauty have been seldom surpassed, and Mr. Charles Burroughs and his helpers deserve praise in their signal success." A total attendance of 30,000 was reported, also that "the order was perfect, not a single arrest was made and there were no serious accidents." 5 (See Plate XIII for the Exposition's Temple of Beauty which served as the background and setting for The Star of Ethiopia; its Egyptian architecture symbolizes the American Negro's ancient past. See Plate XIV which shows forty dancers before the Temple of Beauty.)

The New York Times gave a general brief description of the Exposition:

The interior of the Armory has been artistically decorated.... Perhaps the greatest interest centers around the Egyptian Art Temple constructed in the center of the Armory floor. It is after the design of Nicholas Brown. In it are shown the paintings, sculpture and other


works of art executed by colored people. In the center stands an eight foot group of statuary, "Humanity Freeing the Slaves," the work of Miss Meta Warrick, a young colored woman from Philadelphia who studied three years in Paris under Rodin.6

The New York performance was followed by other presentations of The Star of Ethiopia in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, at the General Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, May 16, 18, and 20, 1914. Dr. Du Bois later defined for his readers the pageant-drama:

The Pageant, that new and rising form of art expression, seems especially fitted for such a celebration as this (Emancipation Exposition). A pageant is not a tableau or playlet or float. It is a great historical folk-festival, staged and conducted by experts with all the devices of modern theatrical presentation and with the added touch of reality given by numbers, space and fidelity to historical truth.7

Writing on the subject, "The Immediate Program of the American Negro," in 1915, Dr. Du Bois stated what he thought should be the racial objective of pageantry: "In art and literature we should try to loose the tremendous emotional wealth.... We should resurrect the forgotten ancient Negro art and history."8


As the Emancipation Celebrations continued, a custom promoted by the NAACP, branches in various parts of the United States requested presentations of *The Star of Ethiopia.* Although Dr. Du Bois considered repetition of the pageant impractical, a partnership was formed, known as the Horizon Guild, for the purpose of producing *The Star of Ethiopia* in Washington, D. C. The Horizon Guild had the following reported objectives:

The purpose is to stimulate the pride of colored people in the historical progress of their race, and to develop their natural dramatic talent. Its work is somewhat similar in scope to that of the Drama League of America, except that it is confined in scope to the interpretation of the highest ideals of Negro life.

The impracticalities of the repeat performance must have been overcome in the Washington production. "Literally thousands besieged our doors and the sight of the thing continually made tears arise. After these audiences aggregating 14,000, I said: The Pageant is the thing—this is what people want and long for."11

*The Star of Ethiopia* reflected the Association's approach to easing the Negro race-problem in America, the gaining of

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fuller acceptance of the Negro through identification with
the darker nationalities of the world. His pageant placed
the American Negro's ancient home in Ethiopia and not in
the jungle of West Africa. No doubt, Dr. Du Bois's promo-
tion of pageantry had some influence on other pageant pro-
ductions by Negroes. For example, during 1916, a Shake-
spearean pageant was given by the colored school children
in Washington, D. C. Dr. Du Bois wrote encouragingly of
their efforts:

The rendition of this pageant made
very clear that natural histrionic ability
of the colored boys and girls... This is
the dawn of the day for the colored play-
wright and colored actor. Not all of us
can or care to be either, but we must be
ready to foster and appreciate everything
that can help to give us an entrance into
the world of beautiful art.12

A special interest in the pageantry of African life was
revealed by Dr. Du Bois. "All through Africa," he wrote,
"pageantry and dramatic recital are closely mingled with
religious rites."13 The Crisis reported the production of
an African pageant titled Asheeko which was successfully
presented in Philadelphia during 1922; the pageant was
written by a group of Africans.14 In 1933, the students of

12W. E. B. Du Bois, Editorial, "Another Pageant," The
Crisis, XII (August, 1916), 217.

13 "Drama Among Black Folk," The
Crisis, XII (August, 1916), 169.

14Cited in The Crisis, XXIII (March, 1922), 222.
Cheyney College, a Negro institution in Pennsylvania, presented a pageant entitled Jethro, based on the Ethiopian who gave mankind the idea of representative government. This pageant was written by the President of Cheyney College, Leslie Pinckney Hill and was presented at the Philadelphia Academy of Music.15 (See Appendix B for notices concerning the production of other pageants.)

In 1922 Dr. Du Bois observed some progress in Negro art through pageantry: "We are beginning to be listened to in painting and sculpture. Pageantry is appearing and the white artist and writer are beginning to discover us as human beings and not as conventional lay figures."16 Dr. Du Bois's Star of Ethiopia was presented in Los Angeles, California, in 1925. In expressing his satisfaction with this production, he approached Percy MacKaye's objectives for pageantry, theatre as a leisure time activity. Dr. Du Bois said, "These teachers and students, lawyers and working folk have stooped and brought to life ten thousand years of forgotten history. They have made the Negro race live again in its beautiful and awful past."17

15Quoted in The Crisis, XXXX (July, 1933), 160.


2. Relationships of the NAACP with the Independent Theatre

In Chapter III of this study, the indirect and direct relationships of the NAACP with independent theatres have been cited. Dr. Du Bois went before the Drama League of America to plead for more economic opportunities for Negro performers following the production of Ridgely Torrence's *Three Plays for the Negro Theatre*; he developed attitudes toward the production of plays concerning Negroes at the Provincetown Playhouse and by the Theatre Guild. Glenn Hughes essayed that these groups were in revolt against commercialism. Sheldon Cheney described these independent theatres as possessing an "idealism" while in revolt against commercialism. The ideals that the NAACP sought to realize in the independent theatres were toward favorable representation of Negro life as foils against stereotyped representation. The Negro independent theatres to be considered are the less permanent groups which were organized for productions on special occasions.

*The Association's Sponsorship of "Hazel."*—One of the white founders of the NAACP wrote a play entitled *Hazel* which

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was presented on the stage of the Y. W. C. A. in Brooklyn, New York, December 7, 1916. Miss Mary Ovington dramatized the story of a little colored girl who lived in the North and the South. Hazel, who lived in Boston, went South to visit her grandmother in Alabama. In Alabama, she was successful in teaching a little colored boy how to read. When Hazel learned to love the colored children of the neighborhood, they all had good times together everyday. The review of Miss Ovington's book in The Crisis indicated her psychological approach in writing the story:

Hazel will come as a boon to many puzzled parents. Every thing the colored child sees, hears and reads is about the white folk. About herself and her people, Hazel hears so little that she forgets them until bitter prejudice awakens her and leaves her startled, facing an unknown and unrealized world.

The play was dramatized from the book about Hazel. Miss Ovington attempted to delineate a non-stereotyped Negro child who is the opposite of Stowe's Topsy in Uncle Tom's Cabin, the irresponsible puckish little girl beloved by many generations of play-goers.

The Association's Sponsorship of "Rachel."--The Association appointed a Drama Committee in 1915 "for the purpose of

20The Crisis, XIII (December, 1916), 88.
21The Crisis, XIII (December, 1916), 88.
studying ways and means of utilizing the stage in the service of its cause." In 1917, the Drama Committee sponsored a production of Rachel, a Negro problem play by Angelina Grimke. Miss Grimke was one of the contributing writers for The Crisis; her play was presented in Washington, D. C. Rachel is a three-act drama with its setting in a northern city during the first decade of the twentieth century. Rachel Loving is the protagonist. She is an intelligent girl, a college graduate with a major in Domestic Science. She loves children and wants to marry and become a mother. Rachel is happy because she is keeping company with a fine, intelligent young man; she expresses her happiness in the songs she sings while she accompanies herself with the piano. One day Rachel learns that her father and her half-brother were lynched down South "One year ago today." Her happiness turns to sorrow. She rejects the love of the young suitor and goes into seclusion.

A review in the Washington Evening Star suggested the impression made by Rachel upon the audience:

Rachel is a strong play in which the points-of-view of the people on the colored side of the color line set forth wrongs suffered by the colored race as a result

22The Crisis, XIII (March, 1915), 215.
of what was termed by one character, "the white man's blight of prejudice," are depicted in a forceful manner.
In all, the play presents a view of the condition of colored people throughout the United States. It is claimed on the program that this is the first attempt to use the stage for race propaganda in order to enlighten the American people relative to the lamentable condition of 10,000,000 colored citizens in this free republic. The participants were uniformly excellent. 24

The NAACP propaganda in Rachel is obviously against lynching and in favor of the national anti-lynch legislation sponsored by the Association. The NAACP sponsored a presentation of Rachel at the Neighborhood Playhouse in New York City, April 26, 1917. No reviews of this New York production have been found; nevertheless, the contact between the NAACP and the Neighborhood Playhouse probably would indicate that the policies of this playhouse were favorable toward the program of the Association. The Neighborhood Playhouse grew out of a "settlement," a social work society. Sheldon Cheney stated this theatre's policies as follows:

Its plays are as often as not chosen with an eye to the social problems involved in the plots, or because there is opportunity to try out something that no other theatre in America cared to take a chance on. The group has perfectly lived up to a line in its opening announcement: "By the variety of its program, the Playhouse aims to appeal to a public of diverse tastes, interests, and ages, and in

24 As cited in The Crisis, XI (April, 1916), 284.
Thus, it seems that the presentation of Rachel at the Neighborhood Playhouse was another instance where the NAACP found liberalism in the theatre to accommodate the Association's purposes. Rachel was also presented at Brattle Hall in Cambridge, Massachusetts, May 24, 1917, under the auspices of the Sunday School of Bartholomew Church.

The Association's Defense of the Ethiopian Art Players.---

The April issue of The Crisis, 1923, contained an article which announced the organization of a Negro art theatre in Chicago. This new organization became known as the Ethiopian Art Players. The aims of these players embraced many of the ideals which any Negro theatre could hope to achieve:

The effort is being sponsored by a well-known group of both colored and white people who have great faith in the creative ability of the Negro in general and his dramatic ability in particular. The venture is entirely non-commercial and has three aims as set forth in the announcement. The theatre will be open every night and its staff will be paid. Both professional and amateur actors will be used and developed. We will not do the absurd thing of producing so-called Broadway successes, which, as you know, have no relation to the life of the Negro, his psychology, his hopes and aspirations. We shall attempt only those dramatic pieces

**25** As cited in The Crisis, XI (April, 1916), 284.
which have a universal appeal and are as true for the colored people as for the white and yellow races. And at the same time, we shall do all we can to encourage both colored and white in the creation of a Negro dramatic literature.... A society will be organized around the theatre which will act as the theatre's moral sponsor. It will bring to Chicago lecturers, both colored and white, on drama, literature and other arts. It is the hope of this group that if the Chicago venture succeeds, it will be able to lend its experience to groups in larger Negro cities or any that wish to establish similar theatres in their communities. 26

Raymond O'Neil, "Who had traveled abroad and had become impressed by the work of Gordon Craig and other modernists," 27 was appointed director of these players. Mr. Raymond O'Neil brought the motives of the Moscow Art Theatre to the Ethiopian Art Players; he stated his ideals as follows:

There are two people in the modern world possessing in marked degree fresh and strong potentialities for artistic creation—the Russians among the Europeans, and the Negroes among the conglomeration of racial and national groups which go to make up the United States.

Yet it is in the theatre where the Negro and the Russian show their most pronounced artistic kinship. Strangely enough, it needed the performances of the Moscow Art Theatre Company in the United States to emphasize this fact and to point the way to a still more significant conclusion which is that the resemblance between

26 "The Ethiopian Art Theatre," The Crisis XXVI (June, 1923), 75.

27 Glenn Hughes, op. cit., p. 375.
the Negro and Russian in artistic expression is based upon an almost identical attitude toward life and a sensuous manner of living it.

As the Russians guarded their arts as much as they could from Westernization, so will the Negro have to guard his from one hundred per cent Americanization. Particularly must he be on guard against the white friends of his art who will urge its development in the direction of their prejudiced imagination. A very great advantage which Negro art has enjoyed has been white contempt or indifference toward it, qualities which are rapidly changing now toward eventual commercial and intellectual exploitation...

Raymond O'Neil brought his cast of Oscar Wild's Salome to New York City for the purpose of experimenting with the Negro art form in the commercial theatre. The play was presented at the Frazee Theatre, May 7, 1923. The following review is an example of the criticism that the play suffered:

A good deal of shouting and a small amount of good playing was served at the Frazee last night...Heralded as a dark horse among the many attempts to lift drama on stepping stones of art theatre to higher things, the new organization, at least as far as last night's performance is concerned, made a negative expression. It was not particularly good and not particularly bad during its moments when it was art, and other moments when it was neither. The best of the cast was Mr. Kirkpatrick, an intense Herod, who acted with little restraint.


Other reviews must have been as equally unfavorable, for once again, as Du Bois did on occasions in the commercial theatre, he charged the critics with prejudice and callousness toward non-stereotyped characterizations by Negro actors. Dr. Du Bois took issue with the critics on the following points:

The critics, save a few, were quite in the air. Whenever a black American does anything well there is immediate consternation. First, just why should he do it at all? Cannot a white man do it just as well? Secondly, if he does it better than the white man, then it is dangerous to allow him to do it. Third, suppose he does it as well as the white man? He is simply an additional intruder. Fourth, suppose he does it worse than the white man? He is silly, foolish, striving after the impossible....

And now, when Evelyn Preer comes to Broadway and does Salome better than New York ever saw it done New York, blind to artcriticism to babblines most of its crigreat grandfather.30 About Miss Preer's great grandfather.

Dr. Du Bois attempted to strengthen his case against the New York critics' attitude toward Salome by publishing a part of Theodore Dreiser's letter which was sent to Sidney Kirkpatrick who played the role of Herod:

Out of the general silence-- in white critical circles, I mean, that appears to have attended this surprisingly

valuable artistic presentation, I wish to extend to you personally and to all these others, my gratitude and deep appreciation. I have seen many presentations of Salome in New York and elsewhere—none that I feel to be the peer of this. My first and second impression was that it was flawless....

If the artistic criticism in New York and America, for that matter, were not the thin and anemic thing that it is, all of you and the colored folk-theatre would have been hailed within the week. I trust that your laurels will not long be delayed. My own sincere wish is that you maintain this artistic integrity uncorrupted and indefinitely.31

The ideals of the Ethiopian Art Players seemed comparatively ambitious in the light of the financial hardships that Negro theatres suffered. Dr. Du Bois did not comment on the stated purposes of this group; however, he probably approved of the interracial characteristics of the organization and its resolve to present plays with "Universal appeal for all races of the world." In spite of Raymond O'Neil's belief contrary to racial integration in the arts, that the Negro "Must guard his art from one hundred per cent Americanization," Dr. Du Bois was disturbed by the critics intimating that Negroes should develop their own native materials. To the editor of The Crisis, it was a question whether the Negro succeeds in the theatre because he is a Negro or in spite of being a Negro? These controversial elements in dramatic

31Theodore Dreiser, as quoted in "The Ethiopian Art Theatre," The Crisis, XXVI (July, 1923), 103-104.
criticism between the races seem perplexing unless one realizes that the American Negro lives a bi-racial existence. First as a Negro; second, as an American. Thus, Dr. Du Bois' attitude toward the criticism of Salome is based on this bi-racial point-of-view, that the Negro is capable of succeeding in the theatre as a Negro and as an American.

3. Relationships of the NAACP with the Negro Educational Theatre

The NAACP Drama Committee was the focal point for the beginning of the first Negro educational theatre as well as for the Negro little theatre movement. When this committee met for the purpose of determining how to use the stage for propaganda there was a confusion of motives which Alain Locke recorded as follows:

Between the divided elements of this Committee, with a questionable paternity of minority radicalism, the idea of the Negro Theatre, as distinguished from the idea of race-drama, was born. If ever the history of the Negro drama is written without the scene of a committee wrangle, with its rhetorical climaxes after midnight—the conservatives with their wraps protesting the hour; the radicals, more hoarse with emotion than effort, alternately wheedling and threatening—it will not be well-written. The majority wanted a performance; the minority, a program. One play no more makes a theatre than one swallow a summer.

The parish of the Committee, by the accident of its parentage, became the foundling and subsequently the ward of Howard University.... The organization (at Howard), under the directorship of
Professor Montgomery Gregory of the Department of Drama, with academic credit for its courses, the practical as well as the theoretical, and the fullest administrative recognition and backing of the work, has marked the last two years the eventual vindication of the idea. 32

(See Plate XV for the membership of the Drama Committee)

With the Drama Department established at Howard University, the first among Negro colleges, a precedent was made for a Negro theatre not associated with race. Professor Montgomery Gregory in forming his program for dramatic arts at Howard University was aware of George Pierce Baker's "47 Workshop" which (without benefit of academic credit) provided students with an opportunity to engage in production of plays written in the course, and through this process to learn acting, directing, scene design, costuming, and lighting. 33 Professor Gregory gave the motive behind the theatre at Howard University as follows:

At Howard University, in Washington, D. C., the writer with the enthusiastic cooperation of Marie-Moore-Forrest, Cleon Throckmorton, Alain Leroy Locke and the university officials, undertook to establish on an enduring basis the foundations of Negro drama through the institution of a dramatic laboratory where Negro youth might receive sound training in the art

32 Alain Locke, "Steps Toward the Negro Theatre," The Crisis, XXV (December, 1922), 76.

33 Glenn Hughes, op. cit., p. 363.
THE NATIONAL EMANCipation EXPOSITION IN NEW YORK CITY: THE TEMPLE OF BEAUTY IN THE GREAT COURT OF FREEDOM

PLATE XIII
HE HISTORICAL PAGEANT OF THE NEGRO RACE AT THE EMANCIPATION EXPOSITION

PHARAOH RA THE NEGRO

PLATE XIV
PLATE X V

THE LOCAL PAGEANT COMMITTEE, WASHINGTON, D. C

From Left to Right:
Top Row: Messrs. Evans, Edwards, Terrell, Clark and Walker.
Middle Row: Messrs. Singleton and Brown, Mrs. Glenn, Chief Marshall, Messrs. Hilliard, Bingham and Mrs. Pendergast.
Bottom Row: Mr. Hawkins, Mrs. Clifford, Mr. Du Bois, Miss Elwell and Mr. Heaton, the President of the Board.
of the theatre. The Howard Players have given ample evidence of having the same significance for Negro drama as the erstwhile "h7 Workshop" at Harvard University and the North Carolina University Players have had for American drama in general. Atlanta University, Hampton Institute, and Tuskegee Institute have been making commendable efforts in the same direction.3

The minority of the members of the NAACP Drama Committee were committed to an educational theatre because they believed that such a theatre would have more permanency than a theatre which would be supported by a community. "This is, I take it, what we mean by distinguishing between the movement toward race drama and the quite distinguishable movement toward the Negro theatre," explained Alain Locke.

Dr. Du Bois's sentiments were with the majority of the committee that contended for a Negro theatre associated with race. Nevertheless, he followed his policy of establishing The Crisis as a forum for various opinions concerning the Negro problem and Negro life. Negro education is one of the main areas of interest of the Association and The Crisis publishes an annual education issue containing statistics on the number of Negro college and university graduates.

The table below is an example of the Association's statistical surveys.

Table 6. The Total Enrollment of Negroes in Negro Colleges
According to the Bureau of Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1922 - 1923</td>
<td>6,684</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1923 - 1924</td>
<td>7,782</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924 - 1925</td>
<td>9,506</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925 - 1926</td>
<td>11,698</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926 - 1927</td>
<td>13,860</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dr. Du Bois estimated that there were 19,253 students of Negro descent in American colleges and universities during 1929; he added an estimate of 2,171 students in Northern white colleges to the total of 16,082. Two thousand, one hundred sixty Negroes received degrees in 1929.35

The Association's Attitude toward a Shakespearean production.—Because The Crisis was a forum for the expressions of opinions on various subjects, the editor received correspondence concerning the production of Shakespeare's Twelfth Night by the students of Shaw University, a private denominational school for Negroes in Raleigh, North Carolina. Evidently, the college had invited Miss Nell Battle Lewis,

a white theatre critic who wrote a column for the *Raleigh News*, to review the production. Miss Lewis saw the performance by the students and published her review which appeared in part as follows:

They did, on the whole, creditably well, and they were letter perfect. Yet the play seemed to weigh heavily upon the cast, and the general effect of the performance was strikingly artificial. I say this without the slightest desire to belittle the effort which was admirable. I am very much interested in the advancement of the Negroes along any artistic line. I should greatly like to see them develop a genuine drama of their own.

But Shakespeare, I think, is not their vehicle except, perhaps, in the case of extraordinary talented actors of their race. Ira Aldridge, for instance, played *Othello* with great success.

Though Shakespeare wrote in what is now the Negroes' language, he does not express their spirit, nor do I think that, in general, they can ever adequately express him. This means nothing more than that the spirit of races differs. English actors would probably be very unsuccessful in giving a play of the Chinese.

Racial consciousness and racial pride can be very easily carried to excess. We have a wicked example of it in this country now....

The editor did not comment on either side of this controversial issue of Negroes' natural and technical abilities to present generally acceptable performances of Shakespeare. Dr. Du Bois merely introduced the other side of the issue.

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36 "Race Drama," *The Crisis*, XXX (June, 1925), 90.
"Negroes immediately answered Miss Lewis and she gamely published what they said. The Dean of Shaw (University) writes":

...You asserted by implication that Shakespeare cannot properly be the vehicle of Negro dramatic expression because the language of Shakespeare is for the Negro only an adopted language. English is an adopted language, not only for the Negro, but for all who speak it.

... The child born of any race will accept with equal facility the language of any group in which it may be born. No language is native to anyone except in relation to the social environment of birth.

What you and others deplore as excessive imitation on the part of Negroes is, after all, but the natural attempt of black folk to appropriate their only social heritage.... Africa is as blank to American Negroes as China. Anyone who is waiting for the Negroes of this country to produce something distinctly African has a long time to wait.37

The Dean's stand was supported by Mr. W. A. Robinson of the North Carolina State Department of Education: "Surely we must agree that Shakespeare is 'for all the world and for all time,' but we think that Hamlet was a Dane, Shylock a Jew, Olivia an Illyrian, and Cleopatra an Egyptian. Is not all drama artificial, a dream world?"38

Although Dr. Du Bois did not say anything directly concerning the controversy between the school officials and

37Ibid.

38Ibid.
Miss Lewis, he evidently realized that a small Negro college would encounter difficulties in producing a Shakespearean play, such as the problems of costuming, casting, and directing. It was probably his recognition of these difficulties that caused him to publish an article by Caroline Bond Day who had directed the Negro players at Atlanta University for a number of years. Miss Day gave helpful advice concerning production of plays by Negro colleges:

As a result of the recent discussion in the column of "The Looking Glass" (Crisis' department for reprints) concerning the ability of the Negro students to produce Shakespearean plays, the question has arisen--"What may be substituted in their stead? Not, however, that we have agreed for a moment that they should be eliminated from our schools, or that they may not be done acceptably. We simply grant that these and certain others of the English Classics are produced with difficulty by our students or by any amateur groups in general.

Obviously, the most outstanding difficulty in this situation is one of physical suitability for the parts. Nevertheless, for seven consecutive years I have witnessed Shakespearean performances at Atlanta University which were thoroughly enjoyable and for which somehow suitable persons were secured, for this "bouquet" race of ours can supply types for all parts. (See Plate XVI for her cast of *Twelfth Night*.)

Yet, to secure artistic production such as these, a certain elimination of material is necessary for uniformity of the cast. It is for such groups as these, then, that we offer the following list of plays that are for the most part free from royalties and have parts for persons of mixed blood and of purely Negroid types:
The Drama in Colored America:

PLATE XVI

1. Atlanta University Students in "Twelfth Night"
1. Allegories, Moralities, and Fairy Tales

Every Man
Every Youth
Every Woman
The Slave With Two Faces, Mary C. Davis
At the Sign of the Greedy Pit, C. S. Brooks
The Dragon, Lady Gregory
Six Who Passed While the Lentile Boils, Stuart Walker
Sir David Wears a Crown, Stuart Walker

2. Plays of Different Nationalities

a. Oriental
Chitra Rabindranath, Tagore
The Post Office, Lord Dunsany
Tents of the Arabs, Lord Dunsany
King Argimenes and the Unknown Warrior, Lord Dunsany
A Night at an Inn, Lord Dunsany
Gods of the Mountains, Lord Dunsany
The Judgment of Indra, Dhan Goap Mukey

b. Egyptian
Caesar and Cleopatra, George Bernard Shaw

c. Chinese
The Yellow Jacket, Hazelton and Bemino
The Chinese Lantern, Lawrence Housman
The Turtle Dove, Margaret S. Oliver
d. American Indian
   The Glory of the Morning, Leonard
   The Arrow Maker, Mary Austin
   The Last of the Lowries, Paul Green
   Pokey, Moeller
   Hiawatha, adapted from Longfellow

e. Negro
   Three Plays by Ridgely Torrence
   Emperor Jones
   The Octoroon, Dion Boucicault
   No 'Count Boy, Paul Green

f. Spanish
   A Sunny Morning, R. H. Davis
   Maker of Dreams, Oliphant Downs
   A Scrap of Paper, Sardou
   Dinner at Seven Sharp, Tudor Jenks

g. Others
   Neighbors, Zone Gale
   The Constant Lover, St. John Hankin
   The Lost Silk Hat, Lord Dunsany
   Will O' the Wisps, Doris Gregory
   The Cherry Orchard, Tchekhov

39Caroline Bond Day, "What Shall We Play," The Crisis XXX (September, 1925), 220-222.
At the basis of this controversy over *Twelfth Night* at Shaw University during 1925 were the policies and the position of the small, Negro, denominational institution. Many of the denominational institutions for Negroes were founded by Northern white missionaries who came South and superimposed New England culture upon the colored people, a movement described as "The Crusade of the School-Ma'ams." Therefore the production of classics, such as *Twelfth Night*, was considered as fulfilling the cultural needs of Negroes. Thus classics were produced almost to the exclusion of the realistic and problem plays during this period. This narrow approach to the Negro educational theatre was due to what one writer has called the general weakness of the Negro college:

The first obvious weakness of the Negro college lies in the delusion that the president must be a "Minister of the Gospel." It is not essential that he be an educator of ripe and successful experience, or a scholar of copious industry and promising renown or an administrator of tried and approved judgment....

Second, is the mistake of calling a white man to the presidency...

The third grave weakness is its trustee board. As a result of their divine ordination, they are responsible to no power on earth.40

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40G. David Houston, "Weakness of the Negro College," *The Crisis*, XX (July, 1920), 122-125.
Miss Day's list of plays, however, offered the Negro college theatre a more varied program of classical productions. She attempted to find the answer to casting Negro students of varying hues and complexions so that they would not appear ridiculous in the costumes of different periods and in the portraying of nationalities.

In the meanwhile, Miss Lillian Voorhees, a white lady, was directing the students in dramatics at Tougaloo College in Mississippi during the 1920's. Miss Voorhees reported her success with the Negro actors as follows:

In the eight years that I have been in charge of dramatics at Tougaloo we have produced about forty plays, one-act plays and longer plays including Shakespeare, Goldsmith and Sheridan, and plays of all varieties by modern writers.

Not withstanding the current opinion that colored people are simply good mimics and nothing more, the sensing of the part of which we have spoken is only an indication of their ability to interpret....

Worthy productions by colored students are being given all over the country, but the half has not been told of the possibilities of the development of Dramatics in Negro colleges.\(^{41}\)

Progress of the Negro educational theatre.—The Negro state-supported institutions were less inhibited in promoting dramatics than the denominational institutions. Howard

\(^{41}\)Lillian W. Voorhees, "The Drama in a College for Negroes," The Drama XVI (March, 1926), 224.
University, Morgan State College, West Virginia State College, Tuskegee Institute, Hampton Institute, and Atlanta University continued to develop a theatre curriculum for academic credit and a community theatre with a varied program of productions. Professor Randolph Edmonds, who was trained at Oberlin University and Columbia University, made a continuing contribution to the general development of the Negro educational theatre. During 1934, Professor Edmonds took the following view of the Negro educational theatre:

During the last few years, there has come about a dramatic awakening in our schools and colleges. It is too early yet to pronounce with Olympian finality what the outcome will be, but the results so far lead me to believe that the university theatre, the general term which is sometimes used for all school theatres, is pregnant with more real promise for the development of the Negro Theatre than any other organization.\(^2\)

Professor Edmonds placed little trust in the Negro amateurs and dilettantes of the community theatres. He wrote, "If we are to judge the future by the past, it is highly unlikely that the superficial part-time interest of a few professional people and intelligentsia will submit to stern discipline necessary to really accomplish something worthwhile in drama.\(^3\)

\(^2\)Randolph Edmonds, "What Good Are College Dramatics?" The Crisis, XLI (August, 1934), 232.

\(^3\)Ibid.
During 1915, Dr. Anne M. Cook, chairman of the Drama
Department at Howard University, made a survey of the Negro
Little Theatre Movement. With reference to the Negro college
dramatics program, Miss Cook gave the following account:

Of the thirty-six Negro colleges to
which letters and questionnaires were sent,
twenty-two responded. Two of these have no
program now in their institutions; six have
programs which are solely extra-curricular,
and thirteen have programs for the community
or play to audiences other than the immediate
college group. Among the thirteen colleges
whose programs extend beyond the immediate
campus, the program at Wiley College, Tuskegee
Institute, Atlanta and Dillard Universities
seem worthy of note.44

The American Educational Theatre Association's Symposium
on Desegregation. — The May 17, 1954, Supreme Court Decision,
declaring "In the field of public education, the doctrine of
separate but equal has no place,"45 was won by the Legal
Bureau of the NAACP. The decision further stated that all
public schools should desegregate with "reasonable haste."
The American Educational Theatre Association presented a
symposium on the subject, "The Negro Actor and Desegregation

44 Anne M. Cook, "The Little Theatre Movement as an Adult
Education Project Among Negroes," The Journal of Negro Educa-
tion, XIV (Summer, 1945), 444-424.

In this instance, the impetus came from the Educational Association for an open and frank discussion of desegregation, which illustrates the interest of other organizations in problems concerning Negroes in the theatre—a voluntary action rather than a forced action. Dr. Lillian Voorhees, chairman of the Drama Department at Fisk University, Nashville, Tennessee, was chairman of the symposium which sought answers to the following questions:

1. Should desegregation in the educational theatre follow desegregation off-stage or should it be considered a means of aiding the process and acceptance of desegregation off-stage?

2. How fast may desegregation in the educational theatre be expected to take place? What stages or limitations can you define?

3. What does experience teach us where desegregation in the educational theatre has taken place?

4. What effect may we expect desegregation to have on the educational theatre?

Miss Marjorie L. Dycke, director of dramatics at the School of Performing Arts, New York City, stated that desegregation in the educational theatre should follow closely behind desegregation in the schools, that much would depend on the theatre director's goodwill, good-sense, taste, imagination and rapport with students. Miss Dycke stated further that experience has taught us that stereotyped roles for Negroes should be avoided, that the professional theatre insures us that Negroes are not cast in unsympathetic roles,
and that few plays have been written that do justice to mixed racial casting. She also mentioned the problem of casting Negro mulattoes, whether to cast them as white or colored? She admitted, however, that all-Negro casts in plays and musicals have found favor with both Negro and white play-goers. Miss Dycke submitted a list of plays for mixed-casting which would make an interesting comparison with Miss Day's list of 1925. Miss Dycke's list covered the following three categories of plays:

1. Some Possible Plays for Mixed Casts, Mainly White:
   With Negro Leads

   The Bad Seed, by Maxwell Anderson
   Cradle Song by G. Martinex-Sierrs
   The Grass Harp by Truman Capote
   Home of the Brave by Arthur Laurents
   Lost in the Stars by M. Anderson
   Madwoman of Chaillot by J. Giraudoux
   Member of the Wedding by C. McCullers
   Mid Summer Night's Dream by Puck
   Mr. Johnson by Norman Rosten
   Outward Bound by Sutton Vane
   Teahouse of the August Moon by Sakini
   Tempest by Caliban
"Bit" Parts

Dead End by Sidney Kingsley
Detective Story by Sidney Kingsley
Dream Girl by Elmer Rice
Green Grow the Lilacs by L. Riggs
My Sister Eileen by Ruth McKinney
Picnic by William Inge
Thieves' Carnival by J. Anouilh
Three Men on a Horse by G. Abbott and Holm
Winterset by M. Anderson
Come Back Little Sheba by W. Inge

Possible Scenes

Blythe Spirit by N. Coward
Caesar and Cleopatra by G. B. Shaw
The Children's Hour by Emlyn Williams
Junior Miss by J. Chodorov
Liliom by F. Molnar
Our Hearts Were Young and Gay by C. O. Skinner
My Heart's In The Highland by W. Saroyan
Pygmalion by C. B. Shaw
Stage Door by E. Perber
The following are omitted since they are more likely to inflame than to aid: *All God's Chillun*, *Deep Are the Roots*, *Emperor Jones*, *Native Son*, *Othello*, *The Respectful Prostitute*, *They Shall Not Die*, *Wingless Victory.*

Thomas E. Poag, chairman of the Speech Department at Tennessee State University, a Negro institution in Nashville, Tennessee, discussed desegregation from a Southerner's point of view:

The atomic age ushered in on May 17, 1954, at 12:57 p.m. the anti-segregation ruling on public education and before the ink was dry the news had been flashed around the world. Since this decision, others have followed on desegregation of parks and buses. What are we as dramatists going to do about it in the educational theatre? Are we trying to escape our responsibilities? The question is how will we as teachers and directors both white and Negro measure up first on our theatre heritage regardless of the mores, the patterns of society, and the folkways in the states or the regions where we are living.

Mr. Poag continued with the following answers to the questions:

1. Desegregation in the educational theatre should follow desegregation off-stage. As Negroes enter schools to study with white students, Negroes should be given an opportunity to participate in dramatics.

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47 Thomas E. Poag, *ibid.*
2. The speed of desegregation in the educational theatre depends on the location and geographical region of the theatre. There may be strong objections to mixed-casting in some regions.

3. Experience has taught us that there are still some schools which are trying to escape desegregation in the educational theatre by offering Negroes substitute activities outside the theatre, or by not permitting them to try-out for plays.

4. Desegregation will bring hardships and problems to the educational theatre which the theatre as an institution has withstood through the years.

Robert L. Hilliard, drama critic for The Brooklyn Daily Eagle and instructor of Speech at Adelphi College, Garden City, New York, approached the problem of desegregation primarily from the standpoint of the professional theatre. Mr. Hillierd was not in agreement with Mr. Posg on the issue of desegregation on-stage following the off-stage pace. The New Yorker voiced the following opinion:

We must take the principles of desegregation as an integral aspect of our teaching. We cannot simply let our on-stage practices follow the practices of the community. For if our education were only a reflection of society, then our scientists would not train research people, for research scientists move ahead of what had already been accepted in society.

I do not see a number of seeming limitations in the process of desegregation in the educational theatre. It is undoubtedly true that many communities, college and off-campus alike, may not only be startled, but may strenuously object to the appearance of a non-Caucasian in a role that would normally be considered — in quotes — "White." If we were commercial producers we might have reason, though I do not say excuses, for care in such
casting, for if the audience is not pleased, for valid or invalid reasons, we would be faced with financial failure. Yet the commercial producers have integrated, even in the face of great threats.

A discussion by Mr. Hilliard followed on integration in the commercial theatres. Then as an aid to integration, or desegregation, in the educational theatre, he cited four major areas of integrated casting for public performances:

1. Distinctly non-Caucasian characters in plays.

2. Characters in classical dramas or near classical dramas, such as the role of Dunois played by Earl Hyman in *Saint Joan*.

3. Realistic roles in realistic plays; for example, Frederick O'Neal played a detective in *The Man with the Golden Arm*.

4. Casting light complexioned Negroes in "white" roles, considering theatre itself as an illusion.

It is logical to assume that the NAACP would be more in agreement with Mr. Hilliard's views concerning desegregation in the educational theatre than with those of Miss Dycke and Mr. Poag. The NAACP geared its programs toward the completion of desegregation by 1963, a date to be celebrated as the complete emancipation of the American Negro.

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The Association's Protest Against Blackface Minstrelsy.

The protests by the NAACP against blackface minstrel shows in several of the public schools are related to the Association's campaign against objectionable materials used by the press and against stereotypes in school textbooks. As early as 1919, the branches were encouraged by the National Office to protest against the treatment of Negroes in newspapers and periodicals. During 1925 the National Office received reports from branches complaining that The Saturday Evening Post was publishing stories containing objectionable Negro characters. In 1943, the National Office announced that it had been successful in getting The New York Times to drop the race tag, "Negro," in reporting crime stories. During World War II and afterwards, the Association began a campaign to remove stereotypes from school textbooks. For example, in 1946, the NAACP protested to Rand McNally Company concerning publication of a book titled Interesting Friends which contained the stereotypes "Little Black Sambo" and "Nicodemus." In 1954, the NAACP protested to the Hall

50 "Censoring the Press," The Crisis, XVII (April, 1919), 283.

51 "The Saturday Evening Post," The Crisis, XXV (April, 1923), 247-248.

52 "Times Drops Race Tag," The Crisis, L (July, 1943), 220.

53 The Crisis, LIII (June, 1946), 210.
Mark Company concerning "racially derogatory content of some of their greeting cards."  

The NAACP began its campaign against "blackface" minstrel shows in schools during 1935. The Metuchen, New Jersey Branch made a public protest against a minstrel show which was sponsored by the American Legion. Seven members of the branch drafted a letter which was published in The Metuchen Recorder. Excerpts from the letter are as follows:

All these shows have a grand tradition behind them. They can be excellent fun and entertainment, as a means of putting on local singing and dancing talent, as a vehicle for good natured lampooning of local personalities. It is unfortunate that one of the most important parts of the minstrel show continues to be the representation of the end men as black-face comedians.

The names, mannerisms and dialogue and some of the jokes of blackface comedians are not funny to sensitive Negroes, whether they are presented on a local stage or on a national radio network. ....We would like to point out to the good people who plan and produce minstrel shows that that period has gone by. Do we want to abolish all minstrel shows? No. We would like to suggest alterations in the traditional routine which will do away with elements of prejudice. The blackface aspects might be omitted while retaining the end men. The end men might

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include enough different comic types, running from Chinese to Texans, to commuters to people with ulcers, to make sure that no one group remains the object of stage wit.35

During 1954 the NAACP made a general protest against "blackface" minstrel shows that were being planned for production in the State of California. The Regional Office obtained an opinion from Frederick L. Fenton, San Joaquin County Counsel, who declared that "blackface" minstrel shows were prohibited by the California Educational Code, "for the reason that such shows reflect on American citizens of the Negro race.... It is just as important to prevent racial segregation in mental concepts as in physical facilities for teaching children. The compartments of the human mind are not less real than the compartments of a building.56 The Regional Office obtained the following opinion from the San Diego County Counsel: "The Governing Board of any school district shall not permit in or about any school entertainment which shall cast or bring reproach, discredit, censure or the like in any way upon citizens of the United States because of their race, color or creed.57 Finally,

55 As cited in "Blackface Minstrelsy," The Crisis, LXII (February, 1955), 108.


57 Ibid., p. 22.
the California State Attorney General declared "blackface" minstrel presentations in public schools illegal.

During 1955 the Board of Education of suburban Pleasantville near Atlantic City, New Jersey, banned a presentation of a minstrel show in the auditorium of its senior high school because of the opinion that such a presentation would be offensive. This action was the result of protest by Reverend H. Vigenveno, pastor of Absecon Presbyterian Church. One member of the Board of Education said that he felt that the word "minstrel" had certain unpleasant connotations, as did the appearance of the end men in "blackface" make up. The Board agreed to the use of the school auditorium if the sponsors of the show agreed to eliminate the "blackface" end men and to substitute another word for minstrel. 58

During 1955, the National Office circulated a folder published by The Catholic Interracialist. This folder carried the title, Blackface Minstrels, 10 Reasons Why They're Not So Funny. The following states in substance the ten reasons:

1. The Stereotypes - which tag a whole group as buffoons and clowns.

2. The Slang - perpetuates a racial slang which is offensive to our fellow citizens.

3. The Trifling with Tragedies - hold up to derision what the white man has made of the Negro.

4. The Dulling - used as a device to cover up the sins of a caste system by presenting the Negro as happy-go-lucky.

5. The Eighth Commandment - bear false witness against our colored neighbors.

6. The Effect on Youth - wrongly educated in a whole series of un-Christian attitudes.

7. Damage to Souls - organizations sponsoring minstrel shows can be the cause of further estrangement of souls from the Church.

8. The Golden Rule - do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

9. With Liberty and Justice for All - freedom from villification and the right to a good name.

10. The Global Aspect - unpatriotic to perpetuate through minstrels the color-consciousness and color complex of a dead buried past.59

The NAACP's campaign against "blackface" minstrel shows does not appear to be wide-spread, and it seems to be intensified in certain geographical areas where there are enough Negroes in predominantly white schools to be sensitive

59Blackface Minstrels, Ten Reasons Why They're Not So Funny, Folder, The Catholic Interracialist, 4233 South Indiana Avenue, Chicago 15, Illinois.
to the "blackface" representations. Minstrel shows in "blackface" are still quite popular in the public schools of many regions.

4. The Association's Little Theatre Movement

After World War I, Negroes began to advance in all phases of American life, political, economic, and social. John Hope Franklin accounted for this self-determination on the part of Negroes: "The migration that began during the war had thrown the destiny of the Negro into his own hands more than ever before. He developed a responsibility that he had not previously had."60 Dr. Du Bois sought to promote the advancement of the race through the arts.

"A renaissance of American Negro literature is due," he said. "The material about us in the strange, heart rendering race tangle, is rich beyond dreams and only we can tell the tale and sing the song from the heart."61 Dr. Du Bois began to emphasize the Negro literary movement in The Crisis: "We shall stress Beauty-- all beauty-- but especially the beauty of Negro life and character: its music, its dancing, its drawing and painting and the new birth of literature."62


(See Plate XVII - A reproduction of a painting by Aaron Douglas who was a member of a school of artists influenced by the "Harlem Renaissance.")

The NAACP was aware of the Marcus Garvey Back to Africa Movement and the spirit of Negro nationalism that was arising in Harlem as well as in other centers of the Negro population. At the Chicago Convention of the NAACP in 1926, Dr. Du Bois questioned his audience: "If you, tonight, suddenly should become full fledged Americans, if your color faded on the color line and miraculously forgotten, what would you immediately seek?" Dr. Du Bois answered his rhetorical question with a long description of the race's desire for Beauty; then he concluded:

There is, without doubt, a cultural movement stirring among American Negroes and Negroes the world over which is of deep significance. It is the renaissance of that ancient feeling of men of black blood for beauty in music, in sculpture and in expression, which the world forgot during slavery and the slave trade. As it begins to blossom again in the new generation, it calls for every encouragement.

The Association calls now for the widest cooperation among persons and organizations to forward the movement and encourage art and literature; and above all to make possible, through universal education in adequate common schools, in better high schools and in wider college facilities, the development of the great talent which lies in our race. 63

INVINCIBLE MUSIC
THE SPIRIT OF AFRICA
Drawn for THE CRISIS by Aaron Douglas

PLATE XVII
Thus ended this speech which sought to inspire a movement of cultural uplift among American Negroes.

The NAACP Little Theatre Movement.--While contributing to the beginning of the "Harlem Renaissance" in the arts, the NAACP through Dr. Du Bois considered the Little Theatre Movement as an opportunity for cultural uplift and racial propaganda. The NAACP, having subscribed to a Negro theatre identified and associated with race, entered the Little Theatre Movement for the purpose of developing cultural uplift through theatre activities. In 1925, The Crisis announced a "Play Writing Contest" which offered seventy-five dollars for first prize, forty dollars for second, and ten dollars for third." The announcement gave the following suggestions to the contestants:

Our writers may have two quite different audiences in mind: (1) A white audience used to theatre-going, (2) Colored folk.

While we set no limitations, we are mainly interested in the second audience; we want colored folk to add the new diversion of the drama to their lives. We want the dramatic instinct of the masses to find outlets in the seen and spoken drama. It will stimulate and broaden cramped lives; it will bring inspiration, ambition, and satisfaction. Hitherto they have had almost nothing but caricature or broad farce. The possibilities can be dimly sensed in the pageant. The Star of Ethiopia, as given some years ago in the East and now to be revived this Spring in California....
Again: there are lynchings in the United States; there is sorrow among black folk; there is poverty, misfortune, and sometimes despair; but do not confine yourself to these themes. There are also sunshine and kindness and ambition and hope. Think of these too.64

The Crisis' announcement concerning the playwriting contest may imply that (1) the plays should be for a colored audience; (2) the plays should satisfy a colored audience; (3) the plays may reveal the nobility of the Negro's past; and (4) the plays may be on the new racial themes of kindness, ambition, and hope, instead of sordidness and defeatism. These requirements indicated Dr. Du Bois' reaction to the treatment of Negro life by white dramatists, such as Ridgely Torrence's Granny Maume and Eugene O'Neill's Emperor Jones.

The contest began. Mrs. Amy Spingarn contributed the prize money. The June issue of The Crisis reported that twenty plays had been received and that Krigwa, the name of the contest, would hold its first costumed assembly on August 15th in New York and elsewhere. "Come and listen to the masque, 'Black-Man, A Fantasy,' and hear a program of prophecy of the development of art, literature, drama and music in Black America. What is Krigwa? Write us and learn."65 The writer has not been able to find the entire

64 Mark Seyboldt, "Play-Writing," The Crisis, XXIX (February, 1925), 164-165.

65 W. E. B. Du Bois, "Krigwa," The Crisis, XXXI (June, 1925), 43.
meaning of "Krigwa," but the first syllable is from "Cri-sis." The Krigwa competition of 1926 collected a total of 700 stories, plays, essays, and drawings. Dr. Du Bois claimed that "a half-dozen or more Krigwa bands for the encouragement of Negro art and literature have been formed in the United States, and several of these are giving plays." The awarding of prizes took place at the International House in New York City, October 25, 1926. First prize in play-writing was won by Willis Richardson for Bootblack Lover; second prize went to Eulalie Spence for Foreign Mail.

Krigwa conducted a third contest in 1927, having laid down more stringent rules for the entrants. The competition for this year drew 375 entries, 325 less than the year before. Dr. Du Bois claimed that the entries were of higher merit than the year before. He rated the scripts "A--excellent, D--poor, E--impossible." Looking forward to the Krigwa Competition for 1928, he directed the new Negro writers to an area of unexploited subject matter: "Nothing is more startling or interesting than the economic development of the Negro from slavery to freedom. The story should engage the attention of our best thinkers and writers. We are going to do everything we can during next year to direct the attention of young writers and artists to this phase of our development.

Example of an Original Play for the Krigwa Little Theatre.---One of the more successful playwrights of Crisis' Little Theatre was Willis Richardson who was the first prize winner in 1926. He was educated in the public schools of Washington, D. C., and was, by profession, a clerical worker in the United States Government. His one act play, Compromise, produced by the Krigwa Little Theatre in 1927 and selected for publication by Alain Locke, is an example of the different approaches attempted by Negro playwrights.

The setting of Compromise is a room in the home of Jane Lee, a Negro widow who lives in the country district of Maryland with her son, Alex, and her two daughters, Annie and Ruth. Jane Lee's white neighbor, Ben Carter, a well to do man, comes in for his usual cup of coffee with Jane Lee. During the conversation between them, the audience learns that Ben Carter had killed one of Jane Lee's sons. He had accidentally shot him out of an apple tree, hoping to frighten him off the Carter's property. As a Compromise, Ben Carter had given Jane Lee's husband one hundred dollars which the colored man used to buy whiskey. The husband died of excessive drinking.


Alex hates Ben Carter, blaming the white man for the death of his brother and father. Alex loaded a shot gun at the time of his brother's death and would have killed Ben Carter for revenge, but his mother took the loaded shot gun and put it in the corner of the room.

In the meanwhile, Jane's daughter, Annie, and Ben Carter's son, Jack, are having an interracial love affair. While Ben Carter and Jane Lee are talking about past events, Annie comes in with muddy shoes. Annie finally tells her mother that she has been intimate with Jack Carter down on the river bank. Believing that her daughter will bear a child for the white boy, Jane Lee proposes another Compromise to Ben Carter:

JANE

Wait a minute, Ben Carter. (Advancing to him and shaking her finger in his face)
Wait right there! She says it's Jack, and Jack it is! This is the third thing that's happened to us on account o' you and your'n! And this time you're going to pay! If you compromise this time you're going to compromise for somethin'.

CARTER

I'm a fair man, Jane Lee; you know that. And if Jack's in fault I'll do all I kin do, but I won't be bullied. I've got to know he's in fault.

JANE

Jack is in fault!
CARTER

Your gal must be in fault, too!

JANE

Ah ain't denyin' that!

CARTER

She must 'a' liked him a little or it wouldn't 'a' happened.

JANE

And he must 'a' liked huh a little, too!

CARTER

Why should I have to pay, then, if she's as much to blame as he is?

JANE

You kin stand there and talk like that if you want to, but if ah say let's punish 'em both and make 'em get married, you'd set up a big howl!

CARTER

Wouldn't I have a right to?

JANE

Ah don't know that you would. She's as good as he is, and it wouldn't be the first time that ever happened in these parts.

CARTER

But it ain't goin' to happen this time.

JANE

Ah know it ain't, and that ain't what sh'm after. Ah don't believe in no forced marriages.
CARTER
What is you after?

JANE
Ah want you to do something for ma children to make up for the harm that's come to us by you and your' n.

CARTER
I'll do what's reasonable, but it's got to be fair. I ain't for makin' enemies.

JANE
Then, educate ma children.

Ben Carter agrees to the "compromise" and promises to pay for Alec and Ruth's schooling. When Ben Carter leaves, Alec comes in and learns what had happened between his sister, Annie, and Jack Carter. He takes the un-loaded shot gun and goes out to kill Jack Carter. When Alec returns to the house, the audience learns that he has found that the shot gun was not loaded, so he swung the gun at Jack Carter's head. Young Carter had lowered his head and had thrown up his arm, which was broken by the impact of the gun. Ben Carter, having learned that Alec Lee has broken his son's arm, returns to the house and breaks his promise to Jane Lee. Alec's mother then sends him to stay with his Aunt Dinah. And Jane Lee's last scene is presented as follows:

JANE
(...then she takes the cartridges out of her bosom, where she has tucked them. She looks for the gun--picks it up--sits down
at center table--starts to reload it--fumbles the cartridges--and then suddenly as she says "Oh Lawd," puts them in her bosom again,) I oughtn't 'a' compromised. I oughtn't 'a' compromised. (Suddenly) Ruth, come here. Ruth, yer must help mammy get Alec's things tergether,—quick, yer hear. We must get Alec out o' here. Ben Carter shan't get Alec. I'll face him myself, an' don't mean no foolin' this time. (As she begins to stuff Alec's clothes into a valise, Curtain)⁶⁹

This early Krigwe play did fulfill some of the aspirations of the Negro in the theatre:

1. The subject matter of the Compromise is from that relationship of race with race, of white and black, which Dr. Du Bois has pointed out. Yet, it is difficult to understand whether Ben Carter and Jane Lee have been "intimate" with one another, or how "intimate."

2. The white and colored characters speak almost the same kind of dialect. There is not as much distortion of speech as in O'Neill's Negro plays, nor is the speech on as low a social level as that of Paul Green's plays about Negroes.

3. The characters are of the "New Negro" in the post-war period of the 1920's; they are more confident, more articulate, and less fearful than Paul Green's.

4. The play, as propaganda, has a message aimed toward social uplift. Jane Lee made a "compromise" for the education of her children. The play, as art, has shortcomings in characterizations that beg for more understanding; variety is wanting in the tight unity of the play's construction. (See Appendix A for list of original plays of Negro life published in The Crisis)

The Association's conception of a Negro Little Theatre.—

After collecting and publishing several plays, The Crisis organized a production group and selected Mr. Charles Burroughs as the director. Miss Ernestine Rose of the Harlem New York Public Library offered the Krigwa Players the small auditorium in the building on West 135th Street in New York City. The library authorities built the stage, dressing rooms, and furnished lighting equipment. The Players themselves furnished the curtain, scenery, audience, and other elements of production. No indications of the Negro churches' prohibiting or interfering with theatrical performances by Negroes have been mentioned in this study; Dr. Du Bois, nevertheless, criticized the attitude of the Negro church toward the theatre:

The Negro church gave the slave almost his only freedom in spirit, and of the churches that came to proselytize among the slaves, only
those that were permanently successful were strongly tinged with Puritanism; namely, the Baptist and the Methodist. These churches frowned upon drama and the play, upon the theatre and the dance; and for this reason, the American Negro has been hindered in his natural dramatic impulses. 70

Following this accusation against the Negro church, in particular, and the Baptist and Methodist churches in general, the Krigwa founder laid down four fundamental principles stating what the plays of a real Negro theatre must be:

1. About us. That is, they must have plots which reveal Negro life as it is.

2. By us. That is, they must be written by Negro authors who understand from birth and by continual association just what it means to be a Negro today.

3. For us. That is, the theatre must cater primarily to Negro audiences and be supported and sustained by their entertainment and approval.

4. Near us. The theatre must be in a Negro neighborhood near the mass of ordinary Negro people.

"Only in this way can a real folk-play movement of American Negroes be built up," declared Dr. Du Bois. 71


71 Ibid.
The Crisis reported that the Krigwa Little Theatre Movement had spread to Cleveland, Ohio; New Haven, Connecticut, and to Washington, D. C. The New York Krigwa Little Theatre group entered the national Little Theatre Tournament in 1927 which included little theatre organizations from all over the country as well as one from England. The local New York groups participating were The Unity Players of Montclair, New Jersey, the Association Players of the Y. M. H. A.; The Krigwa Players of Harlem; The Garden Players of Forest Hills, The Union Players of Bay Ridge, The Temple Players of Manhattan, and the Light House Players. There were groups from Memphis, Tennessee; Tulsa, Oklahoma, and Dallas, Texas.72

The Krigwa players appeared in the tournament on May 2, 1927, presenting one of the original Krigwa prize-plays. The New York Times reported as follows: "Of the three one-act plays presented last night, Confession by Kenyon Nicholas merited the approval which the audience bestowed upon it. Eulalie Spence's The Pools Errend which was portrayed by a cast of twelve Negroes was a close second."73

The British players from the Welwyn Garden City Theatre Society won the David Belasco Cup and the tournament with a presentation


of Mr. Sampson. Eulalie Spence of Krigwa received a $200.00 Samuel French Award for the best unpublished play. During this same year, two of the Krigwa players joined the professional casts in the downtown theatres. Richard Hugely took an important role in Paul Green's In Abraham's Bosom which was playing at The Garrick Theatre. Doralyne Spence was given a role in The Stigma which played at the Mayfair Theatre.

The Krigwa Little Theatre became less active after 1928. The Crisis gave a report of their activities during 1928:

The Little Theatre Movement among Negroes is still persisting. In spite of the fact that the Krigwa Players have not been meeting regularly this year, the promoters of the Belasco Tournament, mindful of their excellent work last year, insisted upon their entering the Tournament. They competed in May with nineteen other theatres and presented Aftermath, a play by Miss Mary Bruill of Dunbar High School of Washington, D. C.

By 1930, the Krigwa Little Theatre became completely inactive. The Harlem Experimental Theatre moved into the auditorium of the Harlem Public Library to replace Krigwa. When Dr. Du Bois was interviewed, he remarked that Krigwa was just what it was supposed to be; it was Negro art and not commercial

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75 The Crisis, XXXV (June, 1928), 199.
art. He said that the Krigwa movement in New York City did not last longer than three years because the commercial theatres drew away the best talent of the group. Krigwa, however, left behind a body of original one-act plays of Negro life which is listed in Appendix A of this study. Krigwa also left behind a firm conception of what a Negro little theatre should be: for Negroes, by Negroes, about Negroes, and near Negroes.

5. Summary: The NAACP with The Non-Commercial Theatres

The relationships of the NAACP with the non-commercial theatres were not promoted by anti-commercialism as was one of the motives of the Little Theatre Movement. The Association perceived that there were opportunities in the non-commercial theatres for implementing the organization's internal programs: mass action, cultural and social uplift, development of race-pride and group consciousness. Dr. Du Bois recognized in Negro pageantry the opportunity for mass appeal for his people by picturing for them their heritage in the ancient civilization of Ethiopia. The Star of Ethiopia must have had a degree of influence upon the Negro public for The Crisis reported that there were many requests for repeat performances of this pageant and that there were other pageant activities among Negroes following the production of Dr. Du Bois' pageant. An apparent weakness in the
Association's promotion of mass action through pageantry was the lack of continuing contact with colored people through this medium of theatre.

In two instances, the NAACP made attempts with independent theatre activities to use the stage for racial propaganda. The production of Miss Mary White Ovington's *Hazel* portrayed a Negro character that was not a stereotype. The little colored girl, Hazel, reared in Boston, intelligent and articulate, was made strong and individualized enough to carry and voice some of the racial aspirations. Angelina Grimké's *Rachel* has been considered the strongest propaganda play of the pre-war period of World War I. Rachel, like Hazel, was talented, intelligent and articulate, a character created to sentimentalize on the evils of race prejudice and the horror of lynching. When Dr. Du Bois defended the Ethiopian Art Players against unfavorable criticism which they received for their production of *Salome* on Broadway, he was in principle defending the Negro actors' right to be accepted and approved in non-stereotyped roles; he censored the critics on their silence after viewing an unusual performance, according to his opinion. The Association's independent efforts at using the theatre for propaganda during this period were probably limited by the exigencies of World War I.

The NAACP did not take issue with the Negro educational theatre, which was not essentially associated with racial
motives, although Dr. Du Bois and the majority of the NAACP Drama Committee favored a Negro theatre associated with race. However, during the controversy over the production of Shakespeare's Twelfth Night by the students of Shaw University, the editor of The Crisis "slanted" his attitude toward an educational theatre related in spirit to the darker nationalities of the world, which in turn, was related to the Association's interracial program and to the program of making foreign propaganda. Although the NAACP did not participate in a voluntarily sponsored symposium on "Desegregation in the Educational Theatre" by the American Education Theatre Association, the NAACP would not agree with the opinion that desegregation in the educational theatre should follow the pace of desegregation "off-stage." The NAACP stated with reference to segregation in the public schools the following determination:

The goal of the Fight for Freedom is to rid the country of this "sorry heritage" which blights the lives of little children in seventeen states and the District of Columbia.................................

The area of Jim Crowland has been shrinking steadily under the impact of the NAACP's consistent and uncompromising legal, legislative and educational attack upon segregation as a way of life. This attack will be stepped up in order to wipe out the last vestige of segregated education by the
time of the one-hundredth anniversary
of the Emancipation Proclamation.16

This determination on the part of the NAACP does not
invalidate the principles set forth by the symposium, that
desegregation in the educational theatre is part of the
democratic process of the American schools and that the
pace and amount of integration depends upon the educational
theatre's imagination, integrity, its community, and its
geographical location.

The NAACP Little Theatre Movement was active for only
two years; it was remarkable, however, for its principles
and conceptions. Krigwa, first, sought to guide and develop
new Negro writers by encouraging them and directing them
toward new and different racial themes in Negro life.
Second, Krigwa presented a definite conception of a Negro
theatre, about, by, for and near Negroes. Third, Krigwa
is evidence of the Association's recognition of the Little
Theatre Movement as an opportunity for racial developments.
It is still more remarkable that Dr. Du Bois criticized two
of the major religious denominations, Baptists and Methodists,
for hindering the development of the Negro in the theatre.
The conception of the NAACP for a Negro theatre is based on
segregation, on the all-Negro community as perceived in 1926.

76Target for 1963, Pamphlet, National Association for the
Advancement of Colored People, 20 West 40th Street, New York,
Therefore, this conception is valid today for a Negro community theatre. On the other hand, the community theatre should express the people of the community, therefore, the Negro theatre should change with the changing racial complexions of the community.
THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF
COLORED PEOPLE AND THE AMERICAN THEATRE

A Study of Relationships and Influences
VOLUME II

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the
Graduate School of The Ohio State
University

By

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The Ohio State University
1959

Approved by

[Signature]

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The Negro in American motion pictures underwent developments similar to his developments in American literature and on the American stage. The Negro stage stereotypes representing Negroes as comics, savages, contented slaves, loyal servants and entertaining buffoons were transferred to motion pictures. Peter Noble observed in his study of the Negro in motion pictures that during the period between 1905 through the 1920's there was evidence of prejudice in American films against foreigners and Negroes. A film titled The Masher (1907) was cited as a motion picture which presented Negro characters in a derogatory manner. A series of short comedies featured a Negro comic type named "Rastus" while another series featured a similar type as "Sambo." Other films which presented Negro stereotypes have been listed as follows:

- The Wooing and Wedding of a Coon (1905-all-Negro)
- The Slave, Directed by D. W. Griffith (Biograph, 1909)

Uncle Tom's Cabin (Thanhauser, 1909)

The Battle, Directed by D. W. Griffith (Biograph, 1911)

For Massa's Sake (Pathé, 1911)

The Dark Romance of a Tobacco Can (Essanay, 1911)

In Slavery Days (Rex, 1913)

The Octofoon, From the play by Dion Boucicault (Kalem, 1913)

Coon Town Suffragettes (1914-all-Negro)

Dark Town Jubilee, The first ill-fated attempt to star a Negro in a film, in this case, Bert Williams (1914-all-Negro)

The Birth of a Nation, Directed by D. W. Griffith (Epoch, 1915)

The Nigger, From the novel by Edward Sheldon (Fox, 1915)

Uncle Tom's Cabin, With Sam Lucas as Uncle Tom (World, 1914)

The "Our Gang" Comedies, Produced by Hal Roach, both silent and sound (1918)

Ten Nights in a Bar-Room, With Charles Gilpin (Colored Players, 1920, all-Negro)

Robinson Crusoe, With Noble Johnson as Friday (1922)
Early in the development of the motion picture industry, discerning individuals realized potential influence of films upon vast audiences. Peter Noble made this observation: "Although it is perhaps, stressing a somewhat tiresome truism to repeat here that the film is the most considerable influence for instilling ideas into its vast audiences, it would be well to draw attention at the very beginning of this book to what motion picture pioneer Thomas Edison once truthfully said: 'Whoever controls the film industry controls the most powerful medium of influence over the public.'"

The Birth of a Nation.—The first important full-length picture to devote much of its content to villainous type Negroes was The Birth of a Nation, a film adaptation of Thomas Dixon's novel, The Clansman, which was released for exhibition during 1915. This silent film tells a story which has been summarized as follows:

We are shown the palatial homestead of the Southern family, the Camerons. The Stonemans, a family from the Northern States, and the Camerons are good friends. Ben Cameron falls in love with Elsie Stoneman and their marriage seems eminent. The bitterness of the Civil War drives the young lovers apart...

Ibid., p. 9.
Follows the Reconstruction Period, with Stoneman arriving in Piedmont with Elsie, and taking up his abode next door to the Camerons, who now regard him with distaste. The Northern politician has been appointed adviser to Silas Lynch, the Lieutenant Governor of the district, and quickly he proceeds to bring his ideas of "revenge on the South and complete emancipation for all Negroes" into full play.

Lynch and the politician eject all the white Southerners from positions of power and prominence, and substitute ignorant, ill-educated Negro types. The rule of the carpet-baggers begins. Silas Lynch, the mulatto is chosen Lieutenant Governor... Whites are elbowed off the streets... There is talk of a "Black Empire."... A new and heroic band of white Southerners springs up led by Ben Cameron... By night they ride in their white hoods, lynching, murdering, whipping and threatening... Time and again we are shown trusted and faithful Negro slaves who still cling devotedly to the Camerons, while showing all other black men as vicious rebels and killers. Gus, for example, a "renegade" Negro formerly employed in the Cameron's household, is seen as a swaggering soldier in the colored militia occupying the town of Piedmont (Gus was played by a white actor, Walter Long); he tried to rape the white heroine Flora Cameron, eventually driving her to suicide in a rape scene...

The final reel of this film sees the Ku Klux Klan riding into town and sweeping the blacks out of Piedmont. As the muderers blacks are breaking down the door of the Cameron home, attempting to kill the family, the white-hooded Ku Klux Klan sweeps over the hill and in an exciting and impressive sequence save the white family from Negro terror.

\[Ibid., pp. 34-38.\]
This film was shown to President Woodrow Wilson and his family at the White House. There was also a special showing for the Justices of the Supreme Court and the members of the diplomatic corps. In New York City, a special showing was given on the night of February 20, 1915. Thomas Dixon, author of the basic story, as the final scene passed, shouted to Griffith, "Clansman is too tame. Let's call it The Birth of a Nation." On March 3, 1915, under its new title, the film opened for the New York public at the Liberty Theatre. The Birth of a Nation followed up its New York success with a tour of the country.

1. The Association's Campaign Against The Birth of a Nation

Public reaction to the film.—While the picture was being shown on its first run at New York City's Liberty Theatre, a mixed crowd of white men and Negroes who had obtained seats in the front row of the gallery started a demonstration against the film play by throwing eggs at the screen. Policemen and ushers seized two of the leaders and arrested them. After the demonstrators had left the theatre, a Negro identified as Cleveland G. Allen, arose and shouted—"On the anniversary of Lincoln's assassination it is not appropriate to present a play that libels 10,000,000 loyal American

Terry Ramsay, A Million and One Nights, II (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1926), 641-642.
Negroes. I think President Lincoln wouldn't like this play." In Boston, Massachusetts, two days later, 500 Negroes under the leadership of Monroe Trotter, Dr. Du Bois' associate in the Niagara Movement, arrived in a body at the Tremont Theatre to buy tickets for admission to the showing of *The Birth of a Nation*. The manager of the theatre informed them that the house was sold out. It was reported that Trotter had his followers then assume such an attitude that the manager called the police who cleared the theatre lobby with the use of clubs. The reaction of one audience to the film was reported as follows:

People were moved to cheers, hisses, laughter and tears, apparently unconscious and subdued by tense interest in the play; they clapped when the masked riders reaped vengeance on Negroes, and they clapped when the hero refused to shake the hand of a mulatto who had risen by political intrigue to become Lieutenant Governor. This remark made by a typical New Yorker leaving the theatre characterizes the sentiment which was expressed in much of the comment: "That show certainly does make you hate those blacks. And it gets that effect on me, when I don't care anything about it. Imagine what I would be in the South, a white man daily mixed up in it. It makes you feel as if you'd do the same thing."

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That is the element which mars one of the most ambitious and successful picture-dramas which has yet been attempted; and it is an element which does not seem necessary to the effectiveness of the film. 7

A white man, Henry Brock, who had moved to Lafayette, Indiana from Kentucky, after seeing the picture, came out of the theatre and fired three bullets into the body of Edward Manson, a Negro high school student. The Negro boy died the same night. Jane Addams of Hull House, Chicago, Illinois, was "painfully exercised over the exhibition." Francis Hackett in The New Republic lambasted the Reverend Thomas Dixon as a "yellow clergyman." Booker T. Washington wrote letters to the papers. It was charged that audiences were sprinkled with Pinkerton men to suppress demonstrations. Terry Ramsay came to the conclusion that "These attacks helped mightily to make Griffith's picture great. The roaring denunciations from high places sent the whole public to the theatre to see what the row was about." 9

7 "The Civil War in Film," Literary Digest, L (March 20, 1915), 608-609.

8 "Still Fighting the Film," The Crisis, XII (June, 1916), 87.

9 Terry Ramsay, A Million and One Nights, II, 64h.
The picture Birth of a Nation, and the Ku Klux Klan were based on the same source, Thomas Dixon's novel, The Clansman. Joseph Simmons, who was attached to the national headquarters of the Woodsmen of the World in Omaha, Nebraska, organized a secret order of his own which became known as the Ku Klux Klan, a name inspired by the picture.

Protest against film by NAACP Boston Branch.—The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People launched its attack against the showing of The Birth of a Nation through the Association's Northern California Branch. Dr. Du Bois, editor of The Crisis, the Association's official monthly publication, reported as follows on the action taken by the Northern California Branch against the film:

With great adroitness, the real play is preceded by a number of marvelously good war pictures (scenes); then in the second part comes the real "Clansman" with the Negro represented either as an ignorant fool, a vicious rapist, a venal and unscrupulous politician, or a faithful but doddering idiot. By curious procedure, this film received preliminary approval of the National Board of Censors. It was put on in Los Angeles and immediately the fine organization of the NAACP was manifest. The facts were telegraphed to us from our Los Angeles Branch....

Ibid., p. 638.
It is sufficient to add that the main incident in the "Clansman" turns on a thinly veiled charge that Thaddeus Stephens, the great abolition statesman, was induced to give Negroes the right to vote and secretly rejoiced in Lincoln's assassination because of his infatuation for a mulatto mistress. 11

The California Branch, in its attempt to suppress the film, employed Clarence Darrow as one of its attorneys. 12

Following the failure of the California Branch to suppress the film, the Boston Branch began the attack against the film in the East. The NAACP along with a few representative citizens condemned The Birth of a Nation which was reflected in the press and pulpit. Among these citizens were Doctor Charles W. Eliott, president of Harvard University, Dr. Mann, a Southerner, and the Governor and Lieutenant Governor of the State of Massachusetts. Protests were made to the Mayor of Boston and to the Governor of the State. Many mass meetings were held, culminating in a meeting in Tremont Temple with an overflow meeting on the Common. 13

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12 The Crisis, X (July, 1915), 148.

13 The Crisis, X (June, 1915), 85.
The Boston Branch in one instance upheld the "Black Abolitionist" tradition of New England by issuing a booklet against *The Birth of a Nation* which was circulated all over the country. Terry Ramsay's historical account took the following view of the booklet:

The president of the Boston organization was Moorfield Storey, a white leader of the movement. The Boston booklet, read after ten years have cooled the heat of controversy, appears now somewhat lacking in the measured caution and poise to have been expected of the New England intelligentsia. From its pages one discovers that Dr. Charles W. Eliott charged that the picture was a tendency to perversion of white ideals.¹⁴

Because D. W. Griffith was a Southerner, Negroes became more and more suspicious of his motives in directing the production of the film. Dr. Du Bois, realizing that the film had been defended on the grounds that while it portrayed unpleasant incidents it is historically true, rebutted: "The play, like the book, *The Clansman*, on which it is founded, is a gross perversion of a period of our history about which the people have been persistently lied to for a generation. Even the most eminent historians suppress the truth about it in the interest, I suppose, of national harmony."¹⁵

¹⁵ *The Crisis*, X (June, 1915), 69.
The Boston Branch found only one legal means of suppressing the film and that was on the point of corruption of morals. To eliminate this point of contention, the "Gus Scene," one in which a Negro attempts to rape a white girl, was eliminated by court order. However, the Boston Branch continued its campaign against the film on the issue that the film stimulated race hatred. On this issue, the Boston Branch was successful in promoting the passage of a bill in the State Legislature which created a Board of Censorship consisting of the Mayor, the Chief of Police, and the Chief of Magistrate. Any two members of this Board could revoke or suspend the licenses for public amusement at their pleasure.

National campaign against the film.—After failing to suppress the showing of the film in Boston, the National Office of the NAACP alerted its Branches to be vigilant against The Birth of a Nation. The editor of the NAACP official publication warned Negroes in the South not to oppose the showing of the picture: "The Negroes throughout the South will oppose Dixon's picture in vain. Their opposition will not stop the showing of

the picture but will serve to advertise it more heavily
and make it a greater issue. My advice to the Negro in
the South is to let the picture alone." The Annual
Report of the NAACP for 1915 contained a section on
"The Slander" promoted by The Birth of a Nation:

A propaganda of this sort against colored
people has long been carried on in the United
States. It was used to defend slavery; it was
used to disfranchise Negroes; and today there
is evidence of new life and determination on
the part of certain classes of Americans to
make Negroes despised and hated. A peculiarly
aggravating case of this during the last year
has been the picture play called The Birth of a
Nation. Here every resource of a magnificent
new art has been employed with an undeniable
attempt to picture Negroes in the worst possible
light.

Of course, it is difficult under such cir-
cumstances to select a feasible method of cam-
paign to counteract the undoubtedly vicious
influences of this widely viewed picture. If
Negroes and all their friends were free to
answer in the same channels by the same methods
in which the attack is made, the path would be
easy; but poverty, fashion, and color prejudice
preclude this. We have therefore sought vigorously
through censorship to stop this slander of a
whole race.18

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W. E. B. Du Bois, "Slanderous Film," The Crisis,
(December, 1915), 76.

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Dr. Du Bois evidently sought to answer Thomas Dixon and D. W. Griffith's historical representation of Negro life in the South during the Reconstruction Period for the editor of *The Crisis* published what was probably a reply from George Bernard Shaw on the question. This British playwright expressed his opinion as follows:

Yes, I should like to write a play showing that the South is really ruled by the Negro with a hideous tyranny just as the prisoners in a prison dominate everything—dictate the daily habits of the jailers, oppress and boss their imagination, color their consciences, force them to share their imprisonment and yet give them none of the prisoners' freedom from care and responsibility. But I am not a Southern white man, and nobody else could do it, and I cannot do everything.19

In promoting the national campaign against the film, the NAACP National Office circulated three pamphlets published by the Boston Branch to all parts of the country. Pamphlets titled *Fighting a Vicious Lie*, *Why The Negro Was Enfranchised*, and *The English Leaflet* were sent to sixty-three local branches and college chapters, and to high school principals. Articles were published


against the film in the press by members of the NAACP and by individuals sympathetic toward the Negro. For example, The Brooklyn Standard Union stated- "If a whole race, other than the Negro race, were slandered as the Negroes are in the current moving picture play, it would not run two nights in New York or in any other city." Sermons were preached from the pulpits of various churches against the showing of the film. For example, Rabbi Stephen S. Wise's statement- "Monsterous of all is the circumstance that this play constitutes a deliberate attempt to deepen and justify within the hearts of men the more or less instinctive prejudices which it is the business of an enlightened democracy ceaselessly to challenge and to combat...." The National Office of the NAACP reported in 1918 that it had addressed letters to the Governors of all the States and to the State Councils of Defense asking that they use the power of their offices to prevent the showing of The Birth of a Nation because of the film's harmful effects on national morale during the time of war.

21Quoted in The Crisis, X (May, 1915), 19.

22 Ibid

Campaign against the film in the West. — Although there were a few editorial comments in white Southern newspapers favorable toward suppressing *The Birth of A Nation*, the South was eliminated from the NAACP campaign. *The Crisis* reported the activities of Branches in the West as follows:

Albuquerque, New Mexico. — The Branch was successful in quieting race troubles at Gallup and in prohibiting the showing of the film (1915).

Chicago, Illinois. — This Branch presented to the new Mayor its objections to the moving picture play based on *The Clansman*. The press reported that the play was passed by the wife of the former Mayor, Mrs. Harrison, and by his secretary. In a letter to the press, Mrs. Harrison later condemned the picture. The film was shown because it had been licensed by the former Mayor (1915). Through persistent efforts of the Chicago Branch, *Birth of a Nation* was permitted to be shown in only one theatre at one time. The Branch attempted to have the injunction dissolved on the grounds that it violated a subsequent statute passed by the Illinois legislature which permitted the suppression of any film that tends to provoke riots or breach of peace, or which exposes the citizens of any race, color, creed or religion to contempt, derision or obloquy. The court witnessed a private showing of the picture and expert testimony was produced in the person of three University of Chicago professors of Sociology and Political Science to show that the picture did hold Negroes up to contempt and derision (1940). Actions were taken against the showing of the film in Alton, Illinois.

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24 *The Crisis*, XXXVII (July, 1940), 205.
Columbus, Ohio.--Film executives sought the endorsement of colored citizens for *Birth of a Nation*. Governor F. E. Willis spoke out against the film (1915). The producers of the film made attempts to exhibit the picture as "a complimentary feature" of the Buckeye Corn Special Tour, an annual excursion promoted in the interest of education and patriotism. Governor Willis objected to the showing (1916). Cleveland and Toledo, Ohio protested against the showing of *The Nigger* and *The Birth of a Nation*. 25

Producers of the film attempted to have the picture shown in Ohio after World War I, but the Branch induced Governor Cox to prohibit the exhibition a second time.

Dayton, Ohio.--The Branch organized the colored citizens to protest against the showing of the film. The City Commissioners allowed the film to be exhibited. A Negro newspaper of the city claimed that two Negro publishers, one of Dayton and the other of Indianapolis, Indiana sold out to Thomas Dixon and G. W. Griffith because the publishers approved of the film. The Dayton Forum took the following attitude: "After old man Know cringingly stated that he had seen the film three times, that it was all right, as it showed the love of the Negro for his master, and the love black mammies had for young white soldiers. The Commissioners got cold feet...."26

Des Moines, Iowa.--Two successful public meetings were held. A city ordinance which was drawn up by the president of the Branch and was passed by the City Council in 1907, prohibited the showing of the film on the grounds that it tended to stir up race prejudice (1915).


26 *The Crisis*, XII (January, 1916), 140.
Gary, Indiana.--The Branch succeeded the second time in prohibiting the showing of the film (1915).

Oakland, California.--The Branch succeeded in having several objectionable scenes removed from the film.

St. Paul, Minnesota.--The Branch voiced protests against The Birth of a Nation, and The Nigger. The Mayor approved the showing of the former, but the Branch was successful in having the "Gus Scenes" removed from it. The Branch also supported the Student Council at the University of Minnesota in the students' protest against the film.

Topeka, Kansas.--Protests by the Branch against the film were referred to Governor Clapper who was president of the Branch. The Governor succeeded in prohibiting the exhibition of the film on the stage (1915).

Campaign against the film in the East.--The Boston Branch took the lead in the early stage of the Eastern campaign, according to this survey. The Crisis reported a riot resulting from showing the film in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. "A number of colored people were arrested. When the intense feeling of the Negroes against this most slanderous caricature of their people is considered, it is remarkable that there have not been many riots." The Philadelphia Branch cooperated with other organizations in its unsuccessful attempt to suppress the film. The Newark, New Jersey Branch held two mass meetings, but the Branch was hampered by a court injunction. A Negro city councilman in Wilmington, Delaware was able

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"Slanderous Film," The Crisis, XI (December, 1915), 76.
to secure an ordinance to prohibit the showing of The Birth of a Nation.

During 1921, the film was revived and shown in several Eastern cities, including the Capitol Theatre in New York City. The New York City Branch immediately made a public protest by securing former service men and women and YMCA secretaries to carry placards and to distribute handbills to passers by at the Capitol Theatre. The distributors were arrested, convicted and then given suspended sentences. Later, Judge Talley of the Court of General Sessions reversed the convictions, and stated the following opinion:

The defendants were well within their rights in distributing the circulars in question, and the complaint against them should have been dismissed. I hold that the ordinance in question was never intended to prevent the lawful distribution of anything other than commercial and business advertising matter, and the circular in question does not come within that category. It would be a dangerous and un-American thing to sustain an interpretation of a city ordinance which would prohibit the free distribution by a body of citizens of a pamphlet setting forth their views against what they believe to be a movement subversive of their rights as citizens.29


29 Cited in "The Libelous Film," The Crisis, XXIII (December, 1921), 71-72.
During November of 1923, *The Birth of a Nation* was advertised for a showing at a local New York City theatre, and the National Office of the NAACP immediately filed a protest with various city and State officials and with the Motion Picture Commission of the State of New York. After a hearing in support of the Association's contention, the Commission dismissed the complaint against the film.

The National Office reported a more insistent movement to revive the showing of the film during 1938. *The Birth of a Nation* was offered to an adult education class in a large New York high school, but the showing was prohibited by Mayor LaGuardia. The film was used in a class on the history of the cinema at New York University. "Reports received at the National Office of the NAACP stated that the film was used in a similar class at Wesleyan University at Middletown, Connecticut, which suggested that the film was being taken on a tour of universities," stated *The Crisis*. The readers were also informed that the New York City schools had been mailed circulars from a commercial film library offering

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30 *The Crisis*, XXV (March, 1923), 218-219.

the picture on the ground that the film was of "great historical significance," that the film was picketed at a showing in Washington, D. C., and that Cecil B. DeMille had announced publicly over the radio his intention of making a sound picture of the film.

During the same year, the Orange, New Jersey Branch of the NAACP caused the arrest of the manager of the Ormont Theatre for exhibiting the film. The warrant for the arrest was sworn out by Theodore R. Inge, president of the Branch, under a New Jersey law passed in 1935 designed originally to curb Nazi propaganda.

The American Civil Liberties Union advised the NAACP in 1939 that the Association's continued fight against the showing of The Birth of a Nation "is inevitably a boomerang.... The precedent established will work against films favorable to Negroes on the other side." Nevertheless, the NAACP Board of Directors voted to protest to Will Hays, president of the Motion Picture Producers, against the showing of the film and to use every other means in the Association's power to

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32 Ibid.

prevent further showing of the sound film version of
The Birth of a Nation. Among the individuals who
sent protests to Will Hays' office were Channing H.
Tobias of the National Council of the YMCA, Mrs.
Bernard Waring of the Society of Friends' Committee
on Race Relations, R. B. Eleazer of the Commission
on Interracial Cooperation, Doctor Stephen S. Wise,
president of the American Jewish Congress; George B.
White of the Congregational and Christian Churches
Board of Home Missions, and Charles Webber of the
Methodist Federation for Social Service. In reply

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to the protests sent to the Motion Picture Producers,
Carl E. Milinken, director of the Community Service
Department of the Hays' office, stated to the NAACP
that the circulation of the sound version of the film
made in 1931 had not been circulated widely and that
his office had had practically no comment from the
public on the film.

The silent version of The Birth of a Nation was
revived again during World War II and shown at the
Fifth Street Playhouse in New York City during December

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The Crisis, XXXVII (May, 1940), 150.

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Ibid.
of 1943. The NAACP established picket lines before the playhouse. After three hours of picketing the film, the NAACP was informed by the manager, Lowell Mellett, that the film would be withdrawn. The National Office of the NAACP protested a showing of the film at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City during 1945.

During the post-war period of 1955, a motion picture company under the leadership of Ted Thal proposed to remake *The Birth of a Nation*. Roy Wilkins, executive secretary of the NAACP, sent a telegram to Mr. Thal which stated the Association's position on the issue as follows:

> It is now more than seventy-five years since the period depicted in *The Clansman* on which the film is based, and forty years since the first film was released. The revival of the unashamed and undistinguished racial animosities of that era in the middle of the twentieth century following two world wars and unparalleled progress in race relations can do little except to inflame the still uninformed....

The NAACP protest campaign is still active at the present time against revivals of the showing of *The Birth of a Nation*. The Association conducted

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36 *The Crisis*, LII (March, 1945), 79.


the campaign (1) through the picketing of theatres, (2) through letters and articles in the press, (3) through interracial cooperation, (4) through church pulpits, and (5) through legal actions. The campaign included protests against the showing of the film in the commercial theatres and in the non-commercial theatres such as high schools, municipal auditoriums, universities and colleges, and art galleries.

Results of the campaign.--Dr. Du Bois claimed: "While the NAACP has failed to kill The Birth of a Nation it has succeeded in wounding it"; he meant that in several cities and States portions of scenes had been deleted which made the story of the film somewhat incoherent. The National Office stated in 1938 that according to its files the film was barred in eighteen States and numerous cities. The National Office collected a body of legal opinions against the film and circulated it among its Branches. However, the NAACP did not do any appreciable financial harm to the film because the film made money for the producers.

39 The Crisis, XXV (March, 1923), 219.

40 Terry Ramsay, A Million and One Nights, p. 641.
One important result of the campaign was the channeling of protests against the film by the NAACP and enlightenment of the informed American public concerning features of the picture which were objectionable to Negroes.

The campaign gave the NAACP another opportunity to take offensive action against the Ku Klux Klan, an organization inspired toward anti-Negro sentiments by The Clansman and consequently by The Birth of a Nation. The NAACP began to take action against the Ku Klux Klan in 1920 for the purpose of exposing the Klan's activities against Negroes, Jews, and Catholics. A New York newspaper, The New York World, printed a series of articles which reported the methods, purposes, and leaders of the Ku Klux Klan. The NAACP assisted The New York World in making the investigation. The Crisis stated the following attitude:

Even before the election of 1920, in which the Ku Klux Klan attempted to intimidate colored voters, the NAACP was endeavoring to obtain facts about these bed-sheet heroes. An officer of the Association discovered, when he was invited to join the Klan under the mistaken impression that he was a white man, that the Klan intended to organize in New York City. The attention of the New York Police Department,

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41 Peter Nobel, op. cit., p. 40.
the Mayor and the District Attorney was at once called to this menace, and both the Mayor and District Attorney assured the people of New York that the Klan would not be permitted within the city limits.42

The movement to keep the Klan out of New York City continued in 1922. The District Attorney called in for questioning Reverend Oscar Haywood, a national lecturer on the Klan. Reverend Haywood denied that he knew of any New York City Klansmen; he stated that his work in New York was not to organize the Klan but to organize an American Protestant Church.

When the NAACP asked the National Board of Censorship of Motion Pictures to revoke the Board's approval of The Birth of a Nation, the Association entered the general controversy concerning the freedom of the movies. The NAACP attempted to bring court action against the film on the ground that it tended toward a breach of the peace as in the case of the race riot in Philadelphia, and on this ground the Association sought to have the National Board of Censorship revoke its approval of the film. The National Board of Censorship denied the

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43 "Ku Klux Klan," The Crisis, XXIII (November, 1921), 10-11.
Association's plea on the grounds stated as follows:

W. D. McGuire, Jr., executive secretary of the Board, holds that "board does not regard itself as a censor of accuracy, unless the inaccuracy in question is of the kind that will result in some concrete disaster to the person whom the inaccuracy misleads." He holds that "any historical inaccuracy in The Birth of a Nation would hardly result in leading any individuals into concrete disaster." Further he says, "A board of censorship for motion pictures or dramatic productions should confine itself entirely to the consideration of whether a given production is objectionable from the standpoint of public morals. If it can pass this test it should be permitted. If not, it should be stopped. Public authorities have no right to interfere with the production of a play or motion picture which emphasizes the Southern point of view of our great conflict and the subsequent period of reconstruction."

Mr. McGuire states that the Pennsylvania State Board of Censorship, the Chicago Municipal Board of Censorship and committees in Los Angeles and San Francisco all approved it. It has run for several weeks in these cities without adverse comment, he said, and a vote taken at the performance in Los Angeles polled over 2,500 favorable to twenty-three adverse ballots.

The National Board of Censorship contended that its primary obligation was to represent public opinion. This Board was established by the motion picture industry in 1909; it was formed as a result of the showing of sensational pictures in New York City, particularly The Great Thaw Trial to audiences in which children were present. The name of the Board was changed to the

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National Board of Review in 1916 because its members were opposed to censorship. In failing to censor The Birth of a Nation, the Board's attitude toward the protests by the NAACP has been expressed as follows: "In so far as public opinion has had a chance to express itself, the National Board has been uniformly upheld. Spasmodic individual protests and protests of societies which have special objects to further their own causes are not to be considered as representative of any wide public opinion."

Although the National Board did not censor The Birth of a Nation, there is evidence that the protests made by the NAACP and cooperating individuals and groups did have some influence on the Board's later decisions. The following view was taken of the Board's actions:

A recent example of inconsistency on the part of the National Board is of interest, especially because the inconsistency was due to an attempt at consistency. The Board refused to prohibit the film The Birth of a Nation, which in the view of many persons was an insult to a defenseless race, calculated to intensify race hatred and even to cause violence....


Shortly thereafter, the National Board condemned a film which depicted outrages by German soldiers, alleged to have been committed in 1870 in the Franco-Prussian War.... In this second case, the National Board acted on a ruling adopted at the outbreak of the Great War, that films likely to cause unneutral acts, or riots between (for example, Franco-Americans) should not be permitted. This ruling sufficed to neutralize and to override the ruling which had been applied to refusing to condemn *The Birth of a Nation*.47

The NAACP campaign of protest against the film was related to later developments concerning the National Board and the motion picture industry. Various groups and individuals cooperating with the National Board became dissatisfied and resigned their positions on the Board, which found twenty per cent of the films objectionable in 1921. The motion picture industry became desperate and took drastic action; it decided upon a totally new organization to represent the industry, headed by an outstanding public figure to lend dignity and respectability to it. On March 4, 1922, Will H. Hays resigned his position as Post Master General and assumed the directorship of the new agency, The Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America. After 1922, the Will H. Hays office was


approached by the NAACP concerning the prohibiting of the showing of The Birth of a Nation and other films which the NAACP deemed unfavorable toward the Negro.

The NAACP had an indirect relationship with the proposed Federal legislation concerning the control of motion picture films. In 1915 a bill was introduced in Congress providing for a Federal Motion Picture Commission as a division of the Bureau of Education in the Department of Interior. The bill provided that a commission of five members be appointed by the President of the United States; that this commission was to examine, censor, and license all films before they could be admitted to interstate commerce.

As a result of the protests against The Birth of a Nation and the proposed Federal legislation for the control of films, D. W. Griffith wrote articles and made speeches in defense of The Birth of a Nation and against Federal control of films. According to Peter Noble's account of the campaign of the NAACP against the producers of The Birth of a Nation the controversy became the concern of political organizations which were seeking the Negro vote. Because of pressures against the film, D. W. Griffith came to its defense and based his rebuttal on seven points. Seymour Stern cited these
points in a monograph as follows:

(1) First and foremost, it was based on the story. Of whatever excesses or outrages the blacks may be guilty, these they commit as the blind and misguided pawns of their satanic new masters from the North. But as an attack on the Negro race, there is no hint...

(2) The personal "heavy" (villain) is not Silas Lynch, the mulatto leader, but the white senator.

(3) Stoneman is the fictional counterpart of Thaddeus Stevens whose political extremism and maniacal ambition very nearly wrecked Lincoln's post-war program of unionization...


(5) In defense of showing the Negroes gaining control of the South Carolina legislature, Griffith cited the records of the State House of Representatives, Columbia, South Carolina, and also the State Supreme Court of South Carolina, 1868-1871.

(6) In support of certain other scenes of alleged Negro misbehavior, Griffith cited records of the same period from the higher courts throughout the South.

(7) Finally, Griffith defended his own right as a free American citizen to dramatize history in the light of his own understanding.49

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49 Cited in The Negro in Films, p. 274.
After 1915, the year of the bitterest and most severe protests against *The Birth of a Nation*, D. W. Griffith became the most militant opponent of censorship and Federal control of films. At a meeting of the National Association of the Motion Picture Industry convening in New York City, September 21, 1916, D. W. Griffith voiced the following opinion:

> When Federal censorship is once established what power is ever going to break it? Once established who is there in this room who thinks he would stand any chance of arguing with the United States Government about whether Mary Pickford should smoke a cigarette in the first act or whether any of the other actresses should wear a skirt two and one-half inches above the shoetops? Once that form of hypocrisy is put over the motion picture people, I thoroughly believe from the bottom of my heart that Federal censorship means the end of the motion picture business as an art, as an industry, and as a form of speech. 50

Although the NAACP was unsuccessful in having the National Board to revoke its approval by legal action, the Association accomplished one purpose which is related to the major program of the NAACP, and that is to influence public opinion concerning a controversial issue. First, the National Board of Censorship was criticized for its attitude toward *The Birth of a Nation*.

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Second, D. W. Griffith found it necessary to defend himself in open discussion from the platform and in the press. Third, the campaign caused the motion picture industry to become more aware of protests from Negroes concerning the representation of Negro life in films.

2. Attitude of The Crisis toward Other Films

Sound pictures came to the motion picture theatre in 1926 when Warner Brothers produced The Jazz Singer starring Al Jolson. The first of Hollywood's all-colored films was Hearts in Dixie produced by Fox Studios and featured the Negro comedian, Stepin Fetchit, who acted the role of the lazy, good-for-nothing, good-natured slave on a Southern plantation. On the other hand, the reviews gave the Negro actor Clarence Muse credit for "a charming performance, fine dignity, grand voice and noble bearing" in the same film. Although this film possessed motives for advancing the Negro's position in motion pictures, it failed to do so.

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Hallelujah (1929).—The second sound picture featuring an all-Negro cast was Hallelujah. King Vidor, the producer, had desired to experiment with Negro material in motion pictures, the songs, rhythms, and folk-ways; he found his opportunity in this film. The background of the story is the cotton fields of the South where Zeke, a fine farmer, worked happily with his parents. Zeke meets a fallen woman named Chick and drifts down with her into a life of sin which leads to murder. Zeke finally arose from this life of sin, returned home to his parents and his first sweetheart, a chastened man.

The monthly publication of the NAACP, The Crisis, divided its comments between the two films, Hearts in Dixie and Hallelujah:

Hearts in Dixie is a fine film, skillfully avoiding the tabooed love interest and has an ending which would show the results of educating young Negroes. But Hallelujah is a great drama. It touches the religion steeped in tradition, hope, and phantasy. And to this King Vidor dared to add not simply the traditional mammy and the wild sex lure, but a womanly Negro woman—Missy Rose, a slim, dark and modest girl beautifully in love. Thus, the first time such a character has appeared on the American stage....

The Crisis, XXXVI (October, 1929), 327.
The genius and authority of Belasco broke the white-black complex in Lula Belle, but left the sordid tragedy untouched. Porgy softened the tragedy with faint nobleness of character. Then in the movies came Hearts in Dixie and Hallelujah. Both of these portrayed Southern Negro laborers and sought a real folk drama based on the desire for education, the Negro religion.54

While departing from the traditional Negro stock characters in film stories and breaking the taboo of romantic love making between Negro actors and actresses, the producers of Hallelujah created the problem of gaining general acceptance for the film in the South.

Trader Horn (1934).—Loren Miller, who reviewed the film Trader Horn in The Crisis, detected the beginning of a certain Negro stereotype in Hollywood films, "the savage Negro." The film was directed by Thalberg and Mayer and starred Harry Carey and Constance Woodruff as the "White Goddess" who was pictured in the clutches of an African. Lorene Miller commented on this scene.


as follows:

It is high time the American Negro took up arms on the Hollywood front to check the poisonous pictures of himself which are being sent to all parts of the globe. In Trader Horn, one scene depicts the "beautiful, of course, blond heroine in the clutches of 'savage Africans.'" Where there are racial clashes in Birth of a Nation, the Negro is pictured in Trader Horn as vicious and depraved.

Imitation of Life (1934).--Universal produced a film of Fannie Hurst's novel, Imitation of Life, which featured the Negro actress, Louise Beavers. The subplot of the story focused attention upon Miss Beavers as "the self effacing, faithful kind hearted cook, and her mulatto daughter who could easily pass for white, played by Fredi Washington." A controversy arose over the treatment of Negro life in this film; namely, between Sterling A. Brown, film critic for the Opportunity Magazine (monthly publication of the National Urban League), and Fannie Hurst. Sterling Brown contended that the film followed too closely so many other films that treated Negro characters as stupid servants. Miss Hurst stated that Negroes should express more gratitude for the fact that she had presented their problems in her novel and screen play.

59 Ibid., p. 61.
The Crisis review praised Miss Beavers' performance as follows:

Her performance in the picture justified the belief in director John M. Stahl. Although the role was the most difficult in the picture, Miss Beavers enacted it in a manner which provoked critics to declare her performance "one of the most unprecedented personal triumphs for an obscure player's in the annals of a crazy business." Everyone who sees Imitation of Life will agree that Miss Beavers steals the picture even though filmland's best box office bets, Claudette Colbert and Warren Williams, are in the cast.

The Crisis, in this instance, took the attitude that this film gave a good actress, who had been a maid for ten years in a Hollywood studio, an opportunity to use her talent. However, the following year, the NAACP registered protests against The Prisoner of Shark Island for portraying Negroes as inferiors and as cowards, and against The Frisco Kid and Barbary Coast for glorifying lynching.

Fury (1938).—One year later, the NAACP approved a film which contained no Negro characters. The film, Fury, which starred Spencer Tracy and Sylvia Sidney,


has been called one of the most effective attacks on lynching in the United States. The Crisis complimented the film as follows: "In a year which saw the greatest variety of crusading and publicity against lynching, it is notable that for the first time in the history of the motion picture industry, a picture was made that is perhaps the most effective preaching against America's disgrace that has yet been employed. The film was produced by Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer and was directed by a foreigner, Fritz Lang, a fact which Peter Noble termed significant.

**Gone With the Wind (1939).**—One historian of the motion picture industry has said, "Of all the motion pictures produced since the screen began, the one that has reached the most people and may fairly be judged the most popular is the epic production of Margaret Mitchell's famous novel, Gone With the Wind." Lawrence Reddick, Negro historian, observed interesting similarities in the film elements of Gone With the Wind and The Birth of a Nation: (1) the efforts of Negroes to free themselves from slavery, (2) extraordinary

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62 "Fury," The Crisis, XXXIV (February, 1937), 49.

63 Bosley Crowther, The Lion's Share, p. 261.
artistic and technical production, (3) fantastic publicity, (4) extraordinary length, and (5) high financial successes.

While this film was in production, it was protested against by the NAACP, the National Negro Congress, the National Urban League, the Negro press, and the Communist Party. The NAACP offered vigorous objections to the film and sought to have some of the most offensive scenes eliminated, or, at least, softened. Then the editor of The Crisis announced the opening dates of the film and alerted Negroes for protesting against the showing. "These openings of the motion picture are of great interest to the colored people because the book from which the film is taken was judged by many critics to be full of anti-Negro propagandas."

Gone With the Wind had its premiere in the author's hometown, Atlanta, Georgia, December 14, 1939. The film starred Clark Gable as Rhett Butler and Vivian Leigh as Scarlett O'Hara and was directed by Victor Fleming. The leading Negro characters in the film were Hattie

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64 Cited in Negro in the Films, p. 75.

65 The Crisis, XXXXVIII (December, 1939), 337.
McDaniels and Butterfly McQueen, who played the roles of loyal slaves and household servants. John D. Silvera, writing in the March issue of The Crisis, exclaimed—"Just as Will Hays caters to the feelings of the Jewish, Italian and other racial minorities, he should be made aware of Negroes' objections to the vicious stereotyping they are given in the movies and they grow steadily worse. God forbid what Gone With the Wind will bring us." Roy Wilkins, who had succeeded Dr. Du Bois as editor of The Crisis, gave the following analysis of the film:

Happily, the film which had its world premiere in Atlanta and New York eliminated practically all the offensive scenes and dialogue so that there is little material, directly affecting Negroes as a race to which objection can be entered.

There are two or three uses of the word "darky" which may make some spectators wince. There is a fleeting scene of carpet-baggers and Negroes, and there is the emphasis upon the devotion and faithfulness (to their white folks) of "Uncle Tom" servant type, but the inflammable dialogue in the novel has been omitted.

The film, with its moving, talking characters, is sure to make plainer than ever to millions of people who have not analyzed history or the Mitchell novel that the Civil War not only saved the Union, but the South. For its own sake, white Dixie, even while cheering a

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Quoted in The Negro in Films, p. 76.
nostalgic excursion into the past, ought to be glad the whole business is going with the wind. Negroes, still hamstrung by die-hards, can hope and work for the day when the era truly will be gone, and not merely on its way. 67

Walter White, executive secretary of the NAACP, took a different view of the film; he stated, "Whatever sentiment there was in the South for Federal anti-lynch law evaporated during the Gone With the Wind vogue." Still another view was voiced by motion picture critic, Dalton Trumbo, while speaking to the Hollywood Writers Congress in 1943; he said, "The most gigantic milestones of Hollywood's appeal to public patronage have been the anti-Negro pictures like The Birth of a Nation and Gone With the Wind." 69 Lawrence Reddick believed that the net effect of such a film as Birth of a Nation on the public mind can only be guessed, not measured.

The NAACP, so far as Roy Wilkins was concerned, should take some satisfaction in having caused the film story and production to be modified which made it less offensive to Negroes. These seemed to have

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67 Ibid.
68 Ibid.
69 Ibid.
HATTIE McDaniels

Her Mammie in GWTW was winning her Oscar.

PLATE XVIII
been achieved more easily by the NAACP than similar modifications were brought about in *The Birth of a Nation*. The producers of *Gone With the Wind* were probably influenced or affected by the NAACP protest campaign against *The Birth of a Nation*. Hattie McDaniel was given the Academy Award for the best acting of the year in a supporting role which she portrayed in *Gone With the Wind*. "The fact that she was given an 'Oscar' for her work as a stereotyped 'mammy' caused a deal of further dissention," observed Peter Noble. "Indeed many Negroes felt that Miss McDaniel should have refused to take the award as a protest against her part."

Although Miss McDaniel acted a stereotyped role, *The Crisis* gave notice of her success in the film by printing her picture on the front cover of an issue. (See PLATE XVIII).

Concerning other films.---During 1938, a motion picture titled *Hollywood Hotel* was released. This film featured Benny Goodman's Orchestra which contained two Negro musicians whom Mr. Goodman had integrated with his white musicians. The Negroes were Teddy Wilson, pianist, and Lionel Hampton, vibraphonist. When *Hollywood Hotel* was shown in Memphis, Tennessee, the scenes containing the Negro musicians had been deleted. *The Crisis* editorialized as
follows on the Memphis policies of censorship:

The excuse was that the city has an ordinance prohibiting any theatrical scene showing Negroes and whites on an equality. We sympathize with the city fathers of Memphis. They are in a spot. They have got to try to maintain local white prestige, no matter how difficult the task. Teddy Wilson, Lionel Hampton, Benny Goodman, and Gene Krupa may enter the homes of thousands of Memphians on an equality via record and the radio; their movie may play to millions; but the Memphis censors know better than all these.  

During the early part of World War II, the National Office of the NAACP was informed by some of its branches that Negro soldiers were being deleted from the newsreels in various motion picture theatres. The Crisis editorially stated: "All this means that the movie going public, estimated at 75,000,000 people weekly, sees no film of Negro soldiers. Inevitably white people get the impression Negroes are doing little if anything to win the victory." In reply to the NAACP charge of discrimination, Pathé and Paramount News stated that they had no policy of excluding Negroes from their releases.

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70 "Tain't So," Editorial, The Crisis, XXXV (March, 1938), 81.

In a discussion of the motion picture version of the novel, *Foxes of Harrow*, written by a Negro, Frank Yerby, Professor Hugh M. Gloster cited a change in the script which favored the South:

Following the usual Hollywood pattern for dealing with complications of sex and race, writers of the scenario endeavored by eliminating censor-provoking representations of connubial unfaithfulness and interracial amours...

No mention is made of Aurori's extra-marital affection for Stephen, and Desiree's racial identity is apparent only to those who are familiar with New Orleans and illusions to Rampart Street. Except for a slave girl who commits suicide rather than let her off-spring grow up in bondage, the Negro characters are of the *Gone With the Wind* variety.72

Professor Gloster was indirectly criticizing the Hollywood producers for their close observance of Motion Picture Code, the self-regulations of the industry which was published in 1934. Section 6 of the Code, under the heading of "Miscegenation," states that there should not be any depiction of sex relationships between white and black races.73 The other point of criticism was the employment of a white actress to play the mulatto mistress.

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73 Cited in *Freedom of the Movies*, p. 111.
In commenting on the film version of John Steinbeck's novel, *The Grapes of Wrath*, a writer challenged Hollywood producers to make a film about Negroes that reveals the same courage that the producers exhibited in depicting the problems of white share-croppers.

"A much bigger story than the sorry plight of the indigent, ignorant and shiftless white share-croppers is the story of the three centuries of unrecognized, legalized and scandalized terror to which American Negroes have been subjected," the writer claimed.

The NAACP produced its own color film in 1943 which documented in a favorable manner the contributions of the Negro soldiers to the War effort. This film, titled *On Guard*, was exhibited by NAACP Branches all over the country. The following year, a group of white producers called The Negro Marches On, Inc., made an all Negro film titled *We've Come a Long Way*. The NAACP refused to support the commercial showing of this film on the ground that "the technical execution was faulty." It was reported that *We've Come a Long Way* was made up of newsreel and documentary film shots put together in bad sequence.

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75 "Film on Negro Life Called Insulting," *The Crisis*, LI (March, 1944), 88.
The NAACP in its relationships with the motion picture industry has been concerned about three issues: (1) favorable representation of Negro life, (2) the deletion of Negro actors in the Southern exhibition of films which integrate Negro and white actors in scenes, and (3) the use of Negro stereotypes to the exclusion of individualized characterizations. The NAACP considered these issues important because of the wide communication of the motion picture medium. In an article, "The Movies and Race Relations," which appeared in The Crisis, Edgar Dale raised the questions:

Seventy million Americans go to the movies every week. What do they see? What kind of education is being handed them under the sugar-coating of entertainment? How has the motion pictures treated the Negro? To point out at the outset that our thinking in regard to most problems is in terms of stereotypes—ideas fixed in permanent form—is to say nothing new. The characteristic thing about popular generalizations is that they are too frequently founded upon incomplete data. They represent unscientific thinking based upon too small a sampling...

Vocational stereotypes are also set up and based on the lack of data. Racial stereotypes have wide appeal...

76 "The Movies and Race Relations," The Crisis, XXXXIV (October, 1937), 294-296.
The Crisis reviews could not possibly cover all of the films that presented Negro stereotypes; for example, Paul Robeson performed in the film version of The Emperor Jones in 1933, Clarence Muse and George Reed in So Red the Rose (1936), Bill "Bojangles" Robinson with Shirley Temple in The Little Colonel (1936) Stepin Fetchit and Hattie McDaniel with Will Rogers in Judge Priest (1935). Butterfly McQueen, Louise Beavers, Willie Bess, Eddie "Rochester" Anderson, and Mantan Moreland played stereotyped roles in many films. Until the beginning of World War II, there were three thousand or more Negro extras working in Hollywood along with the Negro stars. Independent Negro film producers also made use of stereotypes. The popularity of the state folk opera, Porgy and Bess, encouraged Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer to purchase the screen rights of the stage production, Cabin in the Sky. According to Variety, Hollywood producers have avoided films with all-Negro casts because of the difficulty of selling such films to Southern motion picture exhibitors. The film version of Cabin in the Sky

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was released in 1943; its all-Negro cast was led by Lena Horne, Eddie "Rochester" Anderson, Ethel Waters, and Rex Ingram. Twentieth Century Fox released Tales of Manhattan during the same year; this film featured Paul Robeson, Ethel Waters, Eddie "Rochester" Anderson in an isolated scene. Peter Noble described the scene as follows: "The central idea of the scene was quite preposterous in that it showed a group of Southern Negroes who, picking up a dress suit which had been thrown from an aeroplane with the pockets stuffed with money, believed that this was really a gift from Heaven in answer to their prayers for a new church." The film was severely criticized by the Negro press and various individuals. Paul Robeson acknowledged the criticism and admitted that it was justified and claimed that he didn't realize the scene's import until after the filming had been completed and that he then tried unsuccessfully to get the producers to change the script.

Metro-Goldwyn-Meyer produced The Man on America's Conscience in 1944, another film story about the


80 "Robeson Sees 'Glory Road Song' and 'Tales' an Insult to Negro Race," Variety, CXXXVII (August 26, 1942), 18.
Reconstruction Period in the South. Andrew Johnson, who succeeds Lincoln as President of the United States, is seen as "the staunch upholder of the Southern bourgeoisie against the North, and the main part of the action is concerned with his clash with Thaddeus Stevens, a Northern politician who believes in giving the ex-slaves equal rights with the white Southerners. Negroes protested against this film because Andrew Johnson, whom they considered as anti-Negro in his sympathies, was portrayed as a hero. When the protests reached the Office of War Information, Federal officials requested that the producers change certain parts of the script. The film underwent certain modifications at the suggestion of the NAACP.

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81 Peter Noble, *op. cit.*, p. 208

World War II and the rededication to the principles of democracy created a climate of liberalism toward the treatment of the Negro in Hollywood films. Such films as *Casablanca* (1943) with Dooley Wilson and *Sahara* (1943) with Rex Ingram presented Negroes in non-stereotyped roles. Nevertheless, the NAACP through its executive secretary, Walter White, began a campaign in 1942 to remove Negro stereotypes from Hollywood films. Walter White explained in his autobiography that he met the late Wendell Willkie in 1940 while Mr. Willkie was running against Franklin Delano Roosevelt for the presidency of the United States. The two men met at a luncheon where Mr. White mentioned "that the most widely circulated medium yet devised to reach the minds and emotions of people all over America and the world was perpetuating and spreading dangerous and harmful stereotypes of the Negro." According to White's account, Wendell Willkie, who was then president of the Board of Directors at Twentieth Century Fox motion picture studios, commented as follows: "I ought to have a tiny bit of influence right now - I don't know how long it will last - with the motion picture people. Let's go out to Hollywood and talk with the more intelligent people in the industry
to see what can be done to change this situation.

Wendell Willkie and Walter White met in Hollywood during 1942 when Mr. Willkie accepted the invitation to speak at the Thirty-First Annual Conference of the NAACP. These two men spoke before a group of Hollywood producers at a luncheon in the Café de Paris on the Twentieth Century Fox lot. Walter White's remarks were reported in Variety as follows:

White said he would seek "fairer representation of the Negro in pictures." He explained, "I don't think Hollywood should make a hero of the Negro, because not many Negroes are heroes, just as not many white people are heroes. However, we do wish films would give the Negro his normal place in the world.

Just as Hollywood now puts one out of each fifteen persons in crowd scenes in uniform, which is the ratio of servicemen to the rest of the population, so White desires that one out of ten persons be a Negro in normal pursuits. For instance, in shots of Grand Central Station, he asked that Negroes be shown not only as porters, but as travelers too, just as they are in real life.

The situation has improved immensurably in the past few years, White declared. He cited In This Our Life (Warner Brothers) as the high point in Negro treatment in films. Also a scene in Saboteur (Universal) in which the crowd viewing the Inside of the Statue of Liberty included a Negro.

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84 "Negroes Ask for Better Shade in Pictures," Variety, XXXXVII (June 17, 1942), 5.
Wendell Willkie addressed the producers after White had spoken. Walter White summed up Willkie's speech as follows:

He reminded his audience that, whether they wished it or not, the fate of every human being was inextricably tied up with the outcome of the war which was swiftly enveloping the globe. And then he bluntly pointed out that many of the persons responsible for Hollywood films belonged to a racial and religious group which had been the target of Hitler, and they should be the last to be guilty of doing to another minority the things which had been done to them.85

Walter White stated in his autobiography that one or two of the producers and several writers and directors told both Willkie and himself that the industry had misrepresented the Negro because the motion picture industry needed an "unbiased authoritative source of information." Two producers suggested that the NAACP establish an independent Hollywood bureau to advise the industry, but Mr. White and Mr. Willkie declined to act on the suggestion, according to Mr. White's autobiography.

In Chapter I of this study, "The Negro in the American Theatre," the Negro stage stereotypes were classified as "the noble savage," "the faithful servant," "Uncle Tom," "The loyal slave," "the savage brute," and "the tragic mulatto." Lawrence Reddick has added the

85 Walter White, A Man Called White, p. 201.
following to the catalogue of these stereotypes which have been employed in films:

1. The corrupt politician
2. The irresponsible citizen
3. The petty thief
4. The social delinquent
5. The natural born musician
6. The perfect entertainer
7. The superstitious church goer
8. The chicken and watermelon eater
9. The razor and knife "toter"
10. The uninhibited expressionist
11. The mental inferior

Walter White has described the actions of certain of these stereotypes as they appear on the motion picture screen: "Restriction of Negroes to roles with rolling eyes, chattering teeth, always scared of ghosts, of portrayals of none-too-bright servants perpetuates a stereotype which is doing the Negro infinite harm.

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87 "Better Roles for Negroes," The Crisis, XXXIX (June, 1942), 297.
Protests against Negro stereotypes in films.--The campaign of protest against stereotypes in films began with the United States' active participation in World War II. In the summer of 1942, two Negro newspapers, The Los Angeles Sentinel and The Los Angeles Tribune, organized a picket line against the showing of Tales of Manhattan at the Loew's State Theatre. The picket line was led by the respective editors of the two newspapers, Leon Washington and Alma Davis, who claimed "that the portrayals of Paul Robeson, Ethel Waters, 'Rochester,'" the Hall Johnson Choir, and others were of an undesirable and 'Uncle Tom' nature." The Crisis commenting on this protest took the view that this demonstration came nearer than ever before or since to getting the attitude of Negroes over to the motion picture producers, but that the effectiveness of the demonstration lost its force when the Negro press disagreed on strategy.

The NAACP campaign against motion picture stereotypes was interrupted by World War II. Walter White was engaged by the War effort; he travelled overseas to inspect Negro troops and sought to end segregation in the Armed Forces. However, criticism of Negro

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88 Phil Carter, "It's Only Make Believe," The Crisis, LIII (February, 1946), 18.
stereotypes in the films continued during the World War II. For example, The Crisis published this observation of the Negro soldiers' reactions to films which were shown overseas:

I've seen it happen in New Guinea, in the Phillipines, on blood-swept Okinawa, and again on Guam. Whether at some hastily constructed theatre....

Sometimes it's a dark-skinned "mammy" whose "yes'ums" and "no'm's" will touch it off. Again, it's a comely lady's maid in black uniform and a white tea spron whose "sho is de truf" does the trick. Or maybe tonight it's a shuffling, elongated, masculine "Uncle Tom" who thrusts the dirk into the heart of every brown skinned Yank in the audience.

Silently, as unobtrusively as possible, as if moved by some puppet master, dark shapes rise from among the audience and slink silently away to their quarters.89

Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer released Lena Horne from her contract in 1945 to lead an all-Negro cast of the Broadway stage production of St. Louis Woman, a play which the studio was considering for motion picture production. The book for this all-Negro musical production had been written by two Negro writers, Countee Cullen and Arna Bontemps. Lena Horne was supposed to play the role of a "bad woman." Almost immediately, criticism against the production came from Leon Herdwick, secretary of the

89 "G. I.'s Resent Uncle Tomism on Screen and Radio," The Pittsburgh Courier (September 1, 1945), p. 15.
Hollywood Interracial Film and Radio Guild, and from Freddie Washington, drama critic for a New York newspaper, *The People's Voice*. This incident of protest has been discussed in Chapter IV of this study. Arna Bontemps explained in a letter to the writer the part played in this protest by Walter White, the executive secretary of the NAACP (See Appendix C for the text of Mr. Bontemps' letter).

**Song of the South (1946).**—The following year, Walter White stated the Association's protest against Walt Disney's cartoon production of *Song of the South*, a film which starred James Baskett as "Uncle Remus."

Disapproval of this film did not originate with the NAACP. An open controversy developed when *Time Magazine* and other publications criticized the picture and presented varying opinions concerning it. In the midst of the controversy, the NAACP was asked to express its opinion of the film. Walter White then stated the Association's position as follows:

> The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People recognizes in *The Song of the South* remarkable artistic merit in the music and in the combination of living actors and cartoon techniques. It regrets, however, that in an effort not to offend the South, the production helps to perpetuate a dangerously glorified picture of slavery, making use of the beautiful
Uncle Remus folklore. Song of the South unfortunately gives the impression of an idyllic master-slave relationship which is a distortion of facts.90

Song of the South was given an award by Parent's Magazine. When the NAACP learned of this award, Walter White wrote a letter to the editor which expressed the Association's disapproval: "The NAACP is shocked by the award to a film which glorifies racial stereotypes and virtually justifies slavery by picturing it as an idyllic system. One of the chief causes of racial friction in this country is the half truths and untruths which are planted in the unsuspecting minds of young people." This second protest against The Song of the South is related to the Association's protests against stereotypes in school text-books, against such characters as "Nicodemus" and "Little Black Sambo." James Baskett received a special award from the Motion Picture Academy for his portrayal of "Uncle Remus."


91 "Rebuke," The Crisis, LIV (February, 1947), p. 52.
Controversy between NAACP and Negro motion picture performers.--The series of "tolerance films," the biographical films of Negro life, and the films that integrated Negroes into scenes with whites did not use Negro stereotypes and, therefore, decreased the number of opportunities for employing Negro performers. Because of the loss of employment, some of the Negro performers resented and objected to the NAACP campaign of protest against Hollywood motion pictures. According to one account, the resentment developed when Walter White announced that he had perfected plans to establish a NAACP Bureau in Hollywood to supply both advice and guidance to script writers, producers and directors for the purpose of broadening the role of Negroes in films and presenting a truer picture of the race. Opposition to Walter White's plan was expressed as follows:

White, it was learned, had hardly completed his announcement, sat down, when the celebrities loosed a barrage of protest to the dais.

Firing the opening gun was Clarence Muse, veteran actor and member of the local NAACP Branch board of directors. Muse said he is a personal friend of Mr. White but would take issue with him when he (White) was in error. The actor charged that neither he nor any other member had been consulted on the move made by the National Office (of the NAACP). He said that Mr. White had taken the important and far-reaching matter in his own hands with the consent of only a minority group of the association's officers.
Voicing her objections in a forceful manner, was Louise Beavers who declared the move was a high-handed one by outsiders "who were inexperienced and who had attacked the problem from the wrong slant." She questioned the sincerity of the sponsors motive and averred that the actor himself should be actively part and parcel of any such organization formed. 

Although Walter White stated in his autobiography that he and Wendell Willkie decided against setting up a bureau to advise motion picture industry, The Pittsburgh Courier reported that White said the following:

The purpose and need of such a bureau should be readily apparent in any open minded person...

At no time has the NAACP taken the position that Negroes should never be shown as servants or comedians. When such picturization is a logical part of a story, particularly in relation to the period in which story is laid, there can be no objection to the intelligent and unbiased casting of Negroes in such roles. The NAACP contention, however, is that Negroes should not be limited to these two stereotypes but instead should be pictured as normal human beings playing an integral and important role in the life of America and the world...

It is exceedingly unfortunate for them and for the Negro that a few Negro actors and a few actresses object to any effort to improve the Negro's picturization in moving pictures. Their fear seems to be based upon the belief that they will not be given work in films...

But the issue is bigger than jobs for a few individuals. Many of the evils from which the Negro as a race now suffer are born of the low opinion of Negroes to which the usual treatment of him by the movies has materially contributed. The question, therefore, reduces itself to one as simple as this: What is more important, jobs for a handful of Negroes playing so-called "Uncle Tom" roles or welfare of Negroes as a whole, instead of a few? 93

Billy Rowe, theatre editor for The Pittsburgh Courier, took an arbitrary position concerning the controversy; he observed that some of the Negro performers were accusing Walter White of seeking financial advantages for himself from the motion picture industry. Mr. Rowe agreed with other individuals that the NAACP could help the Negro in his relationships with the motion picture industry if the Association joined forces with other organizations and selected a person with full knowledge of the entertainment industries to channel suggestions in the right direction. Concerning Walter White, Billy Rowe said, "He has done a superb job for the race in many fields; however, he has never accepted the unhappy task of telling the people what was good or bad for them. Now to suddenly burst forward in the difficult role of censor, approving the good or disapproving the bad that is in entertainment, not

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only seems farfetched, but out of his ken."

Herman H. Hill, a Negro theatre editor in Los Angeles reported that the Negro performers were not in discord with Walter White's plan but that they did object to his method of operation. The performers, according to Mr. Hill, would have welcomed Walter White's counseling with them before presenting any plans to the producers; but at the same time, they would like to see the blame for the questionable roles acted by Negroes placed where it belonged, "in the laps of the film executives and producers."

Mr. Hill reported that during this controversy there was alarming concern over the mounting "feeling of anti-semitism voiced by many Negroes who bitterly resented the fact that producers and writers of minority group origins were using the vehicle of the films to continually characterize the Negro as lowly, shiftless menials." One of the performers who had played stereotype roles that called for the "rolling eyes," Eddie "Rochester" Anderson, refused to commit himself on the issues. "Anderson steers clear of all arguments about racial prejudice,"

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91 "Billy Rowe's Note Book," The Pittsburgh Courier (February 9, 1946), p. 18.

95 Herman N. Hill, "Stereotype Roles Cease of Dispute in Film Industry," The Pittsburgh Courier (March 9, 1946), p. 19.
stated Peter Noble, "and as he puts it, 'In my opinion, a performer is a performer first and last. He has no business making propaganda. People want to be entertained not educated'."

Reactions of individuals and organizations to the controversy.--Several individuals and organizations became interested in the issues evolving from the NAACP protests against stereotypes in films. Dr. E. I. Robinson, president of the Negro National Medical Association, suggested that a committee of outstanding citizens be appointed by the NAACP to meet with the members of the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors Association and the Society of Independent Motion Picture Producers of Hollywood for the purpose of seeking a solution to the problem. Accordingly, a committee was appointed.

Marsha Hunt, a white actress who had worked with Negroes in making films, commented that she had not been aware of any problem concerning Negro stereotypes until the recent controversy, and that there is no


reason why Negroes should not play cooks and Pullman porters. Miss Hunt, however, qualified her remarks as follows:

I'll do some speaking at these meetings, because I have a theory about all this. I'm awfully tired of generalizations that Japanese are sneaky, the Irish are scrappy, the French are great lovers, and the Russians carry bombs. I believe that all groups are made up of individuals, with separate characteristics, habits and personalities. And that includes Negroes...

Let's show that Negroes are teachers, artists, and professional men. In a scene showing a group of doctors, let one be a Negro. When a part calls for someone with achievement, don't plug it, but now and then let it be played by a Negro...

Charles Butler, the only Negro casting director in Hollywood, stated to the Negro press that Negroes had only themselves to blame for the plight of the performers in the motion picture industry. To support this contention, Mr. Butler mentioned instances in which certain performers lost their jobs because of irresponsibility. Mr. Butler admitted that the producers have appeased the South in the making and releasing of films, but the era is coming when the South will accept the Negro in non-stereotyped roles.

Concerning the issue of employment for the Negro

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performers, this casting director gave the following statistics:

Let us turn to the records. There are approximately 9,500 members of the Motion Picture Screen Actors Guild who earn about $75,000,000 a year in salary. Of the 9,500 there are not and never have been seventy-five Negro members, and only two, Stepin Fetchit and Lena Horne, have ever been employed on a sustaining basis. All others have worked and have been paid only for the time that it would take to make a picture for which their contracts were given. Negroes who have earned $5,000 a year or more as motion picture actors or actresses can be counted on the fingers of two hands.99

The Screen Actors' Guild became interested in the issues arising from the controversy and proposed that a special committee be set up to implement a policy and to meet with representatives of the Screen Writers' Guild, the Screen Directors' Guild, the Motion Picture Producers Association. The Screen Actors' Guild passed the following resolution:

WHEREAS, Negro actors have a long and honorable history in the American theatre and in the motion picture industry and have played an important part in the formation of our Guild, and

WHEREAS, unemployment among our Negro Guild members has reached a point more alarming than at any time in Guild history, and

WHEREAS, in several instances producers have gone to the length of using white actors in Negro roles,

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED: that the Screen Actors' Guild use all its power to oppose discrimination against Negroes in the motion picture industry....

After a number of conferences between the Screen Actors' Guild committee and the motion picture producers, three points of agreement were reached by them: (1) If a Negro is indicated in a script, the part will be played by a Negro and the racial character will not be changed; subject of course, to normal judgment or story values. (2) The Negro will be portrayed on the screen, not as a caricature, but simply as a human being, a normal member of the community. (3) Some thought will be given from time to time to casting Negroes in the routine, unnamed bits in a script, such as gas station attendants, elevator operators, etc.

Results of the protests.—Because of the liberalism of the Post World War II period and because of the NAACP protests against stereotypes and the intercession of individuals and organizations in behalf of Negroes, the


film producers began to use Negro stereotypes less frequently.

The motion picture industry demonstrated a conscious effort to promote better understanding among races and groups in America, and among nationalities and races of the American allies. For example, the following changes were observed:

Film audiences have been introduced to dozens of new and great Negro talents such as Bill Robinson, Hazel Scott, Lena Horne, Duke Ellington, Teddy Wilson, Fats Waller, Katherine Dunham, Kenneth Spencer and Paul Robeson. However, in almost every instance, the artist has been introduced either in an "all-Negro" film or in a segregated sequence, which amounts to the same thing.

An exception was In This Our Life made from a Pulitzer Prize novel, in which a young Negro law student is shown in close association with a white family. Brewster's Millions elevated "Rochester" to major domo. Batasang dignified Kenneth Spencer... In Sahara a Sudanese soldier sacrificed himself to help save an army tank crew.102

After World War II, the motion picture industry produced a series of pictures which have been termed "tolerance films." For example, United Artists produced Home of the Brave in 1949, a film play based on the stage

play of the same name. The film version was changed from an attack upon anti-Semitism to an attack upon anti-Negro sentiments. During the same year, Twentieth Century-Fox produced a tolerance film called Gentleman’s Agreement, a preaching against anti-Semitism; Lost Boundaries, a film story about a Negro doctor and his family who passed for white, was produced by Louis DeRochemont. Twentieth Century-Fox produced another "tolerance film" during the year, Pinky, which tells the story of a Negro girl who passes for white and falls in love with a white doctor.

The following year, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer released The Intruder, an expose' of the evils and dangers of mob violence. In 1950, Twentieth Century-Fox starred Negro actor, Sidney Poitier in No Way Out, a dramatic story with an interracial cast, and produced The Broken Arrow to promote better understanding of the American Indian. The next year, United Artists released The Well which illustrates the danger of misunderstanding and fear between Negroes and Whites. Universal-International produced Bright Victory in 1951, a war drama with an interracial cast. Two years later, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer starred Dorothy Dandridge, a Negro actress, in Bright Road which dramatized the relationship of a Negro school teacher in the South and a racially maladjusted pupil. The stories of two Negro athletes were filmed during this period: The Jackie Robinson Story in 1950 and
The Joe Louis Story in 1952.

These "tolerance films" promoted the trend toward desegregation of the Negro performers in films which contained interracial casts; such as the case of James Edwards in the cast of The Caine Mutiny and of Frank Silvera in Fear and Desire. The "tolerance films" met with some disapproval in the South along with films which integrated Negro performers into white casts.

Negro actress, Pearl Bailey, was deleted from Variety Girl when the film was shown in Memphis, Tennessee. Memphis barred Curley, a film showing Negro and white children playing together, and accepted Home of the Brave. In New Orleans, Louisiana, The Joe Louis Story and Go Man Go which features the Negro basketball team, the Harlem Globetrotters, were withdrawn from exhibition because white patrons of the movie theatres demonstrated against the showing of these films. Not only was Lost Boundaries barred from Atlanta, Georgia, by the city's censors, but the producers of the film were denied time for advertising the picture from the city's television stations. The producers of the film appealed the


105 "Dixie TV Refuses To Sell Air Time for Film Showing," The Pittsburgh Courier (September 3, 1949), p. 19.
court injunction against the picture and took the cases to Federal Appeals Court in New Orleans, Louisiana, but this court refused to review the district court's decision in favor of censorship. The Atlanta censors permitted *Pinky* to be shown after two scenes had been deleted. The censors in Baltimore, Maryland, barred *The Well*.

Through a series of actions resulting partially from the NAACP's protests against Negro stereotypes in Hollywood films, there have been four developments. First, Negro stereotypes were employed less frequently which consequently caused many Negro actors to be unemployed. Second, Hollywood began desegregating Negro performers, to individualize Negro actors, and to employ themes of racial "tolerance." Third, the South restricted its acceptance of racial desegregation and racial tolerance in films. Fourth, the film producers then faced the problem of selling such films to exhibitors in the South. Columbia Pictures and the Motion Picture Association of America made plans to take court action against the censor in Memphis, Tennessee, Lloyd T. Binford while the producers of *Lost Boundaries* took

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legal action against censorship to obtain "freedom of the movies" similar to "freedom of the press." At the same time, the producers have been encouraged to continue making such films as Lost Boundaries and Pinky on the grounds that the South constitutes only twenty per cent of the film market and that such films are popular in Europe, Asia, and Africa, South Africa excepted. "American Negroes are now a sizeable segment for the film patronage in America as a whole and Northern cities are relatively indifferent to pictures with all-colored casts but appreciate pictures with mixed-race actors," observed Variety.

The series of tolerance films came to almost a complete end in 1953. The American Jewish Congress stated in its Civil Rights report the following: "The movie industry, which produced several pictures dealing expressly with intergroup problems during the immediate post-war years, has failed to continue this trend. No such pictures were produced during 1953." The Crisis reported a return of stereotypes in a picture released in 1953, Go for Broke. The reviewer had the following

109 Civil Rights in the United States, Pamphlet, Published by the American Jewish Congress and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. 1954, p. 178.
to say of the film: "The Hollywood version of the exploits of the brave 442nd. has come to the screen. If the documentation is an endeavor to harmonize racial discord Go for Broke is a dismal failure, despite its glamorous formula for military glory."  

The controversy between the NAACP and the Negro performers concerning the NAACP protest campaign had varying affects upon the performers. Butterfly McQueen, for an example, who had played on Broadway in Brother Rat and had played in the films, Gone With the Wind, The Woman, and Cabin in the Sky, announced to the Hollywood producers after her role in Duel in the Sun that she would no longer accept stereotyped roles. Sidney Poitier, a young, talented Negro actor who had appeared in the films Something of Value and The Edge of the City stated to the press that he would not play any roles "which would show his race in a bad light."

110 "Old Stereotyped Pattern," The Crisis, LX (January, 1953), 181.


112 "Poitier Loathes 'Uncle Tom' Movie Roles" The Pittsburgh Courier (February 16, 1957, p. 23.)
The Will Hays office of the Motion Picture Producers Association announced in 1956 that Section 6 of the Code is to be discontinued. Therefore, "Miscegenation" was no longer a taboo. "Now, Hollywood has a wonderful opportunity to cast the Negro in a role which befits him as a vital segment of the American people," declared one columnist. As if to proclaim the end of the "miscegenation" taboo, Darryl F. Zanuck of the Twentieth Century-Fox studio produced *Island in the Sun*; his production dramatized romantic relationships between Negroes and whites living on a Caribbean island.

The advances that Negro performers made in better roles were accompanied by less employment for the performers. In 1957, Roy Wilkins, the late Walter White's successor as executive secretary of the NAACP, spoke to the Association of Motion Picture Producers in Beverly Hills, California. While speaking at a luncheon, Mr. Wilkins reviewed the relationships that Walter White had established with the motion picture producers; then Mr. Wilkins accused the producers as follows: "Some figures in the industry apparently used the NAACP discussions as an excuse for restricting employment of

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Negro actors. Negro film actors thereupon concluded that the NAACP, through the suggestions of Mr. White, was keeping them from employment." Then Mr. Wilkins denied the following allegations against the NAACP because of its motion picture relationships.

1. The NAACP censors scripts and even in some cases designates the Negro actors who should or should not be employed.

2. The NAACP has a one-for-one policy; that is, if a Negro actor is cast as a servant, there must be another Negro actor cast in a non-servant role.

3. The NAACP will not approve of Negroes as comics, maids, menials, etc.

Mr. Wilkins elaborated on the third point and stated that the motion picture and television industries had not kept pace with the economic, social, and political progress of the Negro. (See Appendix C for the entire text of the speech)

The influence of the NAACP on the motion picture industry. One of the important results of the NAACP campaign of protest against The Birth of a Nation was that the campaign focused public attention upon the production of motion picture films that involved Negro performers and Negro life rather than upon the individual performers. The NAACP campaign against Negro stereotypes
in American motion pictures promoted the following actions and developments:

1. Descriptions and cataloguing of Negro stereotypes.

2. The picketing of The Tales of Manhattan in California.

3. Criticism and protest against Gone With the Wind and Song of the South.

4. The establishing of the NAACP bureau of guidance and advice for the production of films involving Negro life, as in the case of advice sought in modifying The Man on America's Conscience.

5. Controversy between the NAACP and the Negro performers on the issue of the NAACP's right to interfere with employment and the production of films.

6. Cooperation of individuals and organizations in attempting to solve the problem of Negro stereotypes and employment.

7. The production of "tolerance films" and the movement toward desegregation of the Negro performers in American motion pictures.

8. The abolishment of the code against racial "miscegenation."

There has been confusion of motives among the NAACP, the Negro race, and the Negro performers. The NAACP, in representing an informed opinion of the Negro people, has
sought favorable representation of Negro life in American motion pictures. The Association, therefore, launched a campaign against stereotypes which limited the employment of Negro performers, and, at the same time, encouraged a series of films which featured fewer Negro performers in non-stereotyped roles. During the controversy with the Negro performers, the late Walter White declared that the employment of a few actors and actresses was not the important point, but the favorable representation of the entire Negro race is more important. If the figures of Charles Butler, the Negro casting director, are correct, that not over ten Negroes have earned $5,000 a year or more from the motion picture industry, the attitude of the late Walter White toward the controversy is the more reasonable one.

The moral right of the NAACP to interfere with the employment of Negro performers may be questioned on the following points: (1) The present executive secretary of the NAACP admitted that the Association does not "have the time, money, staff, or inclination to act as censor" (See Appendix C for entire statement). (2) Walter White was criticized for not counselling with the performers before he protested against stereotypes. (3) The blame for stereotypes should not be placed upon the Negro performers but upon the motion picture writers, directors and producers. Dick Campbell, Negro field representative
for the American National Theatre Academy, and Fred O'Neal, Negro vice-president of Actors' Equity Association, stated during interviews held in New York in June of 1957 that the late Walter White was right in principle but wrong in method. Mr. O'Neal and Mr. Campbell agreed that Walter White should have consulted the performers themselves and that the stereotyped roles should have been balanced by Negroes in non-stereotyped roles, a policy which the present executive secretary of the NAACP has not accepted, the "one-for-one" policy. Because the NAACP has not had a clear statement of policy for the motion picture industry, and because the NAACP did not consult the Negro performers, this Association did not have the moral right to interfere with employment.

The moral obligation, therefore, belongs primarily to the motion picture producers, the writers, directors, executives, and exhibitors. Such films as *The Birth of a Nation*, *Song of the South*, and *The Man on America's Conscience* have indicated that the producers do cater to the South when they portray Negro life. The "tolerance films" which were produced as a result of national and international relationships promoted by World War II are manifestations of the moral obligations of the motion picture industry to the principles of democracy. Mr. Henry Lee Moon, NAACP public relations director, has
said that the Association would like to believe that it has had some influence upon selection of better motion picture roles for Negro performers. The producers, to off-set Southern rejection of films which present Negroes in non-segregated scenes, have considered the continued production of such films for the foreign markets. This consideration is an attempt by the industry to meet fairly its moral obligations as well as its economic obligations. In discontinuing the code against "Miscegenation," the motion picture industry has attempted to regulate its operations to the changes in the Negro's social position. Nevertheless, the NAACP through Mr. Wilkins has accused the motion picture industry of lagging behind the economic, political, and social progress of the Negro in the production films.

The NAACP has been a part of these issues through the Association's relationships with the motion picture industry. Similar to the developments in the American theatre toward more economic opportunities for Negro performers, toward more favorable racial representation, and toward desegregation and acceptance of Negro performers, the developments in these directions in motion pictures will depend upon the esthetic needs of this medium of entertainment, the economic pressures at the box office of exhibitors, and the moral courage of the producers. The NAACP has had a more direct relationship with Darryl F. Zanuck of Twentieth Century-Fox.
than with any other Hollywood producer, having approached Mr. Zanuck through the late Wendell Willkie. The inter-relationships of Mr. Zanuck's interests and the desires of the NAACP as expressed by the late Walter White contributed to a cycle of "tolerance films" produced by Twentieth Century-Fox: Home of the Brave, Intruder in the Dust, and Pinky. The more recent Zanuck production, Island in the Sun, reveals his courage in abolishing the code against "miscegenation."
CHAPTER VII
THE NAACP AND THE RADIO AND TELEVISION INDUSTRIES

One may reasonably assume after reading the preceding chapters of this study that the National Office of the NAACP is seriously concerned about the impressions of Negroes and Negro life as presented by the mass media of entertainment. This concern about favorable public opinion for Negroes has been manifested more intensely by the Association's protest campaign against motion pictures than by protests against the press and stage. When the communication medium of radio developed to proportions comparable to the press, the NAACP became interested in radio for three purposes: first, as an industry which could give Negroes economic opportunities; second, as a means of advertising the Association's programs; third, as a medium through which it could create a favorable public opinion for Negroes.

Closely related to the radio industry, the phonograph recording companies had been noticed by the NAACP as possible economic opportunities for Negro musicians before the development of the radio industry. The Crisis, the Association's official monthly publication, stated that sixty-five per cent of the phonograph records made for Southern trade by one company was sold to colored
people, but that this company employed colored musicians very seldom. The statement continues as follows:

Here is a tremendous field. We have some of the finest voices in the world right here in Negro America. Within the past few months one of the smaller newer phonograph companies experimented by having a colored girl sing "Blues." The experiment was so successful and the demand for her records among colored folk so great that the company was not able to fill its orders.¹

Negro musicians, from the 1920's to the present, have gained increasing acceptance by the general American public through the phonograph recording industry. This acceptance through recordings has been transferred to the radio and television industries.

1. The NAACP and the Radio Industry

From time to time, The Crisis recounted the activities of Negro performers who were gaining acceptance through radio presentations. The editor called the readers' attention during the 1930's to the Negro quartet, The Southernaires, which was singing weekly over the National Broadcasting Company network; to John Henry, the Black River Giant, a drama series broadcast weekly over the Columbia Broadcasting Company's network; to the life and achievements of "Fats" Waller, who gave a weekly show over CBS; and to Benny Goodman's use of colored musicians in his white band, Teddy Wilson and Lionel Hampton. A

¹The Crisis, XXI (February, 1921), 152.

²Roy Wilkins, "Radio's Roly-Poly Organist," The Crisis, XXXI September, 1934) 261.
featured article on Benny Goodman was complimentary of Mr. Goodman's liberalism in experimenting with an inter-racial orchestra:

At the outset, Benny wanted a band that would sound like his favorite of all, the original group of Fletcher Henderson. He assembled the orthodox instrumentation of the big colored band; five brass, four reeds, and four rhythms and brought a special arrangement from two excellent Negro orchestrators, Benny Carter and Edgar Sampson.

The band was nothing to boast about in the summer of 1934. Benny was convinced that he would be happy only with a band with Negroes in majority.

The great victory Benny won is with his radio sponsors, the Southern makers of camel cigarettes. When they learned that Teddy Wilson was colored they hit the roof and tried not to announce his name on the air. Goodman was militant, however, and now he regularly features on the Camel Show, with full announcements both Wilson and Hampton, as well as, Chick Webb's great singer, Ella Fitzgerald.

Special and honorable mention was given by The Crisis to the Negro choral group, Wings Over Jordan, which broadcast every Sunday morning over CBS. This program featured Reverend Glenn T. Settle in a six minute talk during the half hour show. Reverend Settle also gave interpolations for the spirituals. The editor complimented

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3 John Hammond, "King of Swing," The Crisis, XXXIV (April, 1937) 110-111, 123.
the program as follows:

These thirty minutes of radio time contain some of the greatest choral singing on the air by a choir of unaccompanied Negro voices. This group is in the same class with the great Tuskegee choir, and rivals in the richness of its effects the best that the famed Salt Lake City Tabernacle Choir has offered.

There have been many religious and semi-religious programs by Negroes on the air locally and nationally, and some have been excellent, while others have been pure "clowning." In Wings Over Jordan, however, the intelligence, brevity and interest of the talks and the thrilling beauty of the music have combined to make a feature of which CBS and the Negro race can be proud.4

The National Office of the NAACP reported in 1942 that a commitment had been obtained from NBC and the Blue Network to the effect that both companies will give more economic opportunities to Negroes. The commitment came as a result of a conference by the NAACP, John Hammond, publisher of Music and Rhythm, and the broadcasting officials. Mr. Hammond expressed the opinion that most of the opportunities will be for Negro musicians "who are expert in reading and for those whose background and training fit them for doubling in a variety of types of music."5


5 Cited in The Crisis, XXXXIX (July, 1942) 228.
While the National Office was interested in the economic progress of Negro performers in radio, it was also interested in using the medium of radio to publicize the Association's national programs and the programs of local Branches. In Chapter II of this study, examples and instances were cited in which the National Office used radio networks to publicize certain programs and issues. Local Branches of the NAACP used the local radio stations for presenting programs which featured certain issues related to the interracial life of the community. The New York Branch presented a scroll to radio station WNEW "for its contribution toward the promotion of interracial goodwill and understanding through its distribution of a series of one minute spot announcements under the title, 'Keep Faith with America,' and for its weekly presentation of the American Negro Theatre." In 1946, the Cincinnati Branch increased its membership with the aid of a radio show over WCPO, Private Citizen 13. This show carried a message against racial and religious hatred and employed an interracial cast. There have been other

6 Cited in The Crisis, LIV (February, 1947), 51.

7 The Crisis, LV (July, 1948), 60.
Branches which have used the medium of radio for such purposes as well as for other purposes.

2. The Association's Protests Against Stereotypes on Radio

The Association's protests against Negro stereotypes in radio began approximately at the same time as the National Office's concern about Negro stereotypes in American motion pictures. For example, in 1942 the National Office protested to Columbia Broadcasting System because of a radio show which portrayed a Negro messman as "a stupid and frightened clown"... The Man Behind the Gun had a terror-stricken Negro messman faint in the face of danger. The National Office demanded an apology. It was reported that William Robeson of station WABC answered and stated that he had realized too late that the skit would be offensive to Negro listeners and promised that there would be no recurrence of such an offense.

Protest against a Negro minstrel show.--In the Spring of 1948, "Lucky" Millinder, a Negro band leader, was signed by the National Broadcasting Company to lead a Negro

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8 The Crisis, LV (July, 1948), 47.

9 "Radio Slurs Negroes," The Crisis, XXXIX (December, 1942) 289.
minstrel show which was scheduled for the national radio network. A description of this minstrel show was given in The Pittsburgh Courier as follows:

Featuring a star-studded cast of thirty-five headline entertainers, musicians, specialty and dancing acts, the lavish production, which opens with the traditional words, "Gentlemen, Be Seated," is directed and staged by the fabulous "Lucky." It is the first genuine big-time effort to revive minstrelsy, once the nation's most popular and exciting entertainment medium, combining visual appeal with fast-paced action typical of today's musical variety revues. Millinder has completely eliminated the offensive features of the minstrel show, such as dialogue, situations and controversial characters. He is retaining the general pattern and style of basic minstrelsy....

Under the title, Modern Minstrels, this all-Negro production was scheduled to open on NBC, July 7, 1948, eight o'clock, Wednesday evening, Daylight Saving Time. Since the show had no sponsor, The Pittsburgh Courier alerted Negro listeners to write letters to NBC to let the officials know the attitude of Negroes toward the show. It was later reported, however, that the show would be postponed. The postponement was explained as

10 "Lucky" Millinder Launches Show," The Pittsburgh Courier, (June 4, 1948) p. 29.

follows by The Pittsburgh Courier:

After a series of meetings, rescripting and advice (both good and bad); from Walter White to Noble Sissle, a fear gripped the mighty moguls of the NBC chain that left them in a more "hands off" attitude than anything else....

Noble Sissle, Eubie Blake and Langston Hughes were brought in to give the NBC officials their idea of what an all-colored show should be like.12

Billy Rowe, theatrical editor of The Pittsburgh Courier, a Negro weekly newspaper which had cooperated with the NAACP on other occasions, took exception to the attitude of the NAACP toward the minstrel show. Mr. Rowe, a Negro writer, took issue with the NAACP as follows:

Such groups, unwise in the ways of the theatre, have been permitted to keep our thespians out of the chosen circles much too long. This latest "intervention" which has blasted the hopes of those who have constantly fought for radio-right-of-way for Negroes is a flagrant stumbling block thrust in the path of progress, both dramatic and economic. By their actions they have defeated the very purpose for which they are supposed to be fighting.

... ... ... ... ... ...

This is 1948 and Sissle and Blake are still obsessed with the ideas of Shuffle Along. The Negroid comedy of Langston Hughes, superb writer though he is, would gather just as many beefs as that of Octavus Roy Cohen....

It would be a shame for America's 110,000,000 people to allow either NBC or Ralph Cooper (a Negro actor), whom we understand organized a feeble form of protest against the show over the word "minstrel" to kill the first all-colored script show in the broadcasting system's history.13

In this controversy concerning a Negro minstrel show designed for the NBC radio network, Mr. Rowe took sides with the producer, "Lucky" Millinder and reported the following developments:

1. Nile Trammel, president of NBC, attempted to settle the dispute over the word, "minstrel." Langston Hughes and Noble Sissle rewrote the script which was approved by Walter White, executive secretary of the NAACP, and by NBC.

2. The title of the show was changed to *Swingtime* at the Savoy. "This new format of the show is to have a Savoy Ballroom locale," explained Mr. Rowe, "and will feature the type of music and jive comedy which made the Harlem dance hall a national institution."14

13 Ibid.

3. With the exception of Variety, the show received good press notices when it was broadcast every Wednesday evening for one month. After the fourth broadcast, Swingtime at the Savoy was discontinued over NBC and was to be replaced by Dennis Day's show.

4. Swingtime at the Savoy was presented again by NBC August 25, 1948. The show was taken on a tour of theatres and ballrooms by Millinder; it did not return to the NBC network.

5. During October of 1948, "Lucky" Millinder was given an executive position on the staff of Victor Recording Company.

This protest by Walter White in the name of the NAACP came three years after his protest against the alleged Negro stereotypes in the stage production of St. Louis Woman which was presented on Broadway during 1945 (See Chapter III for details of the protest). The NAACP did not make the points of the protest clear against Modern Minstrels. According to the changes

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16 "Batoneer Added to Staff as Adviser," The Pittsburgh Courier (October 16, 1948), p. 22.
made in the format of the show, it may be assumed that, first, the NAACP objected to the word, Minstrel, in the title; second, that the NAACP objected to the traditional minstrel format and favored the musical comedy format which was used by Noble Sissle and Langston Hughes in writing the show; and, third, the NAACP objected to some of the traditional minstrel material and approved of the material only after it had been rewritten.

As has been observed by Mr. Rowe, the Association's point of view in its protest against "Lucky" Millinder's Modern Minstrels seemed to have been inconsistent with the Association's point of view in its major campaigns and protests. In two responsible opinions and evaluations of Negro minstrel, the commentaries by James Weldon Johnson and Edith Isaacs, Negro minstrelsy was credited for its lively form of entertainment, for introducing Negro talent to the American public, and for distortion of Negro life through buffoonery, burnt cork, and thickened lips in make-up. However, the physical distortion would have been eliminated by the audio medium of radio. The objection to the word, minstrel, in the title was inconsistent when the objection is considered in comparison with the Association's later attitude toward blackface minstrelsy in the educational theatre (See Chapter V for ten points of objection to blackface minstrelsy). One Branch of the NAACP has explained in its
protest that the Branch objected to blackface minstrelsy in the educational theatre because the show identified the end men as Negroes; it requested that the end men have no racial identification.

However, when "Lucky" Millinder's show was presented, Mr. Rowe reported that the studio audience, most of whom were Negroes, enjoyed that traditional minstrel material better than the newer musical comedy material:

> It was definitely class music fare and the packed studio audience went for it so strongly they were reluctant to leave when the thirty minutes came to such an early end.

Oddly enough the section of the show that had been the biggest bone of contention turned out to be the liveliest and equally as entertaining as the music features. The comedy of Miller and Lee was undoubtedly as slickly delivered, expertly timed and clever as any to be heard on any commercial radio program.17

The NAACP and its associates' protests against Modern Minstrels on radio resulted in confusion similar to the results of the protests against the stage version of *St. Louis Woman* and against Negro stereotypes in motion pictures. These results of the radio protest may be summarized as follows:

1. Similar to *St. Louis Woman*, "Lucky" Millinder's show was written by Negroes, and the protest by the NAACP divided the opinions of Negroes between

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those who were against the protest and those who were for it.

2. The protest caused confusion between the Negro performers and the National Broadcasting Company; this confusion had to be mediated by the president of NBC.

3. The NAACP protest probably limited the life of the show on the network to only five broadcasts. The controversy caused by the NAACP could not have been attractive to potential sponsors of the show.

4. Similar to the issue which arose from the campaign of the NAACP against Negro stereotypes in motion pictures, there was the question concerning the moral right of the NAACP to interfere with the livelihood of Negro performers, and the question of the Association's leaving the solution of the problem to the Negro performers and the radio producers.

Certainly the NAACP could not represent the entire Negro race in expressing the Association's attitude toward the term "Minstrel." However, once the issue had been brought before the public the Negro people themselves should have been encouraged to express their opinions by writing letters to NBC. In the protest and censorship
of the entertainment medium of radio by the NAACP, as in the instances of protests and censorship of the stage and motion pictures, the Association's interference brought hardships and confusion to all the elements of production. Mr. Billy Rowe, who tried to mediate in his newspaper column the confusion among producers, performers, and the public, stated his views on the Modern Minstrels as follows:

Censorship and judgment are necessary and valuable functions when constructively used. However, when they are brought to bear without deliberate thought and careful consideration, more harm than good is oftentimes the result....

Notwithstanding, be it understood that the NAACP has nothing but the best intentions in safeguarding the stature and interest of our people. Its zealous efforts for social, economic and political consideration for us is exceeded only by its myriad accomplishments. However, from where we sit, the field of entertainment is an alien one to all its leaders.... At the moment it again enjoys the wrath of most performers because it has been wrongly printed that the Association was the cause of NBC's casting aside the Minstrel format and almost forgetting the entire all-colored idea. Though Walter White rightfully objected to the comedy, which in its original state was badly written, he did not advise that the show not go on.

In reality other self-styled progressive groups, hastily organized, injected themselves into the scene as purveyors of authority on such matters to the detriment of the entire project.... It is always hard for us to understand such battling on the part of persons in
this business of prejudice for themselves at the expense of their own people regardless of the cost or price in human advancement. No national groups are formed and take umbrage at the Duffy's Tavern, The Goldbergs or The Parkyakarkus Show, though all of them are in dialect.

Although one of the Association's methods of executing national programs has been the cooperation of other groups in campaigns of protest, cooperation of other groups in the instance of Modern Minstrels contributed to the confusion, according to Mr. Rowe.

3. The Association's Protests Against Stereotypes on Television

The interest that the NAACP had manifested in more economic opportunities for Negro performers in the theatre and on radio was also evident in the latest medium of mass entertainment, television. As Negro stereotypes were attracted to each medium of entertainment the Association's concern for the public impression made by these performers grew to such proportions that the National Office launched protest campaigns against press and radio. By 1950, television had established itself as one of the major media of mass communication in the United States. The NAACP hoped that television would accept Negro talent and that radio would offer Negroes more opportunities because of the

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Billy Rowe, "Prejudice is a Business," The Pittsburgh Courier, (July 31, 1948), p. 22.
competition offered by television. At the same time the National Office was aware of the visual aspect of television in contrast to the audio aspect of radio in presenting Negro talent and in representing Negro life.

Protests against the "Amos 'n' Andy Show".—Some of the leaders of various Negro groups along with the NAACP had criticized the radio version of the "Amos 'n' Andy Show" but they did not make any organized protest against the show. The producers of the show, Charles Correll and Freeman Gosden, began preparations for bringing "Amos 'n' Andy" to television in 1946; for three years, they conducted a search for Negro talent to fill the cast. Correll and Gosden discovered Tim Moore in 1950 whom they cast as "The King Fish" and Spencer Williams to play the part of "Andy Brown." Billy Rowe reported that this search had covered over 25,000 miles. The producers of the show obtained the sponsorship of the Blatz Brewery, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and scheduled the show to open over the Columbia Broadcasting Company's national network the first week of July, 1951.

During the last week of June, 1951, the Annual Convention of the NAACP met in Atlanta, Georgia. This convention passed a resolution against The Beulah Show which featured Hattie McDaniel on radio and against The Amos 'n' Andy Show which had been scheduled for
television. The resolution was published in The Crisis as follows:

**Racial Tension:** WHEREAS, radio and television programs, such as the "Amos 'n' Andy" and "Beulah" shows, which depict the Negro and other minority groups in stereotyped and derogatory manner definitely tend to strengthen the conclusion among uninformed or prejudiced peoples that Negroes and other minorities are inferior, lazy, dumb and dishonest; and

WHEREAS, the false impression created by programs and shows over the radio and television such as the "Amos 'n' Andy" and "Beulah" shows seriously hamper and retard the development of the work of this Association and other interested groups and associations to promote intelligent appraisal of all human beings as individuals;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in convention assembled condemns the practice of manufacturers, distributors, retailers, persons or firms sponsoring or promoting radio and television programs and shows which portray stereotyped characterizations of Negroes or other minority groups. Further, that this Association utilize every means at its disposal to discourage the presentation of such shows.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that all branches and state conferences of branches of this Association are urged and directed to protest to the sponsors and promoters of such shows and programs and to the radio and television stations involved, condemning these stereotyped programs and to use every means at their disposal, both by collective action and through the individual action of their respective members, to discourage the sponsorship and presentation of such programs and shows even to the extent, if necessary, of resorting to the boycott of the goods, products or services of the sponsors and promoters, including the radio and television stations and networks.19

19 The Crisis, LVIII (August-September, 1951), 478-479.
In spite of the NAACP resolution against The Amos 'n' Andy Show, this comedy series began on schedule under the sponsorship of the Blatz Brewing Company. The leading roles of Kingfish and Andy Brown were supported by Alvin Childress as "Amos," Johnny Lee as "Lawyer Calhoun," Ernestine Wade as "Kingfish's wife," Amends Randolph as "Kingfish's mother-in-law," and Horace Stewart at "Lightnin."

Reactions to the protest against "Amos 'n' Andy."—Two weeks after the passing of the resolution, the Negro press reported that some of the Negro performers were not in agreement with the NAACP protest:

In New York City, a group of Negro actors organized to protest the NAACP's actions in regards to the show as they asserted, such a position would jeopardize the chances of Negro actors. The group claimed that the NAACP action did not represent the majority of Negro opinion.

The committee for the Negro in the Arts, on the other hand, protested that the show was a "flagrant revival of stereotypes." They suggested that a more representative presentation of Negro life, "written by Negro writers preferably," would be of much greater merit.20

One of the originators of the Amos 'n' Andy series, Mr. Freeman Gosden, defended his show against the protests

by the NAACP; he said, "I think that the NAACP will realize we are showing the Negro in a very good light." With reference to the "Amos 'n' Andy" protest, Hattie McDaniel, the Negro actress who played the maid on the radio Beulah Show, defined her character as - "The type of Negro women who has worked honestly and proudly to give our nation the Marian Andersons, Roland Hayes, and Ralph Aunches."

As in other protest campaigns by the NAACP against the media of mass entertainment, Negros as well as other groups voiced their opinions both for and against the NAACP protest campaign. Mr. Rowe of The Pittsburgh Courier attempted to mediate and defend the show at the same time:

All who wish to make a racial issue out of the Amos 'n' Andy Show can go right ahead, but we think they will be fighting a losing battle. In our opinion, the only thing that makes even this much discussion necessary is the fact that the cast is Negro and the setting is Harlem, USA. We admit, however, that this type of sophisticated analysis can be overdone, too. For example, to many children across the nation this show will be their idea of how Negroes behave. It is true that without variety in the situations presented the show can fall into an unfortunate mold. For such reasons we must hope that its sponsors will use their medium

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22 Ibid.
to demonstrate the wide panorama of everyday activities in which Negroes are found.23

This controversy brought forth comments from Arnold M. Rose, an associate professor of Sociology at the University of Minnesota and author of studies on American racial minorities (See Chapter II of this study for Rose's references to the NAACP). After determining Walter White's leadership of the protest campaign against Amos 'n' Andy, Mr. Rose continued as follows.

Why should a popular comedy program be so outspokenly condemned by a respected civil rights organization? The answer lies partly in the history of the American race relations, partly in the history of the mass media's treatment of the Negro, and partly in the program and character of the NAACP.

The NAACP is a serious organization, influential, and usually a well-balanced organization devoted to the defense of the Negro against discrimination. Its leaders have thought long and hard about matters like The Amos 'n' Andy Show; they know that The Birth of a Nation damaged Negroes and that the elimination of the Fu Manchu movies that were so popular in the 1920's helped to raise white America's estimation of the Chinese. Not all Negro leaders and publishers agree with the NAACP in its attack on Amos 'n' Andy. Some say that their fellow Negroes should learn not to be so sensitive and should show a sense of humor about these things. They point out stereotypes of other ethnic groups in the mass media.24


24Arnold M. Rose, "TV Bumps into the Negro Problem," Printers' Ink (July 20, 1951), pp. 36-37, 79.
The reply of Walter White to Arnold Rose's article supplemented the views stated previously by the latter. Mr. White presented the following issues in defense of the Association's resolution against the show:

1. That the executive secretary (White) did not "vehemently denounce" the show nor did he force the Annual Convention to condemn and boycott the show, but he received a unanimous vote of the Convention for condemnation of the show after the Convention had seen the premiere on television in the auditorium where the delegates met.

2. That the NAACP is not a "Jim-crow" organization; both Negroes and whites were members of the Association, and both Negroes and whites were present at the Atlanta Convention.

3. That Mr. Rose identified only one of the Negro leaders whom he said disagreed with the NAACP protest against the show.

4. That protests against stereotypes has little or nothing to do with being racially sensitive.

5. That if the Television industry and advertisers who are eager to sell their goods and services in a $5,000,000,000 Negro market had previously presented Negro characters as "normal human
beings and as an integral part of the American scene, a series like Amos 'n' Andy and Beulah could be taken in stride."^25

6. That the employment of Negro performers in such roles as "Amos 'n' Andy" and "Beulah" and the buying of advertising space in Negro newspapers by the Blatz Brewing Company "are not sufficient compensation for the caricature of an entire race at this critical period of world affairs."

Walter White claimed that the Negro group needed insulation against the notion that Negro lawyers are slippery and coward, that Negro doctors are charlatans and thieves, that Negro women are cackling hens and tempestuous shrews, and that all Negroes are allergic to toil. "Unhappy the system of segregation in the United States that permits far too many Americans no opportunities to know Negroes except through such a medium as television," said the late Walter White.

The executive secretary of the NAACP in his reply to Mr. Rose's article wrote that the motion picture industry had expanded its film treatment of the Negro.

"The motion picture industry has moved forward and apparently has abandoned making pictures like the Amos 'n' Andy and Beulah shows for the very practical reason, among others, they would not make money... We hope the television industry will also mature."

Following the discussion of the "Amos 'n' Andy" controversy between Mr. White and Mr. Rose, Professor Randolph Edmonds presented six basic issues which opposed the Association's protest against the "Amos 'n' Andy" on television. Professor Edmonds, whose contribution to the Negro educational theatre has been discussed in Chapter V of this study, stated the following issues in a series of articles:

1. Has the NAACP the financial resources to make successful this new and broad program?

2. Has the NAACP a really sound conception of a theatre for Negroes?

3. Were the Amos 'n' Andy television fight and the Beulah radio fight really necessary, and do they mark a change in policy from using the traditional legal weapon to that of employing the extra legal pressure tactics of many special interest groups of the country?

Ibid.
l. Has the past program of the NAACP concerning the concert and theatrical stages been of such a nature and consistent enough as to inspire confidence?

5. Does the National Office of the NAACP understand sufficiently the realities and problems involved for the Negro in the theatres of this country?

6. In the days of integration which lie just ahead, is the NAACP planning to insist on a specialized treatment of the Negro on the stage or is it going to decide to require that the theatre be looked upon as theatre and urge that Negro fictional characters be treated like fictional characters of every other race?

Answers to Professor Edmonds' questions came from Mr. Henry Lee Moon, Director of Public Relations for the NAACP. Categorically, Mr. Moon answered as follows:

1. The NAACP has never had enough money to fight adequately on all fronts, but the Association has been largely responsible for most of the

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race's advancement toward first-class citizenship.

2. The NAACP does not advocate "theatre for Negroes." The Association seeks a theatre in which the Negro is treated naturally and humanly, without sentiment and without distortion.

3. The Amos 'n' Andy fight was necessary, for any group which seeks favorable public acceptance faces the necessity of answering misrepresentations; the Amos 'n' Andy fight does not mark a change in policy because the NAACP has for forty-two years sought to mobilize the maximum public support.

4. The program of the NAACP concerning theatrical activities has been of such a nature as to inspire confidence; for example, the improved roles for Negro performers on stage and screen and the breaking down of the segregation policy at the Ford Theatre in Baltimore, Maryland.

5. As a matter of opinion, the NAACP does sufficiently understand the problem because the Association considers problems of the Negro in the theatre "as no more complex and insoluble than those facing the Negro in education."
6. In the period of racial integration, the Association will "require Negro fictional characters to be treated like fictional characters of every other race" because the Association is requiring this at the present time.

After a discussion of these six issues, Professor Edmonds stated the probability that the officials of the NAACP may identify themselves with the "Amos 'n' Andy" and "Beulah" characters and may be offended by the comic antics of these characters. Professor Edmonds believed that most people would prefer to remain detached and view the shows farce comedies.

To this probability and belief, Mr. Moon answered:

Actually, it is not a question of the Negro identifying himself with "Amos 'n' Andy" but of being so identified by the dominant majority group. The important determining factor is the fact that a great many, possibly an overwhelming majority of whites so identify all Negroes including the erudite author of _The Courier_ series.

By August of 1951, the NAACP had forwarded written protests from other organizations and individuals to the Columbia Broadcasting System. As in other protest campaigns, several organizations joined the NAACP protest against _The Amos 'n' Andy_ television show. For example,
the Eighth Annual Institute of the Michigan Federation of Teachers, Fourth Region, which met in Grand Rapids, Michigan, drew up a resolution against the show. This resolution contained the following statement: ".... A gross and vulgar caricature of the 15,000,000 Negro citizens of this country." This resolution pledged its support in the fight against all representations in every medium of communication which tend to perpetuate, to discredit, and to distort stereotypes of the Negro in the minds of white Americans. This organization of the teachers requested that the local CBS television station, WOOD-TV, WHO-Tv, and the Blatz Brewing Company discontinue presentation of The Amos 'n' Andy Show. The Catholic Interracial Council also stated editorially that the "Amos 'n' Andy" series should be discontinued because the show is harmful to interracial understanding and goodwill and is offensive to Negro Americans. 31

The officials of the Columbia Broadcasting System did not react immediately against the "Amos 'n' Andy" series according to an article in Printers' Ink. A


31 Ibid.
spokesman for CBS informed this publication that no concrete point-of-view or suggestion has been made. "Everything is so general," he said, "although the letters in a mild way say the program is unacceptable." 32

An Adventist research team conducted a survey of Negro opinion concerning the show. This study titled "The Negro Evaluates the Amos 'n' Andy TV Program" was conducted in New York and New Jersey among 365 Negro adults. The following results were achieved through interviews:

1. Favorable comments about the show were made by 72.5 per cent.

2. Unfavorable comments about the show were made by 18.8 per cent.

3. Is the show a good thing to see? 80.8 per cent said, yes.

4. Is the show a bad thing to see? 18 per cent said, no.

5. Does the show tend to strengthen the conclusion that Negroes are inferior, lazy, dumb, and dishonest? 23 per cent said, yes. 33

75 per cent said, no.


33 Ibid.
The Blatz Brewing Company continued to sponsor the "Amos 'n' Andy" series over CBS-TV through the year and into 1952. The show was rated in the ten best shows according to a national poll of viewers. At the same time, The Beulah Show continued on radio. The NAACP continued its protest against the first series of television shows featuring "Amos 'n' Andy," and the protest continued to gain strength through the cooperation of labor groups, church and civic groups. It was reported that Gosden and Correll wanted to withdraw their show from the television medium at the end of the series. However, CBS persuaded them to produce a new series for telecast during 1952. The Blatz Brewing Company began its sponsorship of a new series of Amos 'n' Andy Shows in July of 1952. This series was produced by the Hel Roach Studios and directed by Charles Barton.

The NAACP charged the delegates at the 1952 Annual Convention to press the fight against the show. The National Office called upon all branches, individuals and other organizations to protest the program and to use every

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means at their disposal to discourage sponsorship of Amos 'n' Andy and similar shows.

Results of the "Amos 'n' Andy" protest.--During the protest campaign, station WTMJ-TV in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, discontinued telecasting The Amos 'n' Andy show. The Negro press reported that the general manager of the station, Mr. Walter J. Damm, said that the station's decision not to renew the show's contract was not primarily the result of the NAACP protest campaign. Mr. Damm explained that WTMJ-TV dropped the show because the station did not consider it up to professional and technical standards. Speaking for the station, Mr. Damm explained, "We seriously considered the protests of the NAACP, and they added some weight to our decision not to renew the contract, but they were not the main reasons for our dropping the show." Information concerning other television stations that dropped the show during the protest campaign has not been available for this study.

The "show business" trade paper, Variety, indicated probably another result of the protest campaign. A Negro


newspaper, The Chicago Defender, sponsors an annual Billikin Parade for its children readers in Chicago. Variety stated that the personal appearances of Alvin Childress (Amos), Spencer Williams (Andy), and Tim Moore (Kingfish) were cancelled because Walter White protested against their appearance directly to the editor of The Chicago Defender. The entire parade was sponsored by the Blatz Brewing Company and the Columbia Broadcasting System in an attempt to allay some of the ill-feeling concerning the show, according to Variety.

Similar to the consequences of the NAACP protest campaign against Negro stereotypes in motion pictures, one of the results of the campaign against stereotypes in radio and television was the Negro performers' fear of losing their employment in television, as well as in radio. In an attempt to allay this fear, the NAACP announced that their research during 1951 indicated that the employment of Negro performers on major radio networks had in no way been jeopardized by the protest campaign against the Amos 'n' Andy television show. The Negro

press reported that Walter White had secured a promise from NBC which stated: "It is the company's policy to use Negro artists whenever it is logical to do so."

The Mutual radio network sent a telegram to the NAACP National Office which assured that Mutual had not changed its policy toward engaging Negro performers nor toward the script treatment of Negro roles as a result of the protest against "Amos 'n' Andy."  

However, in spite of the networks' promises to maintain the policy of engaging Negro performers whenever it was possible, the Blatz Brewing Company discontinued its sponsorship of the Amos 'n' Andy Show, and the series was dropped from the CBS-TV network. As a consequence of the protest campaign, more than ten Negro performers lost their employment. The NAACP campaign did not remove the show from the television channels altogether. Local television stations in various parts of the country have continued to televise the show locally by using the filmed series of Amos 'n' Andy Shows.

One of the significant results of the NAACP protest against the show was the organizing of

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Negro actors and performers who did not agree completely with the NAACP motives and methods of protesting against The Amos 'n' Andy Show. The Negro press reported: "Those thespians who felt the show was not offensive have formed an organization, the Coordinating Council for Negro Performers, which will have Lester A. Walton, former United States Minister to Liberia, as chairman." The Coordinating Council drew up a constitution in 1953 which stated the following as one of its aims: "To assemble, foster and promote the Negro performers in the amusement field for the purpose of aiding, counseling, and coordinating the artists in their respective fields and to have a more favorable and amicable understanding among the Negro performers in every branch of the theatrical field and its sponsors." If the Association's interference with the production of Amos 'n' Andy Show on television did not lessen the opportunities for employing Negro performers, there is evidence that the NAACP protest campaign did not increase the opportunities for employing Negro performers on television.

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The attitude of the NAACP toward other television shows.--Besides protesting against racial stereotypes, the NAACP also registers protest against the television industry's alleged misrepresentations of Negro life, whether in fiction or fact. The Philadelphia Branch, for example, registered a protest against the March of Time program which was telecast over station WCAU-TV during 1953. This particular program featured Levittown, a huge private housing development in Bucks County. Although this housing development bars Negro residents, the March of Time program dramatized the project as America's most perfectly planned community, according to Dr. Harry J. Greene and Charles A. Shorter who registered the protest. The leaders of the local Branch called the housing development "A monster of discrimination" which could have harmful and far reaching effects on the great Commonwealth of Pennsylvania; they instructed the National Office of the NAACP to file protests with the Columbia Broadcasting System and with the sponsors of the show.

During an interview on June 19, 1957, with Mr. Henry Lee Moon, Director of NAACP Public Relations, the writer asked Mr. Moon for the Association's attitude

42 The Crisis, LX (April, 1953), 147.
toward revivals of such plays as *The Emperor Jones* and *The Green Pastures* for stage or for television. Mr. Moon replied that the NAACP would not be in favor of reviving such plays because the Association's present program calls for racial desegregation in every phase of American life. He said that after the desegregation period has passed, the NAACP would be more favorable toward reviving these plays. Mr. Moon said that some of the Negro actors and performers agreed with the Association's policies toward theatrical entertainment, and some disagreed.

Several Negro actors and performers residing in New York City were interviewed in an effort to record their attitudes toward the NAACP policies which affect theatrical entertainment. Fred O'Neal, one of the vice-presidents of Actors' Equity, recalled that Walter White's actions in protesting against stereotypes in motion pictures and television were right. "He ignored actors and went to the top people. Leaders have to work with uneducated masses. Therefore, long distance leadership is necessary. Birds in flight must never get ahead of their leader." When Mr. O'Neal was asked what he thought of the NAACP's attitude against reviving *The Emperor Jones*, he stated that he was offered the titled role of the show when *Emperor Jones* was presented by Kraft Theatre over the NBC television network in 1956. His
reason for rejecting the role was that he thought the character, Brutus Jones, is a caricature of Henri Christoph and Toussaint L'Overture, Negro emperors of Haiti, and because he has great respect for the Haitian people and Haitian history. Mr. O'Neal suggested that Ossie Davis give his reason for playing the role in the Kraft Theatre presentation.

Ossie Davis, a young Negro actor, was playing in *No Time for Sergeants* on Broadway during the summer of 1957. The interview was held in his dressing room. Mr. Davis said that the Association's policy changes from situation to situation, therefore he could not speak for the policy. Speaking as an actor, Mr. Davis said that he has been affected by the Association's policies toward the theatre, that the policies have made for the maximum amount of confusion. "We are fighting one another instead of fighting together," he said. "The NAACP should consult with the actors. Otherwise, each actor has his own tangent and goes off in a different direction." Concerning reviving *The Emperor Jones* and *The Green Pastures*, Mr. Davis said that these plays should be revived because they constitute jobs for actors.

Mr. Ossie Davis stated that he accepted the role of Brutus Jones because he had a wife and three children to support, and that this job with the Kraft Theatre
production paid $600.00. He explained that he gave his decision to accept the role every consideration. This actor consulted Roy Wilkins, executive secretary of the NAACP, and Mr. Wilkins was against Davis' accepting the role. "Mr. Wilkins had no such policy against William Warfield's playing Porgy in the folk-opera, Porgy and Bess," commented Mr. Davis. The general Negro press, Mrs. Paul Robeson, and several other individuals were consulted by Mr. Davis, and the majority of them were in favor of his playing the role.

Other precautions were taken by Ossie Davis to avoid personal censorship and disapproval on the part of his Negro constituency. Mr. Fielder Cook, the director of Emperor Jones, promised Ossie Davis that the script would be adapted for television without offending Negroes, and that Mr. Davis could make suggestions concerning script changes. In return, Mr. Davis requested that Mr. Cook and Mr. Stockton Helfrick, the producer, make a public statement after the production in favor of Negro actors. The producer and the director promised that they would make the statement. Then Ossie Davis promised his Negro constituents that if the presentation of Emperor Jones created a too negative result that he would lend his personal services
to any organization which wished to attack Kraft Company or the National Broadcasting Company.

The Kraft Theatre presentation of _The Emperor Jones_ provided vocal disapproval among a comparatively few Negroes, but it provided no occasion for an attack against the Kraft Company or against NBC. Mr. Davis said that the producers were impressed by the attitude of Negroes toward _Emperor Jones_, but they did not make the promised public statement in favor of Negro actors. While reflecting on his difficult experiences with the Kraft presentation, Mr. Davis declared, "No actor should take upon himself the entire responsibility of a group. The group should share its own responsibility and leave the actor free to make a living by his talents."

Mr. George Norford, a Negro who is one of the writers and producers for NBC, said that $600.00 was not enough money for Ossie Davis to take such a chance as he did with _Emperor Jones_, which could have damaged Mr. Davis' personal reputation among Negroes.

In 1957, the Hallmark Hall of Fame planned an all-star production of _The Green Pastures_ for television, featuring an all-Negro cast. The NAACP, as has been mentioned before, was against the proposed presentation. Mr. Fred O'Neal of the Coordinating Council of Negro Performers stated during the interview that this organization was against the presentation because the all-Negro
cast would be indicative of racial segregation rather than integration. William Warfield accepted the role of "De Lawd" in the Hallmark production. Louis Armstrong, the jazz trumpet player, was offered the role of Angel Gabriel. The Coordinating Council, fearing that Mr. Armstrong's portrayal of Angel Gabriel would turn The Green Pastures into a farce-comedy, protested to the producers for the rejection of Mr. Armstrong. Fred O'Neal said that since the Coordinating Council could not suppress the production it sought to preserve the simple dignity of the show. Homer Tutt who played Angel Gabriel in the original Broadway production of The Green Pastures was signed to play the same role in the television presentation. Incidentally, Mr. O'Neal played the role of Moses in the Hallmark production.

As an evaluation of the influence of protest against The Emperor Jones and The Green Pastures, Mr. George Norford of NBC said that the television producers will listen and consider all protests and then present the performance according to public demand and commercial advantages, as in the case of the Hallmark production. The NAACP, individuals, and other organizations have only a limited influence on theatrical producers, according to Mr. Norford and Mr. Ossie Davis.
Trends toward racial desegregation in television.--

Following World War II, the NAACP directed its national program toward the desegregation of the Negro in every phase of American life; its Legal Bureau began forming strategy for pleading racial desegregation in the public schools before the United States Supreme Court. From 1945 to 1950, Negro performers were integrated on the New York stage; they appeared more frequently than ever before in racially mixed casts and less frequently in all-Negro casts, according to John Lovell's study (See Chapter III and Table 5). Negro actors appeared on stage in roles that were not stereotypes but were roles of normal human beings in natural settings; in several plays, they performed roles which were not designated as Negro. According to Robert L. Hillard's study, "Desegregation of the Negro Actor on the New York Stage," the trend toward desegregation on the stage was due primarily to the democratic idealism of the post-war period and to the Negro's social, political, and economic advancements in American life. The attitudes of the producers toward desegregation and the esthetic needs of the stage were considered by Mr. Hillard as contributing factors to this trend.

The trend toward desegregation and the producers' attitudes also affected the Negro performers in television. Desegregation in sports introduced Negro athletes on the
television screen and Negro major league baseball players became quite familiar to the American public, along with Negroes in other sports. Beginning in 1949, Ed Sullivan presented Negro performers comparatively frequently on his Toast of the Town NBC television show; such performers as Nat "King" Cole, Count Basie, The Ink Spots, Sarah Vaughan, and Pearl Bailey. Arthur Godfrey employed The Mariners, an interracial quartet of two white singers and two colored, on his two shows over CBS-TV. It was reported that when someone described the quartet to Godfrey as "A wonderful demonstration of democracy in action," Godfrey's terse response was, "Nuts." An all-Negro quartet featuring Billy Williams sang regularly on Sid Caesar's show. Fred Waring employed a Negro tenor, Ron Spearman, to sing on his weekly General Electric program. When Steve Allen took over The Tonight Show, he used Negro performers as frequently and as generously as Ed Sullivan. Steve Allen expressed his attitude toward Negro performers in television as follows:

Television needs the Negro performer and benefits by his contributions to the medium.
I consider it unfortunate that this idea is

still not generally accepted by the television industry. Certain producers or performers feel that if they use a high percentage of Negroes that perhaps viewers in the South or elsewhere might object. That always seems to me to be ridiculous thinking. And as proof that it is ridiculous I think that I have gotten about two cards or letters that could be said to represent that kind of negative, evil thinking.

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A racially integrated culture is certainly more desirable than a segregated one, and I suppose morals are more important than art. Integration is probably even more important artistically, because the advantage to be gained by performing your artistic function in the valley between two high mountains isolated from the rest of the world are secondary to those which would bring you into contact with the stream of the artistic heritage that all mankind has in common.44

Featured personalities of other television network shows demonstrated the same attitude as that expressed by Mr. Allen and also received the same kinds of negative responses from individuals who were against the desegregation of Negro performers. Herman Talmadge, Governor of Georgia, for an example, criticized television shows that presented "Negro males and females in proximity and on a basis of equality with white performers." 45

44 Steven Allen, "Talent is Color-Blind," Ebony, X (September, 1955), 49.

It was reported that Governor Talmadge's criticism was directed toward the shows which featured Ed Sullivan, Ken Murray, and Arthur Godfrey. Mr. Sullivan answered the Georgia Governor as follows:

Statements of Georgia's Governor Talmadge that Negro performers should be barred from TV shows on which white performers appear is both stupid and vicious. Television has been a tremendous force in bringing about a finer American understanding throughout the country. From my personal experience, the South has been delighted by the great Negro performers who have brought their songs, dancing and dramatic talents into Southern livingrooms.46

Ken Murray, responding to a question from the Negro press, stated "It has always been and will continue to be our practice to choose performers on the basis of their ability and not on their creed or color."47

The National Executive Secretary of the Television Authority, George Heller, responded, "We will continue to do everything within our power to completely effectuate the principle that Negro artists should have the opportunity of displaying their talents in portrayals that are integrated and not segregated and are true reflection in all its aspects of the true dignity of the individual, regardless of race or color."48

46 Ibid.
47 Ibid.
48 Ibid.
Arthur Godfrey defended his interracial quartet against Governor Talmadge's denunciation: "Would you kindly tell Governor Talmadge for me that if these four young fellows could fight together through a war in behalf of our United States where bullets didn't bother with segregation, that I'm afraid I can't be bothered either." 49

Other individuals also objected to Governor Talmadge's anti-integration statement; for an example, Walter Winchell, the newspaper columnist, and Dick Campbell, vice chairman of The Coordinating Council of Negro Performers. The NAACP official publication, The Crisis, tersely commented, "Governor Talmadge's blast at TV shows which practice racial equality were the vaporings of an ignorant man." 50

Although the developments in the trend toward desegregation in television, motion pictures, and on the New York stage cannot be attributed directly to the campaigns and protests of the NAACP, Mr. Henry Lee Moon of the NAACP National Office stated, "We like to believe that we have had an influence upon Negroes'.

49 Quoted in "The Mariners," Ebony, IX (February, 1945), 85.

50 The Crisis, LIX (February, 1952), 103.
receiving better roles and upon the desegregation of Negro performers." To encourage desegregation in television, Mr. Moon sent a letter of congratulations to Phil Silvers for presenting a Negro soldier in the natural scenes of Army life in The Steve Bilko Show. Both Mr. Moon and Mr. Wilkins have exclaimed that the NAACP is not a censoring organization but a pressure organization; yet, both officials have admitted that the television and movie industries do ask the National Office of the NAACP for advice and recommendations which the National Office gives in accordance with the Association's policies and programs.

The trend toward desegregation continued in spite of protest by individuals. A report titled Civil Rights in the United States, 1953 cited a role played by a Negro actor, Frank Wilson, on a Studio One television show as an improvement in the casting of Negro talent. This report also called attention to a show performed by a predominantly Negro cast which began a series during the year, Harlem Detective. This television drama series was based on crimes committed in Harlem. This show featured two detectives, one white and the other a Negro.

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Leontyne Price, a Negro soprano, sang the non-Negro role of Tosca in the National Broadcasting Company's Opera presentation during 1955. Several other presentations by the television networks featured Negroes in non-stereotyped roles.

4. Campaign for More Economic Opportunities for Negroes in Broadcasting

The trends toward desegregation in the mass media of entertainment were accompanied by the tendency on the part of theatrical producers to employ Negro performers less frequently. On the New York stages during the early 1950's, Negro actors were employed in non-stereotyped roles but were given fewer opportunities for employment. The same tendency prevailed in the motion picture industry, much to the general and serious economic concern of Negro performers. This same tendency prevailed in the radio and television industries.

Lena Horne, Negro stage and screen actress who was the center of the controversy created by Walter White during the New York stage production of *St. Louis Woman*, accused the national networks of discriminating against the employment of Negro performers (See Chapter III). Miss Horne made her charge against the radio networks in
1947 and expressed the following attitude:

Almost every day, I hear someone on the radio hailing America as the home of democracy. Yet, almost every network is guilty of discrimination against the Negro performer. There are a few isolated cases of Negroes in broadcasting, but the lily-white policy is seldom violated. When I was on the Ed Gardner show, the script had to be revised so that I would not address the star as "Archie." They wanted me to call him "Mr. Gardner." It wasn't considered proper for a Negro girl to speak a white man's first name. But I refused to consent to the change. So the earth shaking problem was finally solved by deleting the name from the script.51

Negro performers hoped that the development of the television medium would cause more economic opportunities for them in the radio broadcasting; they had observed that only a few Negroes were employed by the radio industry, Hattie McDaniel on The Beulah Show, Eddie "Rochester" Anderson on The Jack Benny Show, Lillian Randolph on The Great Gildersleeve Show, the King Cole Trio on The Wildroot Show, and Lionel Hampton's band show for the United States Treasury Department.

This employment situation in the radio industry was viewed

as follows:

For every top star on radio there are fifty trying to get even a bit part. So with competition so keen, it is little wonder that we have not made the grade. Sponsors and their advertising agencies decide whom they want on their shows. The stations only sell time in big-time radio. The stars come from agencies. So if an actor or actress has none of these connections, he or she is left in the cold.

If Negroes were really excited about radio, a number of business men could sponsor the type of show they desire and not wait for a break from white sponsors.52

Since 1948, Negroes have become "really excited" about radio. In quite a few cities such as Atlanta, Georgia; Birmingham, Alabama; Nashville, Tennessee; Louisville, Kentucky; and other cities, enterprising Negroes are now operating radio stations which cater to the interests of Negro listeners.

The television industry was cited for discrimination against the employment of Negro performers along with the radio industry. An instance of prejudice against racially integrated casting in television was reported in 1947. The show which presented this incident was Look Upon A Star, which featured students from high schools, colleges and professional schools.

Some of the viewers resented the scene in which a colored man danced with a white girl, two dancers from the Katherine Dunham School.

A group of Negro performers held a conference in New York City during July of 1949 for the purpose of launching a campaign "to put pressure on the nation's networks, stations and sponsors to employ more Negroes and to eliminate stereotypes of Negroes." The conference was led by Miss Fredi Washington and was attended by a reported 300 radio and television writers, actors, directors, representatives of unions and colored organizations. Canada Lee, a Negro stage and screen actor, delivered the key-note address at this conference. He said that the employment situation among Negro performers was an "iron curtain" in radio.

During November of the same year, a Committee for the Negro in the Arts and Sciences held a meeting along with other groups in Town Hall of New York City and "used the plight of the race in radio and television as a battle cry." The result of this meeting was reported as

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follows: "The outcome was the re-inforced urge to support radio unions, demand increased employment of beige artists in broadcasting and more protestations against the alleged 'blacklist' of individuals in the field."

Campaign for more opportunities in the television industry.--Billy Rowe, theatrical editor for The Pittsburgh Courier, observed in March of 1950, the status of the Negro performer in television: "Notwithstanding that TV is yet to come up with a worthwhile sponsored Negro show among its 2,300 advertisers, there isn't a week that the eye-channel is without a colored guest on one, two, or three of the big shows." Two months later, the New York Branch of the NAACP protested against alleged discrimination by the television industry in the employment of Negroes. The New York Branch directed its charges of discrimination to stations WOR, WCBS, and WNBC. The Branch stated that it had received many complaints that qualified Negroes had not been integrated into the personnel of the major stations; it, therefore, had reason to believe that some form of discrimination was being practiced by the broadcasters.

Mr. Charles A. Levy, president of the Branch, asked that an investigation be made of the theatre unions in order to discover if the unions were discriminating against Negroes.

An NAACP investigating committee, after meeting with the personnel managers of the major New York television stations, published the following report:

Station WOR employs between fourteen and fifteen hundred staffers, hires no more than 100 Negroes. About twenty are white collar workers, several are secretaries and typists. Forty do light porter and cleaning work. One supervises screen and cartoon activities. There is a wardrobe mistress, working with ten in make-up. There are three to four technician helpers.

Worst offender is WBAC (WJZ) which has eight hundred employees and "no record or knowledge of Negroes employed."

Station WNBC, with 1,550 employees, hires some thirty Negroes.

Billy Rowe approved of this investigation: "Throughout entertainment circles, the action of the NAACP aroused much favorable comment and approval. As Cab Calloway told the writer: 'The many Negroes who are investing in television sets would love to see a free

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The New York Branch of the NAACP, after its investigation of the television stations, filed a protest with the New York State Commission Against Discrimination. This Commission observed the practices of the television stations and then reported that it did not know what action to take against the television industry because the NAACP had not presented the necessary facts in the instances of racial discrimination.

The president of the New York Branch, in an appeal to Negro performers, published the following statement in the Negro press:

Let's flood the State Commission with legitimate complaints. I know, as well as they know, that there are hundreds of cases. I am appealing to have the information and facts in these cases brought to the attention of the New York Branch of the NAACP or to The Pittsburgh Courier's Theatrical Department.59

One of the first shows to be protested against by the NAACP was Fred Waring's musical show for the General Electric Company. The protest pointed out that Mr. Waring's show had a "kindred spirit with

58 Ibid.

Negroes in the kind programming" used by Mr. Waring, and a "kindred spirit" for the tremendous number of Negroes who buy General Electric products. The Pittsburgh Courier Theatrical Department stated that if the State Commission Against Discrimination did not act upon the charges made by the NAACP a national boycott of commercial products on television would be launched.

The combined campaign of The Pittsburgh Courier and the NAACP reported indications of desired results in November of 1950. The report cited the appearances of Negro performers on The Milton Berle Show, on the Cavalcade of Bands, on Showtime USA, and Studio One. Ed Sullivan's Toast of the Town was recognized for leading the way in non-discriminatory practices in employing Negroes.

Nevertheless, the campaign continued. During April of 1951, Josephine Baker, a Negro performer, spoke in behalf of more opportunities for Negroes before the twenty-ninth convention of the National Association of Radio and Television Broadcasters which

\[\text{Ibid.}\]

met in Chicago, Illinois. Miss Baker began her dancing career in Harlem during the 1920's. She married a Frenchman and moved to Paris and became a popular favorite on the stage. While touring the United States in 1951, Miss Baker cooperated with the NAACP in its financial and protest campaigns (See Chapter IV for her protest against Sherman Billingsley's Stork Club).

Another indication of favorable results of the campaign occurred after a meeting of representatives of all the major television networks with the American Federation of Labor and the Television Authority. This conference issued the following statement:

Negroes take part in every phase of life in our country today as citizens, as workers and as consumers whose buying dollars help pay the costs of television entertainment.

It is our purpose to secure representation of Negroes on television programs, matching their role in every day life and providing opportunities for the employment of the many qualified Negro artists among the membership of Television Authority.

During February of 1951, the vice presidents of the National Broadcasting Company met with members of the Negro press in Chicago, Illinois. This meeting was a

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second conference on the subject, "RCA and the Negro National Community," the first having been held in New York City. The following issues were reported by the Associated Negro Press:

They (NBC) hedged, however, when questioned on specific points of hiring more Negro employees throughout their vast company.

A Negro scene designer, Perry Watkins, has been hired in its television division, NBC reported, but held out no prospects of hiring Negro announcers, writers, directors or vice presidents.

Willard Townsend of the CIO and Dowdal Davis, editor of The Kansas City Call, both picked as spokesmen for Negro leaders, mentioned the rise of Negro business in America and the significance of the Negro press.

Davis called for action against job discrimination and stated that "weasel words aren't sufficient to relieve our democracy of its crushing burden of hypocrisy and deceit."

NBC countered with an off-point discussion by Sidney Elges, vice president in charge of press, concerning its desire to have friendly and cordial relations with the Negro press and from William Brooks, vice president in charge of public relations, concerning NBC difficulties in eliminating race stereotypes from scripts and songs and some casual mention of hiring policy.

Mr. Rowe reported no appreciable results of the conferences with the vice presidents of NBC. The integrated cast and its show, Harlem Detective, was

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"NBC Vice Presidents Meet With Negro Press," The Pittsburgh Courier (February 3, 1951), p. 17.
discontinued by WOR-TV of New York City in June of 1954. The lack of suitable facilities for televising the show was given as the reason for dropping it. A committee including William Marshall, Negro detective of the show, Julian Mayfield, Elsworth Wright, Sidney Poitier and Ossie Davis accused the network of "succumbing to the pressures of blacklisting" as a reason for discontinuing Harlem Detective. This committee explained in a press conference that "blacklisting" tactics were a means of keeping Negro performers off the air, that the show had received good reviews in The New York Times due to the performances of William Marshall, and then an article appeared in a newsletter charging that Marshall had been involved in certain "Communist-inspired" activities.

After studying the series of the shows announced by NBC for the 1955-1956 television season, The Pittsburgh Courier Theatre Department commented as follows: "From an eye-level point of view it would seem that the just announced 'Big Look' schedule for the '55-'56 fall season over NBC will be a 'lily-white' affair. According to an announcement this week, only

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Marian Anderson is figured into the master plan and that is on the opera side." Mr. Rowe came to the conclusion that the television industry feared racial integration in its shows first, because the industry is comparatively young; second, because of the great costs in producing shows. Mr. Rowe reasoned with his readers that the protests should be taken to the television advertisers. "If they refuse to give all people a fair showing, don't buy from them. Program directors will have to give the people what they want," Mr. Rowe explained. "Write them and let them know that you have eyes, too."

Campaign against alleged race-bias in television.--After the National Broadcasting Company's conference on the "Negro National Community" which was held in Chicago, Illinois, the Coordinating Council of Negro Performers issued a statement to the press. This statement related that NBC made the report that a total of eighty Negro acts and individual performers had appeared over NBC radio and

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television facilities for the two years ending August, 1952; and that if this figure included repeat performances, a total of one hundred appearances by Negroes had been presented.

The Coordinating Council pointed out that this report to the colored community so characterized by the NBC would include 635 performances if orchestras, quartets and other acts were included in the overall figures. The Coordinating Council replied to the NBC report as follows:

In analyzing these figures, it is taken into consideration that there are approximately 122 hours of telecasting by the networks during a given week. Allowing ten persons to each hour of telecasting, the number of jobs per week total 1,220 and 63,440 a year.

On the basis of the National Broadcasting Company's figures, the 635 jobs which were given Negroes in two years, constitute an unimpressive one-half of one per cent. One-half of a colored performer was employed to every one hundred white performers. While the Council is not urging employment primarily on a percentage basis, it has been found necessary to cite this ratio, they say, in challenging the claim of NBC that in the selection of talent, "ability is the yardstick."

The unfavorable situation concerning the employment of Negroes by the television industry was commented upon by Hy Gardner, editor of the "TV and Radio Magazine"

in The New York Tribune. Mr. Gardner stated that there was no more versatile comedian than Sammy Davis, Jr., that a blank wall of frustration confronted such Negro stars as Lena Horne, Dorothy Dandridge, Billy Eckstine, Duke Ellington, Ethel Waters, Marian Anderson, Pearl Bailey and Harry Belafontea. "Television will throw them a bone from time to time, but the meat, a program series of their own, remains hidden away in the deep freeze of intolerance," declared Mr. Gardner. "Since the Lord has gifted certain humans with rare artistic abilities the viewing public is being cheated of many hours of enjoyment."

The Coordinating Council in association with the Labor and Industry Committee of the New York Branch of the NAACP launched a protest campaign against the alleged race bias of radio and television industries. The combined groups proposed "a two-hour television blackout" for Saturday, February 26, 1955, from 8:30 to 10:30 p.m. Folders were circulated to advertise the blackout. The blackout was executed as scheduled. A great number of Negroes over the country did not turn on their television sets, it was reported. The Crisis announced the effect thus: "As a result, the first

69 Quoted in "Not Ahead on TV," The Crisis, LXII (November, 1955), 548.
round in the battle for a fair percentage of non-white employment has been won."  

Continuing cooperation with the NAACP, the Coordinating Council sought the support of other organizations in its campaign against race bias in the broadcasting industries. Frederick O’Neal, vice president of the Coordinating Council spoke before the Catholic Interracial Council and explained that his organization had no desire to "disturb the artistic integrity" of television performances, that the Coordinating Council’s aims were to have Negroes appear in the number and kind of roles they actually fill in real life. Mr. O’Neal stated that the omission of Negroes from television gave the impression to viewers that Negroes had no place in American life.

The protest campaign of the Coordinating Council was expanded during 1956 in both force and methods. An appeal was made by the organization to the Negro population over the country through letters, folders, and the press (See Appendix C for the Council’s form letter and contents of the folder). John D. Silvera, Chairman of the Council’s Board of Directors, explained the

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70 The Crisis, LXII (May, 1955), 300-301.
position of this organization as follows:

After many conferences with these employers of talent, we have always left such meetings with the feeling that there is no conscious or formal ban against the use of Negro talent in these media. However, the fact that certain programs have not seen fit to use Negro actors and others only in occasional guest spots, do give rise to our belief that such bans do exist in a small section of the industry.

The Negro performer does not ask to be cast in a role merely as a gesture of goodwill. What he does ask for is a fair chance—based solely on his ability as a performer.

Mr. Silvera asked Negro viewers to address cards and letters to stations and call for more realistic casting of Negroes.

In accord with the protest campaign of the Coordinating Council of Negro Performers, the Theatrical Department of The Pittsburgh Courier suggested a boycott by Negroes of products advertised on television shows. The wife of the columnist, Mrs. Izzy Rowe, suggested that Negroes boycott the products one by one. For example, Negroes will give up smoking just one brand of cigarettes, then one brand of toothpaste, and on to household utensils, clothing, and other products. Although many readers approved of Mrs. Rowe's suggestion, the boycott was not carried out because television officials

who were interested in the advancement of Negroes in 
the medium advertised against the boycott.

All of the protesting Negro groups petitioned 
the New York State Commission against discrimination 
to desegregate the chorus girls on television shows. 
The groups called the chorus lines of the various 
television shows, and other shows, "the last barriers 
against full integration in the theatre." The chorus 
lines in Toast of the Town, in Jackie Gleason's show, 
and in Perry Como's show were among those cited for 
racial discrimination.

Results of the television protest campaign.--The 
NAACP, by using the methods which it employs in executing 
its national programs, did achieve several results 
through the television protest campaigns. First, the 
Association, as it did in other campaigns, focused some 
degree of informed public opinion on the issues of racial 
discrimination, upon the use of Negro stereotypes, and 
upon racial desegregation in casting. Second, the 
Association was successful in winning the support of 
other organizations to its protest campaign against


the television industry, namely, The Pittsburgh Courier and the Coordinating Council of Negro Performers. Third, the Association was successful in securing a statement of policies favorable to two Negro performers from the broadcasters; such as those issued by the National Broadcasting Company, and by Television Authority. Fourth, the protesting groups in their threat of mass boycott directed the attention of the Negro public away from the television producers to the television advertisers and their products.

These four general results of the protest campaigns were contributing factors to the trend toward racial desegregation and non-discrimination in the employment of Negro performers. Several dramatic shows presented Negro actors in racially mixed casts; among them were Harry and Ethel Waters in Winner by Decision on the General Electric Theatre, Eartha Kitt in the titled role of Salome, Sidney Poitier, cited for the "best performance by an actor" during 1955, in A Man is Ten Feet Tall. Fred Waring employed a Negro tenor to sing with his group. Jackie Gleason employed a Negro girl, Luly Guerrero, for one of his "Billboard

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75 The Pittsburgh Courier (September 1, 1956), p. 21.
Other examples of racial desegregation in television may be cited.

The protesting Negro groups petitioned repeatedly to the television industry for a network show which would feature a Negro personality in the manner of the Perry Como Show. Two networks attempted to present such a show. The American Broadcasting Company made a pilot film of a television show featuring Sammy Davis, Jr., and the Will Mastin Trio. The show was titled Three's Company and presented Frederick O'Neal, Ruth Attaway, and Frances Taylor. After eight months of rehearsals and $20,000 invested in the pilot film, the show opened and closed because no sponsor subscribed to it. Sammy Davis, Jr. was reported to have said that his color costed him millions of dollars (See Plate XIX for Kivie Kaplan, co-chairman of the NAACP Life Membership Committee, enlisting Sammy Davis, Jr.).

The most important example of non-discrimination in the employing of Negro performers by the television networks was the NBC presentation of the King Cole Show

76 "Jackie Gleason's 'Billboard' Girl," Ebony, XIV (December, 1958), 32.

during 1956 and 1957. Accompanied by the Gordon Jenkins' orchestra and the Boataneers, Mr. Cole and his guests performed for thirteen months. For the greater part of the thirteen months the show was presented on a sustaining basis and for the other part by cooperative advertisers.

Mr. Cole gave reasons for the discontinuing the show: first, the decision to change the time from Tuesday at 7:30 p.m. to Saturday at 7:00 p.m.; second, the limited budget for the show. In expressing his attitude toward his experiences with the show, Mr. Cole stated that the advertising industry did not want their products associated with a Negro, yet the industry was willing to hire Negro talent to make a white featured personality a success. Mr. Cole was proud of the high ratings given his show by American Research Bureau as number one in the New York area and as number eight in Los Angeles, that at the seventy-seven stations that carried the program, half of them were in the South, that Trendex revealed his show to be going into more than three million homes, and that his show became racially integrated without general negative reaction. Although the advertising industry thought the show could not be sold to a sponsor for fear of offending the South, when the show was offered to sponsors on a cooperative basis, The King Cole Show sold Regal Beer in New Orleans and Coca Cola in Houston, Texas.
This featured personality sacrificed $500.00 in commitments to take a chance on a sponsored Negro show; he gave NBC credit for doing all in its power to sell the show to sponsors; he was highly complimentary of NBC's General David Sarnoff. Mr. Cole thought that his show proved five important points:

1. That sponsors will buy a program starring a Negro entertainer, for his show had over thirty cooperative sponsors
2. That white people will not boycott the sponsors of such a show as The King Cole Show
3. That a Negro star can be accepted to the American television audience
4. That Negroes will organize and support a Negro star on television
5. That a Negro star can serve as host of a racially mixed cast of both sexes.

Addressing himself to the readers of Ebony, a Negro publication similar in format to Life, Mr. Cole advised the following course of action:

Negroes, above all, must become financially independent. All things, as intelligent Negroes know, boil down to money. We must, before it is too late, solidify our positions. We must support organizations like the Urban League and the

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Nat King Cole, "Why I Quit My TV Show," Ebony, XIII (February, 1958), 29-34.
NAACP. Of course, different organizations fight in different ways and we all have different reactions to them, but in the final analysis they are all working for racial betterment. Negroes, too, must invest more, not only in entertainment enterprises, but in all business. We should put our money to work because money is what the people working against us respect.79

The reference to the NAACP in this statement is significant because Mr. Cole had the occasion to react to the NAACP protest campaign against racial segregation in theatres and places of amusement in the South (See Chapter IV of this study).

5. Relationships of the NAACP with the Broadcasting Industries

The protests campaigns of the NAACP against the broadcasting industries may be justified when these protests are considered in their connections with the Association's national programs, the securing of economic, political, and educational equalities. Protests against discrimination in the employing of Negro performers by the radio and television industries are a part of promoting the ideals of American democracy and are related, therefore, to the Association's national program. Equal time on radio or television for all groups and individuals is a Federal and self-regulating code of the radio and television industries

79 Ibid.
which the NAACP has observed and used from time to time. Equality of educational opportunities for Negroes has been argued by the NAACP before the United States Supreme Court and has been generously reported and considered by the radio and television networks.

Relationships with the radio industry.--The NAACP protest campaign against stereotypes in radio shows is difficult to reconcile with the national program of the NAACP for economic equality. The campaign's influence on "Lucky" Millinder's Modern Minstrel Show caused disruption in the production and the loss of employment for the Negro performers. At the same time, the National Office admitted to the critics of the protests against stereotypes that the Association had neither the time, staff, finances, nor the inclination to be censors. The NAACP demanded the omission of Negro stereotypes from radio scripts, such as the Beulah Show, and the equality of economic opportunities for Negroes in the radio industry. Confusion of motives, practices, and issues was the result of these demands.

Relationships with the television industry.--The NAACP protest campaign against Negro stereotypes included television as well as motion pictures. The National Office considered "Amos 'n' Andy" on television as more damaging Negro stereotypes than on radio because the visual representation was added to the audio
representation. Therefore, The Amos 'n' Andy television show became the prime object of the Association's protest. The protests against this show extended from conferences to boycotts and threats of boycotts. In addition to causing confusion in the production of the show, the NAACP contributed to the advertisers' withdrawing from network sponsorship of The Amos 'n' Andy Show.

The National Office of the NAACP, according to Mr. Henry Lee Moon, considered The Emperor Jones and The Green Pastures as representations of Negro life of a by-gone era and disapproved of reviving these plays on television. The attitude of the NAACP on the television production of these two plays contributed to negative comments on the production and to the mental anxiety of the Negro actors, according to Mr. Ossie Davis who played the titled role in The Emperor Jones.

Upon considering the later developments and the results of the NAACP protest campaigns against stereotypes, segregation, and race bias and discrimination in the employment of Negro talent, the Negro performers who renounced the campaigns, because it interfered with their employment, found evidence to support their objections.
The NAACP campaign against alleged race bias, racial discrimination in the television industry revealed that the greater offenders were not the television broadcasters but the television advertisers. Fred Waring and Jackie Gleason responded to the trend toward integrated casting by employing Negro talent. Ed Sullivan of NBC and Steve Allen of CBS stated on the desegregation issue that the South did generally accept shows with mixed racial casts. The King Cole Show exhibited evidence on the discrimination issue that the American television audience would generally accept a racially integrated show with a Negro performer as the featured personality. Although the NAACP protest campaigns against television did focus attention upon the television advertisers as the major offenders in racial discrimination, the Negro performers may conclude that the NAACP did not have the moral right to interfere with their opportunities for employment.

The broadcasting industries are comparatively young (and need experience, study, and understanding,) as observed by Mr. Billy Rowe of The Pittsburgh Courier. Speaking for the Negro performers, the Coordinating Council of Negro Performers stated on the issues involved in the production of radio and television shows, that, first, Negro performers are not trying to interfere with the esthetics of production, but they should
be considered on bases of their talents; second, that Negro performers are not seeking patronage, but they should be cast in the normal scenes of every day American life. As advised by Mr. Cole, Negroes and the NAACP should exert more economic pressures upon the radio and television advertisers. Mr. Cole intimated, as did Mr. Ossie Davis and Mr. George Norford, that producers will continue to present what the public and advertisers want to hear and see.
CONCLUSION

The relationships of the NAACP with the American theatre and of its influences upon it have been documented and presented by a Negro who has been physically and spiritually involved with the issues herein discussed. However, the writer has attempted to remain objective in his approach to the subject, hoping to avoid prejudiced and biased conclusions; he hopes that this study has been deemed appropriate and timely, that it has been considered against the background of interracial events both national and international, and that it has been considered both in the present and future of human relationships in the theatre. Because of the intellectual characteristics of the Negro leadership exemplified by the NAACP in its relationships with the theatre, the writer believes that there are values in the responsible opinions which have been expressed on the hopes and desires of Negroes relative to the mass media of entertainment.

The development of the Negro performer.--In order to establish the relationships of an organization such as the NAACP with the theatre, the trends in the development of the Negro performer have been plotted. From the colonial period to the 1850's, Negro performers were excluded from the stage; their parts were played by white actors in blackface make-up. Since minstrelsy was based on the folk dances, plantation melodies, and manners of southern Negroes, it was inevitable
that Negro performers made their first appearances on the stage in this form of theatrical entertainment. Minstrelsy caricatured Negro life and distorted the Negro characters; yet, it introduced Negro performers to the American public and advanced some of them to stage plays such as *Uncle Tom's Cabin* which featured Sam Lucas.

The all-Negro musical comedy was the next phase in the development of the Negro performer between 1910 and 1930. The musical comedy departed from the minstrel tradition by introducing the colored show girl, dramatic sketches in blackface, and trained and talented Negro musicians such as Will Marion Cook, Bob Cole, Eubie Blake, James Reese Europe, and Ford Dabney. From this point, the Negro entertainer began to shed his minstrel stereotype and to individualize his performance; for example, Bert Williams, George Walker, and Miller and Lyles.

Negro life was not the serious and sincere concern of American playwrights during the nineteenth century. During this period, Negro stereotypes were used in dramas for comic relief, such as the Zeke, Sambo, and Caesar types in the early American dramas. The humanizing of Negro characters awaited his emancipation from slavery as signified by Miss Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Negro life was not treated sympathetically by American playwrights because his life was concealed by misrepresentations, misconceptions, and prejudices against revealing him realistically.
The fuller development of Negro life and characters in American drama depended, first, on the esthetic demands of the theatre; and second, upon the Negro's social, economic, and political advancement in American life. The production of Ridgely Torrence's *Three Plays* in 1917 exhibited evidence that Negro life can fulfill the esthetic needs of the theatre. Eugene O'Neill's *Emperor Jones*, presented in 1920 indicated that Negro life was worthy of serious treatment. From this point, the Negro actor grew in stature, developing from the two dimensional stereotype into the three dimensional human personality, as illustrated by Charles Gilpin, Paul Robeson, and Rose McClendon.

The developments of the Negro performer and actor in motion pictures and in the broadcasting industries were parallel to the trend of his developments in the theatre.

Relationships of the NAACP to the mass media of entertainment. To reconcile the national programs of the NAACP to the theatrical developments of the Negro performers and actors may seem difficult. Exerting pressures externally, from within the Negro group, the NAACP's national programs have sought for Negroes equal justice in the courts, political, civil, and educational equality, equality of economic opportunities, undiscriminated health and hospital services, desegregation in the Armed Forces, and desegregation in the public schools. Within the Negro group, the NAACP has directed its national programs toward the promotion of race pride, cultural and social
uplift, and mass action. Dr. W. E. B. DuBois has stated the purpose of the internal program as follows: "To make the Negro race free from insult and free from indignation."

These comprehensive national programs of the NAACP were designed to cover the activities of Negroes in every phase of American life, and, consequently, included the mass media of communication and entertainment. The relationships of the NAACP to theatrical activities were involved with the following issues: seeking more economic activities for Negro actors and performers, seeking more favorable representations of Negro life, and seeking racial desegregation of Negro performers and audiences.

1. Relationships of the NAACP with the Commercial Theatre

From the beginning of the NAACP in 1910 to 1934, Dr. W. E. B. DuBois as director of research and editor of The Crisis was the Negro spokesman of this Association. Realizing the cultural force of the theatre, he went before the Drama League of America in 1917 and pleaded for more opportunities for Negro actors. Dr. DuBois desired that the stage present favorable representations of Negro life; he believed that all Negro art should be toward propaganda, toward "truth, beauty, and the right of Negroes to live, to love, and to enjoy." At the same time, he warned his Negro readers that they should not insist that their art and propaganda be one, that Negroes should not insist that the theatre present only the complimentary, heroic, and flattering pictures of Negro life. Dr. DuBois stated in 1925
that the Negro race was secure enough to lend the whole of racial truths to the dramatists. One of his basic criticisms of the American theatre was for the almost exclusive presentation of themes of racial frustrations and defeatism. His criticism suggested that Negroes cannot always judge a drama for themselves because in some instances they lack the knowledge and conceptions of artistic values, as in the case of The Green Pastures. Dr. DuBois objected to the New York critics' failing to observe the significance of the Negro in the drama of life, such as the racial symbolism in George Bernard Shaw's Back to Methuselah. As the years passed since the founding of the NAACP, the Association became less and less an interracial organization and more and more a Negro organization. At the same time, the Association's dramatic criticism became less universal and more limited to the Negro's point of view.

During the economic depression years of the 1930's, the social and political forces in America moved the NAACP closer to the main stream of the American theatre in several instances. The NAACP and the Communist Party were rival defenders of the Scottsboro Boys. This defense laid the basis for the satirizing of the NAACP in a play concerning the Scottsboro Boys, They Shall Not Die (1934). The plight of Negro labor in the South was dramatized during the same year in Stevedore. These economic and social forces of the period brought about a closer relationship between Negroes and whites on the stage and in the theatre audience which was illustrated by other labor plays.
After World War II, the ideals of American democracy along with the general progress of the Negro in American life, as has been observed by Robert L. Hilliard, promoted a trend toward the desegregation of Negro actors and performers on the New York stage. This new development gave Negroes the opportunities to play not only non-stereotyped roles but also roles without racial designations. Concurrently, the older presentation of all-Negro casts and the Negroes in star appearances continued from 1944 to 1952. Nevertheless, the NAACP, through Walter White, protested against alleged stereotypes in the Broadway production of St. Louis Woman in 1946. This protest cannot be reconciled with the national programs of the NAACP because it disrupted the all-Negro cast and probably shortened the Broadway run of the show. Negro performers and actors were receiving better roles, and Negro life was receiving more favorable treatment without the direct interference of the NAACP. The protest against St. Louis Woman, according to one of the writers of the show, was not related to a national program of the NAACP nor to the production.

However, the influence of the NAACP upon the progress of Negroes in American life and the criticism and the opinions of its leaders concerning the Negro and the theatre must not be discounted. The NAACP did contribute to a body of informed public opinion on the position of the Negro in the American theatre. Through a series of legal and social actions, the NAACP has contributed to the advancement of the Negro in American life.
2. **Against Segregation and Discrimination in the Commercial Theatre**

Mrs. Edith J. R. Isaacs stated in her commentary on the Negro in the American theatre that Negroes had been excluded from the New York theatres more by custom and tradition than by laws. In 1915, the NAACP came to the conclusion that the right of Negroes to attend theatres was a civil right and not a social issue. The National Office instructed its Branches to protest against racial segregation and discrimination in theatres wherever possible. This protest campaign against racial segregation and discrimination was more direct and forceful because it was a part of the Association's program of legal action. This campaign affected theatre production because the NAACP enlisted the aid of Negro and white actors and performers and theatrical organizations. This protest campaign achieved results favorable to the NAACP. In the Northeast, theatres and places of amusement abolished its policies of racial segregation and discrimination; namely, the Ford Theatre in Baltimore and the National Theatre and Constitution Hall in Washington, D. C.

Because of the bi-racial economy of the South which afforded all-Negro and all-white theatres, the campaign was directed against municipal auditoriums which discriminated against Negroes. In the early stages of the Southern campaign, Marian Anderson set the precedent of dividing the auditorium in half from top balcony through the orchestra, with one half reserved for whites and the other for colored. Later in the
Southern campaign, the NAACP succeeded in getting Marion Anderson and other artists to insert non-segregation clauses in their contracts. This campaign succeeded in changing the segregation policies of the municipal auditoriums in Louisville, Kentucky; and Jacksonville and Miami, Florida. By a series of court actions, the NAACP broke down the segregation policies in places of public amusement and recreation in several border and southern cities. The campaign in the West achieved similar results.

The abolition of racial segregation and discrimination in the theatre should have a beneficial effect on the representations of Negro life. The Negro as a patron will become a factor at the box office which will be recognized by writers and producers. The more frequent employment of Negro actors and performers will bring more Negroes into the theatre. The Negro as a part of the theatre audience will lead to a balancing of theatrical elements in his favor.

3. Relationships of the NAACP with the Non-Commercial Theatre

The NAACP realized that the non-commercial theatre offered opportunities for the promotion of the Association's internal programs of cultural and social uplift, race pride, and mass action. Relative to a Negro civic theatre, Dr. DuBois recognized in pageantry the opportunities for promoting race pride. His Star of Ethiopia attempted to recapture the glories of the Negro's historical past. Attempting to use the Negro independent theatre for racial propaganda, the NAACP sponsored the
production of two plays which contained Negro propaganda: Miss Ovington's *Hazel* and Miss Grimke's *Rachel*.

The most remarkable theatrical activity of the NAACP was its participation in the Little Theatre Movement. Dr. DuBois helped to launch the "Harlem Literary Renaissance" in the early 1920's and founded the NAACP's own little theatre which was named The Krigwa Little Negro Theatre. This theatre group distinguished itself in two little theatre tournaments, discovered several amateur playwrights, introduced a group of actors to the commercial theatre, and defined what a Negro theatre should be - by Negroes, for Negroes, of Negroes and near Negroes. The Krigwa Theatre operated for only three years. The relationships of the NAACP with the non-commercial theatre were not of significant influence upon the mass of Negro people. A score of writers and artists in Harlem would hardly constitute a mass movement of Negroes in the arts. Dr. DuBois said that the efforts of the Krigwa Theatre were "art" and that these efforts were hampered by the commercial theatres which attracted talent away from Krigwa and by the Negro churches of the Baptist and Methodist denominations which frown upon the theatre and discouraged theatrical activities. The difficulty of the NAACP in appealing to the non-intellectual Negro masses should be added to the other handicaps in fostering cultural uplift through the theatre. The independent all-Negro theatres were hampered by poverty and meager production facilities.
The NAACP appointed a Drama Committee in 1917 to study ways and means for using the theatre for the Association's propaganda. The Committee divided its opinion on whether a Negro theatre should be associated with race or disassociated from race. The minority of committee members voted for disassociation and promoted the founding of the first Negro educational theatre at Howard University, Washington, D.C. The most significant influence of the NAACP upon the educational theatre was the Association's successful plea before the United States Supreme Court for desegregation in the public schools. The Association's victory against segregation in the public schools will have extensive effects. For example, the American Educational Theatre Association held a symposium on "Desegregation in the Educational Theatre" which attempted to determine the rate and methods of desegregation. Public schools are facing and will continue to face the problem of integrating Negroes into the program of educational theatres. In most instances, desegregation in the educational theatre will give Negro students better facilities and opportunities for training than they had in the segregated educational theatres. These advantages will bring the Negro student performer before the American theatre for all to see and hear rather than the theatre for only Negroes.
4. Relationships of the NAACP with the Motion Picture Industry

To reconcile the relationships of the NAACP with the motion picture industry to the Association's national programs is less difficult than reconciling the relationships with the theatre. The NAACP protest campaign against *The Birth of a Nation* was justified because of the film's doubtful historical accuracy and the anti-Negro sentiments of the film. After recognizing the superior artistry of D. W. Griffith's realistic and pictorial production, Dr. DuBois feared the consequences of public exhibition of the film. The passing of several city ordinances against the showing of this film supported the attitude of the NAACP toward *The Birth of a Nation*.

The protest campaign against racial stereotypes in motion pictures is also justifiable because the communication of Hollywood films is far more extensive than the communication of the stage. These films presented Negro stereotypes to many cities and towns in America and in foreign countries. The leaders of the NAACP claimed that such films as *The Birth of a Nation* and *Gone With The Wind* caused the NAACP to print many pages of explanations to correct the false impressions created by these two films. Through the pleas of Wendell Willkie and Walter White, Twentieth Century-Fox and other Hollywood studios began to discontinue Negro stereotypes and to produce a series of "tolerance films" which advocated interracial goodwill and understanding. On the other hand, the protest against stereotypes caused some of the studios to discontinue the portrayal
of Negro life and the use of Negro characters, thus bringing about unemployment among Negro performers.

The majority of the Negro actors and performers in Hollywood thought that the campaign against stereotypes was unjustified because, first, they had not been consulted by the NAACP; second, the portrayal of stereotypes was the responsibility of the producers and not of the performers; third, the protest campaign decreased opportunities for employment. A minority of the Negro actors and performers who supported the NAACP protest campaign stated that progress for the race in motion pictures should be measured by the kind of roles portrayed by Negroes and not by the number of roles portrayed by Negroes.

Concerning these issues, the writer agrees with Dick Campbell, Negro field representative for the American National Theatre Academy, who came to the conclusion in 1957 that, first, Walter White should have consulted with the Negro actors and performers; and second, Walter White should have insisted on balancing the Negro stereotypes with normal and individualized Negro characters. Racial stereotypes are inevitable in the representation of any racial group because they are attractive and are based on some degree of actuality. However, to present racial stereotypes to the exclusion of normal characters is unfair and unjust discrimination against any racial group. In the all-Negro theatre, Negro stereotypes are enjoyed and are unmolested by organized protests because they are portrayed along with individualized Negro characters.
5. Relationships of the NAACP with the Broadcasting Industries

The NAACP's major interest in the broadcasting industries was prompted by the opportunities to use the media of radio and television to advertise the Association's programs and to create public opinions and impressions which are favorable toward the Negro. The portrayal of Negro stereotypes by the radio industry was not as frequent and extensive as their portrayal in motion pictures because radio was a younger industry. Representation of Negro life in the blackface minstrel tradition began on the radio networks in 1925 with the Amos 'n' Andy Show and has continued as a popular show on radio to the present time. Yet, in 1947, the NAACP protested against "Lucky" Millinder's Modern Minstrels on the basis of the minstrel format and the word "minstrel" in the title of the show. This protest cannot be justified because of the inconsistencies of the Association's policies. The NAACP probably did not organize a protest against the radio Amos 'n' Andy Show because it was performed by white actors. An all-Negro show in the minstrel tradition was protested. Blackface minstrels produced by educational theatres were protested on several occasions. The protest against the stereotyped role played by Hattie McDaniel on The Beulah Show over the radio network seemed unfair and the outcome inconsequential. Miss McDaniel died during the protest against her show which she defended to the best of her ability.
The NAACP launched a national protest campaign against the television version of the *Amos 'n' Andy Show* which was acted by Negro performers. The National Office stated that the television version was more damaging because the stereotypes were presented visually as well as with sound. The producers of the show informed the NAACP that they had attempted to give a fair cross-section of Negro life in presenting the show. Nevertheless, the protest campaign continued until the show was removed from the network. As a result of the protest, a fine cast of Negro actors lost their employment.

In protesting against the stereotypes in broadcasting, the NAACP should have demanded more non-stereotyped characters rather than the removal of the stereotypes. The protest against *Amos 'n' Andy* was unnecessary and unjustifiable because the greater offenders were the advertisers and not the broadcasters and because the loss of employment as a result of the protest cannot be reconciled with the NAACP's programs for greater economic opportunities. The protest campaign against alleged race bias and discrimination in the broadcasting industries indicated that the *Amos 'n' Andy* campaign had little or no influence on the disposition of the radio and television network officials to employ more Negroes.
6. Future Relationships of the NAACP with the Theatre

This study has presented evidence that the NAACP protest campaigns against theatrical productions which presented Negro stereotypes have caused more harm to the Negro actors and performers than beneficial results to the Negro race as a whole. The methods of censoring and protesting employed by the NAACP have been questionable as well as the ability of the NAACP to solve the racial problems involved in theatrical productions. Roy Wilkins, executive secretary of the NAACP, admitted in 1957 that the NAACP is not a censoring organization. This admission together with the confusion caused by the protest campaigns should lead the NAACP to refrain from direct censoring and protests against theatrical productions in the future.

In withdrawing from the activities of protesting and censoring the productions of the commercial theatre, the NAACP should maintain relationships with the theatre through the theatrical organizations which have cooperated with the Association: The Coordinating Council of Negro Performers, Actors' Equity Association, Dramatists Guild, Association of New York Producers, Screen Writers Guild, Screen Actors Guild, and the National Association of Radio and Television Broadcasters.

The NAACP's relationships with the non-commercial theatre were not as direct and significant as the Association's relationships with the commercial theatre; however, the Association's motives are worthy of further realization in the non-commercial
theatre. The Krigwa Theatre's conception of a Negro theatre is still applicable to the all-Negro community. Negro civic and independent theatres still could contribute to the "social and cultural-uplift" of the race, refining the racial arts for the integration in the American arts. The changing racial complexions of the American communities will afford many opportunities for racial integration in community theatres.

In the Association's relationships with the educational theatre, the NAACP should let racial integration follow its logical and liberal pattern which racial integration followed in scholastic and intercollegiate athletics. On the other hand, the NAACP should continue its protests against racial segregation and discrimination practiced by commercial theatres, by theatrical labor unions, and by radio and television advertisers.
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"Screen Actors Guild to Fight Bias Against Negro in Movies" (September 28, 1946), p. 19.

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Dixie Dynamite, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, 20 West 40th Street, New York 18, New York.


NAACP, An American Organization, National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, 20 West 40th Street, New York 18, New York.

UNPUBLISHED MATERIAL


APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

CATALOGUE OF ONE-ACT PLAYS PUBLISHED IN
THE CRISIS

Broken Banjo, by Willis Richardson, XXXI-(February, 1926), 167-71.

Church Fight, by Ruth A. Gaines-Shelton, XXXII-(May, 1925), 17-21.


Exit, An Illusion, by Marita O. Bonner, XXII-(October, 1920), 335.


George Washington and Black Folk, by W. E. B. Du Bois, XXIX-(April, 1933)

Holiday, by Otto B. Graham, XXVI-(May, 1923)

It Might Have Happened in Alabama, by S. Ralph Harlow, XLI-(October, 1933)


Mine Eyes Have Seen, by Alice M. Dunbar-Nelson, XV-(April, 1918), 271-75.

On the Field of France, by The Late Joseph Seamon Cotter, XX-(June, 1920), 77.

Purpose Flower, by Marita O. Bonner, XXXV-(January, 1928), 9-11.
APPENDIX B

THEATRICAL NOTICES CONCERNING NEGROES PUBLISHED IN THE CRISIS FROM 1910 TO 1920

The Crisis, I-XX (November, 1910 to December, 1920)

I. Notices Concerning Negro Actors in the Commercial Theatres

Art center for colored people is being formed at the headquarters of Bert Williams, Cole and Johnson and Will Marion Cook, James Reese Europe and the Clef Club Orchestra, (November, 1910), 6.

George W. Walker, the well-known comedian is dead, I-(February, 1911), 10.

Marching Through Georgia was presented at the New York Hippodrome, a spectacle which called for a number of colored players, I-(July, 1911), 101.

The Garden of Allah, dramatized by Mary Anderson and Robert Hichens, is now being presented in New York City. A colored flute player has been brought to the United States from Biskra to play in the production, III-(November, 1912), 101.

Christophe, a Haitian tragedy, written by William Edgar Easton of Los Angeles, California, was presented this summer at the Gamut Auditorium in Los Angeles, V-(November, 1912), 14.

Ehph Williams presented a fine show (a Negro minstrel show), but clean and good in Cleveland, Mississippi. It was reported that some mean white boys killed one of his ponies, hit a little girl dancer with a stone, and refused to pay for the side show, V-(February, 1913), 170.
Bert Williams, the colored comedian, will appear as Friday in Robinson Crusoe, which will be produced later in the season by Klaw and Erlanger and F. Ziegfeld. VII-(January, 1914), 115.

The Renaissance Players, a company of colored players, will give a series of plays in Washington and other cities during the present season. The purpose of the players is to bring the best side of the Negro before the public, VII-(February, 1914), 164.

The Renaissance Players of Philadelphia have opened the season with a number of one-act plays on racial subjects, IX-(December, 1914), 59.


Sir Herbert Tree, the English actor, was a guest of honor at a Shakespeare tercentenary celebration by colored actors at the Lafayette Theatre in New York City. He addressed a predominantly Negro audience on this occasion, VII-(May, 1913), 7.

Mr. Richard B. Harrison gave a series of recitals in Boston, New York, and Philadelphia. His program included scenes from The Merchant of Venice, Julius Caesar, Macbeth, and Damon and Pythias, IX-(November, 1914), 7.

S. Tutt Whitney and Company played The Smart Set, and The First Mr. President, at the Lafayette Theatre in Harlem, (December, 1914), 32.

Bert Williams posed for motion pictures while playing in The Ziegfeld's Follies of 1914, IX (November, 1914), 2.
William Harris, Jr. has arranged to produce a play by Laurence Eyre in which all the characters are Negroes. No attempt is made to burlesque the race, XII-(July, 1916), 115.

The All-Negro play by Laurence Eyre, which William Harris, Jr. recently announced for production, has been named Sazus and Matazus. The play is a comedy in three acts and every member of the cast will appear in "blackface" XXI-(August, 1916), 196.

A Negro stock company has been organized in Baltimore, Maryland. It is to open its season in the Fall at the Colonial Theatre, XII- (September, 1916), 224.

Mrs. Emilie Hapgood will continue the Colored Players as an organization, and next season they will be seen in a Broadway New York Theatre in a new program of plays. Mrs. Hapgood will also present the players on tour, XIV - (July, 1917), 142.

(Cut-line for a picture) A leading actress in the recent movement toward establishing a Negro Dramatic Center in New York City. Ida Gwathmey Anderson was born in Virginia, and has played the leading roles in Within, Under Cover, Trilby, The Lion and the Mouse, XV - (December, 1917), 82.

Mary Rose Dorsey, a dramatic reader of Boston, and Helen Hagan, concert pianist of New Haven, have appeared in a series of recitals throughout Ohio and Indiana. At Camp Sherman they entertained five thousand Negro conscripts, XV - (February, 1918), 191.

Matty Thomas plays the role of Bostan in Chu Chin Chow, XVI - (May, 1918), 29.

Bert Williams, the colored comedian and for several seasons one of the stars of the Ziegfeld Follies, has left the company alleging that while his name was carried to help the show, his parts have not been commensurate with his ability or reputation, XVI -(August, 1918) 189.
A Negro theatrical circuit has been formed, headed by E. C. Brown, a Philadelphia banker, and Lester A. Walton, General Manager. The opening of a school of dramatic art in New York for colored men and women has been decided upon, and a booking office to supply colored theatres throughout the country with colored acts is planned, XVIII-(September, 1919), 253.

"The Smart Set," Negro comedians, etc., headed by Tutt Whitney and J. Homer Tutt, will present this season under the booking of Klaw and Erlanger Children of the Sun, in two acts and ten scenes, representing the Swanee River, Japan, India, Persia, Thebes and Ethiopia, XVIII-(October, 1919), 307.

The Quality Amusement Corporation has accepted for production a drama, "The Racial Tangle," by Henry O. Downing. The Corporation and Mr. Downing are colored, XX-(July, 1920), 147.

The Colored Actors and Performers' Association of New York City has been granted charter. The organization has been formed to provide a club house and promote mutual interest and development, XX-(August, 1920), 191.

At the Bramhall Playhouse, New York City, a three-act drama, Justice, written and produced by Butler Davenport, is being presented for indefinite time. It has a cast of white and colored players, XIX-(February, 1920), 211.

Tommy Harris, a Negro of Des Moines, Iowa, has signed a ten week vaudeville contract for $250.00 a week, XX-(September, 1920), 238.

2. Notices Concerning Negro Musicians in the Commercial Theatre

Mme. Anita Patti-Brown, coloratura soprano of Chicago, Illinois, after a successful tour of Cuba, is being heard in concert throughout the State of Texas, IV-(May, 1912), 13.
A remarkable concert was given in Carnegie Hall, New York, by the new Music School Settlement. The critic of the New York Press said: "If the orchestra of the Clef Club under the direction of James Reese Europe, had not occupied the whole stage.... the Music Settlement for Colored People would have drawn a larger audience....", IV- (June, 1912), 27.

Will Marion Cook has lately published a group of four of his characteristic songs through Schirmer Music Publishers, V- (December, 1912), 63.

The Clef Club has made arrangements to tour several large cities after the initial concert at the Emancipation Exposition, V- (November, 1912), 321.

James Reese Europe has resigned as president of the Clef Club and Dan Kildare has been elected to fill the position, VII- (February, 1914), 164.

Dr. W. E. B. DuBois spoke to the Drama League of America when it attended a special meeting of the Garden Theatre, New York City, where the Colored Players had produced Ridgely Torrence's three plays. Miss Burrill of Washington, D. C. made an appeal for opportunity. The orchestra for the Colored Players, under J. Rosamond Johnson, rendered songs and melodies of the Civil War, XIV- (June, 1917), 81.

J. Rosamond Johnson, song writer and pianist, has returned from England where he appeared in a new musical comedy act at the London Pavillion. Mr. Johnson's first appearance since his return was at the New Strand Theatre, Philadelphia, Pa., during the week of March 16. He was assisted by Mr. Thomas Brown, VIII- (May, 1914), 5.
Ned Wayburn, who has staged so many of the large Broadway shows, is said to be the man who introduced rag-time to Broadway, sixteen years ago. He tells how he first heard the rhythms when on vacation in Alabama from an old colored man who played the banjo. He caught the measure by placing a piece of paper over the old man's instrument, XI- (November, 1915), 8.

James Weldon Johnson has translated the Spanish opera Goyescas, which is to be produced at the Metropolitan Opera House in English, XI- (December, 1915), 59.

The Clef Club, Inc of New York City appeared in an entertainment for soldiers and sailors at the Harris Theatre. "Deacon" Johnson was their musical director, XV- (April, 1918), 294.

Harry F. Gilbert has written a ballet pantomime based on a story of old New Orleans by George W. Cabel; the ballet is titled Dance in Place Congo, and was one of two novelties presented in March at the Metropolitan Opera House, EVI- (May, 1918), 30.

Will Marion Cook and his Southern Syncopated Orchestra of thirty Negroes under the management of George W. Lattimore, has been meeting with decided success in England, XIX- (December, 1919), 90.

Will Marion Cook has returned to America from England where he was conductor of the colored Southern Syncopated Orchestra. He will conduct a tour with the American Syncopated Orchestra, XIV- (February, 1920), 210.

Creamer and Layton, colored composers in New York City, wrote the lyrics and music for Three Showers, a comedy presented by the Coburns at the Empire Theatre, Syracuse, New York, XIX- (April, 1920), 338.

J. Edgar Dowell, a colored composer in Baltimore, Maryland, has recently produced four successful
numbers, two of which the Ziegfeld Follies is featuring: "San Tan," "I’m Coming Home." "You Don’t Know" was written for Pace and Handy; the fourth, "Every Night," is being featured at the Amsterdam Roof Garden, New York, XIX - (March, 1920), 113.

George W. Lattimore, colored proprietor of the American Southern Syncopated Orchestra and Singers has leased the Philharmonic Hall, London, England, for two years at a rental of $50.00 per year, XXI - (December, 1920), 78.

The Quality Amusement Company, a white organization with stock companies of colored players, has been operating in New York, Washington, and Baltimore. It proposes to add to this circuit a $100,000.00 theatre in Baltimore and also houses in Boston, Pittsburgh, Providence, and Norfolk, XIII-(February, 1917), 190.

3. Notices Concerning the Negroes in the Non-Commercial Theatres

In the Independent Theatres

Midsummer’s Night Dream, was recently given at the Howard Theatre by the Washington Dramatic Club, Washington, D. C., IV-(July, 1912), 114.

The Washington Dramatic Club, Washington, D. C., a successful organization which owes its inception to Mrs. Anna J. Cooper, presented its second annual play, A Midsummer’s Night Dream, at the Howard Theatre, VI-(July, 1913), 239.

Experience, a morality play by George V. Hobart, was presented by the Young People’s Dramatic Association of the Dixwell Avenue Congregational Church of New Haven, Conn., April 6. Special permission was granted by F. Ray Comstock and others for the presentation of this play, XII-(May, 1914), 7.
Hazel, by Miss Mary White Ovington, (a member of the NAACP,) will be produced on the stage of the Y. W. C. A. in Brooklyn, New York, by colored people on December 7. Hazel is the story of the life of a little colored girl in the North and the South. The play is being produced for the benefit of Lincoln Settlement, XIII - (December, 1916), 88.

Rachel, a drama by Angelina Grimke, (her father is NAACP officer) played by colored men and women, was presented April 26 at the Neighborhood Playhouse, New York City, under the auspices of the NAACP, XIV - (June, 1917), 87.

Rachel, the race-play written by Miss Angelina W. Grimke, was presented at Brattle Hall, Cambridge, Mass., on May 24, under the auspices of the Sunday School of Bartholomew Church. The principals, although amateur colored actors, deserve mention for the splendid performance of their roles, XIV - (July, 1917), 141.

The Lion and the Mouse, by Charles Klein, was presented by the Norfolk Colored Dramatic Club at the Colonial Theatre under the direction of J. C. Stith, for the benefit of the St. Joseph Catholic Church, XIV - (July, 1917), 141-142.

The National Flower, an operetta, was given at the Howard Theatre, Washington, D. C., under the direction of Mrs. Sadie Gaskin Holly. One hundred prominent Washingtonians were in the cast and $200.00 was netted for the Y. W. C. A., XVI - (August, 1918), 189.

The Problem, a military drama, has been presented by E. Grant Gilmore and colored actors at the Academy of Music, Philadelphia, Pa., XIX - (December, 1919), 80.

Rhab has been given by the Negroes at Lynchburg, Virginia at the Academy of Music under the direction of Mrs. Frances Cox. The receipts were $1,035.00, XX - (August, 1920), 191.
Under Two Flags, was presented by the DuBois
Dramatic Club of Omaha, Nebraska; the play
was under the management of Ada Hiki Smith.
Seven hundred dollars were netted in receipts,
XIX - (March, 1920), 279.

Caught was among four one-act dramas presented
by the Players of Los Angeles, California.
Eloise Bibb Thompson, a colored woman, wrote
the play, XX - (June, 1920), 89.

In the Educational Theatres

Atlanta University, Atlanta, Georgia.
(Cut-line for photograph) "Drama in Colored
America: Atlanta University Students in

Howard University Dramatic Club, Washington,
D. C., presented Bulwer-Lytton's Lady of Lyons.
(Photographs of two actors) Miss Osceola
McCarthy in the role of Pauline, exhibited
talent of a very high order, VI- (May, 1913), 13.

Lincoln Institute, Jefferson City, Missouri, pre­
sented Macbeth for Commencement. Florida A. and
M. College, Tallahassee, Florida, presented
Twelfth Night on the Commencement Program.
Atlanta University, Atlanta, Georgia presented
Comedy of Errors to celebrate Commencement, VI-
(July, 1913) 53.

Howard University, Washington, D. C. presented
Richelieu (Photograph of leading character)
VIII - (May, 1914), 139.

Florida A. and M. College, Tallahassee, Florida,
presented The Tempest (Photograph of the cast)
IX - (December, 1914), 60.

Wilberforce University, Wilberforce, Ohio, pro­
duced The Dust of the Road, under the direction
of Miss Hallie Q. Brown. It was a play in four
acts with nine players, IX - (February, 1915), 239.
Wilberforce University, Wilberforce, Ohio has presented *The Fruits of His Folly*, a drama in five acts, under the direction of Miss Hallie Q. Brown, XI - (January, 1916), 112.


Hartshron Memorial College, Richmond, Va., presented Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* before an appreciative audience in the college chapel, March 4, XII - (May, 1916), 7.


The Girls' High School Dramatic Club, Boston, Mass., presented *Twelfth Night*, a production in which Miss Elise W. Thurston, Colored Student, as Orsino, received considerable praise, XII - (July, 1916), 114.

Samuel Houston College, Austin, Texas, presented Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, to a large and enthusiastic audience in the college auditorium in May, XII - (October, 1916), 295.

The Howard High School, Wilmington, Del., presented as a Christmas entertainment *An Hawaiian Idyll*, an operetta in three acts. Mrs. Alice Dunbar-Nelson wrote the words, the arrangement of the musical numbers was made by Miss Etta A. Roach, and the costumes were designed under the direction of Miss Agatha F. Jones, all teachers in the school assisted. An Hawaiian orchestra of native instruments was directed by Dr. Conwall Banton, XIII - (February, 1917), 189-190.
The Dunbar High School presented Mrs. Carrie W. Clifford's *Tradition*, a one-act drama, for the benefit of the public playgrounds, XIV - (June, 1917), 141.

The Douglass School, Winchester, Virginia, presented *Jake Among the Indians*, written by Principal P. W. Gibson, XIV - (July, 1917), 141.

The State Deaf, Dumb and Blind Institute for Colored Youth, Austin, Texas, recently entertained members of the Legislature with a patriotic play *The Story of the Flag*, XVI - (June, 1918), 82.

The Booker T. Washington High School Alumni, Indianapolis, Indiana, presented a Japanese operetta, *Princess Chrysanthemum*, to provide for a memorial to ninety-seven members of the Alumni Association who entered military service, XVII - (July, 1919), 151.

The A. and T. College Summer School, Greensboro, North Carolina, presented *Every Woman*, directed by Mme. Mary Ross Dorsey. There was a mixed audience including prominent citizens who witnessed the successful performance, XVIII - (October, 1919), 307.

Columbia University, New York City, students synthetic play producing and acting have appeared in a lecture demonstration of the King's Progress, by Mrs. Maxwell Armfield. Among the participants was Mrs. Dora Cole Norman (Colored), XX - (May, 1920), 98.

New York University, The Varsity Dramatic Society, has accepted *The Return*, a one-act play by a Negro student, Edwin J. Morgan, for production, XX - (July, 1920), 147.
APPENDIX C
LETTERS AND STATEMENTS
Mr. Leonard G. Archer
Box 174
Wilberforce, Ohio

Dear Mr. Archer:

I am very pleased that Dr. Pawley considered my paper good enough to recommend to you. Please thank him for me.

You may keep this copy. I hope that it serves your purposes.

Sincerely,

/S/ Marjorie L. Dycke
Chairman, Drama Department
Professor Leonard C. Archer
Box 17½
Wilberforce, Ohio

Dear Professor Archer:

I'm flattered that Tom Pawley thought so highly of my paper on desegregation in the educational theatre; and I'm very pleased that you're interested in reading it.

The enclosed copy of the speech is the only one I seem to be able to find, so I'd appreciate it if you would return it when you are through. And, of course, if you find any of the material pertinent to your dissertation, please feel free to use the paper as a source.

I'm also enclosing a couple reprints (which don't have to be returned) of an article in last May's Educational Theatre Journal on the Negro in the Broadway theatre. You might find in this some better information for your project than in the Chicago speech.

As I write this I'm trying to think whether I ran across any information on the NAACP when doing research for these papers. I can't recall any. If you haven't already, you might get in touch with Fred O'Neal (the actor who has been so prominent in the fight for integration in the theatre), at 41 Convent Avenue, New York, N. Y. Fred would probably know of any work in this area done by the NAACP.

Good luck with the dissertation. I'm looking forward to reading it sometime.

Sincerely,

/a/ Robert L. Hilliard,
Assistant Professor

P.S. If you haven't already met Fred O'Neal, and do write to him, you can mention that I suggested you contact him.
Professor Leonard C. Archer
Central State College
Wilberforce, Ohio

Dear Professor Archer:

I have your letter of May 27 and was glad to know of your work. I remember your father as one of my best friends during my years of teaching at Atlanta University. As a matter of fact, the NAACP had, to my mind, very little direct effect upon the theatre in America. From the first, the organization deliberately limited its efforts to securing civil, political and social rights for American Negroes. On the other hand, of course, it was impossible for them to neglect entirely so great a cultural force as the theatre. Indirectly, therefore, they did a good deal. James Weldon Johnson who was their chief executive for 17 years, had close connections with the theatre.

The Crisis, under my editorship, was interested in the theatre, published some plays and started the Krigwa Little Theatre. Most of our connections with the theatre will be found in the pages of The Crisis, although as you say, there was some organizational activity concerning The Birth of a Nation and The Torrence plays. I shall be in New York June 11 to 20 and would be glad to have you telephone me for an appointment--Main 4-2929.

Very sincerely yours,

/S/ W. E. B. DuBois
Mr. Leonard C. Archer  
Central State College  
Wilberforce, Ohio

Dear Mr. Archer:

The subject of your doctoral dissertation interests me very much. I happen to have run into the censorship question in two fields: Children's Literature and Theatre. Both times the motives were good, I'm sure. My little book YOU CAN'T PET A POSSUM was illustrated by a distinguished artist, but the drawings raised questions in the minds of some Negroes who thought they stereotyped the race. Of course I had nothing to do with the selection of the artist and no chance to see the drawings before the book was published, but there was enough difference of opinion about the matter to eventually cause the publishers to let the book go out of print. I have never expressed an opinion on this specific case.

The ST. LOUIS WOMAN affair was even more mixed up, as I see it. I do not think Walter White's position on it was consistent with his attitude toward PORGY AND BESS, STRANGE FRUIT, etc. I believe his singling out ST. LOUIS WOMAN was rather based on his personal experiences in Hollywood. He felt he had somehow been let down by individuals with whom he and Wendell Willkie talked in Hollywood and reacted, in my opinion, mainly out of personal miff.

Nothing whatever passed between Walter or the NAACP and me on the subject. I was not in New York at the time of the hullabaloo and therefore heard none of the discussions. My only information came from the newspapers and from letters written to me by Countee Cullen. Certain newspaper people and some NAACP officials went along with Walter in this operation and I am quite sure they succeeded in limiting the Broadway run of ST. LOUIS WOMAN. However, I am sure they were all dead wrong in the position they took and that time will prove that their action made no contribution whatever toward advancing the cause of the Negro in the United States.
Censorship is a dangerous two-edged sword. There may be cases in which its use can be justified in the Negro's struggle for first class citizenship, but I can't think of any at the moment. I have even noticed that Roy Wilkins cautioned the students at Alcorn College against denying Clennon King freedom of speech. Yet, I am told, that he supported Walter White's efforts to deny ST. LOUIS WOMAN a production. It just happens that I don't believe that the race is belittled by the story of "low life" on the sporting wheel at the turn of the Century. Even if there is a difference of opinion on this point, I would not recommend censorship as the method of dealing with it any more than I would recommend it in the case of the controversial "Little Black Sambo."

I do not have a copy of Walter White's Hollywood "Code of Equal Rights for the Negro Actors" at hand. But it goes without saying that I think Negro actors as well as Negro writers should get a break in Hollywood as well as on Broadway and on TV and radio.

Freddy Washington, who was then writing for People's Voice, the now defunct Harlem newspaper, carried the ball for Walter's side of the argument. A woman columnist named Normand, I believe, then writing for the New York Post, also put in a strong roar for him. The Pittsburgh Courier headlined some of the controversy. These are about the only sources I can mention offhand other than Countee's letters to me.

With best wishes,

Sincerely yours,

/S/ Arna Bontemps

AB/ alj
Mr. Leonard C. Archer
Central State College
Wilberforce, Ohio

Dear Mr. Archer:

Just a brief explanatory footnote to my letter of July 25th. It occurs to me that the last line of the second paragraph could raise a question in your mind. The reason Walter White was out to get ST. LOUIS WOMAN, in my opinion, is explained by the fact that the backing for the broadway production came from Metro Goldwyn Mayer, and this was one of the studios which had disappointed him. Frankly, I always thought Walter dreamed of becoming a kind of general consultant to the film industry and perhaps show business at large on the Negro. In fact, he twice mentioned something of this sort to me.

Sincerely yours,

/S/ Arna Bontemps

AB/alj
EXTRACT OF STATEMENT OF COMMITTEE OF DRAMATISTS GUILD
LEAGUE OF NEW YORK THEATRES,
ACTORS' AND CHORUS EQUITY ASSOCIATIONS
ON THE
INTEGRATION AND EMPLOYMENT OF NEGRO PERFORMERS

The theatre and all other expressions of American entertainment are today among the most powerful and influential media of communication and education. In a critical world period, when the democratic credo is under fire, it becomes increasingly important that the expanding role of our Negro citizens in the community of this nation be adequately portrayed in the entertainment arts.

The realities of the American scene today confirm the portrayal of the Negro as a more general part of the scheme of our society, for example, as postmen, policemen, clerks, secretaries, government workers, doctors and teachers, without the necessity of emphasis on Race.

If writers, producers, directors and casting agents would consider the Negro artist primarily as an artist, to be given consideration for casting in any roles which his ability permits; it would be a vitalizing force in the theatre. In the instances where this has been observed, there has been no violation of the naturalistic tradition of the theatre. On the contrary, realism has been more faithfully served, has advanced the interests of the theatre, and has actually lent increased variety and excitement to the presentations.

In the recent past, a well-intentioned but ill-directed sensitivity to this problem has worked inadvertent harm to the Negro artist. Apprehensive of doing injustice to the Negro citizens and offending humanity, writers and producers have tended to completely eliminate the Negro in comedy and servant roles. This policy, well-meant though it may be, is unrealistic and has seriously curtailed the employment of the Negro artist. While caricature and stereotype are always to be condemned, there is nothing inherently wrong in comedy or servant roles when they are part of an honest living presentation. However, when the Negro citizens are presented exclusively in such roles, an imbalance results, and their integration in American life is improperly set before the world.

We must correct this situation, not by eliminating the Negro artist, but by enlarging his scope and participation in all types of roles and in all forms of American entertainment—just as in American life, the Negro citizen's role now extends from the kitchen to the United Nations.
DID YOU SEE A NEGRO ON TELEVISION LAST NIGHT?

All too often your answer must be NO. Negroes are almost totally excluded from employment in television. Last year Negro performers got only \( \frac{1}{200} \) of one per cent of the total of TV performer employment. One of every 200 jobs!

The Real America

There are sixteen million Negroes in the United States. One out of every ten Americans is a Negro. There are Negro taxi drivers, doctors, secretaries, teachers, diplomats, milkmen, etc. But they are seldom seen in these roles on television. We believe that Negroes should be presented in the numbers and the roles that they occur in American life.

The TV America

It would be difficult to show an everyday scene without Negro citizens—except on TV. Television crowds have no Negroes. Negroes do not shop at TV stores or ride on TV subways. This results in the elimination of Negroes from one of our most powerful media of communication and education.

Excluding Negroes in this way constitutes a form of adverse propaganda, which has a damaging effect. The absence of Negroes in any but an occasional menial role gives a distorted picture to other Americans, which in turn prejudices the struggle of the Negro for full citizenship.

The Economics Of It

Negroes comprise a large part of the consumer market, and the consumer makes commercial telecasting possible. The cost of television entertainment is included in every article advertised on TV. As consumers Negroes spend 15 billion dollars a year which is more than the consumer expenditure of Canada. Negroes are therefore part-producers of television shows. It is only fair that Negroes should be included as actors in a proportion more commensurate to their contribution.
What Is The Co-ordinating Council

The Co-ordinating Council for Negro Performers has for its principle aim the broadening of employment opportunities for Negroes in the entertainment fields. It is composed of artists, craftsmen and laymen who share the belief that Negroes should be more fairly presented in radio and television. Negro artists through the exclusion practised in television are denied the chance of accurately showing the Negro's role in American life.

You Can Help

1. Join the Co-ordinating Council.

2. When you see shows that exclude Negroes, write to the station voicing your objection.

3. When you see Negroes in roles and situations that are disparaging, also make your objections known.

4. Finally (and this is most important) when Negroes are presented realistically and fairly write to the station expressing your approval.

Your inquiries and suggestions are welcomed by the Co-ordinating Council for Negro Performers, Inc.

15 West 44 Street
New York 36, N. Y.

Mu 2-3719
How often do you see a Negro on television? Of all the hundreds of plays, musicals and other programs on TV that show American life, I am sure you know it is unusual when you see a Negro appear. This is strange when you consider that there are 16 million Negroes in America in all walks of life, doing every conceivable job. The performer is, in his work, the public representative of the citizen and through the denial of employment to Negro performers the Negro citizen is absent from the picture of America shown on television and thereby his contribution to American life disavowed.

Because of the existing situation a group of actors and laymen got together two years ago and formed the Coordinating Council for Negro performers, Inc. They were aware of the elimination of Negroes in this powerful medium of communication. They decided to look into this situation and do something about it.

I am a member of this organization and this is what we found:

1. Negroes spend 15 million dollars a year for commodities such as soaps, foods, drugs, beverages and automobiles.

2. These products make commercial telecasting possible, as part of every dollar spent for these commodities goes to pay for TV entertainment.

3. Negro performers received only \( \frac{1}{200} \) of one percent of the total of TV performer employment, 1 out of every 200 jobs.

- We have been able to establish contacts with TV networks to make them aware of an organized demand for representation.

- We have established liaison between the casting departments of these networks and our performers to facilitate employment.

- We consult with producers of programs on matters of script material whereby Negroes may be integrated into the program.
We are joining with other civic minded groups such as the New York Chapter of the NAACP, as well as church affiliates, to urge citizens to voice their objections by writing to the station when they see shows that consistently exclude Negroes, and their approval when they see shows presenting the Negro realistically and fairly.

I am writing to you in order to ask you to join the Co-Ordinating Council, because I feel that you will want to be one of us who are working to end the present inequity and make true democracy on television a reality.

Yours truly,

------------------

Please enroll me as a member of the Co-Ordinating Council For Negro Performers, Inc.

I enclose two dollars annual membership dues.

Name ________________________________

Address ______________________________
Remarks of Roy Wilkins of New York City, executive secretary of the NAACP, to Luncheon under auspices of Association of Motion Pictures Producers, Beverly Hills Hotel, California, October 25, 1957.

Mr. Kahane, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am grateful for the opportunity to discuss with you face to face, at long last, a matter about which there has been a deal of misunderstanding. After much telephoning and writing back and forth, beginning, I believe, last March or April, you have been gracious enough to arrange this luncheon meeting.

While there has been much talk of an NAACP policy on employment of Negro actors in film roles, and on the type of material involving Negroes and so-called race question which has found its way into motion pictures, the truth of the matter is that there has never been a clear, written policy issued by the NAACP.

The late Wendell Willkie of Twentieth Century-Fox and the late Walter White of the NAACP held several conferences in 1942 with executives of the film industry. Mr. Willkie was concerned with the pictures of America being received by nations around the globe and the effect such impressions were having on our war effort. Mr. White was concerned with this, but also with the damage to the morale of Negro citizens in the war against Hitlerism.
While no written policy came out of these discussions, the clear intent of the talks was indicated by a paragraph in a letter written by Mr. Darryl Zanuck under date of July 21, 1942, to other film executives. I should like to quote just the paragraph:

"It seemed to me that Walter White's statement of the problem was simple and direct. What he is actually asking for is that Negroes be used in motion pictures in the same manner in which they occupy positions in life: some are heroic, some are not; some are serious minded, others are comedians; some are industrious, some are lazy; some hold highly responsible positions, some of course, are in menial occupations. In other words, they are just like all other human beings. There is no objection to using a Negro occasionally for comedy, but he would like to have them used as often as possible in the more heroic roles- in the positions which they occupy in real life, as normal and integral parts of the American world scenes. All this should be done, of course, without any direct or indirect suggestion of propaganda."

This seems clear, but in some way misunderstanding developed on a fantastic scale. Some figures in the industry apparently used the NAACP discussions as an excuse for restricting employment of Negro actors. Negro film actors thereupon concluded that the NAACP, through suggestions of Mr. White, was keeping them from employment. Some of the allegations which attained wide currency were:

1. The NAACP censors scripts and even in some cases designates the Negro actors who should or should
not be employed. This is sheer nonsense. We have not the time, money, staff, or inclination to act as a censor. We believe in freedom of expression for ourselves and for others. Occasionally the NAACP is asked for an opinion on an idea, or a treatment, or, on very rare occasions, on a completed script. We have no list of "dos and don'ts." Therefore, the executives, on any level, or any other persons connected with film production, either for theatres or for television, who say, "We can't do so and so because we would get into trouble with the NAACP code" are merely using us as an excuse and are costing Negro actors jobs.

2. The NAACP has a one-for-one policy, that is, if a Negro actor is cast as a servant, there must be elsewhere in the cast a Negro actor cast in a non-servant role. This is ridiculous and untrue. We have never stated any such position, either verbally or in writing. Just recently we learned that a young Negro actress had been chosen for a maid's role in a television series, but when her picture reached the McCann-Erickson advertising agency in New York, she was turned down with the statement that if hired "the NAACP would demand another Negro in the cast on a higher level." We are investigating
this report with McCann-Erickson in order to nail the falsehood once and for all, but in the meantime the NAACP has been used again as an excuse to deny Negro actors jobs.

3. The NAACP will not approve of Negroes as comics, maids, menials, etc. This is not true and nothing can be found in the 1942 discussions to support it. The NAACP does oppose (a) limiting Negro actors to such roles and thus limiting the depiction of Negroes in American life, and (b) stereotyped characteristics such as eye-rolling, shuffling, grinning and obsequiousness--the kind of thing that perpetuates the image of the Negro as a buffoon whose claims to equality need not be taken seriously.

So that there will be no misunderstanding, please let me recapitulate and emphasize:

1. The NAACP does not now and never has assumed the role of censor.
2. The NAACP does not now have and never has had a one-for-one policy.
3. The NAACP does not now disapprove and never has disapproved servant and comic roles as such; it has opposed and does oppose exclusive or preponderant casting of Negro actors in
such roles, since such casting misrepresents the role of Negro citizens in American life.

I should like to elaborate a bit on the latter point. There have been many changes in the status of Negroes since 1942. The armed services, formerly restricted and rigidly segregated, are now desegregated. Negroes are now serving in all branches and grades up to and including a general in the Air Force.

Since 1942 we have seen the enactment of fair employment practice laws by states and cities—more than a dozen states and some forty cities. This means that Negroes now occupy better-paying jobs in a wider variety of categories, including white collar and technical.

The organized labor movement has opened up membership and promotions to Negroes under many contracts with management, resulting in an expansion in the number of Negro skilled artisans. There has been, too, a growth in the number of Negroes in professional and technical employment. We have more engineers, chemists, laboratory technicians than ever before. Our great industrial concerns now recruit engineering and chemistry graduates from Negro colleges as they have done for years from "white" colleges. It is now commonplace, therefore, to find Negroes as stenographers, bookkeepers, retail clerks, bus drivers, nurses, crane operators, etc.
Since 1942, public school desegregation has progressed under Supreme Court decisions. Since 1950 Negro students have entered and been graduated from state universities in all but five Southern states. On the elementary and high school levels, desegregation has been practically completed in the District of Columbia, West Virginia, and Missouri; it is well along in Maryland, Delaware, Kentucky, and in West and South Texas; small beginnings have been made in North Carolina, Tennessee and Arkansas.

Moreover, since 1942, there has been a steady migration of Negroes from the South to Northern and Western states. As a result their political strength has increased, with the further result that their employment in civil service jobs has increased, and their number in elective and appointive political posts has grown.

For example, in civil service, many state, county and city departments and bureaus have Negro white collar workers in considerable numbers. There have been Negro policemen and detectives for years and years, but now it is not a rarity to be halted by a Negro motorcycle or traffic officer, to have Negroes
as dispatchers at headquarters, or to have Negro technicians in police laboratories and Negro lecturers in police academies. The Commissioner of Public Safety for Illinois, in charge of all highway police, is a Negro.

There are Negro firemen and, of course, a vast number of other municipal and state servants. Take a look sometime at the Los Angeles City Hall or Hall of Justice. Drop into the Municipal Building in New York City, or the State Motor Vehicle Bureau office there, or into the municipal offices in Chicago, Cleveland, Detroit, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, Cincinnati, St. Louis and Kansas City. For instance, the chief purchaser of drugs for the City of New York is a Negro, and until he was recently promoted, the Commissioner of Water Supply, Gas, and Electricity for the City of New York was a Negro engineer who was graduated from the University of Montana nearly forty years ago.

There are three Negroes in Congress, many state legislators and city councilmen, judges, members of school boards, and staff members in city and state law departments. A Negro is Borough President of Manhattan in New York City; until recently, one was Vice Mayor of Cincinnati, and one is an elected member of the board of education in Atlanta, Georgia.
Yet with all this, we find that the films seldom picture Negroes as a part of an American crowd scene, either on the streets in normal course of business, or in sports crowds, or at political rallies.

So, it is unrealistic for the movies and TV not to keep pace with the Negro's own progress. It is not fair to the race or to Negro actors.

Besides, I suggest strongly that the industry has a duty to become more accurate. In 1942 we were in a shooting war. In 1957 we are in a cold war. We have had Little Rock and Sputnik. Each has damaged the prestige of our country. With Little Rock we were forced into hasty and emergency measures to counteract the damage done. Our Ambassador to Britain was rushed into a defensive speech before a distinguished British gathering in London. One of our delegates to the United Nations, Mr. George Meany, president of the AFL-CIO, was delegated to make a speech on Little Rock and the American race situation before the United Nations. The Voice of America frantically tried to explain Little Rock to the world.

But the film industry can do this every day. Television can do this every day. If the films had been doing the job that they know how to do so well, the picture of the Negro in American life would have been
before the world and Little Rock would have been seen in perspective. There would have been no need for the unseemly (and hence suspect) scrambling to try to make clear the nation's position. Yes, the proper portrayal of the Negro American is a patriotic duty which the film industry ought to perform.

I cannot close without mentioning that there have been changes in the Negro himself. He is more alert, more aware of himself and of the place of his nation in the world. He knows what the great conflict between democracy and dictatorship is all about. He knows that our democratic liberties and ideals are at stake and that he is a part of the testing. He has traveled and his young men have fought all over the globe. He has the movies, radio, television, newspapers and magazines, and he evaluates the information he thus receives.

He has seen India and Indonesia attain independence. This year he saw Ghana, an independent African nation, come into being. He knows that in a year or two Nigeria will be independent. With all this happening about him, it seems foolish to him that the American film industry should be so far behind the times in depicting him as a citizen of the world's greatest showcase nation of democracy. Mind you, he does not want and does not expect exaggeration or "overplay"; he just wants an honest, balanced picture of himself in these times of
decision. World War II gave him a sense of importance and the cold war has emphasized it.

There will continue to be scrutiny and criticism by the NAACP of the products of the film industry touching this area. The old stereotypes, for example, must give way to new portrayals. The NAACP will continue to fulfill its role of trying to represent the best interest of the race as a whole. It will not seek to dictate to the industry, but will attempt to see that sixteen million Americans, struggling to attain their rightful place in the life of the nation and the world, are not handicapped by misrepresentation in a medium which speaks powerfully to people everywhere.

Your presence here today indicates your interest in exploring how the task can be accomplished. I think I can assure you that in that exploration you will have the full cooperation of Negro actors, agencies and organizations, as well as the gratitude of the rank and file of Negro Americans themselves.
I, Leonard Courtney Archer, was born in Atlanta, Georgia, August 17, 1911. I received my secondary education at Morehouse Academy in Atlanta, Georgia, and my undergraduate training at Morehouse College, which granted me the Bachelor of Arts degree in 1934. From the University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, I received the Master of Arts degree in 1940. After teaching English and Dramatics in Georgia, Mississippi, and Arkansas, I accepted the chairmanship of the Speech and Drama Department at Central State College, Wilberforce, Ohio, in 1947.

In 1950, I entered the Graduate School of Ohio State University and began matriculation of the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Speech, having selected a major in Theatre and minors in Radio and Dramatic Literature. While teaching and directing dramatics at Central State College, I continued part-time study at Ohio State University. During my full-time residence at Ohio State University, I was associated with several stage productions, and served as the assistant director of The Emperor Jones under the supervision of
Dr. Everet Schreck. I became a professor of Dramatic Literature at Tennessee A. & I. State University, Nashville, Tennessee, while I was completing the final requirements of the Doctor of Philosophy degree.